



AI IN TRANSLATION

LESSONS FROM THE FRONT LINE AT PAB

**Empowering organisations to
connect, grow, and thrive
through expert communication.**

Helping you communicate with clarity, confidence, and impact.

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence is transforming how organisations approach translation and multilingual communication. Faster turnaround, lower costs, and instant access are appealing, particularly under growing operational and financial pressure.

However, as adoption accelerates, many organisations are unknowingly exposing themselves to legal, reputational, and operational risks by relying on AI translation without appropriate professional oversight.

This report explores where AI translation can add value and, critically, where it can fail, drawing on real-world scenarios from regulated and high-risk environments. It offers practical insight to help organisations make informed decisions, protect quality and compliance, and avoid costly mistakes.

In this report, Iwona, Director at PAB Languages Centre Ltd summarise recurring observations we consistently hear from:

- Senior freelance translators and revisers
- Translation managers
- Localisation specialists

These are people responsible for final outputs, client satisfaction, and regulatory compliance. Their feedback is not theoretical, it is operational. This report does not constitute any legal advice.

A word from Iwona Lebiechowicz

Over the past several months, we have had dozens of open conversations with professionals working at the sharp end of multilingual communication.

Not at conferences. Not in sales decks.

Not in AI demos.

But in real delivery environments, where quality, accountability, and outcomes matter.



The insights in this report are based on applied experience with AI systems deployed in closed environments, adapted for specific organisational and client contexts. These systems operate with controlled data sources, defined memory structures, and clear separation between clients.

While AI can be effective for low-risk, internal, or informal content, its use in legal, medical, technical, and public-sector contexts raises serious concerns. This report highlights the most common risk areas organisations face when bypassing professional translators, including:

- Loss of legal and contractual accuracy
- Compliance and regulatory exposure
- Data security and confidentiality issues
- False confidence in “good enough” output

Importantly, this is not an argument against AI.

Instead, it provides a balanced, practical perspective on how AI can be used responsibly and where human expertise remains essential.

This report is based on operational feedback from linguists, project managers, and localisation specialists working in regulated environments, using closed, client-specific AI systems with professional oversight.



Executive Summary

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping how organisations manage translation and multilingual communication. While AI offers speed, scalability, and cost efficiencies, its growing use in regulated and high-risk environments has revealed significant gaps between fluency and true accuracy.

This report draws on extensive operational feedback from senior translators, revisers, project managers, and localisation specialists working with AI systems in real delivery settings. Their insights highlight where AI adds value, and where it introduces risk.

Across industries, organisations are increasingly adopting AI translation tools, yet fewer than 30% have clear governance frameworks in place. As a result, many are unknowingly exposing themselves to legal, compliance, confidentiality, and reputational risks.

Practitioners consistently report issues such as inconsistent terminology, fragmented meaning, cultural inaccuracies, and the false assumption that fluent output equals correct output. In many cases, post-editing AI-generated text takes longer than producing a human translation from scratch.



The evidence shows that AI performs well for low-risk, high-volume, or internal content, especially when supported by glossaries, style guides, and structured workflows. However, for legal, medical, technical, and public-facing material, professional linguistic oversight remains essential.

The most effective organisations are not choosing between AI and human expertise, they are combining both through risk-based decision-making, clear accountability, and robust quality assurance.

Used responsibly, AI can support efficiency and enhance workflows. Used without safeguards, it can distort meaning, compromise compliance, and create hidden long-term costs. The safest and most effective approach is a hybrid model: AI + professional linguistic expertise, supported by strong governance, transparent processes, and human judgment where accuracy matters most.



Quick Numbers

20%

Average revenue at risk
Organisations lose up to 20% of revenue due to poor data quality — including inaccurate translations in regulated content.

60%

Over 60% of businesses are using AI translation tools to enhance their multilingual content strategies, reflecting a growing acceptance in various industries.

£3M

The typical large UK organisation faces on average £3 million in costs following a data breach, including remediation, fines, and reputational damage.

70%

Over 70% of organisations report using AI tools in some capacity.

30%

Fewer than 30% of organisations have clear governance frameworks in place for AI use.

40%

Over 40% of employees report using AI tools without formal approval, guidance, or training from their organisation.

Figures referenced are based on industry studies, client data, and practitioner feedback.

AI Translation Under Scrutiny: What We Are Actually Seeing

One of the most persistent misconceptions around AI-based translation is the belief that fluency equals quality. Readable text can feel reassuring, yet still be factually wrong, contextually off, or terminologically inaccurate. This gap between “sounds right” and “is right” is where risk quietly enters. Language models can produce well-formed, fluent output, but surface fluency alone does not guarantee reliability.



Without scrutiny, smooth wording can mask errors that materially change meaning or intent.

1. Consistency remains AI's weakest point

Despite common claims, AI frequently produces multiple variants of the same term or phrase within a single document. This is repeatedly flagged as the most disruptive issue — particularly in regulated, technical, or branded content.

At PAB, our project managers see this improving with custom terminology management and client-specific glossaries integrated into workflows. While AI vendors argue fine-tuning solves this, we know that real consistency requires proactive human oversight and structured processes.



2. Style guides and glossaries help, but require effort

When AI operates at segment level, it often breaks coherence, logic, and flow. Practitioners report fragmented meaning and inconsistent terminology that must be manually re-aligned. Providing detailed instructions, glossaries, and document-level context improves results.



However, doing so adds preparation and management time, reducing the perceived efficiency gains.

3. Post-editing often takes longer than translating

A common surprise for clients: Correcting AI output can take longer than a clean human translation due to meaning drift, structural issues, and formatting damage.



PAB teams address this by setting clear MTPE (Machine Translation Post-Editing) guidelines and training linguists to optimise review steps. Tech providers may claim efficiency gains, but we've learned that efficiency only happens when workflows are designed for quality first, not speed alone.



4. AI struggles with ambiguity and linguistic nuance

Idiomatic expressions, legal terms, cultural and contextual references remain high-risk. Our linguists and project managers mitigate this by embedding cultural and contextual checks early in the process. While AI advocates highlight improvements in newer models, we know nuance is not just linguistic: it's cultural, regulatory, and brand-driven, which requires human judgment.

5. The issue isn't AI, it's expectations

Many professionals agree AI did not "fail." What failed was the assumption that it could replace judgment, rather than support it.

PAB's Project Manager, Aymen, added:

"For example, an AI-generated translation may spell the client's name differently within the same document. The same issue can occur with key terms, such as the word "survey", which can be translated into Arabic in two or three different ways.

Instead of maintaining one consistent term throughout the document, AI may use multiple variations in various sections. AI translation is still useful, but not with complicated contexts such as technical and medical documents where extra research should be done by the linguist.

AI can speed up the work pace, but it is not yet 100% reliable. Human supervision always is required."



6. Cultural intent and tone remain human work

Clients don't pay professionals to replace words they pay for meaning, intent, tone, and cultural accuracy. This remains firmly human-led.

7. Cost pressure is shifting risk onto professionals

Savings are often created by lowering pay, not lowering effort. Senior practitioners increasingly push back — raising rates or declining low-quality MTPE work.



8. AI is accepted, but as a tool, not a craft

The emerging consensus is clear:

AI can assist with volume, drafting, and automation.

Professional value lies in knowing when not to use it.

Natsai, Project Coordinator at PAB said:

"AI can certainly speed up parts of the workflow, but it doesn't remove the need for human judgment. Ensuring accuracy, consistency, and cultural intent still depends on expertise.

AI can assist, but it can't replace that responsibility. The biggest misconception is that fluent output equals correct output. AI sounds confident even when it's wrong, which is why human oversight isn't optional; it's essential."

Approximately 70% of AI translation tools now integrate seamlessly with other platforms, such as content management systems, enhancing workflow efficiency.

Combining AI translation with human post-editing can yield higher quality translations, with accuracy rates improving by up to 99%.

What this feedback really tells us

This is not resistance to innovation. It is a course correction driven by people who:

- Deliver under real constraints
- Carry legal, reputational, and UX risk
- Are accountable for outcomes, not hype

Across roles and seniority levels, the message is consistent:

AI works best when embedded thoughtfully, not imposed blindly.



The industry appears to be moving from experimentation to fit-for-purpose use.

- Less noise.
- More responsibility.
- Better decisions.

And that shift, led by experienced practitioners, is a healthy one.

Summary

AI is here to stay, but how it is used matters.

Organisations that achieve the best outcomes are those that combine technology with professional linguistic expertise, clear governance, and risk-based decision-making. Rather than choosing between AI or human translators, the most effective approach is to define when AI is appropriate and when professional oversight is essential.



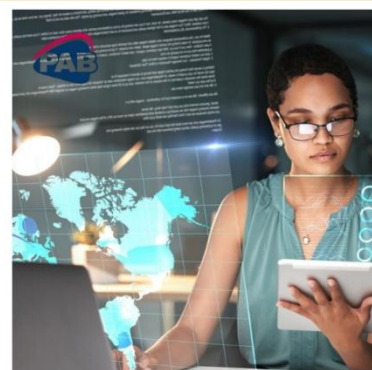
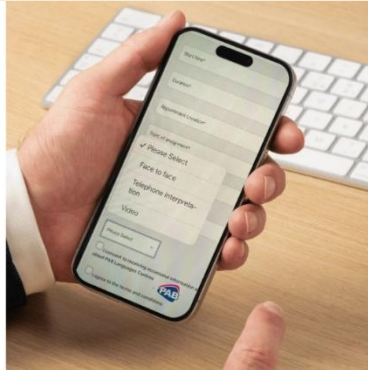
Based on our experience, organisations should:

- Assess translation risk by content type and sector
- Avoid AI-only solutions for regulated, legal, or public-facing material
- Implement human review and quality assurance where accuracy matters
- Ask clear questions about data handling, confidentiality, and accountability
- Treat translation as a strategic function, not a technical afterthought



Used correctly, AI can support efficiency. Used without safeguards, it can create hidden costs and long-term damage.

This report is intended as a starting point to encourage informed conversations, better decision-making, and responsible use of AI in multilingual communication.



Conclusion

The rapid integration of AI translation tools into wider digital ecosystems highlights their growing role in improving speed and workflow efficiency. However, efficiency alone does not guarantee accuracy or reliability.

The strongest outcomes are achieved when AI translation is combined with human post-editing and professional oversight, where quality, context, and accountability are maintained.

Evidence shows that this hybrid approach can deliver accuracy levels of up to 99%, demonstrating that responsible use of AI rather than AI alone is key to achieving safe, high-quality translation at scale.



Ultimately, these systems work best when guided by people who understand the language, the subject matter, and the risks involved.

Legal risk

Misinterpretation, liability, unenforceable clauses

Data & confidentiality risk

Unclear data storage, breaches, loss of control

Reputational risk

Public errors, loss of trust, brand damage

Compliance risk

Failure to meet regulatory or audit standards

False efficiency

Time saved upfront → costlier corrections later

Without safeguards, AI can invent, distort, or oversimplify information; used responsibly, it can support efficient and well-controlled workflows. The difference comes down to accountability.

Tools don't replace expertise, they amplify it.

Lessons to Take with Us

THE SAFER APPROACH

AI + Professional Linguistic Oversight

- Risk-based decision making
- Human review where it matters
- Clear accountability
- Quality assurance built in

AI GOVERNANCE CHECKLIST

Before deploying AI for translation or multilingual communication, ask:

Data & Security

- Do you know where AI-processed data is stored?
- Is this data isolated, or can it be reused for training or other purposes?

Oversight & Accountability

- Is human review mandatory for regulated, legal, or public-facing content?
- Who is accountable if an AI-generated output is incorrect?

Quality & Auditability

- Are AI outputs traceable and auditable?
- Can you evidence how a translation was produced, reviewed, and approved?

Risk Management

- Have you clearly defined when AI may be used, and when it must not be?
- Is AI treated as a support tool, not a replacement for professional judgment?

If any of these questions cannot be answered clearly, AI use may be introducing hidden risk rather than efficiency.



"Technology works best when guided by expertise."



Get in touch with PAB Languages Centre

For questions, comments, or suggestions, please call us on 07799772360 or email the team at hello@pabcom.co.uk

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GROW GLOBAL.**

