

## ARTICLE

# A Stylistic and Semantic Study of Artificial Intelligence and Human Literary Translation of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* into Arabic

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## ABSTRACT

The future of literary translation has become a major concern due to the rapid development and integration of artificial intelligence in creative and interpretive domains. This research performs a comparative analysis of the Arabic translation of J.D. Salinger's iconic novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, translated by Ghalib Halasa, and the Arabic translation produced by ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI. The study explores how both translations convey complex literary elements, including stylistic voice, cultural allusions, idiomatic expressions, and emotional resonance. The evaluation employs carefully selected excerpts of the text and relies on formal theories of translation. These include Vinay and Darbelnet's stylistic approach, Peter Newmark's semantic and communicative approach, and Eugene Nida's dynamic and formal equivalence. The results show that although ChatGPT achieves high lexical accuracy and syntactic fluency, it consistently ignores the pragmatic and cultural meanings of the source text. Halasa's human translation, by contrast, reflects cultural sensitivity, interpretive depth, and contextual awareness more in line with the goals of literary Arabic communication. The research contends that artificial intelligence, at present, lacks the creativity and skill to simulate human literary translation. By exploring the potential and limitations of AI for translating literature across cultures, this study contributes to the cross-disciplinary debates among the fields of Arabic literary studies, machine translation, and digital humanities.

**Keywords:** Arabic Translation; Dynamic Equivalence; Idiomatic Expressions; ChatGPT; Literary Translation; AI-based Translation; Translation Theory; Stylistics

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# 1. Introduction

Like many areas of communication, the field of translation has significantly evolved because of advances in artificial intelligence (AI) in language processing. One of the most sophisticated software tools currently available is OpenAI's ChatGPT, capable of translating text in real time with naturalness and coherence. Though these algorithms excelled in the information and technical environments, discussions on their effectiveness for literary translation persist. Literary translation requires a keen sense of cultural and emotional context, in addition to linguistic precision. It involves conveying cultural references so that they resonate with readers in the target language, while preserving the author's voice and rendering idiomatic and figurative language accurately.

The Arabic language, being formal and colloquial varieties, poses significant challenges to translation because of these characteristics. A translator has to consider the contextual connotations, emotional undertones, and cultural context appropriate to the target audience while at the same time maintaining accuracy in wording while translating this kind of voice into Arabic. In the arena of AI-powered translation, which often focuses on grammatical correctness and literal translations, the sophistication of these challenges rises.

Neural models tend to fail to convey emotional tone and comprehend figurative language. Though artificial intelligence can generate grammatically correct sentences, it tends to overlook nuances, sarcasm, and the special narrative voice that are paramount in literary translation. Translation into Arabic particularly requires the preservation of cultural authenticity while being sensitive to the target culture's expectations. While AI translations tend to rely heavily on Modern Standard Arabic, which causes the output to sound formal, impersonal, or emotionally distant, human translators tend to achieve a greater balance. Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> translation of J.D. Salinger's <sup>[2]</sup> *The Catcher in the Rye* into Arabic provides a standard against which AI translation efficacy can be evaluated.

Artificial intelligence's limitations in literary translation are clear from recent studies, especially when cultural, stylistic, and emotional factors are involved. Zagood et al.

<sup>[3]</sup> compared humans and machine translations of Saki's En-

glish short stories into Arabic in their work "Man vs. Machine: A Comparison of Linguistic, Cultural, and Stylistic Levels in Literary Translation." Their research shows that while machine-generated translations may be grammatically correct, they often overlook significant elements of literary works like *The Catcher in the Rye*, including cultural references, figurative language, and artistic depth. The study indicates that machine translation frequently lacks the subtle sensitivity required to convey tone and subtext in Arabic.

Similarly, Mehawesh <sup>[4]</sup> points out in his study, "Human Translation vs. Machine Translation in Naguib Mahfouz's Novel Palace Walk: A Case Study", that human translation outperforms the machine-generated version in capturing the literary and cultural essence of the original work. His research illustrates that AI struggles to grasp the emotional depth, analogies, and culturally specific vocabulary found in Arabic prose. Careful interpretation is necessary when translating the context, idiomatic phrases, and tone in Holden Caulfield's voice, which is informal, sarcastic, and emotionally unpredictable.

In addition, Kadaoui et al.'s <sup>[5]</sup> "TARJAMAT: Evaluation of Bard and ChatGPT on Machine Translation of Ten Arabic Varieties" offers a technical assessment of AI systems across various Arabic dialects. The researchers examined eleven regional varieties—including dialectal and Modern Standard Arabic—to compare ChatGPT with Bard. Their results show that while ChatGPT performs well in overall fluency and grammar, it struggles to understand dialectal idioms, culturally rooted expressions, and context-sensitive terms. This poses a challenge when translating stylized literary works as *The Catcher in the Rye*, where the narrative voice is influenced by dialect, mood, and cultural references.

Together, these studies reinforce the main argument of this research, which is that even though ChatGPT and other AI technologies offer impressive speed and fluency, they still cannot adequately convey the deeper semantic, emotional, and cultural layers essential for literary translation. To explore these differences and consider their implications for Arabic literary reception, translation theory, and the evolving role of AI in the humanities, a comparative study of Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> "Human Translation and ChatGPT's AI-generated Version" is conducted.

Additionally, few studies have directly compared

proven human translations of *The Catcher in the Rye* to those generated by AI. The most important for comparison purposes is the Arabic translation done by Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> in 1989 due to its cultural translation and high stylistic quality. Through comparative analysis of selected excerpts from Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> and ChatGPT, the study provides a new insight into translation studies and digital humanities with emphasis on the strengths and weaknesses of artificial intelligence in this intricate linguistic endeavor. The study attempts to address the following questions:

1. In what ways does Ghalib Halasa and ChatGPT vary in terms of handling slang, idiomatic phrases, and culturally referential language in *The Catcher in the Rye*?
2. How well does each translation retain the narrative voice and emotional tone of Holden Caulfield?
3. In what ways do the translation methods employed by ChatGPT and Halasa relate to the theoretical frameworks proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet <sup>[6]</sup>, Nida <sup>[7]</sup>, and Newmark <sup>[8]</sup>?
4. What are the potential consequences of AI-generated literary translation in Arabic, specifically on reader response and cultural fidelity?

## 2. Literature Review

The increasing overlap between translation studies and artificial intelligence (AI) has seen considerable scholarly attention, especially concerning the potentialities and constraints of machine translation technologies for sophisticated literary settings. Literary translation is unique in that it demands the conveying not only the literal meaning but also the tone, emotional complexity, cultural allusions, and stylistic nuances. The task of translating into a language such as Arabic is further complicated by its unique structural and sociolinguistic challenges. This literature review establishes a foundation for the present study by examining prominent models of translation theory, contemporary research on AI translation, and pertinent studies concerning Arabic literary translation.

Recent studies have built on earlier research by looking at AI's strengths and weaknesses in literary and specialized translation environments. These include comparisons of AI and human translation performance in various con-

texts. By comparing AI outputs with student translations, Alkhofi's <sup>[9]</sup> study, "Man vs. Machine: Can AI Outperform Student Translations?", highlights that, despite its speed, AI still struggles with nuanced literary interpretation. In their work, "Artificial Intelligence Tools and Literary Translation: A Comparative Investigation of ChatGPT and Google Translate from Novice and Advanced EFL Student Translators' Perspectives," Abdelhalim et al. <sup>[10]</sup> show that while AI tools assist new translators, they do not capture the emotional depth and stylistic details present in human translations.

Artificial Intelligence and Human Translation: A Contrastive Study Based on Legal Texts by Moneus and Sahari <sup>[11]</sup> provides relevant insights about the accuracy and context awareness needed in translation, which also applies to literary translation. While discussing AI's potential to improve translation teaching, Yuxiu <sup>[12]</sup> points out that AI cannot replace human skill in making cultural and stylistic choices in Application of Translation Technology Based on AI in Translation Teaching. Kunst and Bierwiazzonek <sup>[13]</sup>, in "Using AI Questionnaire Translations in Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Research", underscore that AI-generated translations often miss pragmatic and intercultural nuances, which are essential for literary translation where cultural context matters.

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework in Literary Translation

This research assesses human and AI literary translation differences based on three primary theoretical frameworks: Eugene Nida's <sup>[7]</sup> theory of equivalency, Peter Newmark's <sup>[8]</sup> communicative and semantic approaches to translation, and the methods stipulated by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet <sup>[5]</sup>. Eugene Nida's <sup>[7]</sup> principal system is outlined in "Towards a Science of Translating", in which he distinguishes between dynamic equivalence, aimed at the effect of the translation on the reader, and formal equivalence, which emphasizes fidelity to vocabulary and structure. Dynamic equivalence is generally employed in literary translation because it maintains the emotional and cultural effect of the original work.

In his book *A Textbook of Translation* (1988), Peter Newmark <sup>[8]</sup> elaborates further on this premise by describing his classification of communicative and semantic trans-

lation. Communicative translation aims to cause the reader to respond in a like manner to the original work, often requiring more cultural adaptation, while semantic translation is more loyal to the source work, emphasizing semantic accuracy. Communication strategies are more effective in literary works like *The Catcher in the Rye*, where character voice and emotional tone are predominant. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet<sup>[6]</sup> present a functional approach in their book *Comparative Stylistics of French and English* (1995) with seven procedures: borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. These procedures permit structural, grammatical, and cultural adjustments in translation. This research employs these procedures to examine Halasa's<sup>[1]</sup> and ChatGPT's strategies in dealing with idioms, slang, and cultural nuances in the context of Arabic translation.

## 2.2. AI in Translation: Developments and Limitations

The integration of artificial intelligence, especially neural machine translation (NMT), has greatly changed translation practices in recent years. Toral and Way<sup>[14]</sup> conducted an important study that evaluated a literary-adapted NMT system for translating English novels into Catalan. They covered works from the 1920s to today. Their findings showed that NMT systems provide an 11% relative improvement in BLEU scores compared to phrase-based statistical machine translation (PBSMT). Additionally, between 17% and 34% of NMT outputs were seen by native speakers as equivalent to professional human translations. In contrast, only 8% to 20% of PBSMT results achieved the same equivalence. Despite these encouraging numbers, Toral and Way<sup>[14]</sup> recognize that NMT often struggles with the deeper stylistic and emotional qualities found in literary texts.

Further discussing the creative limits of machine translation, Guerbero-Arenas and Toral<sup>[15]</sup> studied the translation of a short story into Catalan and Dutch under three conditions: raw machine translation, post-edited MT, and human translation. Their results showed that human translations ranked highest in creativity, while raw MT ranked lowest, often resulting in literal and uninspired renditions of the source text. Post-edited MT improved upon raw MT but still could not match the expressive and idi-

omatic richness of human translators. This study highlights that while NMT can manage surface fluency, it often restricts the creative potential needed for literary translation.

Critiquing the evaluation methods that support claims of human-level parity in machine translation, Läubli et al.<sup>[16]</sup> argue that current assessment practices often exaggerate NMT's perceived quality. Their research identifies several key flaws, such as evaluator background, the omission of context, and a limited number of reference texts, which distort results and give a false impression of machine translation's abilities. They call for stricter evaluation standards that take context and human linguistic intuition into account, especially crucial for complex genres like literature. This work highlights that while AI has made significant strides, important gaps still exist, particularly in capturing subtle stylistic and cultural nuances.

Together, these studies show that even with impressive improvements in fluency and lexical accuracy, NMT systems face inherent challenges when translating literary works. The ability to express creative thought, emotional depth, and cultural resonance remains a uniquely human skill, making professional translators essential in literary translation.

## 2.3. The Arabic Context in Literary Translation

Translating Arabic literature presents unique challenges due to the language's diglossic nature and its rich rhetorical and poetic traditions. Translators must carefully select appropriate registers, usually Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and creatively convey culturally specific concepts to ensure the texts are accessible and meaningful to target readers.

Allen<sup>[17]</sup>, in his research titled "Translating Arabic Literature Introduction," emphasizes that translating Arabic literary works requires more than just linguistic accuracy; it demands an understanding of the cultural and artistic values embedded in the text. He points out that translators must balance being faithful to the source while adapting expressions to connect with the target audience.

Similarly, Shamma<sup>[18]</sup>, in "Arabic Literature in Translation: Politics and Poetics," explores the relationship between political context and poetic form in Arabic literary translation. She argues that translators must navigate polit-

ical nuances while preserving poetic artistry, which often requires making interpretive choices that go beyond direct translation.

Both Allen <sup>[17]</sup> and Shamma <sup>[18]</sup> stress the significance of cultural mediation and creative adaptation in Arabic literary translation. These aspects remain challenging for current AI translation systems, which usually lack the ability to fully capture the cultural depth and stylistic nuances of Arabic literature.

## 2.4. Narrative Voice and Stylistic Equivalence

A key part of literary translation is capturing the narrative voice, which includes the tone, rhythm, and emotional perspective that shape how a reader engages with a text. In “A Study of Equivalent Translation from the Perspective of Narrative Stylistics: The Case of Tao’s *The Colour Purple*,” Yuanfei <sup>[19]</sup> shows how the narrator’s identity and cultural background are closely tied to the stylistic choices authors make. Yuanfei <sup>[19]</sup> argues, using a story stylistics approach, that translators should not only find equivalent words but also recreate these stylistic and syntactic elements. Her case study shows how narrative voice connects with themes and character development and highlights that the psychological depth of stylistic details is often lost in direct translations.

This supports the growing evidence that AI-generated translations struggle when stylistic authenticity matters. These systems depend on pattern recognition instead of understanding deeper meanings. In narratives like *The Catcher in the Rye*, where Holden Caulfield’s first-person narration uses unique speech patterns, sarcasm, and feelings of disillusionment, this issue is even more critical. While machine translations can convey basic meaning, they risk missing stylistic differences that are important to the story.

## 2.5. Semantic Fidelity and Idiomatic Accuracy

A major challenge for machine and human translation is idiomatic language. Semantic integrity, according to Ahmed <sup>[20]</sup> in “Translation and Semantics: Challenges and Strategies in Translating English Idioms,” relies on capturing the pragmatic function and connotative layers of idiomatic statements while also keeping the denotative meaning. His research, which examines English idioms across

various genres, shows how translation systems often take metaphorical language literally. This approach leads to semantic errors. When interpreted literally, idioms like “kick the bucket” or “spill the beans” often produce silly or confusing results, especially in languages like Arabic that may not have direct equivalents.

Ahmed also highlights the importance of cognitive translation methods used by humans. These include metaphorical mapping, cultural replacement, and paraphrase. AI systems struggle to perform these tasks accurately. This limitation can hinder not only comprehension but also the emotional impact and artistic tone of literary works since idioms often serve metaphorical, comic, or satirical purposes.

## 2.6. Register, Dialect, and Cultural Appropriateness

To maintain cultural authenticity and proper communication in literary translation, register and dialect are very important. Borrillo’s <sup>[21]</sup> study, “Register Analysis in Literary Translation: A Functional Approach,” highlights that translation must consider field (subject), tenor (relationship), and mode (medium) to keep the function of language in context. Borrillo <sup>[21]</sup> shows how a character’s social status, sense of place, and emotions are conveyed through small changes in register and dialect that the translator needs to capture. Machine translation technologies often overlook dialect diversity and usually rely on neutral registers, making it tough to represent these elements accurately. For example, Holden uses New York slang and idioms as a storytelling tool and cultural marker in *The Catcher in the Rye*. If this register is not preserved, either through formal language or incorrect dialect substitutes, the original text’s cultural and psychological depth gets lost. AI systems often produce translations that lack sociolinguistic nuance unless they are specifically adjusted. This highlights the crucial role of human judgment in translating literature that is sensitive to register.

To create culturally appropriate Arabic translations, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> frequently uses adaptation strategies like modulation and equivalency for metaphors and culturally specific idioms. For the phrase “Big shot,” ChatGPT avoids a literal translation and uses “شخص مهم جداً,” which misses the implications of the original text.



Halasa translates “Strictly for the birds” as “لا يستحق الاهتمام,” a phrase that sounds natural in Arabic and preserves the original’s dismissive tone. ChatGPT’s version.

## 2.7. Linguistic Aspects in Literary Translation

Linguistic analysis is key to assessing the quality of literary translation, encompassing structural, semantic, and pragmatic aspects that influence how meaning is conveyed. Hatim and Mason <sup>[22]</sup>, in their important work “Discourse and the Translator,” argue that literary translation needs to maintain textual cohesion and coherence through discourse analysis. They stress that ignoring these linguistic links can break up the narrative and lessen stylistic impact. This view explains why machine translation, which often focuses on sentence-level accuracy, may struggle to keep text-level unity.

Similarly, Baker <sup>[23]</sup>, in “In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation,” points out the significance of linguistic equivalence across grammar, vocabulary, and textual cohesion. She notes that translators must focus on both meaning and how that meaning is formed through repetition, collocation, and specific language choices. These fine points are often where AI-generated translations miss the mark since they lack awareness of discourse-level features and stylistic choices.

Overall, these studies highlight that linguistic factors are essential for literary translation. By looking at morphology, syntax, semantics, and discourse, researchers can gain a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of AI systems in comparison to human translators. This aspect is especially important for Arabic translation, where the relationship between morphology and syntax often creates rhetorical and stylistic effects that go beyond literal meaning.

## 3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, comparative research design based on established theoretical frameworks from descriptive translation studies. The main goal is to investigate how literary elements, especially idioms, slang, emotional nuance, and culturally specific references, are translated into Arabic by an artificial intelligence system (ChatGPT) and a human translator <sup>[1]</sup>. The study situates

itself within the broader discussion on AI’s capability to translate literature by focusing on J.D. Salinger’s <sup>[2]</sup> *The Catcher in the Rye*. This book is known for its casual tone, character-driven storytelling, and emotionally rich language.

There are significant concerns about the future of literary translation as artificial intelligence continues to be applied in creative and interpretive areas. The line between computer-generated work and human authorship is blurring as publishers, academic institutions, and translators increasingly rely on machine-assisted tools like ChatGPT. In many cases, whether AI can interpret meaning is becoming a more pressing issue than whether it can translate. Literary translation requires more than just language skills; it demands a deep understanding of tone, cultural context, and how readers respond, especially in emotionally rich and culturally complex works like *The Catcher in the Rye*.

This study addresses this growing debate by providing a comparative analysis grounded in translation theory. It is based on the idea that literary meaning is shaped by culture, voice, and emotion, rather than being fixed in words alone. The study uses three main theoretical frameworks to explore how human and AI translators navigate these challenges: Nida’s <sup>[7]</sup> concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence, Newmark’s <sup>[8]</sup> distinction between semantic and communicative translation, and Vinay and Darbelnet’s <sup>[6]</sup> classification of translation methods. These models provide a solid basis for categorizing and analyzing translation methods concerning the linguistic, emotional, and cultural aspects of the source and target texts. The study evaluates whether ChatGPT’s machine-generated translations demonstrate cultural flexibility and interpretive nuance or whether they rely primarily on formal structure and literal representation. Each framework offers a unique viewpoint on the translation process, considering interpretive impact, cultural context, and stylistic fidelity alongside accuracy and fluency.

In their influential work, *Comparative Stylistics of French and English* (translated into English in 1995), Vinay and Darbelnet <sup>[6]</sup> presented a systematic classification of translation methods. They distinguished between indirect translation methods, like transposition, modulation, equivalency, adaptation, and direct methods, such as borrowing, calque, and literal translation. Direct techniques work best

when the source and target languages are structurally and culturally similar. However, translators often need to use indirect methods to maintain meaning and tone in literary texts that feature emotionally loaded terms and culturally specific idioms, such as the case in *The Catcher in the Rye*. For example, adaptation replaces a specific cultural reference with one more relevant to the local audience, while modulation might change a phrase's perspective or emotional tone to fit the target culture.

Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> translation exemplifies these processes, frequently transforming Holden Caulfield's slang and sarcasm into Arabic expressions that resonate with the target culture and emotions. In contrast, ChatGPT often produces literal translations, resulting in text that is grammatically correct but difficult to understand or culturally appropriate. Newmark's <sup>[8]</sup> translation theory, presented in *A Textbook of Translation* (1988), provides another essential distinction between semantic and communicative methods. Semantic translation seeks to maintain the exact meaning and structure of the original text, even if it risks alienating the reader with rigid language. It prioritizes accuracy over naturalness to stay true to the author's intent.

Newmark's <sup>[2]</sup> framework is particularly relevant for literary translation, as it emphasizes balancing message and reader experience. Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> typically employs a communicative style, skillfully adjusting language to preserve emotional depth and context for Arabic readers. In contrast, ChatGPT tends to favor semantic rendering, revealing its reliance on grammatical consistency and pattern matching. This often comes at the expense of artistic authenticity or emotional nuance. Nida <sup>[7]</sup>, a key figure in modern translation studies, notably differentiated between formal and dynamic equivalence in *Towards a Science of Translating* (1964), which introduces yet another significant theoretical model.

Formal equivalence aims to keep the structure and meaning of the original language intact, whether word-for-word or structure-oriented. This approach is often favored in legal, technical, or religious texts. On the other hand, dynamic equivalence focuses on achieving a similar effect on the reader as the original text had on its audience. Dynamic equivalence becomes critical in literary works, as the case in *The Catcher in the Rye*, where character voice, tone, and subtext matter deeply. Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> regularly employs dy-

namic equivalence to make idiomatic expressions or cultural metaphors more relatable to Arabic audiences. While ChatGPT can produce grammatically sound translations, it often struggles with complex, emotional, or idiomatic language, leading to rigid or lifeless results. This study takes a broader view, considering cultural, emotional, and stylistic dimensions of meaning transfer while also evaluating translation choices based on accuracy. It highlights whether AI systems and human translators prioritize reader experience, rely on creative adaptation, or fall back on mechanical literalism. These theories together enrich the understanding of how both entities tackle literary translation issues. This study further emphasizes the essential role of human interpretative skill in literary translation, contributing to ongoing discussions about AI's limitations in fields focused on the humanities.

## 4. Data Collection

To collect data, key sections of *The Catcher in the Rye* were specifically selected. These passages were chosen for their cultural significance, emotional tone, and rich idiomatic language. Each selected sentence or section was shown in its original English form. The Arabic translation from Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> 1989 edition was then obtained. The original English sentence was entered into ChatGPT (GPT-4) to produce a machine translation, and the output was recorded without any user corrections.

The comparison examines reader impact, tone preservation, and figurative meaning, in addition to lexical equivalence. Each translation is assessed regarding the translator's approach to cultural and emotional nuance, using the chosen theoretical frameworks to identify changes in meaning, adaptation strategies, or errors in communicative intent.

This study uses a mixed-methods approach based on recent empirical research on AI-assisted translation and established translation theories to examine how well human and AI-generated translations of *The Catcher in the Rye* perform. A qualitative textual analysis is part of this approach, categorizing translation choices using Vinay and Darbelnet's <sup>[6]</sup> taxonomy of translation procedures, Newmark's <sup>[8]</sup> semantic and communicative translation models, and Nida's <sup>[7]</sup> dynamic and formal equivalency. Selected ex-

cerpts from the 1989 Arabic translation by Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> and the translation by ChatGPT are analyzed. The study focuses on idiomatic expressions, cultural references, slang, sarcasm, and emotionally charged language, which can be particularly challenging for machine translation systems.

Moreover, the study looks at semantic, stylistic, and linguistic aspects. It assesses how word choice, sentence structure, narrative style, and tone impact the accuracy and natural flow of translations. By comparing Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> adaptive strategies with ChatGPT's straightforward and data-driven outputs, the research highlights where human translators keep subtle meaning, emotional tone, and rhetorical effects, and where AI finds it hard to duplicate these qualities. This analysis helps us better understand how pre-

cise meaning, authentic style, and flexible language improve the overall quality of literary translation.

## 5. Findings and Analysis

Regarding colloquial idioms, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> consistently applies dynamic and communicative strategies to ensure that the Arabic translation captures the original's intended meaning. As shown in **Table 1**, he translates "You're a pain in the neck" as "أنت مزعج," conveying the emotional annoyance of the English without a literal translation. However, ChatGPT generates the literal translation "أنت ألم في الرقبة," which, while technically accurate, lacks practicality in Arabic.

**Table 1.** Idiomatic Expressions.

| Original Quote                         | Halasa's Translation           | ChatGPT Translation             |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| "You're a pain in the neck."           | أنت مزعج.                      | أنت ألم في الرقبة.              |
| "I got the ax."                        | طردت من المدرسة.               | حصلت على الفأس.                 |
| "I was in hot water with Mr. Spencer." | كُنْتُ في ورطة مع السيد سبنسر. | كُنْتُ في مشكلة مع السيد سبنسر. |

The same pattern appears with "I got the axe," where ChatGPT takes the phrase literally, missing the idiomatic nuance, while Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> correctly uses a culturally relevant term that indicates expulsion.

Beyond lexical choice, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> shows a strong understanding of meaning and style in his translation, preserving the emotional tone and practical function of the original English phrase in line with dynamic equivalence principles <sup>[24]</sup>. ChatGPT accurately conveys the words but does not evoke the intended emotional response in Arabic, highlighting the system's limitations in meaning. Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> chooses a culturally relevant term to express the idea of dismissal, keeping both clarity and style intact. In contrast, ChatGPT offers a literal translation that is unclear to Arabic readers. This shows how AI struggles with meanings that rely on cultural and stylistic context.

From a style perspective, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> also captures the informal, conversational tone of Holden's narration. He maintains rhythm, register, and simple syntax, which are essential for reflecting the protagonist's voice. While ChatGPT is grammatically correct, it often comes off as more formal and stiff, losing the narrative's original expressiveness. This difference underscores the crucial role of human translators in balancing meaning and style in literary texts <sup>[24]</sup>.

Slang poses one of the biggest challenges for machine translation. Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> translates informal language into culturally appropriate Arabic terms in each case. As shown in **Table 2**, "Phoney" is rendered as "متصنّع," preserving Holden's sardonic tone. In contrast, ChatGPT opts for "مزيف," which misses the emotional and cultural layers of social performance and insincerity.

**Table 2.** Slang and Informal Speech.

| Original Quote                                                | Halasa's Translation                    | ChatGPT Translation                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| "It was very phony—I mean him being such a big snob and all." | كان متصنّعًا جدًا، وأقصد كونه متعجرفًا. | كان مزيفًا جدًا، وكأنه شخص متعطرس. |
| "We had a swell time."                                        | قضينا وقتًا ممتعًا.                     | قضينا وقتًا جيدًا جدًا.            |
| "He was a flit."                                              | كان شاذًا.                              | كان طائشًا.                        |

In another example, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> translates "swell time" as "وقت ممتع," a natural and idiomatic phrase in Arabic.



ChatGPT's version, "وقت جيد جدًا," is technically correct but stylistically dull. Vanmassenhove et al. [25] noted similar results, highlighting how AI tends to diminish the stylistic variety of literary texts. Halasa [1] accurately translates "flit," an outdated American slang term with negative undertones, in context. ChatGPT mistakenly translates it as "طائشًا," a term that suggests irresponsibility rather than the intended meaning due to its lack of historical and cultural context.

Slang presents a significant challenge for machine translation because it is deeply rooted in cultural and contextual meanings. Halasa [1] consistently translates informal language into precise and stylistically suitable Arabic, ensuring that both meaning and tone remain intact. These examples highlight that keeping the meaning and stylistic details is crucial in literary translation. Human translators like Halasa [1] effectively navigate these complexities, while AI translations often produce texts that are semantically acceptable but lack stylistic depth. This supports findings by Zhewei Sun et al. [26], who noted that AI struggles to interpret slang because it depends heavily on context and meaning.

Capturing Holden Caulfield's character voice requires attention to tone and emotional nuance. Halasa [1] skillfully reflects Holden's boisterous, emotionally charged speech

using colloquial Arabic. As shown in **Table 3**, his translation of "That story killed me" captures the original's intense emotional tone. ChatGPT translates it as "أعجبتني كثيرًا," which is correct in meaning but lacks style. Halasa [1] enhances the phrase "It drives me crazy" with the colloquial "يجعلني أجنّ," closely mirroring the original's dramatic emotion. In contrast, ChatGPT's formal and literal translation, "يجعلني مجنونًا," feels less immediate and emotionally resonant.

These examples show that semantic fidelity alone is not enough for literary translation. Stylistic adaptation and recreating emotional intensity are also essential. According to Troiano et al. [27], AI translation systems often have difficulty preserving emotional nuances, especially in literary texts. This struggle stems from challenges in capturing feelings and cultural contexts. Human translators use both semantic and stylistic approaches to keep the authenticity and impact of the original work.

As shown in **Table 4**, "خصص للطيور فقط" is semantically incorrect and could confuse readers unfamiliar with the idiom. Similarly, for "a king's ransom," Halasa [1] uses the culturally relevant metaphor "ثروة طائلة" while ChatGPT's literal translation—"فدية ملك"—sounds outdated and conflicts with the context.

**Table 3.** Emotional Nuance and Voice.

| Original Quote          | Halasa's Translation | ChatGPT Translation |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| "That story killed me." | أعجبتني بشكل قاتل.   | أعجبتني كثيرًا.     |
| "It drives me crazy."   | هذا يجعلني أجنّ.     | هذا يجعلني مجنونًا. |

**Table 4.** Cultural References and Metaphors.

| Original Quote                          | Halasa's Translation             | ChatGPT Translation            |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| "He's a big shot around here."          | إنه شخص مهم جدًا هنا.            | إنه شخص كبير هنا.              |
| "Strictly for the birds."               | لا يستحق الاهتمام.               | مخصص للطيور فقط.               |
| "He spent a king's ransom on that car." | أنفق ثروة طائلة على تلك السيارة. | أنفق فدية ملك على تلك السيارة. |

These examples show that human translators can balance accuracy with style. They keep the tone, register, and cultural meaning intact. In comparison, AI tends to focus on literal word-for-word translations. This often leads to results that are stylistically flat or misleading. This supports the observations of Hassan and Omri [28], who point out that machine translation frequently has trouble capturing stylistic and cultural details, especially in metaphorical language.

Halasa [1] shows a deep understanding of Arabic id-

ioms and captures the meaning of English phrases well. As shown in **Table 5**, the English phrase "It killed me," often used to show amusement, is translated by Halasa [1] as «أضحكني ذلك كثيرًا», which clearly conveys the intended meaning in Arabic. In contrast, ChatGPT's literal translation, «قتلني ذلك», misses the idiomatic sense and results in a strange meaning in Arabic. This supports findings by Omar and Salih [29], who highlight the need for cultural adjustment in translation to keep the meaning intact across languages.

Table 5. Linguistic levels and components: Lexical Choice.

| Original Quote                    | Halasa's Translation | ChatGPT Translation |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| "It killed me."                   | أضحكني ذلك كثيراً.   | قتلني ذلك كثيراً.   |
| "That killed me, she really did." | أمتعتني كثيراً، بحق  | ذلك قتلني حقاً.     |

The syntactic structures in Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> translation show a strong grasp of Arabic grammar and sentence construction. As shown in Table 6, the English sentence "He's my brother and all" becomes «إنه أخي، وهذا كل شيء». This version keeps the conversational tone and structure suitable

for Arabic readers. In contrast, ChatGPT's translation «هو» «أخي وكل شيء» sticks too closely to English syntax, making it sound awkward and unnatural in Arabic; which is one of the difficulties that AI encounters when trying to match the subtle details of human language.

Table 6. Linguistic levels and components: Syntax.

| Original Quote                           | Halasa's Translation              | ChatGPT Translation               |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| "He's my brother and all."               | هو أخي وكل شيء.                   | إنه أخي، وهذا كل شيء.             |
| "If you really want to hear about it..." | إذا كنتم حقاً تريدون سماع قصتي... | إذا كنت حقاً تريد أن تسمع عنها... |

As shown in Table 7, Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> translation captures the style of the original text, keeping the author's voice and tone intact. In the sentence "I was half in love with her, and half not," Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> version, «كنت أحبها نصف»، «حب»، «وأكرهها نصف كره كنت»، preserves the rhythmic balance and emotional depth of the original. ChatGPT's version, «كنت

» «نصف واقع في حبها ونصف غير ذلك» while correct, lacks the style and emotional impact found in Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> translation. This aligns with the findings of Guerberof-Arenas and Toral <sup>[15]</sup>, who state that while AI can achieve surface fluency, it often limits the creative ability needed for literary translation.

Table 7. Linguistic levels and components: Style.

| Original Quote                               | Halasa's Translation                 | ChatGPT Translation                  |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| "I was half in love with her, and half not." | كنت أحبها نصف حب، وأكرهها نصف كره.   | كنت نصف واقع في حبها ونصف غير ذلك.   |
| "All that David Copperfield kind of crap."   | تلك الحماقات من طراز ديفيد كوبرفيلد. | كل ذلك الهراء من نوع ديفيد كوبرفيلد. |

## 6. Discussion

A comparison of Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> translation and ChatGPT's output reveals clear differences in how they handle idiomatic meaning, emotional tone, and cultural adaptation. Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> style relies on dynamic equivalency and intentional communication techniques to capture the artistic and emotional effects of Salinger's <sup>[2]</sup> original work. His translations reflect cultural awareness, natural language, and emotional depth. While ChatGPT's outputs are grammatically correct, they often use formal and literal methods that lead to misunderstandings. These issues are especially noticeable with idioms and slang. When precise translations are made, they can alter the narrative tone or make the meaning unclear. The diglossic nature of Arabic and its sensitivity to tone and register make these gaps more apparent in literary contexts. Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> work best demonstrates how a translator

can act as a cultural mediator by changing not just words but also the voice and experience behind them. However, ChatGPT still struggles in areas that require creativity, intuition, and deep cultural understanding. While technology can assist with repetitive tasks or draft translations, it cannot replace human translators in literary contexts, particularly for closely tied and emotionally rich language pairs like Arabic and English.

A fundamental difference in translation philosophy also contributes to this discrepancy. ChatGPT generates text through statistical correlations and probabilities, while Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> employs culturally informed interpretive methods like modulation and adaptation. ChatGPT chooses the most likely outcome based on data without truly "understanding" the cultural or emotional meanings of words, leading to translations that are often homogeneous, neutral, and lacking the nuanced nature of literary tone. This issue is

particularly challenging in works like *The Catcher in the Rye*, where narrative voice is crucial to character development and the overall reading experience. Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> shows a deep understanding of the intended audience. For Arabic readers, his translations hold cultural and emotional importance in addition to being technically accurate. His ability to navigate between Modern Standard Arabic and informal language reflects his strong cultural insight. In contrast, ChatGPT rigidly adheres to MSA, which is technically correct but lacks the intimacy and spontaneity needed for Holden Caulfield's speech. This highlights one of the main flaws in AI translation: its inability to adjust register, tone, and emotional weight to match the original text's intended message.

This comparison also shows that human empathy, interpretive reasoning, and creativity are vital for effective literary translation. Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> choices reveal an interest in the text as a living entity, needing to connect with readers in a foreign language without sounding artificial or alien. ChatGPT cannot replicate this richness because it lacks awareness of audience and context. Although technically accurate, its translations lack context and emotional connection. The gap is particularly noticeable in Arabic literary contexts due to the diglossic nature of the language and its sensitivity to tone and register. Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> work exemplifies how a translator can function as a cultural mediator, adjusting not just words but also the voice and experience behind them. However, ChatGPT remains limited in areas requiring originality, intuition, and deep cultural knowledge. It can assist with draft translations or repetitive tasks, but it cannot replace human translators in literary contexts, especially in closely related and emotionally rich language pairs like Arabic and English.

A number of recent studies have illuminated the complex limitations and potential of artificial intelligence (AI) systems in the ongoing debate over the relative merits of AI vs human translators in literary translation. Dardour and Anasse <sup>[30]</sup> claim in "Artificial Intelligence Translation vs. Human Translators: Limits of Balancing Cultural Sensitivity and Linguistic Accuracy in Literary Texts" that even with their growing sophistication, AI systems struggle to strike a balance between linguistic accuracy and cultural sensitivity, according to the research paper. The authors note that al-

though AI is capable of translating texts with proper syntax, it frequently fails to capture the richer emotional content and culturally embedded meanings that define literary works. They contend that because AI relies on statistical likelihood and pattern recognition, the results are literal translations that fall short in properly capturing colloquial idioms or culturally sensitive nuances. In literary translation, where meaning is inextricably linked to emotional tone and cultural context, this deficiency is especially significant. Dardour and Anasse <sup>[30]</sup> emphasize that such duties necessitate the interpretive inventiveness and empathetic insight that only human translators can offer. Similarly, AlAfnan and Alshakhs <sup>[31]</sup> study "Bridging Linguistic and Cultural Nuances: A Comparative Study of Human and AI Translations of Arabic Dialect Poetry" provides insightful information about the challenges of translating Arabic dialect poetry, a genre rich in regional meaning, rhythm, and colour.

According to their research, AI systems handle Modern Standard Arabic somewhat well, but they struggle with dialectal differences and the poetic components that give the original text its distinct voice and emotional resonance. The poetry loses its spontaneity and cultural uniqueness due to the formal tone that AI frequently forces on translations, producing output that sounds robotic or dispassionate. Human translators, on the other hand, have a sophisticated capacity to modify register, tone, and style in order to conform to the literary and cultural expectations of the intended audience, thereby mediating between the reader and the source culture.

AlAfnan and Alshakhs' <sup>[31]</sup> findings support the notion that literary translation is a culturally situated process that is impossible to fully automate. Furthermore, Guerbero-Arenas and Toral's <sup>[15]</sup> essay "Creativity in Translation: Machine Translation as a Constraint for Literary Texts" examines the inherent conflict between the formulaic nature of machine translation output and the creative requirements of literary translation. They show that although AI models are capable of producing writings that are grammatically accurate and fluid, their results are typically stylistically homogeneous and devoid of the imaginative diversity necessary to maintain an author's voice and stylistic quirks. The writers contend that in order to preserve the life and uniqueness of the original work, literary translators make

conscious creative decisions, such as using metaphors, changing grammatical structures, and modifying culturally specific allusions.

Based on statistical and probabilistic models, machine translation has a tendency to “normalise” these stylistic variances, producing translations that are less interesting and dynamic. This limitation severely limits AI’s ability to mimic the depth and complexity that human translators add to literary works. These studies, which include Guerberoof-Arenas and Toral’s <sup>[15]</sup> critique of AI’s impact on creativity, AlAfnan and Alshakhs’s <sup>[31]</sup> comparative analysis of translating poetry in Arabic dialect, and Dardour and Anasse’s <sup>[30]</sup> examination of AI’s cultural and linguistic limitations, all arrive at the same conclusion: AI, while helpful as a support tool, cannot completely replace human translators in literary contexts. AI is still unable to handle the complex cultural mediation, stylistic adaptability, and creative intuition needed for literary translation. This is particularly true for language pairs like Arabic and English that have a lot of cultural and diglossic complexity. Thus, human translators like Halasa <sup>[1]</sup>, who overcome these obstacles by applying cultural awareness and inventive adaptation, continue to be essential for creating translations that are accurate and meaningful.

Beyond cultural mediation and idiomatic translation, a crucial aspect in comparing Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> and ChatGPT focuses on semantic fidelity, stylistic rendering, and linguistic appropriateness. Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> consistently shows semantic awareness by choosing Arabic words that reflect not only their literal meaning but also their emotional and pragmatic undertones. For instance, in translating phrases like “It drives me crazy” as «يجعلني أجنّ», Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> captures both the meaning and emotional intensity of Holden’s voice while maintaining the flow of casual speech. In contrast, ChatGPT translates it as «يجعلني مجنونًا». While it accurately conveys the meaning, this translation lacks the stylistic and emotional depth, making it sound formal and detached. Similarly, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> translates “That story killed me” as «أضحكني ذلك كثيرًا». This expresses amusement and an emotional response. ChatGPT’s version, «أعجبتي كثيرًا», is correct in meaning but loses the stylistic and expressive strength of the original.

From a syntactic viewpoint, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> modifies En-

glish sentence fragments and conversational constructions into Arabic structures that feel natural while preserving Holden’s unique speech style. For example, the English fragment “He’s my brother and all” becomes «إنه أخي، وهذا كل شيء» in Halasa’s <sup>[1]</sup> translation, keeping syntactic clarity and conversational tone. In contrast, ChatGPT sticks closely to English syntax with «هو أخي وكل شيء», resulting in awkward Arabic that sounds foreign and interrupts the narrative flow. This demonstrates that syntactic changes are vital for maintaining the stylistic voice, especially in a language like Arabic that has different forms.

Concerning stylistic fidelity, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> captures rhythm, parallelism, and narrative tone by aligning Arabic expressions with Holden’s sarcastic, introspective, and emotionally rich voice. Word choices like «متصنع» for “Phoney” and «وقت ممتع» for “swell time” retain tone, social nuance, and literary style. While ChatGPT is correct with its word choices, it usually opts for more formal or neutral terms, losing the subtleties of voice and style. This trend matches findings by Al-Batineh <sup>[32]</sup>, who points out that AI translations often standardize stylistic differences, resulting in output that is grammatically correct but lacks semantic and stylistic richness.

Finally, on a broader linguistic level, Halasa <sup>[1]</sup> shows an understanding of Arabic diglossic nature by adjusting sentence structures, tone, and style to achieve the intended emotional and social impact. ChatGPT’s translations often mirror literal meanings, overlooking sociolinguistic and stylistic cues that are essential in literary translation. This reinforces the idea that translating literary texts effectively requires more than surface-level accuracy; it needs a deep understanding of semantics, syntax, style, and context—qualities that current AI systems have yet to achieve fully.

## 7. Conclusions

This study compared the effectiveness of ChatGPT’s AI-generated translation and Ghalib Halasa’s <sup>[1]</sup> human translation of J.D. Salinger’s <sup>[2]</sup> *The Catcher in the Rye*, focusing on idiomatic expressions, slang, emotional nuance, and cultural references. The findings highlight the challenges of literary translation and the difficulties artificial intelligence faces in this area. They draw on translation theory

and are supported by recent empirical research.

By examining the text closely, the study highlighted that Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> translation consistently employed techniques like modulation, dynamic equivalency, and cultural adaptation to retain the tone, emotion, and stylistic quirks of the original work. His choices reflect a solid understanding of Arabic readers' language conventions and cultural expectations. While ChatGPT provided grammatically correct and coherent translations, it often relied on a formal style and literalism, leading to a loss of emotional depth, idiomatic expression, and nuance.

The analysis of semantic, stylistic, and linguistic aspects suggests that AI translations, while technically correct, often miss the subtle interplay of meaning, tone, and narrative voice required in literary texts. Halasa's <sup>[1]</sup> translation shows careful adjustments to syntax, precise word choice, and sensitivity to stylistic elements. This approach ensures that Holden Caulfield's casual speech, emotional depth, and narrative flow resonate with Arabic readers. In contrast, ChatGPT produces outputs that are literal and formal, often losing these important linguistic and stylistic details. This emphasizes that good literary translation needs human insight, cultural understanding, and careful interpretive judgment <sup>[32]</sup>.

Overall, this discussion highlights how essential human translators are for preserving the aesthetic and cultural diversity of literary works. Artificial intelligence still lacks the cognitive, emotional, and cultural abilities needed to grasp the complexities of literary discourse, even as it improves in fluency and structure. Human translation encompasses not only meaning and words but also experience and voice. In the realm of literary translation, artificial intelligence will remain a support tool rather than a replacement until it can replicate these dimensions.

## Author Contributions

L.J.A. has contributed in writing the Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology sections. L.J.A. and M.A.S. contributed in writing the semantic Discussion. L.J.A. has also helped in providing the Data Collection and in writing the Conclusions. M.A.S. has contributed in writing the Findings and Analysis sections. In addition to pro-

viding the stylistic discussion, M.A.S. and L.J.A. worked on the semantic section. Z.A.A.-S. has contributed in writing the Discussion section. Z.A.A.-S. also contributed in identifying and explaining the literary expressions used in the analysis. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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