

Integrating AI-Based Technologies into Translation Workflows through a Simulated Translation Bureau (STB)

Koen Kerremans

Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels,
Belgium

koen.kerremans@vub.be

Abstract

This paper reports on an exploratory, qualitative study of technology use in a Simulated Translation Bureau (STB) in a master's programme in translation. The STB is a practice-oriented module in which students work on authentic translation projects and integrate a range of technologies, including AI-based tools, into their workflows. The paper addresses how students' technology-related decision-making can be made visible and assessable, including students' reflections on how they justify and verify the use of output-generating technologies, and how they describe perceived changes in their technology use over the course of the simulation. The study shows that the STB is an effective pedagogical model for teaching and assessing technology judgement in AI-enabled translation workflows, but also highlights the need to foreground broader ethical dimensions of AI literacy more explicitly in future iterations of the pedagogical design.

1 Introduction

AI-based technologies – from machine translation (MT) integrated into computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools to large language models (LLM)-based assistants – are increasingly embedded in professional translation workflows, as evidenced by recent market-based studies such as ELIS (2026). This evolution creates a concrete challenge for translation training programmes: if professional practice changes, translation education must integrate these technologies in

ways that prepare students for professional practice. This challenge is not limited to teaching students how such technologies function at a technical level. It also involves helping them understand how these technologies are integrated in real translation workflows, while also developing the AI literacy required to use them responsibly, critically, and ethically (Krüger, 2024).

A Simulated Translation Bureau (STB) offers a particularly suitable pedagogical setting for such integration as it is explicitly practice-oriented (Buysschaert et al., 2018): student teams work as translation bureaus with different roles, carry out authentic translation projects, and deal with professional constraints such as deadlines and quality requirements (Van Egdom et al., 2020). This structure makes it possible to treat and assess technological tools as part of the workflow, rather than as separate topics taught in class (Zappatore, 2020, 2022).

This paper reports on an exploratory, qualitative study of how technology use becomes visible in an STB. It focuses on the data sources built into the STB module design of a master's programme in translation to monitor how students use technologies in their translation workflows. The starting point in the STB module is that students should have sufficient autonomy to choose and integrate any type of technology (including AI-based tools) in meaningful ways, while also being expected to explain how and why they used it. Importantly, the STB design does not isolate AI-based technologies from the wider set of technologies used in the translation workflow but examines how such technologies are used alongside other tools, such as CAT, project management, or collaboration tools.

In this respect, the study addresses three questions: How does a translation bureau simulation make students' technology-related decision-making visible and assessable (RQ1)? Which practices do students report and demonstrate when integrating AI-based technologies into translation workflows, and how do they justify and verify this use (RQ2)? To what extent do students report changes in their technology use during the simulation compared to prior practice (RQ3)?

In this study, technology-related decision-making is considered visible when students explicitly report where in the workflow a technology was used, for what purpose, and with what outcome. It is considered assessable when these reports provide evidence to evaluate how transparently students describe their technology use and justify their choices, and how far they demonstrate creative or innovative uses.

This assessability was also supported by the course design itself. Students were informed at the start of the STB module that technology use formed one of the dimensions on which group performance would be evaluated, and they received a rubric specifying how this aspect would be assessed. The rubric distinguished between limited use of technology, guided use, more creative integration into workflows, and highly proactive, innovative, and critically justified use of technology. This rubric clarifies the pedagogical criteria against which students' technology-related decision-making became assessable.

2 Background and pedagogical design

Research on translator training has increasingly treated technology as an integral part of contemporary translation practice, while also emphasising that students need to learn not just how to use tools, but when, why, and in which contexts they are best applied (Bowker, 2014; Kenny, 2020). Recent discussions on AI literacy in translation extend this argument by stressing that users need not only operational technological competence, but also the ability to evaluate, justify, and monitor the responsible use of AI-based tools (Bindels et al., 2024; Krüger, 2024).

Within this broader context, the STB model is especially relevant because it links technology learning to authentic professional workflows (Zappatore, 2022). Earlier work on simulated translation bureaus has shown their value for immersing students in realistic projects, external collaborations,

entrepreneurship, and service provision (Buysschaert et al., 2018; Van Egdom et al., 2020; Kontinen & Salmi, 2025). The present study builds on that tradition by examining how students use technologies and report on their technology-related decisions.

The argument advanced here is that the use of technology in STB training should be studied at two levels. At the individual level, students need to be able to explain how and why they use particular technologies in specific tasks. At the group level, bureaus also need to decide collectively how they organise work, which tools they use, how they handle planning and communication, etc. The STB is therefore not only a teaching environment but also a useful research site for observing how technology judgement is negotiated in a practice-oriented setting.

3 Research design

3.1 Course context and participants

The study was conducted as part of a mandatory STB module in a master's programme in translation. Student teams worked in small simulated bureaus as either project managers or translators/revisers and carried out authentic projects for real and/or simulated clients. The module was explicitly designed to simulate professional practice by combining project management, client communication, translation, revision, external collaborations, and technology use. CAT tools were part of the working environment from the outset, but students retained meaningful autonomy in deciding how to integrate technologies into their workflows.

The present paper analyses a first-cycle corpus consisting of 17 artefacts produced by three simulated bureaus: 11 individual portfolios, three group technology reflection notes, and three final group presentations. The 11 portfolios were written by students performing different roles, including three project managers and eight translator/reviser profiles. The STB module was taught in the second semester, after a first-semester course on technologies for translators, and students had already gained insight into the technical dimensions of language and AI during their prior BA-level training. Within the STB, they were explicitly allowed to use AI-based technologies, provided this use was documented transparently in their reporting, in line with the university's broader policy on the responsible and transparent use of AI in edu-

cational contexts. To ensure anonymity, individual portfolios are cited as ID1–ID11 and the three bureaux are referred to as Bureau A, B, and C.

3.2 Data collection

Data collection was embedded in the mandatory course assignments to capture students' technology use in a naturalistic, practice-oriented way, without explicitly framing the course around AI-based technologies. This was important because the study sought to examine how students use AI-based tools alongside other technologies in the workflow, such as CAT, MT, terminology, project management, and collaboration tools. As noted above in the discussion of visibility and assessability (see Section 1), students were informed at the start of the STB module that group performance would be evaluated in part through specific indicators, including one focused on technology use, and that this aspect would be assessed using an explicit rubric (see Appendix 4). This was intended to encourage them to take an active role in identifying technological solutions and integrating them into their projects, while still leaving them enough autonomy to decide what to incorporate and how to incorporate it.

At group level, each bureau submitted a brief technology reflection note of approx. 500–800 words (See Appendix 2). In this document, groups had to report at least three concrete examples of technology use in a fixed format including: a description of the specific tool that was used for a specific purpose, task or process, a reflection on the outcome or effect of its use and a link to supporting evidence. If the example involved an AI generating output, groups were additionally required to indicate how the output was verified. These notes provide direct evidence for RQ1 by showing where in the workflow technologies were used and for RQ2 by making verification explicit.

A second group-level data source was the final presentation (see Appendix 3), in which each bureau reflected on projects, challenges, SWOT factors, technology choices, and lessons learned. Although this presentation partly overlapped with the separate technology reflection note, it served a distinct pedagogical and analytical purpose. Whereas the written reflection note required groups to document technology use in a structured way, the presentation invited them to synthesise these experiences for an audience of peers, allowing other bureaux to learn from their choices, challenges, and strategies. The oral format therefore added an additional pedagogical and research dimension to

the written reflection by showing how groups collectively framed their workflow, justified their technology use, and highlighted what they considered most relevant.

At individual level, each student submitted a portfolio describing their involvement in projects, their specific role(s), learning reflections, and a separate section on technology use. This individual perspective was important because it added a more fine-grained and role-specific dimension to the two group-level sources. Whereas the technology reflection note and the presentation mainly captured group-level technology practices and shared strategies, the individual portfolios made it possible to examine how students themselves experienced and interpreted these practices from their own position within the bureau (see Appendix 1). They were therefore particularly valuable for identifying differences between project managers and translators/revisers. Students were also explicitly asked to reflect on whether and how their technology use had changed during the STB module compared to before the module and, if relevant, to provide examples of output-generating technology use. This makes the individual portfolios especially important for RQ3, which concerns perceived change, while also providing role-specific evidence for RQ1 and RQ2.

Taken together, the three types of data sources provide a basis for triangulating reported practices, verification strategies, and perceived changes in technology use across roles and workflow stages.

3.3 Data analysis

The analysis was based on qualitative content analysis of the collected group- and individual-level materials, combining deductive and inductive thematic procedures. At a deductive level, it was organised around three main categories derived from the research questions. In relation to RQ1, the analysis will identify patterns of technology use across workflow stages. For RQ2, the focus was on how students report checking and validating AI technology use. In relation to RQ3, the analysis examined students' reported changes in technology use over the course of the simulation, based on individual reflections and supporting examples. At an inductive level, recurrent themes were identified within each category through close reading of the data sources.

Meaningful reflection segments were used as coding units. After the initial coding, the group- and individual-level materials were compared in order to identify convergences and divergences between collective and personal reporting on technology use.

4 Results

4.1 Making technology-related decision-making visible and assessable (RQ1)

In the individual portfolios, translators and revisers most often connect technologies to translation, terminology, revision, and quality control, while project managers connect them to planning, communication, task allocation, and document management. These materials show that the STB does not merely reveal what technologies students use but also how they locate them within their specific workflows. This also appears clearly in the group materials. In Bureau A's presentation, problems are categorised as: organisation efficiency, technology/workflow, and communication; the accompanying technology slide refers to the use of a CAT tool, language supporting tools (e.g. electronic dictionaries, translation memories, spelling checkers) as distinct resources within the workflow. Bureau B explicitly separates a specific tool for communication and collaboration (e.g. a shared agenda for planning), a CAT tool for translation and revision, and a MT tool for translation support. Bureau C likewise connects technology to their workflow, linking a collaboration and communication tool, a project management tool, a CAT tool and a MT tool to successive phases in their workflow, such as task distribution, translation, and revision.

Assessability, however, depends on the degree of structured documentation. The strongest portfolios and reflection notes make decision-making assessable by reporting a tool, a purpose, an outcome, and a quality-control procedure. ID5, ID8 and ID9, for instance, explicitly describe what a tool produced and what they did with that output afterwards. By contrast, some documents mention technology in more general terms ("it was efficient", "it helped us") without further specifications on the effect of the outcome and how the output was verified. The group reflection notes tend to be more consistent than some of the individual portfolios because they use a more standardised reporting template. Taken together, the materials suggest that the STB makes students' technology-

related decisions easier to assess when the reflection task clearly asks them to explain why they used a tool, what effect it had, and how they controlled or checked its use. When the task instructions do not follow such a strict reporting format, it also becomes harder to assess those decisions.

4.2 Practices of integrating and verifying AI-based technologies (RQ2)

The group- and individual-level data consistently show that AI-based technologies are used as part of a broader technological workflow. Most reported uses concern CAT-integrated MT, AI-based writing assistants, and, in one bureau, the use of a generative AI chatbot for suggesting a company name and logo rather than for translation itself. Apart from that, the use of a standalone generative AI chatbot for translation drafting is almost absent from the research materials. Bureau B reports having tested MT in the CAT tool they used but having rejected it because the quality was insufficient; Bureau C states that MT suggestions were only used in one project and were always revised; Bureau A also highlights CAT-integrated MT, but also foregrounds electronic dictionaries, language assistants and spell-checking tools in its workflow. The overall pattern is therefore one of AI-based tools embedded within a larger set of technological tools.

A second pattern is that output-generating tools are mostly treated as supportive rather than substitutive. Students typically describe using them to generate a first draft, explore alternative formulations, find lexical options, or speed up (repetitive) tasks. In their individual portfolios, ID8 reports using MT integrated in a CAT tool to support the translation work but then switching off the MT function when post-editing became less efficient than translating independently, especially for the specific project on which they had been working (i.e. the translation of historically sensitive farewell letters written by people during the Second World War shortly before their execution). ID9 describes using MT as a starting point for translating a specialised text on biodigesters, but adapting the output almost systematically, especially terminological suggestions. ID6 similarly describes consulting the output of a built-in MT feature in a CAT tool mainly to support the translation of difficult grammatical constructions or single lexical items rather than adopting full segments. At the group level, Bureau B describes MT use primarily as a way of finding more idiomatic alternatives and states explicitly that it was sometimes used

only when no other satisfactory formulation could be found. These accounts suggest a pragmatic use of AI-based tools rather than any attempt to out-source translation completely.

Verification emerges as the clearest and most consistent marker of responsible AI-related practice. Students repeatedly describe post-editing, comparing generated output with the source text, consulting dictionaries, checking terminology via IATE, EurLex, or parallel texts, relying on peer revision, and carrying out final quality checks. Bureau A's technology reflection note, for instance, explicitly states that MT suggestions in their CAT tool were treated only as "a first idea or example", after which the text was post-edited, revised several times by the translator, and then revised either internally or by an external partner. Bureau C's presentation similarly stresses that MT output was never adopted without further scrutiny, but checked against the source text, dictionaries, and peer revision. The individual portfolios confirm the same pattern. ID9, for example, reports that MT output for a specialised article was verified against the source text and professional reference sources, while suggestions from an AI-based writing assistant were only accepted after checking tone and coherence in the full text. Taken together, these findings suggest that students did not place unconditional trust in AI-based tools, but subjected their output to explicit verification.

At the same time, the data shows that students' understanding of responsible use is still mostly operational. They focus on revision, source checking, and not accepting output blindly. Much less is said about privacy, bias, intellectual property, or environmental impact. One project manager (ID1) states that technologies should be used in the "right, ethical and efficient way", but such broader ethical reflection remains relatively rare. The present materials therefore capture verification and transparency very well, but only partially capture broader ethical AI literacy.

4.3 Reported change in technology use (RQ3)

The clearest pattern in the individual portfolios is a reported shift from reluctance towards CAT tools to greater familiarity and acceptance. Several students state that before the STB they preferred to work in Word, used CAT tools only when required, or perceived them as too complex. Through repeated use in authentic projects, they became more aware of the practical benefits of CAT tools for workflow support and collaboration. ID8, for example, reports a

fundamental change in attitude after working with the chosen CAT tool, which came to be seen as a useful and supportive part of the translation process rather than as an unnecessarily complex tool. ID6 similarly describes a better understanding of why CAT tools are efficient and professionally relevant. ID3 emphasises their value for the translation workflow, for monitoring deadlines, and for maintaining a clear overview of translation projects within the team. This shift is also reflected at group level: Bureau B lists learning to work with CAT tools among its strengths, while Bureau C presents its CAT environment as useful not only for translation itself, but also for organising the workflow.

Reported change is not limited to the tools students use, but also concerns how these tools help students to organise the translation process itself. Several students describe a move away from a more linear way of translating a text towards a more structured workflow divided into phases such as project setup, drafting, revision or quality control. Others emphasise that they now see technologies as integral components of the overall process. This is particularly visible in the portfolios of the project managers. ID1 and ID4, for instance, describe learning to use communication and planning tools, shared agendas, and CAT tools more purposefully in order to monitor deadlines, distribute work, and maintain a clear overview of tasks in their projects. Bureau C's presentation illustrates this shift clearly: the group explains that it initially worked in a largely ad hoc manner, but gradually developed a more structured workflow supported by several dedicated technologies, including the selective use of MT. The STB thus appears to foster change not only in tool use, but also in how students conceptualise workflow, coordination, and the place of technology, including AI-based tools, within professional translation practice.

A third pattern is that students report using MT- and AI-supported tools in a selective and cautious way. As discussed in Section 4.2, generated output is mainly used as support, for example as inspiration or a first suggestion, and rejected when correcting it takes more time than translating directly. This pattern also appears at group level. Overall, the data point less to a broad enthusiasm for AI as such than to a more selective and workflow-dependent use of these technologies.

5 Discussion

Taken together, the findings show that the STB makes it possible to analyse technology use at both individual and group level. The individual portfolios provide insight into how students describe and justify their own technology-related decisions, whereas the reflection notes and presentations show how each bureau organised its workflow, distributed roles, and combined different tools. This matters because the findings show that technology use in the STB depends both on students' own choices and on how the group organises its workflow and divides roles. Project managers mainly report technology use in relation to planning, communication, deadline monitoring, and task distribution, while translators/revisers focus more on translation, revision, terminology work, and quality control.

This broader role- and workflow-based view of technology use is in line with earlier work on simulated translation bureaus and translator training, which stresses that technology is embedded in collaborative, practice-oriented environments rather than in isolated tool exercises (Buysschaert et al., 2018; Van Egdom et al., 2020).

Decision-making became most visible when students were required to specify where in the workflow a technology was used, for what purpose, what resulted from that use, and, in the case of AI-generated output, how the result was checked. In this respect, the richest evidence came from those data sources that followed a fixed reporting structure. In such cases, technology use could be analysed in a more systematic way. By contrast, where reporting was more open or less systematically structured, statements about technology use often remained broad.

AI-based tools were typically used in a supportive way, alongside CAT tools, dictionaries, terminology tools/resources, project management tools, and collaboration platforms. The most common pattern was to use AI-generated output for inspiration, a first draft, or lexical support, followed by revision, comparison with the source text, and other forms of verification. This means that, in the present dataset, AI use appears less as a disruptive force than as one resource within a broader workflow in which people still play the main role in checking quality and making decisions. This aligns with work on MT literacy, which emphasises that students and translators need to understand when and how MT can best be used, and that

human intervention remains central to translation work (Kenny, 2020).

At the same time, the findings suggest that the current design captures some dimensions of AI literacy more clearly than others. Students frequently describe selective uptake, post-editing, terminology checking, source comparison, and peer revision. In other words, they provide evidence of operationally responsible use. By contrast, they much less often reflect on broader ethical issues such as confidentiality, bias, intellectual property, or environmental impact. What emerges from the present design is therefore mainly a picture of responsible use in terms of verification and quality control. A useful next step would be to retain the current workflow-oriented setup, but to add one or two explicit prompts that invite students to reflect on risks, limitations, or ethical considerations when using AI-based tools in their projects. This distinction is also consistent with recent work on AI literacy and translation technology ethics, which argues that responsible use involves not only functional and evaluative skills, but also attention to wider ethical and professional implications (see e.g. Moorkens, 2022).

The study also has some limitations. First, it is based on one course run and a relatively small dataset. Second, the data come from assessed course assignments, so they are partly self-reported. However, combining individual and group materials helps reduce this limitation by allowing personal reflections to be compared with group reflections and concrete examples. The paper therefore does not claim to prove that students developed these competences because of the STB design. Instead, it shows that the design makes important aspects of technology-related learning visible, including decision-making, the checking of AI- and MT-supported output, and reported changes in students' use of translation technologies. Further research is needed to examine more directly to what extent the STB supports the development of these competences over time.

6 Conclusion

This study has shown that the STB makes technology-related decision-making visible through workflow-specific reporting at both the individual and group levels. It has also shown that AI-based technologies are mainly used as supportive tools within a broader workflow, and that students mainly report change in three areas: greater familiarity with CAT tools, a more explicit

integration of technology into the workflow, and a more critical and selective use of MT- and AI-supported tools.

The paper's broader contribution is both pedagogical and methodological. Pedagogically, it suggests that a practice-oriented STB offers a useful setting for teaching and assessing technology judgement in AI-enabled translation workflows. Methodologically, it shows the value of combining individual and group-level data in order to capture both personal experiences and shared ways of organising and reflecting on technology use. Future research can build on this first cycle by expanding the dataset and refining the task instructions so that broader ethical dimensions of AI literacy are addressed more explicitly, alongside workflow judgement and quality control.

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Appendix 1. Instructions for the individual technology reflection

Reflect on your use of technology within the STB. Technology is understood broadly here and may include CAT/MT, terminology and QA tools, corpora and search tools, collaboration tools, project management tools, automation, writing or language assistants, and similar tools.

A) Change in technology use through the STB

Answer the following question explicitly: Do you use technology differently since participating in the STB than you did before?

- If yes, explain what has changed and why. For example, you may refer to: different tools, a different way of working, more or less trust in certain technologies, different quality-control practices, different ways of collaborating or planning. Illustrate your answer with at least one concrete example (for example a screenshot, a workflow step, or a short description of a procedure).
- If no, explain why your use of technology has not changed.

B) Use of output-generating technology (only if applicable)

If you used AI-technology that generates output (for example translations, reformulations, summaries, or terminology proposals), report a maximum of two different concrete examples using the following format:

- Tool(s): [name of tool]
- Category (choose one): CAT/MT – terminology/QA – corpus/search tool – collaboration/project management – automation – writing/language assistant – other

- Task/purpose (what was it used for?):
- Input/instruction (e.g. prompt):
- Output (brief excerpt or short summary in 2–3 sentences):
- What did you do with the output? (accept / adapt / reject + explain why)
- Quality control (how did you check it?)

Appendix 2. Instructions for the group technology reflection note

Submit a technology reflection note of 500–800 words in which you explain how technology was used within your bureau in a creative and well-considered way. The note must include at least three concrete examples of technology use. For each example, use the following reporting format (maximum 5–8 lines per example):

- Task/process step: (e.g. planning, terminology work, translation, revision, quality assurance, communication, delivery)
- Tool/technology: [name of tool]
- Purpose: (e.g. speed/efficiency, quality, consistency, collaboration, risk management)
- What came out of it / effect: (briefly)
- Quality control: (how did you check this?)
- (If the tool generated output, also indicate briefly what input/instruction you gave and what you did with the output.)
- Evidence: [link to a concrete file or screenshot]

Appendix 3. Instructions for the group technology reflection in the group presentation

Include at least one slide explaining: which technologies were used and what they were used for. If AI-based technologies that generate output were used (for example suggestions or reformulations), include one short example showing:

- tool,

- task,
- input (briefly),
- output (briefly),
- what was done with it,
- how it was checked.

Appendix 4. Technology adoption assessment rubric

The following rubric was used as part of the group assessment to evaluate how student bureaux integrated technology (including AI-based technologies) into their workflow in a deliberate, creative, and critically justified way.

- Insufficient: The bureau uses technology only to a limited extent or without a clear approach. Students do not follow a consistent workflow and show little initiative. They use only whatever happens to be available. There is no visible creativity in the way technology is used. Generative AI is either not used at all or used in a random and unstructured way.
- Basic: The bureau uses the technologies introduced in the course in a correct way. These technologies support the basic functioning of the bureau, for example in translation, communication, and planning, but students mainly follow instructions. There is little initiative or creative application.
- Good: The bureau makes deliberate choices in its use of technology and adapts tools to its own way of working. Students show initiative and use technology creatively to improve collaboration and organisation.
- Excellent: The bureau actively looks for new tools or applications and uses technology in a creative and well-considered way. Students experiment and make conscious decisions about what works best for their bureau. Generative AI, if used, is employed critically and responsibly.