

Technology and GenAI adoption among literary translators in Spain: a survey study on uses, perceptions and attitudes



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Abstract

This article presents an overview of technology adoption among professional literary translators in Spain. It also describes their attitudes towards and experiences with technology and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), as well as their perspectives on the future use of GenAI in the industry. Finally, it considers the benefits of and concerns about using GenAI for the translation of literature.

Keywords: literary translation, generative artificial intelligence, professional literary translators, attitude towards technology, experience with technology, prospects for artificial intelligence, questionnaire.

Resum

Aquest article presenta una visió general de l'ús de la tecnologia entre els traductors literaris professionals a Espanya. Tanmateix, n'exposa les actituds i experiències quant a la tecnologia i la intel·ligència artificial generativa (GenAI), així com les perspectives en la indústria. Per últim, pondera els beneficis i les preocupacions associats a l'ús de la GenAI per a la traducció literària.

Paraules clau: traducció literària, intel·ligència artificial generativa, traductors literaris professionals, actitud tecnològica, experiència tecnològica, perspectives de la intel·ligència artificial, qüestionari.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta una visión general del uso de la tecnología entre los traductores literarios profesionales en España. Asimismo, expone sus actitudes y experiencias con respecto a la tecnología y la inteligencia artificial generativa (GenAI), así como sus perspectivas en la industria. Por último, pondera los beneficios y las preocupaciones asociados al uso de la GenAI para la traducción literaria.

Palabras clave: traducción literaria, inteligencia artificial generativa, traductores literarios profesionales, actitud tecnológica, experiencia tecnológica, perspectivas de la inteligencia artificial, cuestionario.



1. Introduction

Words perpetually transmit the environmental conditions, social models, and individual and collective mindsets and memory of generations through literature. As literature is a genuinely human art that has been transferred across cultures through translation for centuries, it is no wonder that literary translation is currently regarded as the “last bastion of human translation” (Toral & Way, 2014: 174). However, technology has reached that last vestige of a human component in the field of translation (Rothwell et al., 2023; Li, 2023; Sharofova, 2024) and, by extension, the publishing industry (Ryzhko et al., 2024). In fact, the disruptive effect of technologies has undeniably activated new mechanisms through which individuals engage with reading and book consumption (Magadán-Díaz & Rivas-García, 2025).

This digital scenario has also been driven by the significant development of artificial intelligence (AI), a field of computer science that empowers machines “to perform tasks that typically require human-like intelligence, such as natural language processing, problem-solving, and pattern recognition” (Amini et al., 2024: 740). The intertwining of some disciplines derived from AI, notably corpus linguistics, natural language processing (NLP), and machine translation (MT), has led to the development of language technologies such as grammar and vocabulary checkers, text-to-speech and speech-to-text tools, and certain recent MT systems, among others (Ministerio para la Transformación Digital y de la Función Pública, 2023). These kinds of AI-based tools “enable machines not only to read, analyse, process and generate human language, but also [...] to bridge the divide between human communication and machine understanding” (European Commission, 2024).

But a groundbreaking advance took place at the end of 2022, when the company OpenAI launched ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer), a robust chatbot working with generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and based on a large language model (LLM) that can emulate human-like responses to questions and help perform tasks (Tang, 2024; Li, 2024). This introduced GenAI to the world (Okulska et al., 2025), thus affecting a multitude of professions, including writers, illustrators, narrators, and translators, in terms of remuneration, transparency, and authorship (European Writers’ Council, 2024).

Despite increasingly promising developments, language technologies remain far from being able to accomplish complex tasks carried out by literary translators (Li, 2024; Sharofova, 2024). Thus, research has examined the extent to which these technologies are being adopted in practice. One of the first to be concerned with this question was Ruffo (2018), who undertook a small-scale study of literary translators’ views on technology, which was later expanded (2022) to a larger group of participants’ narratives by means of online questionnaires. This led to subsequent studies using nationwide samples. For instance, while Slessor (2019) focused on the practices and needs of literary translators by collecting responses from members of the Literary Translators’ Association of Canada, Daems (2022) studied responses from Dutch literary translators to observe their awareness of and attitudes towards technologies. Similarly, Ruokonen & Salmi (2024)

conducted a study of literary translators working with Finnish. They collected responses through a questionnaire and subsequent interviews with some participants, obtaining data on their technology adoption and when and why they employ such tools in literary translation. Additionally, Noriega-Santiañez & Corpas Pastor (2023b) focused specifically on students' adoption of technology in literary translation tasks. Regarding GenAI adoption, Rivas Ginel & Moorkens (2024) recently carried out an investigation into the potential of ChatGPT among professional translators, exploring their attitudes and degree of adoption of the tool. Finally, Zhang et al. (2025) collected university students' perceptions of the benefits of and challenges posed by the use of GenAI in translation practices.

Although literary translators' mission is to convey the human essence of the works they translate, they are often confronted with technologies that are generally perceived as "imposed" or "forced" upon them to meet the demands of the sector (Ruffo, 2022). However, the ongoing debate among scholars revolves around the extent to which literary translators can leverage technological tools, and the role of ethics and labour rights in this digital scenario (cf. Taivalkoski-Shilov, 2018; Bowker, 2020; Kenny & Winters, 2020; Toral & Way., 2018; and Way et al., 2023, to name but a few).

For this reason, this paper aims to explore the adoption of both traditional and technological tools and resources by professional literary translators in Spain across the different stages of their workflow. To be more precise, it refers to documentation (gathering relevant background information), translation (transferring the meaning of a text from a source language into a target language), revision (reviewing the translated text in detail), and proofreading (checking for surface errors before publication) (Hurtado Albir, 2011). Regarding technologies, this study focuses on digital resources such as online dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and glossaries, among others, as well as other AI-based tools like current MT systems and computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, with special emphasis on those that work entirely with GenAI, such as chatbots. In addition, this paper seeks to set out literary translators' reasons for adopting or avoiding technologies. Finally, it mainly focuses on GenAI, reflecting on such translators' experiences with, attitudes towards, and uptake of it in literary translation, as well as their perspectives on its prospects in the industry. Thus, the paper presents a qualitative and quantitative sample of this study group through the distribution of a survey that addresses three main aspects:

- What traditional and technological resources do literary translators in Spain employ in each translation stage, and how often do they do so?
- What are their views on and professional experience of the use of GenAI in literary translation, and what is the extent of their uptake of it?
- How do they see GenAI being used in the future of literary translation?

Based on these research questions, this article is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the technological panorama in the publishing industry, with special emphasis on the pros and cons of using technologies and AI in literary translation. Section 3 sets out our methodology, explaining the questionnaire design and the study group's profile.

Section 4 presents the results obtained in terms of technology adoption and attitudes, and compares them to previous benchmark studies. Section 5 presents the main conclusions of our study and suggests future research avenues.

2. Language technology in the publishing industry

Technology has brought about a change in the publishing mentality and in readers alike. Tomasena (2019: 2) describes the Spanish publishing industry as “a hyper-saturated market of new titles with fewer copies, the menace of the big tech companies [...] over the book industry, and the constant battle for consumers’ attention”. Although reading habits and literary consumption have experienced a significant change, interest in books remains high. In fact, recent figures show that reading is a leisure activity of more than half of the Spanish population, specifically 65.5% in 2024 (Ministerio de Cultura, 2025).

Reading is not only a widespread activity, but also one that generates a great deal of profit: according to the latest data collected, the publishing industry earned almost 2.86 billion euros in 2023 (Federación de Gremios de Editores de España, 2025). To meet the high demand within this book industry system, significant technology-related changes have taken place, including the emergence of digital devices, e-commerce, and social network promotion (Magadán-Díaz & Rivas-García, 2020; 2025).

Even though publishers are “the gatekeepers of literature in translation” (Way et al., 2023: 9), literary translators are equally paramount in this digital landscape. According to the latest data, translations accounted for 17.2% of total book production in Spain in 2023, with English (8.6%), Spanish (2.1%), and French (1.5%) being the most translated languages (Ministerio de Cultura, 2023). Against this background, the rapid development of technologies in translation is being driven by the need to digitise and automate translation, i.e. to have computers perform repetitive functions that were previously carried out by humans (Rothwell et al., 2023), to meet the demands of this global industry. These technologies typically work best with repetitive texts but struggle to effectively translate more nuanced texts (Toral & Way., 2018; Noriega-Santíañez & Corpas Pastor, 2023b), which is why literary translators tend to be rather tech-savvy (Ruffo, 2022; Daems, 2022). However, literature is not a homogeneous field, as it encompasses a wide variety of texts and textual genres (from novels with more prototypical and commercial structures to poetry), each possessing characteristics that shape the literary translation process (Hurtado Albir, 2011; Boase-Beier et al., 2018) and, consequently, influence the adoption of technology (Noriega-Santíañez & Corpas Pastor, 2023b).

2.1. Human vs computer-assisted literary translation

In recent years, scholars have begun to investigate how human-centred or computer-centred technologies can be applied to literary texts (Declercq & Van Egdome, 2023) to help literary translators effectively navigate this technological landscape. There is enormous interest in exploring to what extent technologies are useful for addressing cultural, stylistic, sense-making, and creative aspects in the translation of literary texts,

assuming the multiple challenges literary translators face at the intertextual and intratextual levels. Such studies generally evaluate efficiency, quality or speed when using these tools compared to a traditional human translation process (cf. Toral & Way, 2018; Matusov, 2019; Dimitroulia, 2022; Noriega-Santiáñez & Corpas Pastor, 2023a).

Of particular note among analysis tools are MT systems. The first MT system was rule-based MT, working with a handful of linguistic rules and a dictionary in the 1950s (Rothwell et al., 2023). Despite tentative success, researchers developed an interest in combining repositories of source texts and their translations, leading to the creation of example-based MT models (Toral & Way, 2015; Rothwell et al., 2023). Following the advent of statistical MT (SMT) and phrase-based MT (PBMT) systems in the late 1990s, these technologies began to be tested for literary translation projects in the 2010s (Voigt, 2012; Toral & Way, 2014; 2015). Whereas SMT systems opt for the most statistically likely translation, PBMT systems work by dividing a given text into individual parts and translating them separately (Amini et al., 2024). Despite their potential, earlier MT systems had very few practical applications in translating literature. However, they laid the foundation for later MT models, specifically neural MT (NMT) systems, developed in 2015 and driven by machine learning and deep learning, which outperformed their predecessors (Toral & Way, 2018; Webster et al., 2020; Van Egdom et al., 2023). In recent studies, scholars have typically compared raw MT output against human translation and postedited output, i.e. MT output that has been corrected by a human professional (Toral & Way, 2018). Similar studies have been carried out by scholars who have tentatively explored postediting the output of certain customised MT systems (Matusov, 2019). These multiple systems have been tested with different novels or extracts (in one or several languages) (Toral & Way, 2018; Sahin & Gürses, 2021) and/or on specific phraseological aspects (neologisms, metaphors, idioms, etc.) (Guerberof-Arena & Toral, 2022; Zajdel, 2023; Corpas Pastor & Noriega-Santiáñez, 2024).

Furthermore, several studies have explored to what extent some other technologies, such as CAT tools (Trados Studio, memoQ, OmegaT, etc.) and translation memories, can improve coherence and cohesion in terms of terminology when dealing with the same literary patterns (Youdale & Rothwell, 2022; Way et al., 2023) and “have the potential to enhance the creative process” (Ruffo et al., 2024: 242). Regarding other digital resources, corpora (monolingual, bilingual, parallel, diachronic, ad hoc, etc.) have been tested with a view to helping translate certain linguistic aspects or stylistic features in literary texts, such as neologisms, culturemes, archaisms, etc. (Zubillaga et al., 2015; Dimitroulia, 2022; Noriega-Santiáñez & Corpas Pastor, 2023a). AI empowers sophisticated software (e.g. Sketch Engine, Voyant Tools, Coh-Metrix) which detects linguistic patterns that affect literary experience and are part of the style of a work (Youdale, 2020). Additionally, parallel and monolingual corpora are one of the most suitable tools for translating phraseology, since they can contextualise thematically or temporally challenging terminology in real documents (Dimitroulia, 2022; Noriega-Santiáñez & Corpas Pastor, 2023a).

Finally, among the technologies currently attracting global attention are AI-based tools that mainly work with GenAI through LLMs, such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Copilot (Tang, 2024). In addition to generating content such as images, text or audio based on user prompts, these systems include translation functions (Kwok et al., 2025). In fact, some authors have tested these GenAI tools to translate literature (Li, 2023; Li, 2024; Sharofova, 2025) and to teach critical thinking to literary translation students (Noriega-Santiáñez, 2024). The use of this translation function has not only been tested in theory: some publishers have put it into practice, including the Danish publisher Veen Bosch & Keuning, which has used a trial system to translate commercial fiction titles with GenAI (Joseph, 2018). Lastly, these systems have recently been studied for sentiment and/or stylistic analysis, not only to understand the demands of the sector through readers' comments and reviews, but also to assist literary translators in identifying the internal characteristics of texts (Li, 2024; Ryzhko et al., 2024).

Such practices are pushing the limits of human-machine interaction while raising questions about the ethical boundaries of this relationship, as explored below.

2.2. The balance between innovation and ethics

Technological systems have not yet reached such a level of sophistication as to enforce ethical principles (i.e. ensuring that their content does not infringe copyright and is accurate and unbiased, and that their data are not used unlawfully). And even if they did this, their performance would not be completely reliable (Moorkens, 2022). Consequently, this task remains the responsibility of their users. With that in mind, many scholars propose a harmonious collaboration between AI capabilities and human dexterity to be able to transfer all the literary content of work according to ethical and moral values (Škobo & Petričević, 2023).

Concerning their positive aspects in the publishing industry, AI-based technologies, such as MT, can be used by publishers to discover and familiarise themselves with unexplored books or aid them in the editing process, enhancing the cross-cultural exchange of literature (Matusov, 2019). In addition, these technologies can help disseminate works in minority or underrepresented languages, democratising literature and giving a voice to more diverse language communities (Nurminen & Koponen, 2020; DeClercq & Van Egdom, 2023).

Regarding their use in publishing scenarios and, in particular, for literary translation, AI-based tools can be useful for “processing speed, semantic judgment, and narrative technique” (Li, 2024: 7). MT systems can help to identify segments that are particularly difficult to translate (Matusov, 2019). In addition, they can render multiple translation options for creative elements as a starting point for tackling literary content (Noriega-Santiáñez & Corpas Pastor, 2023b). Postediting with NMT tends to improve productivity and reduce cognitive effort in literary texts (Toral & Way, 2018), potentially boosting production and facilitating dissemination.

“[M]any contemporary tools are networked, facilitating access to huge repositories of previous translations and the sharing of translation resources by teams of translators” (Rothwell et al., 2023: 5). Furthermore, LLMs can generate content, answer questions, summarise, translate, and perform other NLP tasks, tests on which are being conducted not only in professional environments but also in the classroom (Lee, 2023; Peng et al., 2023). Finally, “voice-activated tools, text-to-speech applications and MT are among the advancements enhancing accessibility” to a wide range of literary works (DeClercq & Van Egdome, 2023: 55).

However, there are several ethical issues to consider, which are currently the focus of global attention as regards translation and technology (Bowker, 2020). For instance, there are concerns about the use of MT systems and AI in literature because their algorithms may be biased due to the cultural influences of their training data (Peng, 2024). This could lead to the marginalisation of minority languages or the homogenisation and standardisation of literary expression, which can be detrimental to cultural sensitivity and linguistic diversity (Kenny & Winters, 2020; Sharofova, 2024). In addition, there are issues regarding professionals’ identity and copyright, as these systems must meet several ethical standards to faithfully protect the rights of the content creators whose work is employed in the training process (Moorkens, 2022). Moreover, adopting more technology in the creation process could blur the lines as to who actually owns the rights to the content created (Way et al., 2023). There are also a series of environmental concerns, as these technologies are very resource-intensive, requiring large amounts of energy (Moorkens, 2022) and water. The infrastructure needed to drive current LLMs produces greenhouse gas emissions and toxic and inert waste. Finally, there is also great concern that the widespread use of such technologies will lead to a reduction in human experts (DeClercq & Van Egdome, 2023), affecting rates and professional conditions (Wiggins, 2024).

With regard to the literary translation industry, the translator’s own voice is dampened when postediting literary texts (Taivalkoski-Shilov, 2018; Kenny & Winters, 2020), which underscores their working process and its creative nature. Whether or not postediting literary texts actually saves time is debatable, as doing so can sometimes be much more time-consuming (Noriega-Santíñez & Corpas Pastor, 2023b), and speed is often not desirable in literary translation anyway (Daems, 2022). Technologies such as MT systems cannot fully capture “the richness of cultural connotations, the intricacies of narrative perspective shifts, and the translator’s subjectivity” (Li, 2024: 7), compromising the quality of literary texts. Metaphors, figurative language, neologisms, and, in general, the expressive art of literary works pose these systems a major challenge (Guerberof-Arenas & Toral, 2020; 2022; Zajdel, 2023; Corpas Pastor & Noriega-Santíñez, 2024). Meanwhile, corpora or other terminology management systems might not be representative enough, leading to discrimination against language communities. In addition, many tools work with decontextualised sentences within platforms that are not fully recommended for literary texts due to their nature (e.g. CAT tools, among others) (Youdale, 2022; Castillo Bernal, 2022). Lastly, overreliance on these tools is affecting both professionals and students (Peng, 2024), deskilling translators in all domains, including literary translators.

3. Methodology

Against the background of studies on the technology-aided translation of literature, this paper intends to bring together data to analyse the degree of technology adoption among professional literary translators in Spain (including the use of LLMs and GenAI), their perceptions of the benefits and limitations of such technologies, and their view on the prospects for GenAI in the publishing industry.

This section focuses on data collection, survey methodology, and associated techniques, with special emphasis on our questionnaire's design and distribution, as well as on the sample profile (professional literary translators).

3.1. Survey design

The survey of professional translators this paper reports on was created in Google Forms and was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Malaga. It was disseminated for eight weeks (from February to April 2025) and the responses collected were completely anonymous. It consists of 22 questions, the nature of which is summarised below (Table 1):

Section	Questions	Modality
Section 1: Demography	1) Age, 2) Qualifications, 3) Work as literary translator, 4) Working languages, 5) Literary genres translated, 6) Years of experience, 7) Percentage of literary translation work	Multiple choice (1, 3, 6, 7) Checkboxes (2, 4, 5)
Section 2: Technology adoption	8) Traditional tools used in literary translation, 9) Frequency of use of traditional tools, 10) Technological tools used in literary translation, 11) Frequency of use of technological tools	Checkboxes (8, 10) Likert scale (9, 11)
Section 3: Attitudes towards technologies and AI	12) Work affected by GenAI, 13) Publishing houses working with GenAI, 14) Offer of work postediting machine-translated literary text, 15) Comfortable using technologies, 16) Comfortable using GenAI, 17) Opinion about the inclusion of GenAI in publishing, 18) Learning about GenAI, 19) Benefits of GenAI, 20) Concerns about AI, 21) Prospects for GenAI, 22) Free comments	Multiple choice (12, 13, 17, 18) Likert scale (14, 15, 16) Checkboxes (19, 20) Long answer (21, 22)

Table 1. Survey

Before filling in the survey, each participant had to agree to the terms and conditions of the study, covering the target audience, the purpose of the research, confidentiality, the dissemination of results, and the right to voluntary participation. The survey was divided into three main sections, inspired by similar studies regarding technologies and the attitudes of literary translators (Ruffo, 2022; Noriega-Santiañez & Corpas Pastor, 2023b; Daems, 2022; Noriega-Santiañez, 2025/forthcoming). In relation to literary translators' working language pairs, we used those included in the most recent *Panorama of Spanish Book Publishing (Panoràmica de la edició española de llibros, 2019)*, issued

by the Spanish Ministry of Culture, as a reference. Respondents were required to answer all the questions, except for a free question at the end of the questionnaire.

The survey was disseminated in two different ways to target professional literary translators in Spain: (1) through the mailing lists of Spanish associations of translators and interpreters, particularly ASETRAD,¹ ACEt,² la Xarxa,³ and APTIC;⁴ and (2) via social media, particularly LinkedIn, X, and Facebook.

3.2. Literary translators' profiles

A total of 51 literary translators participated in this study. To the best of our knowledge, this is one of the largest samples of literary translators from a single country (specifically, in this case, Spain). For instance, the pilot study carried out by Ruffo (2018) comprised eight participants from the UK, while her second study (2022) had 150 respondents from 35 different countries (an average of four per country). The study by Mikolič Južnič et al. (2021) included 30 literary translators from Slovenia. The samples of other similar studies are not comparable with ours, as they are based on working language (e.g. Danish or Finnish) rather than the country where the translation activity takes place (see Daems, 2022; Ruokonen & Salmi, 2024).

Regarding our sample, we collected data from people in different age ranges: 2% were between 18 and 25 years old, 31.4% between 26 and 35, 29.4% between 36 and 45, 23.5% between 46 and 55, 7.8% between 56 and 65, and 5.9% over 65. Of this sample, 92% were freelancers, while 8% occasionally worked as literary translators. Only 17.6% of the respondents worked solely as literary translators. Another 15.7% said literary translation made up more than 75% of their total work, 9.8% said it accounted for between 50 and 75%, 19.6% opted for between 25 and 50%, and 37.3% reported it being less than 25%.

Concerning the respondents' academic background, 49% held a degree in translation and interpreting, and 25.5% in English philology, Hispanic philology, etc. In addition, 12% not only had a degree in translation but also in philology or similar. Only 29.4% held a master's degree in literary translation, while 16% had a master's degree in specialised translation. A total of 19.6% had a PhD in translation and interpreting.

In all, 21.6% of the respondents had participated in specialised courses in literary translation, and 11.8% had attended specialised lectures on language technologies applied to literary translation. The most common amount of work experience in literary translation, as reported by 39.2% of the respondents, was between one and five years. Another 7.8% had between six and 10 years of such experience, 17.6% between 11 and

¹Asociación Española de Traductores, Correctores e Intérpretes (Spanish Association of Translators, Proofreaders, and Interpreters).

²ACE Traductores (ACE Translators).

³Red de Traductores e Intérpretes (Translators and Interpreters Network).

⁴Asociación Profesional de Traductores e Intérpretes de Catalunya (Professional Association of Translators and Interpreters of Catalonia).

15, and 11.8% between 16 and 20, while 23.5% had been literary translators for more than 20 years.

The greatest diversity among the respondents was found in their working language combinations. Most of them translated from English into Spanish (78.4%), in keeping with the figures of the *Panorama of Spanish Book Publishing* (2019). This was followed by the French>Spanish (31.4%), German>Spanish (15.7%), and Italian>Spanish (11.8%) language pairs. Among the most frequently reported regional source and target languages, Catalan (17.8%) was particularly prominent, followed by Galician (5.9%), Euskera (4%), and both Valencian and Asturian (2%). Some participants mentioned other languages, such as Modern Greek (4%), Arabic, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese (2%), most of which were translated into Spanish.

Finally, regarding literary genres, our categories were based on the list set out in the *Panorama of Spanish Book Publishing* (2019). Narrative (84.3%) was the genre most translated by the respondents, followed by essays (51%), poetry (21.6%), and theatre (9.8%). Some participants specified that they had translated comics (5.9%), children's and young adults' literature (4%), short stories, or spiritual, specialised, or gastronomic books (2%).

4. Results and discussion

This section presents an overview of our study's main results regarding technology adoption and attitudes towards technologies and AI. In addition, our findings are compared to those of previous studies to assess the significance of our contributions.

4.1. Adoption of traditional vs technological tools and resources

These results reflect the types of tools and resources that literary translators in Spain incorporate into their workflow (Table 2). The frequency with which they use these tools during the different stages of the literary translation process has been examined as well (Table 3).

According to the data collected, traditional resources seem to be at different stages of adoption. While printed dictionaries such as the *Cambridge Dictionary* and the *Diccionario de la lengua española* [*Dictionary of the Spanish language*] (60.6%) are at the top of the list, they are closely followed by handbooks for grammatical or stylistic reference (e.g. *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas* [*Pan-Hispanic Dictionary of Doubts*] or the *Collins English Dictionary*) (51%). It is noticeable that printed encyclopaedias or reference works (33.3%) are not as widely used due to the emergence of technological resources. Printed glossaries (3.9%) can now be considered a marginal resource, in contrast to printed parallel texts (21.6%), the rate of use of which is significantly higher. It is worth noting that 21.6% of the respondents did not use any traditional resources when translating literature. Our findings contrast with the data obtained by Noriega-Santiañez & Corpas Pastor (2023b) regarding the adoption of resources to address

literary challenges among some translation students in Spain, with professionals appearing to rely more on traditional resources than students. In the ‘Other(s)’ category, participants added that they used technical data sheets or physical documents provided by clients.

Type	Tools / Resources	Percentage
Traditional	Printed dictionaries	60.6%
	Printed encyclopaedias or reference works	33.3%
	Printed style and/or grammar manuals	51%
	Printed glossaries	3.9%
	Printed parallel texts	21.6%
	Other(s)	3.9%
	None	21.6%
Technological	Online dictionaries or databases	100%
	Online encyclopaedias or reference works	92.2%
	Online style and/or grammar manuals	86.3%
	Electronic glossaries	64.7%
	Online parallel texts	70.6%
	Corpora or corpus management systems	68.6%
	Word processors	96.1%
	Machine translation systems	47.1%
	Chatbots	23.5%
	Computer-assisted translation	31.4%
	Proofreading and editing software	23.5%
	None	0%

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In addition, our results show that technological tools are closely linked to literary translators' workflow in the current era. Some are fully integrated into their working practices, such as online dictionaries or databases, including Wordreference and Linguee, (100%), or even word processors, such as Microsoft Word and Google Docs (96.1%). This high rate of adoption was also found in Ruokonen & Salmi's (2024) study. Also prominent are resources related to looking up terminology or information, i.e. online encyclopaedias, reference works (92.2%), and style and/or grammar manuals (86.3%). Certain studies (Dimitroulia, 2022; Noriega-Santíañez & Corpas Pastor, 2023a) that recommended the use of corpora (e.g. the CREA or the BNC) (68.6%) in literary translation reflect the high degree of their adoption in the industry.

MT systems, including DeepL and Google Translate, were employed by almost half of the respondents (47.1%). Our findings contrast sharply with the data collected by Ruffo's (2022) study, where only 7% of respondents reported using MT in literary translation. This shift in mentality could be due to the current sophistication of these tools and their worldwide adoption in the translation market. Despite some studies indicating that the use of CAT tools (e.g. Trados Studio and memoQ) is widespread in literary translation (Youdale & Rothwell, 2022), our findings show that they do not yet have such a firm foothold in Spain.

To the best of our knowledge, our study is one of the first to include chatbots such as ChatGPT and Copilot in a questionnaire to investigate their frequency of use in literary translation. Despite these chatbots not being very well received, 23.5% of our respondents had begun integrating them into their workflow. However, these figures still fall short of those obtained in the study conducted by Rivas Ginel & Moorkens (2024), in which 40% of the participating translators (from different domains) used an LLM. This degree of adoption might open the door to studies that propose making critical use of literary translation in the classroom for new generations of translators (Noriega-Santíañez, 2024). It should be noted that none of the respondents mentioned any other technological tools besides the ones included in the survey, and all of them indicated that they had integrated some kind of technological tool into their workflow. Therefore, our findings

seem to show a wider acceptance of technological tools among literary translators in Spain than previous benchmark studies (Ruffo, 2022; Daems, 2022).

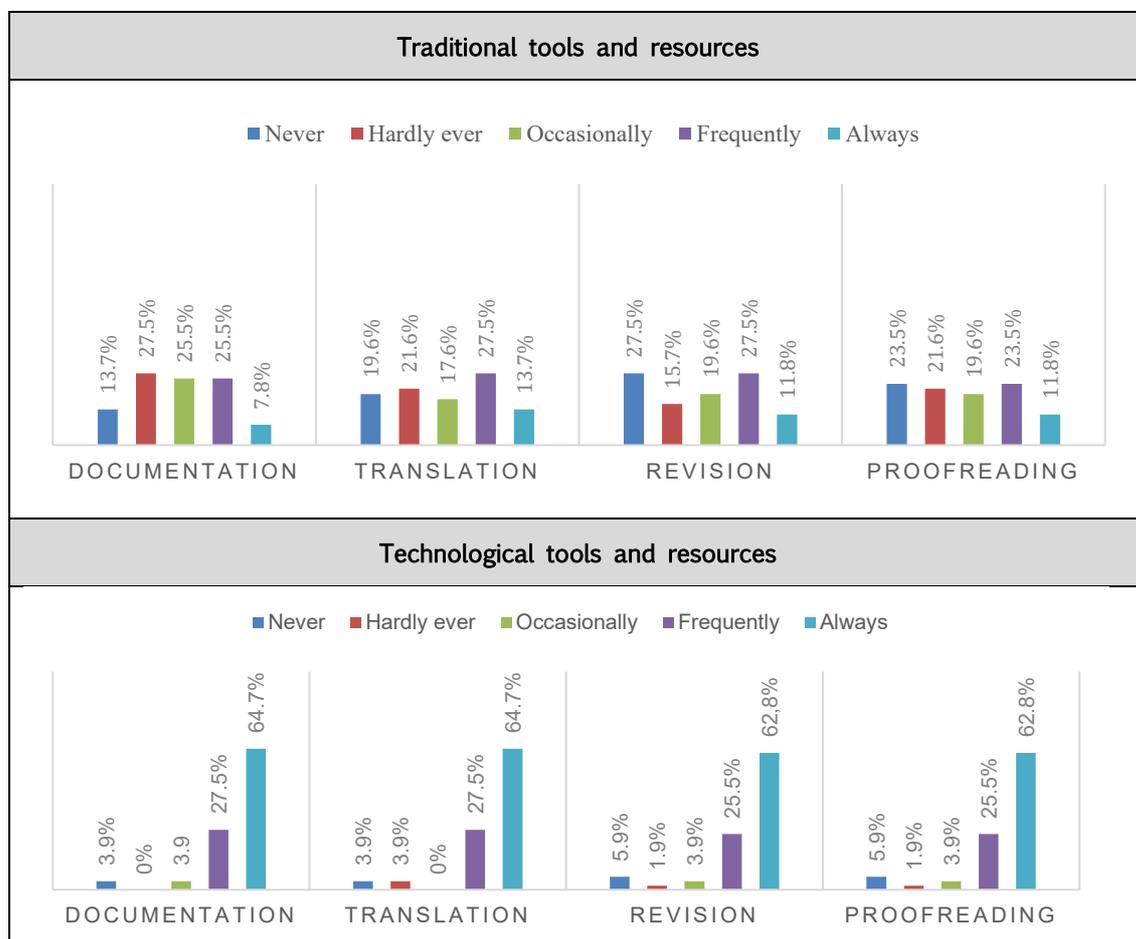


Table 3. Frequency of use of traditional and technological tools and resources

In terms of frequency, traditional resources are most typically used during the translation stage, followed by revision and proofreading. According to our data, documentation is the stage in which traditional resources are employed least frequently. This is closely related to the type of resources adopted; for example, reference tools such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias are preferred in digital format. These findings are in line with the data collected in the studies conducted by Ruffo (2018, 2022), the results of which showed a high degree of adoption of technological tools. In fact, most literary translators appear to rely on some kind of technology during the different stages of their work. The frequency of use falls slightly in the revision and proofreading processes, a finding in keeping with those of Daems (2022), who concluded that, although not all literary translators adopted translation technologies, most employed general technologies such as word processors.

4.2. Technologies and GenAI: experience, attitude, and ethics

This subsection explores the responses related to the participants' experiences with and attitudes towards technology and AI in literary translation (see Table 4 and Table 5 below).

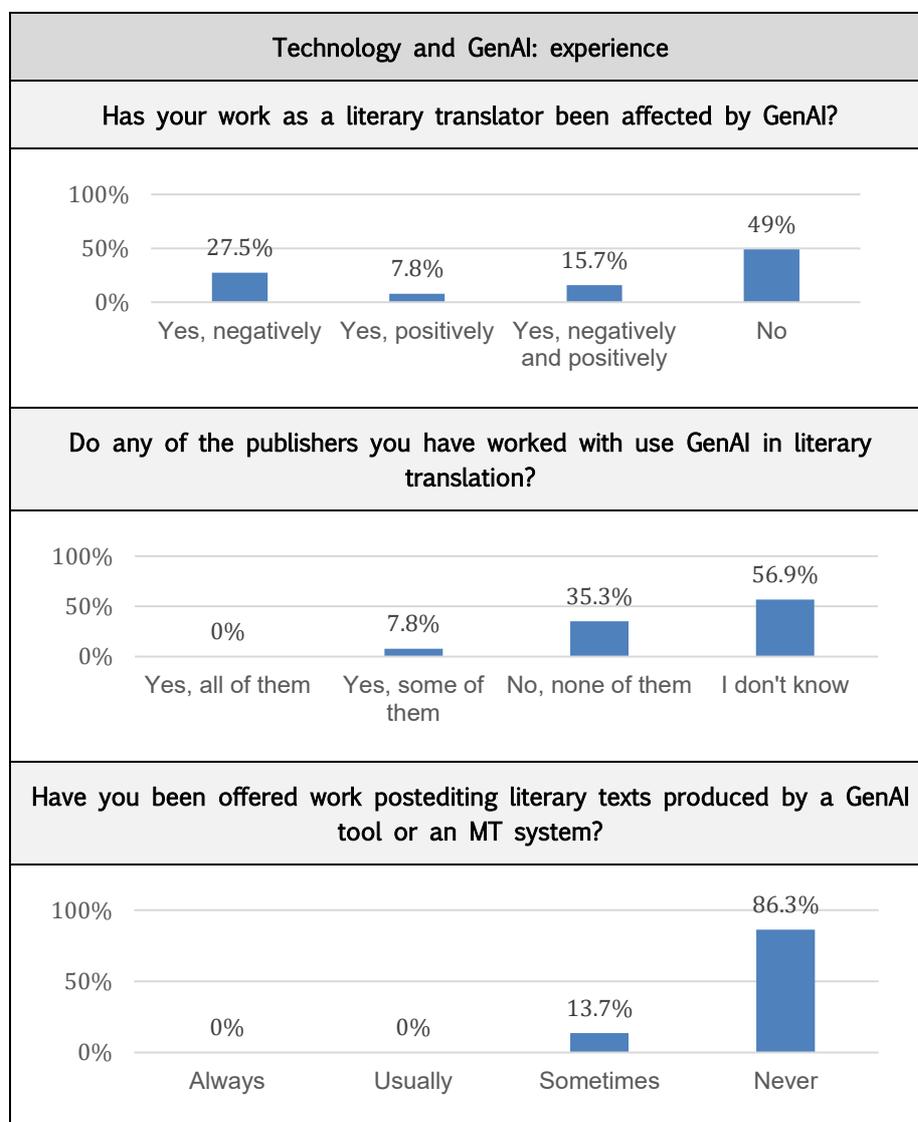


Table 4. Experience with technology and GenAI

According to our data, almost half of the respondents (49%) had not been affected by AI in their professional setting (i.e. they had not experienced an impact on rates, workflow, or translation quality). The others said they had been affected negatively (27.5%), positively (7.8%), or both negatively and positively (15.7%). These findings imply that there are different views on AI and that at least half of the participants have noticed an impact attributable to AI on their workflow in literary translation.

On the question of whether publishers work with GenAI, most participants were unaware of any such use (56.9%), while others reported that none of the publishers they had worked with used it (35.3%). However, a small group confirmed that they did know of such practices (7.8%). This is linked to the question of whether respondents had been

offered work postediting machine-translated texts produced by a GenAI tool or an MT system. Most participants answered that they had never received such an offer (86.3%), while a small but substantial group confirmed that they sometimes had (13.7%). Based on this small sample, it seems that publishers are beginning to use technology to create new publishing processes, which is part of the market evolution studied by Magadán-Díaz & Rivas-García (2018, 2020). In fact, our results open the door to speculation about whether many of the translators may have received more such offers than publishers are willing to acknowledge, especially given evidence of other uses of GenAI within the publishing sector (e.g. to create book covers or write synopses), as noted by Kalmykov (2024). Thus, this is affecting the publishing sector in different ways and, therefore, painting a mixed picture.

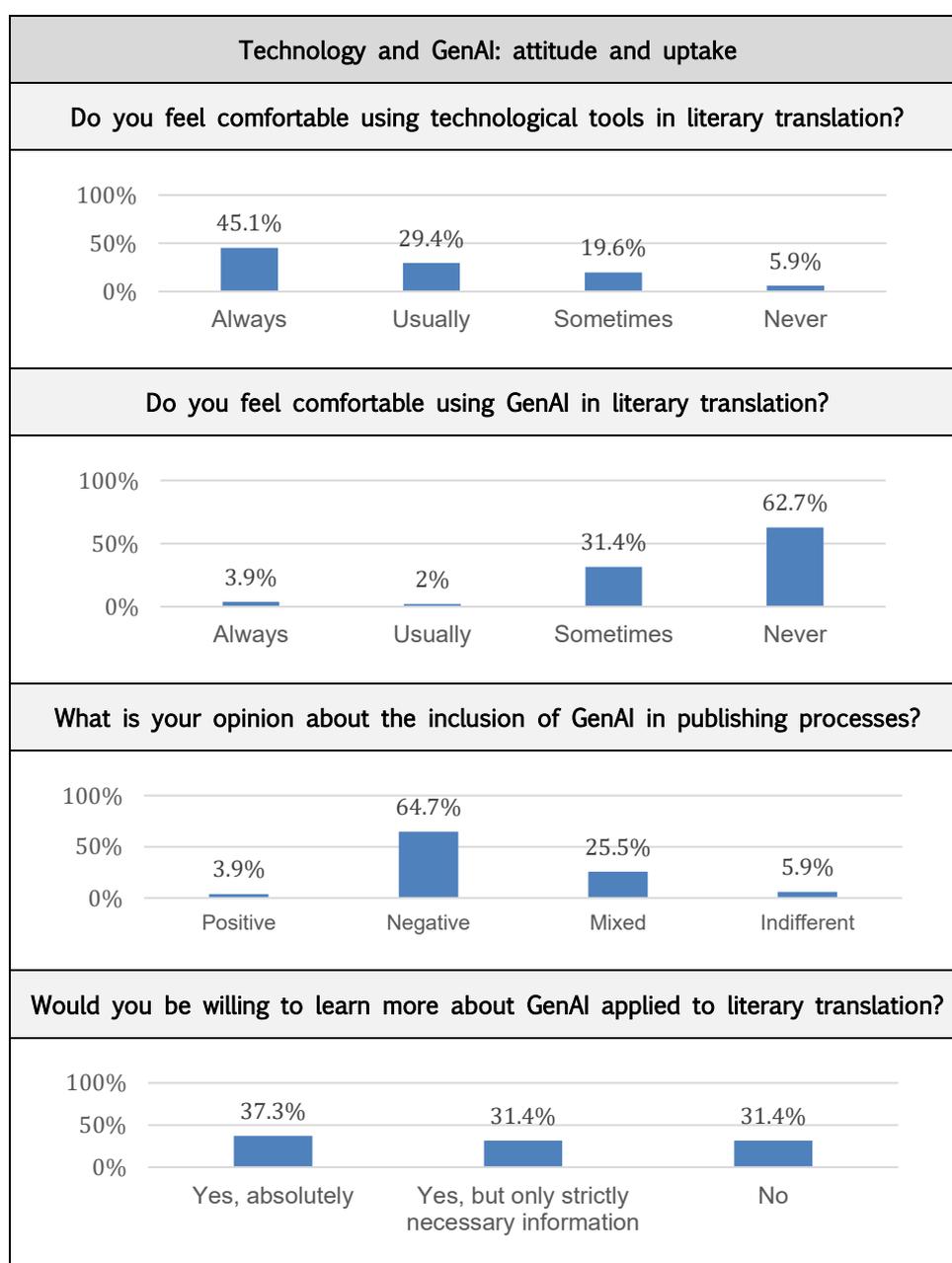


Table 5. Attitudes towards and uptake of technology and GenAI

Regarding attitudes towards and uptake of technology and GenAI, almost half of the participants (45.1%) said they always felt comfortable when using technological tools (i.e. both general and translation technologies), in contrast to others who reported usually (29.4%), sometimes (19.6%), or never (5.9%) feeling this way. This lower adoption figure stems from a lack of trust in applying AI to literary translation or of training in this regard, which is line with the findings of Ruffo (2022).

In stark contrast to the previous answers on technological tools in general, the vast majority of respondents (62.7%) said they never felt comfortable using GenAI in literary translation, compared to 31.4% who said they sometimes did. Very few stated that they always (3.9%) or usually (2%) felt at ease incorporating AI into their workflows. Compared to the data from the study undertaken by Daems (2022), it seems that literary translators are more reluctant to learn about GenAI than about other language technologies.

Our findings show that unease and scepticism shape perceptions of GenAI in the Spanish publishing industry. To gather more information about the participants' attitudes, the next question in the survey inquired about their opinion of including GenAI in publishing processes. The data indicate that the view of the majority was negative (64.7%). Most of the rest of the sample thought this inclusion could be both beneficial and detrimental (25.5%). Few participants were indifferent to the idea (5.9%), and even fewer expressed a positive attitude towards it (3.9%).

The last question on attitudes was insightful, inquiring as to whether the participants would be willing to learn more about GenAI applied to literary translation. Their answers reflected a wide range of opinions. Although 37.3% of the respondents agreed that they would like to know more about the subject, 31.4% said they would prefer to learn only what is essential and another 31.4% opted for not finding out anything more at all. Overall, the predominant attitude leans towards acquiring more knowledge and information on the application of GenAI to literary translation in Spain. These results partly support the ideas of certain studies (Sharofova, 2024; Li, 2024) that predict that the future of AI-human interaction is likely to reshape the global publishing market. Furthermore, the views expressed are consistent with the enthusiasm for learning among Spanish GenAI users reported by Okulska et al. (2025).

4.2.1. GenAI: benefits and concerns

For its questions on the benefits of and concerns related to GenAI, the survey focused on multiple studies that addressed both ethical issues and professional practices in the publishing industry (Moorkens, 2022; Ryzkho et al., 2024; European Writers' Council, 2024; Salani & Tapfuma, 2025). Table 6 below shows how the 51 participants in this study answered these questions.

According to these data, the participants perceived the benefits of applying GenAI to literary translation as very limited. In fact, almost half of them (47.1%) did not believe there to be any advantage at all to doing so. The main benefits, although indicated by only 33.3% of the respondents, centre on the idea that GenAI can help literary translators

by providing stylistic suggestions and supporting the documentation process. These findings are in line with those of Noriega-Santiañez & Corpas Pastor (2023b), in that the professional translators agree with some of the advantages identified by translation students. In addition, some translators (25.5%) found that GenAI helped to save time in certain literary procedures. This benefit is closely related to the possibility of GenAI increasing productivity (17.6%) and improving management and organisation (13.7%) in literary translation. Although already mentioned by other studies (Toral & Way, 2018; Li, 2024), these benefits are perceived by very few literary translators.

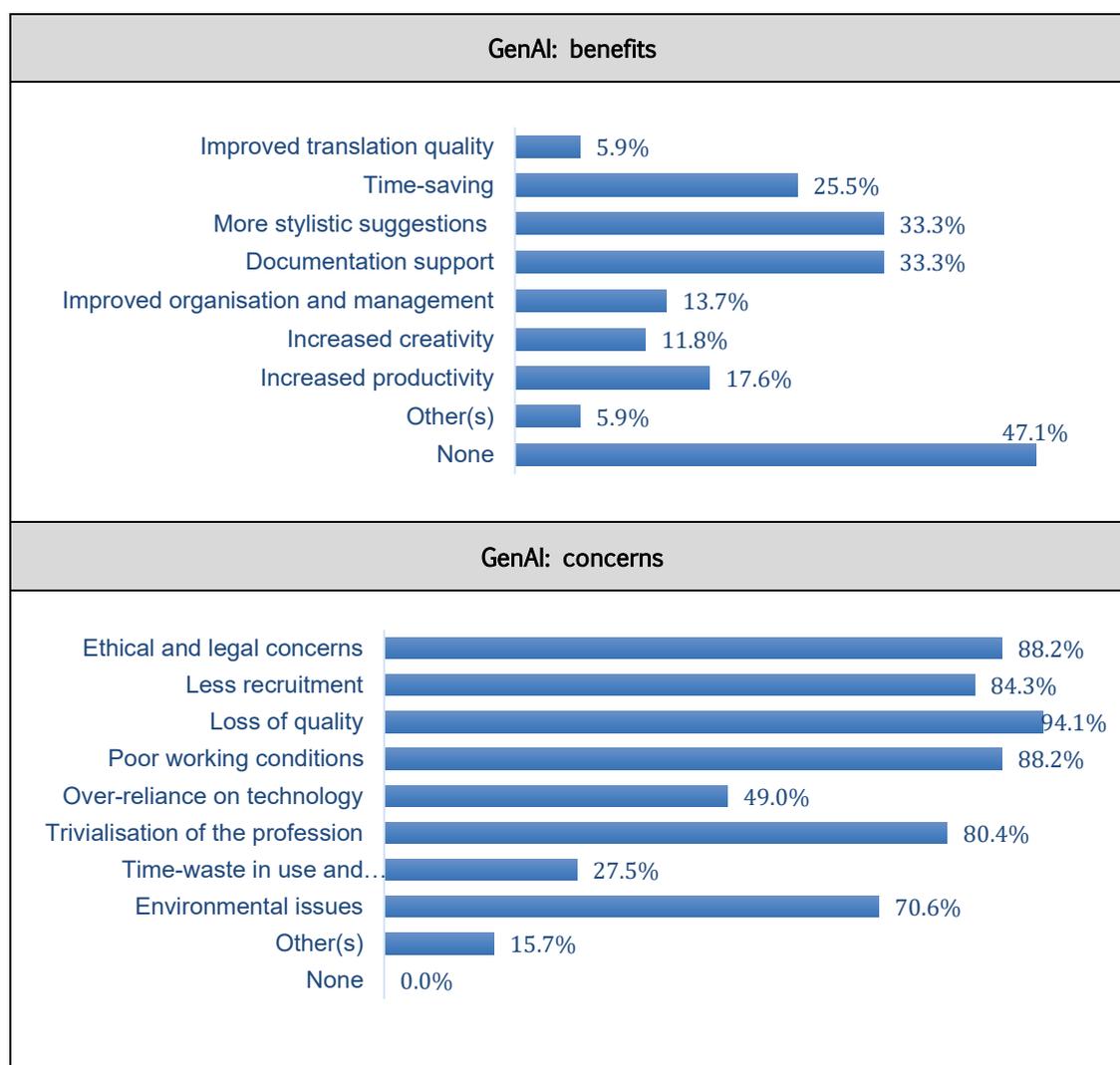


Table 6. Benefits of and concerns about GenAI

Despite there being several studies on the use of NMT for creative aspects of translation (Guerberof-Arenas & Toral, 2020; 2022; Corpas Pastor & Noriega-Santiañez, 2024), our study suggests that very few literary translators (11.8%) feel that GenAI can support creativity in literary translation. In fact, our findings partly contradict those reported by Rivas Ginel & Moorkens (2024): unlike translators from other domains, the literary translators surveyed in our study do not seem to use GenAI for ‘inspiration’ to

assist in the translation process (e.g. to provide better translation options or suggest synonyms, among other tasks). Finally, only 5.9% of the participants in our study believed that using GenAI might improve quality. This low figure is in line with the conclusions reached by Daems (2022), who, even so, does not consider all software to limit literary creation. Nonetheless, one participant believed that AI could help at the terminological level, specifically with synonyms.

Concerns make up a much greater component of Spain-based literary translators' attitude towards GenAI: all the respondents expressed some concern about the use of the technology in their profession. As Table 6 shows, most of them were more worried about the quality of their work (94.1%) than about any potential effects on themselves. This is a reality that is widely reported in all studies on translation and the use of technologies (Bowker, 2020; Sharofovam, 2024). Nonetheless, the participants' main concerns included poor working conditions (impact on their salaries, deadlines, etc.) and reduced recruitment of literary translators, in line with the observations made by DeClercq & Van Egdom (2023) and Rivas Ginel & Moorkens (2024) on the flux and changing rates in the profession.

Ethical and legal issues (e.g. data privacy, copyright, cultural or gender bias, etc.) were also a major concern in literary translation (88.2%), fully supporting certain studies (Way et al., 2023) that warned about how machine-generated texts can be biased and, thus, marginalise some social groups. One of the main concerns of the literary translators involved in our study was that the profession might no longer be deemed valuable (80.4%), which is linked to fears of lower recruitment (84.3%). This is reflected in the issue raised by Taivalkoski-Shilov (2018) about how literary translators might have less agency when postediting. In contrast to the major concerns identified by Peng (2024), our study shows that over-reliance on such technologies is less of a concern in Spain (49%), although it is still an important issue among literary translators. It also seems that the participants were less worried about using or learning to use these tools being a waste of time (27.5%).

However, concern over environmental issues (70.6%) related to technology in literary translation, mentioned in some previous studies (Moorkens, 2022), is taking on more significance than expected, as literary translators begin to become aware of the environmental impact of the widespread use of GenAI. Finally, some participants complained that GenAI can impoverish literary language, which is in line with Ruffo's (2022) data related to MT and CAT tools. Our participants warned that GenAI could standardise language and degrade literary quality, ultimately making for a poorer reading experience and eroding literature to leave it hollow and flat rather than unique and rich.

4.2.2. GenAI: prospects

Finally, our study reveals differences in how literary translators foresee the future of AI in the publishing sector. This subsection shows the results of an open-ended question. Participants' comments were manually classified into several categories:

- **Optimistic perspectives (9.9%):** A small group of literary translators foresaw GenAI being useful for routine tasks, such as preliminary research on a literary work's background, i.e. acting as a search engine. Other respondents believed that GenAI should be regarded in the same way as any other tool in the translation process. Some suggested that certain languages will need GenAI to thoroughly review translations that, due to their idiosyncrasies, feature creative aspects (such as metaphors) or to help prevent repetition and the use of language inappropriate to the context or register.
- **Pessimistic perspectives (25.5%):** A larger group of respondents thought GenAI will increasingly find a place in the publishing industry, negatively affecting the quality of translations. In addition, many complained that GenAI will either reshape professional environments or lead to meagre rates for proofreading poor-quality machine-translated texts. In fact, all comments in this category point in the same direction: literary and cultural quality and expertise will decline, posing a threat to professionals. Participants also lamented that publishers may not consider their opinion in this regard.
- **Critical perspectives (11.8%):** Some participants held a very critical view, regarding GenAI as a bubble that will burst sooner or later. In addition, they considered it a dangerous tool in the hands of technology companies that take advantage of their employees, making working conditions more precarious. They also criticised the publishers who adopt it, predicting that they will cause the quality of literary works to deteriorate. Others had more apocalyptic outlooks and called for a united stand against GenAI in literary translation.
- **Neutral perspectives (23.5%):** Several of the participating literary translators did not commit to a specific stance. For instance, while most respondents anticipated GenAI being used more frequently (especially in certain literary genres), others predicted that its current rise will soon become a decline. Some opinions also focused on the fact that readers are already complaining about works produced with the involvement of GenAI. Finally, some professionals called for specific technological training to operate effectively in this digital environment.
- **Pragmatic perspectives (29.3%):** The largest group of participants in our survey were pragmatic in their attitude towards the future use of GenAI in literary translation, foreseeing a change in their profession where they would still be necessary. Some respondents thought there was no choice but to adopt this technology. However, they thought it should be limited to specific areas where it is useful, not including creative content. Some believed that publishers will use it to reduce publishing costs but will limit it to more commercial or genre-specific works. They thus anticipated two distinct publishing markets: those who adopt AI (to generate synopses, translate, etc.) and those who prioritise human quality. Some respondents said that productivity should not be prioritised over quality. Future generations of publishers, translators, and readers will be responsible for how these ethical issues are dealt with.

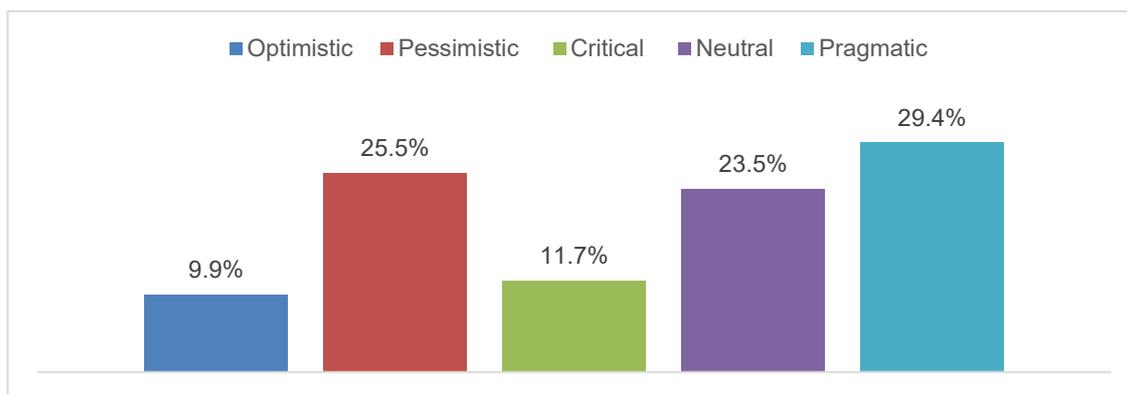


Figure 1. Literary translators' perspectives on the prospects for GenAI

Against this background, our findings show that there is a more negative attitude to technology adoption in literary translation in Spain than in Ruffo's (2022) study. Such opinions are in keeping with both the manifesto and discontent of some associations (European Writers' Council, 2024) that fear instability in the sector and malpractice by many publishers or companies. Although a minority of translators are optimistic that GenAI is just another tool, the general attitude is pessimistic, and concern about GenAI is evident in the sector, in line with some of the fears expressed in conclusions about language technologies in studies such as that of Daems (2022). Furthermore, some of the most critical perspectives align with the views shared by Wiggins (2024), who criticised the lack of transparency surrounding the integration of AI, which is masked as progress but directly affects the earnings of workers.

The few positive visions described are in line with the findings reported by Rivas Ginel & Moorkens (2024), where a small group of translators employed LLMs as virtual assistants. Although some participants pointed to the potential of LLMs as search engines, studies such as that conducted by Zhang (2024), which examine real-world practices in translation, have proven that they can be inaccurate and unreliable. Finally, many of the pragmatic perspectives lean towards the outlooks of certain studies (Sharofovam, 2024) that encourage collaboration between AI and human expertise. This is linked to the conclusions reached by Noriega-Santíañez (2024) about the need for proper training in GenAI related to literary translation.

5. Conclusion

To the best of our knowledge, this paper involves one of the first and largest national surveys to observe both the profile and the adoption of and attitude towards technology of literary translators in a single country in the light of ongoing interest in using GenAI in the labour market. Our survey also reflects the latest trends in technological development, presenting a real, up-to-date overview of today's labour and academic settings. In addition, our study has given literary translators in Spain the opportunity to convey their thoughts about technologies and GenAI, and to articulate their attitudes, experiences, needs, and complaints in relation to the sector and common practices.

These views should be taken into consideration to build bridges between professional realities and academic research.

The data collected show that there is a significant degree of technology adoption among literary translators who work in Spain. To be more precise, traditional tools are still used, especially those such as dictionaries and manuals, in the translation and documentation stages. Nevertheless, the use of technologies is far more frequent and widespread in the different stages of the translation process. Our findings also suggest a notable rise in the integration of MT systems into the workflow of literary translators in Spain.

In contrast, certain AI-based tools, such as chatbots, are seldom perceived as an ally by literary translators, but their as yet limited use, reflected in the data obtained, does denote their presence in an inevitably technological market. This is linked to an evident change in the book industry, as a reduced group of publishers seem to have integrated GenAI in their practices. Even though literary translators in Spain usually feel comfortable when using general or translation technologies, they do not feel the same way about applying AI to their work processes. In fact, regarding the use of GenAI in literature, there are many more negative or critical than positive voices, representing a part of the collective for whom ethical concerns outweigh any benefits. For instance, issues such as quality or working conditions are attributed greater importance than any possible advantages. Against this background, attitudes towards the future of GenAI in literary translation are mixed. There are more pragmatic views that envisage collaboration between such technological systems and human experience. Nonetheless, our study warns of the unease translators feel about the possibility of GenAI affecting their future careers. Indeed, many of the critical and pessimistic points of view expressed are due to ongoing poor working conditions, including rates and working hours. Therefore, there is a need to regulate such practices to effectively ensure that technological progress is ethical and viable.

Finally, our study has some limitations in its approach. For instance, the relatively small number of participants could lead to biased results, which suggests that further studies should consider a larger sample. In addition, the sample is limited to Spain, so our results are primarily focused on the degree of technology adoption in this country. Thus, we intend to enlarge our study in different ways, by (i) adding a new study group (e.g. literary translation undergraduates or postgraduates), (ii) including more questions related to GenAI applied to translating literature, and (iii) disseminating questionnaires in different countries. Furthermore, the results should be correlated/triangulated by taking relevant factors into account, such as text genre and each respondent's age, amount of experience, and attitude towards GenAI, as these considerations could also affect technology adoption. We hope that future studies will further contribute to a better understanding of literary translators' narratives, workflows, and daily experiences at the intersection of their physical and digital environments.

6. Author Contributions

Conceptualization, L.N.-S and G.C.P.; methodology, L.N.-S and G.C.P. ; validation, L.N.-S and G.C.P.; formal analysis, L.N.-S and G.C.P.; Funding, L.N.-S and G.C.P.; investigation, L.N.-S.; resources, G.C.P.; data curation, L.N.-S.; writing—original draft preparation, L.N.-S.; writing—review and editing, G.C.P.; visualisation, L.N.-S.; supervision, G.C.P.; project administration, G.C.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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