



Beyond Pre- and Post-Editing: Sustained Translator Involvement in AI-Assisted Translation

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Abstract

Pre-editing, post-editing, and prompt engineering capture important interventions in AI-assisted translation but offer only a partial account of how translator involvement is sustained across an extended project. This study examines an English–Persian translation of a philosophy-of-religion book undertaken with ChatGPT over approximately three months. Drawing on a retrospective, practice-based case analysis, it describes translator involvement at three interconnected scales: project-wide conventions, chapter-level preparation and authorial review, and paragraph-level evaluation and revision. It identifies two interrelated contextual practices: context preparation, through which the translator coordinated authorial materials, prior agreements, and approved translations; and ongoing context development, through which revisions and author-reviewed chapters became resources for subsequent work. Earlier translation decisions could thus shape the conditions of later translation activity. Recurrent prompts such as “next” illustrate how minimal instructions operated within a workflow requiring continued human judgment. The case highlights the prospective significance of translator interventions and the value of examining their relationships over time.

Keywords: AI-assisted translation, contextual resources, prompt engineering, translation workflows, translator involvement

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1. Introduction

During a book-length translation project assisted by ChatGPT in the summer of 2026, the translator frequently advanced the work with a single instruction: “next.” Taken in isolation, such a brief request reveals little about the translator’s involvement. Yet it formed part of a workflow shaped by previously introduced source and reference materials, established working conventions, and translations evaluated and revised as the project progressed. Some of this earlier work subsequently served as a resource for later translation. The brevity of individual instructions thus raises a broader issue: the activities visible in individual human–LLM exchanges do not necessarily reveal how the translator’s involvement is organized and sustained across an extended project.

Human intervention in machine translation (MT) has traditionally been examined through practices such as pre-editing and post-editing (Koponen, 2016; Somers, 1997), while the emergence of large language models (LLMs) has brought increasing attention to prompt engineering (He, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). Other strands of research offer complementary perspectives. Studies of translation as situated human–computer activity draw attention to the broader conditions of translation work (O’Brien, 2012; Risku & Windhager, 2013), while investigations of multi-turn translation and human feedback demonstrate how contextual information and earlier interactions can inform subsequent LLM-generated translations (Hu et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023). Together, these approaches illuminate different dimensions of translator involvement. Examining a sustained translation project, however, also calls for attention to how these dimensions are connected within the wider workflow, rather than treating editing, prompting, and contextual inputs as separate activities.

The present article examines this issue through the English–Persian translation of Hamidreza Ayatollahy’s (2024) *Philosophy of Religion: A Different Islamic View*, undertaken with sustained assistance from ChatGPT. The study considers how they formed part of a continuous, translator-managed undertaking. Accordingly, it asks: How was the translator’s involvement organized and sustained across a book-length AI-assisted translation project?

To answer this question, the article presents a retrospective, practice-based case analysis of the translation undertaking. It examines the translator’s activities at the project, chapter, and paragraph scales, focusing on the preparation and ongoing development of contextual resources. It also considers how these practices supported a workflow characterized by minimal prompting alongside sustained human involvement. The study thus contributes an empirical account of how translator involvement was organized over time, complementing existing perspectives on editing, prompting, and contextual resources in AI-assisted translation.

The article first reviews research on human intervention and context in AI-assisted translation. It then describes the project and its workflow, before analyzing the translator’s contextual practices and the relationship between minimal prompting and sustained human involvement. The conclusion considers implications for understanding the translator’s role in AI-assisted translation.

2. Literature Review

Research into human involvement in AI-assisted translation has approached the subject from several directions, including editing and prompting practices, the preservation and reuse of contextual resources, and translation as situated activity within human and technological environments. These perspectives offer complementary insights into different aspects of translation work, particularly when translation unfolds through successive interactions rather than isolated requests.

Pre-editing and post-editing have long provided important perspectives on human involvement in MT. Pre-editing concerns interventions in the source text intended to facilitate translation, while post-

editing involves revising machine-generated translations to meet specified requirements. These practices were established well before the emergence of generative AI (Somers, 1997; Koponen, 2016), but remain relevant to LLM-based translation. Ki and Carpuat (2025), for example, investigated automatic source-text rewriting and found that simplification could improve translations generated by LLMs. Castaldo et al. (2025) examined the post-editing of LLM-generated literary translations by professional translators, reporting reductions in editing time compared with translation from scratch. Mihalache and Varela Salinas (2026) further investigated meaning-making and error dynamics in ChatGPT-mediated translation, highlighting the importance of human judgment during revision. These studies demonstrate the continuing relevance of interventions directed at source texts and generated translations.

The development of conversational LLMs has also directed attention toward prompt engineering as a means of influencing translation outputs. Unlike conventional MT interfaces, conversational systems permit users to formulate instructions concerning translation purpose, register, terminology, style, and other requirements, and to revise those instructions through subsequent exchanges. Research has accordingly investigated the effects of different prompting strategies. He (2024) examined the use of translation briefs and translator or author personas in ChatGPT prompts, while Aldosari and Altuwairesh (2025) assessed how different translation prompts affected GPT-4 Turbo outputs. Zhang et al. (2025) investigated the prompting practices of postgraduate Translation Studies students, documenting how they used generative AI across translation-related tasks. Such research extends the examination of human intervention beyond direct modification of source or target texts to include the formulation and adjustment of instructions given to the system. Prompting may itself involve successive interactions and contextual information, rather than being restricted to a single, self-contained instruction.

A broader perspective is offered by research examining translation as situated activity within human, technological, and organizational environments. O'Brien (2012) characterizes translation as a form of human–computer interaction, drawing attention to relationships between translators, technologies, and working conditions. From a sociocognitive perspective, Risku and Windhager (2013) discuss translation as contextualized action embedded in social and technological settings, illustrating this approach through a translation-management case study. More recent empirical studies examine how technological developments intersect with professional arrangements, including the workplace networks of in-house translators (Hao, 2026), relationships between language service providers and freelancers (Jiménez-Andrés & Ibrahim, 2025), and changing professional roles in audiovisual translation (Spiteri Miggiani, 2026). Although these studies address different settings and questions, they direct attention to translation work as an activity involving relationships among people, tools, resources, and organizational practices.

Contextual information and the reuse of earlier decisions have long been relevant to translation and translation technology. Melby and Foster (2010) examine the definition, accessibility, and collaborative dimensions of context in translation, while Castilho and Knowles (2025) review its role in neural MT and its evaluation. Established translation technologies have also provided mechanisms for maintaining and reusing earlier translation decisions. Translation-memory systems enable previously translated segments to be stored and retrieved for subsequent work (Reinke, 2018). Interactive and adaptive MT extends the role of human intervention by allowing corrections to inform later translation through online learning (Peris & Casacuberta, 2019). Retrieval-augmented approaches, in turn, use selected examples from translation memories to guide generation. Bouthors et al. (2024) examine the effects of different retrieval strategies across several translation architectures, including an LLM-based approach using in-context learning. These developments demonstrate that accumulated translations, terminological consistency, and the prospective use of human corrections are not innovations introduced by generative AI. The mechanisms through which earlier decisions are reused nevertheless

differ considerably, ranging from segment retrieval and model adaptation to the provision of reference materials within an LLM's input context.

Recent work on generative AI has placed renewed emphasis on the organization of such contextual information. Beyond the formulation of individual prompts, research on context engineering addresses how information is selected, structured, retrieved, and maintained to support LLM applications (Kovari, 2026; Mei et al., 2025). In human–computer interaction, Palani and Ramos (2025) investigate the orchestration of context across extended creative workflows involving generative AI. Translation-related industry discussions similarly describe the integration of translation memories, glossaries, and style guides into AI translation environments (Comic, 2026). Although these contributions differ in disciplinary orientation and evidentiary status, they draw attention to the organization and continuing availability of resources across successive interactions. This concern is particularly relevant when contextual information is managed not only through technical retrieval mechanisms but also through the translator's continuing involvement in the workflow.

Research on LLM-based document translation provides more direct evidence of the relevance of context across multiple translation turns. Hu et al. (2025) investigate a multi-turn approach in which documents are divided into segments and translated sequentially while previous conversational turns are retained. Their source-primed variant introduces the entire source document before segment-by-segment translation. Under the conditions examined, the multi-turn approach outperformed both single-turn whole-document translation and independent segment translation on several automatic evaluation measures. Related studies investigate how different components of the information supplied to LLMs contribute to translation. Chitale et al. (2024) examine in-context learning for MT, identifying the importance of characteristics such as the quality, quantity, and selection of examples. Zaranis et al. (2024) analyze the contributions of different contextual components, including source text and few-shot examples, and identify differences associated with their content and position. Together, these studies demonstrate how document history, examples, and other contextual information can influence LLM translation under experimentally specified conditions.

Human feedback and its reuse have also been incorporated into LLM-based translation systems. Yang et al. (2023) propose a human-in-the-loop translation pipeline in which an LLM first generates a draft translation and then uses retrieved information or human feedback to guide its revision. Human–machine interactions generated through this procedure are stored in an external database for subsequent retrieval, allowing earlier feedback to inform later translation activity. This provides a technical precedent for the prospective use of human corrections beyond the immediate revision of individual outputs. The study focuses on the design and evaluation of a purpose-built feedback-retrieval system, whereas the present article examines how a translator organized and reused contextual resources within a conversational project environment. The distinction concerns the organization of feedback reuse rather than the principle of reusing feedback itself.

Conversational platforms such as ChatGPT provide further possibilities for combining these forms of contextual involvement. Its Projects feature allows related conversations, reference files, and project-specific instructions to be maintained within a shared environment (OpenAI, n.d.-c). Editable writing blocks also permit users to revise generated text directly within a conversation, with the revised version available for subsequent interaction (OpenAI, n.d.-d). Such affordances make it possible to combine reference materials supplied in advance with instructions, decisions, and revisions introduced during ongoing work. Their practical significance depends on how users select resources, establish conventions, evaluate outputs, and organize successive interactions.

Pre-editing, post-editing, and prompt engineering describe important dimensions of human intervention, while research on source priming and feedback reuse illuminates the role of contextual resources in translation. In the sustained translation project examined here, however, neither phase-

specific categories nor individual prompts adequately account for how the translator organized these activities and resources across the wider workflow.

3. Methodology

This study uses a retrospective, practice-based case analysis of an English–Persian book-translation project undertaken with sustained assistance from ChatGPT. The account draws on the translator’s direct participation and examines how the work was organized and carried out across the project, chapter, and paragraph scales.

The case examined in this study concerns the translation of Hamidreza Ayatollahy’s (2024) *Philosophy of Religion: A Different Islamic View* from English into Persian. The book comprises 15 chapters addressing major questions in the philosophy of religion from an Islamic philosophical perspective. The published English edition extends to 339 pages and contains approximately 2,000 substantive paragraphs. The translation began in late June 2026 and continued for approximately three months.

The analysis is retrospective and draws on the translator’s direct participation in the project, including the instructions, reference materials, approved translations, and procedures through which the work was organized. The account distinguishes activities according to their scope at the project, chapter, and paragraph scales, rather than treating these scales as successive stages. The analysis then considers the relationships among these activities and their development over time.

The translation was carried out with sustained assistance from ChatGPT, using its project-based conversational environment. Rather than treating the book as a succession of independent translation requests, the translator maintained a shared project in which instructions, reference materials, and previously approved translations could be made available across successive conversations. This arrangement allowed contextual resources to be established at the outset and supplemented as translation progressed. The resources originated from different sources and served different purposes, ranging from the English text to authorial Persian materials, editorial guidance, and the translator’s own approved translations.

The project was conducted through the standard ChatGPT web interface in Google Chrome on a Windows 11 laptop, using a ChatGPT Plus subscription. The translator initially used GPT-5.5 and switched to GPT-5.6 as soon as it became available in July 2026 (OpenAI, n.d.-b). ChatGPT’s Projects feature provided an environment for maintaining project-specific instructions, uploaded reference files, and separate conversations for individual chapters. The interface also supported editable writing blocks within conversations, allowing the translator to revise generated Persian text directly and enabling the revised versions to be used in subsequent exchanges within the same conversation. Writing blocks had been introduced into GPT-5.5 conversations on May 28, 2026 (OpenAI, n.d.-b), with expanded long-form editing capabilities released on June 8, 2026 (OpenAI, n.d.-a), shortly before the translation project began. The translator was thus able to take advantage of these newly introduced editing capabilities throughout the project. ChatGPT’s web-search functionality was also used when particular translation questions required additional information.

An important resource consisted of earlier Persian drafts written by the book’s author. These drafts had been used by the author in developing the English book and were subsequently provided to assist its translation into Persian. They were neither complete Persian versions of the published English chapters nor parallel translations corresponding passage by passage to the finished English text. Instead, they contained philosophical formulations and discussions relevant to particular sections of the book. Their value for translation lay especially in providing access to the author’s preferred terminology, conceptual distinctions, and characteristic ways of expressing philosophical arguments in

Persian. The English chapters remained the texts to be translated, while the earlier Persian drafts served as supplementary authorial resources.

Another set of resources concerned the consistency of the developing Persian manuscript. At the beginning of the project, the translator established book-wide instructions concerning terminology, tone, and the reuse of previously finalized translations. The initial project instruction stated:

This is a translation project of a book on philosophy of religion from English to Persian. Terms and tone should be consistent across the book, based on the feedback that I'll provide. I keep adding the final translations of previous chapters to the project context so you can use for terminology, style and other aspects. I'll also share the original author's notes in Persian as we work on the relevant chapter.

The instruction established consistency across the book as a continuing objective and anticipated the progressive incorporation of approved translation decisions. After completing each chapter, the translator sent the Persian translation to the book's author, who reviewed it and returned comments and corrections. The translator incorporated this feedback into the chapter before uploading the finalized version to the ChatGPT project. In this way, the accumulating collection of finalized chapters incorporated both the translator's decisions and the author's subsequent revisions. These chapters served as precedents for terminology, philosophical phrasing, stylistic choices, and other conventions already adopted in the developing manuscript. A separate editing manual also formed part of the working resources.

Not all contextual resources took the form of documents supplied to the project. Previous agreements concerning translation conventions, discussions of particular passages, and revisions made during interaction with ChatGPT also contributed to the working context. In particular, the conversational environment allowed the translator to edit generated Persian passages directly, making the revised wording available within subsequent interaction. Thus, the contextual resources included both materials introduced into the project and material developed through the translation activity itself.

These resources occupied different positions in relation to the translation task. The English chapters supplied the text to be translated; the author's earlier Persian drafts provided supplementary philosophical and linguistic formulations; finalized, author-reviewed Persian chapters furnished approved precedents; and project instructions, editorial guidance, and interactional agreements established conventions for conducting the work. The following subsection describes how the translator worked with these resources at the project, chapter, and paragraph scales.

The translator's involvement in the translation process can be described at three interconnected scales: the project scale, the chapter scale, and the paragraph scale. These scales distinguish the scope of the translator's activities. While some activities were undertaken throughout the project, others recurred at the beginning or completion of individual chapters or during the translation of particular passages. Together, they constituted the workflow through which the translation was organized and carried out.

Project scale: At the project scale, the translator established and maintained conventions intended to ensure consistency across the book. These included decisions concerning philosophical terminology, Persian phrasing, stylistic preferences, and editorial practices. The initial project instructions provided an overarching orientation, while further decisions emerged through translation and subsequent revision. The translator maintained the project's contextual resources by progressively incorporating finalized chapters, including revisions made following the author's review. In this way, previously settled translation choices remained available for consultation and reuse in subsequent chapters. The translator also maintained the developing Persian manuscript outside ChatGPT, transferring approved passages into the manuscript and managing their incorporation into the larger translation.

Chapter scale: At the chapter scale, the translator organized a recurring preparation procedure before beginning translation. A separate conversation was opened for each new chapter within the ChatGPT project. The translator first supplied the English chapter alongside relevant earlier Persian drafts written by the book's author and asked ChatGPT to examine both materials and explain how the Persian drafts could assist the forthcoming translation. This preliminary examination focused particularly on philosophical terminology, conceptual formulations, and expressions that could inform the Persian rendering of the English chapter. The translator then used a separate prompt to ask ChatGPT to review finalized Persian translations of preceding chapters, with attention to established equivalents, phrasing, and stylistic conventions. A further request asked the system to restate the translation agreements established during earlier work. These preparatory requests were made before paragraph-by-paragraph translation began, bringing different resources and previously established decisions into the discussion of the new chapter.

Chapter-level involvement also extended beyond the initial preparation. Once a chapter had been translated and assembled into the Persian manuscript, the translator submitted it to the book's author for review. The author returned comments and corrections, which the translator incorporated into the chapter. The resulting finalized version was then uploaded to the ChatGPT project for use in subsequent chapters. This review complemented the author's earlier contribution of Persian drafts, with the translator managing both forms of authorial involvement within the translation workflow.

Paragraph scale: At the paragraph scale, translation proceeded sequentially through the English chapter. ChatGPT presented Persian translations of successive paragraphs in editable writing blocks within the conversation. The translator examined these renderings against the English source, paying attention to their accuracy, the appropriateness of philosophical equivalents, and the quality of Persian expression. Where necessary, the translator revised the generated text, including through direct editing of the writing blocks. These revisions ranged from terminological and stylistic adjustments to punctuation and orthographic corrections. Once a passage was approved, the translator copied it into the manuscript file and instructed ChatGPT to proceed to the next paragraph.

As the paragraph-level procedure became established, many continuation requests consisted simply of "next," occasionally extended to instructions such as "next and next" or "next three," depending on the length of the paragraphs. These abbreviated requests were interspersed with more substantive interactions whenever a passage required additional attention. The translator could discuss alternative renderings, clarify philosophical meanings, reconsider terminological choices, remind ChatGPT of previously established conventions, or initiate web searches to resolve particular questions. Direct textual revision was occasional, but evaluation of the generated translations remained a regular part of the process. When revisions were made within the conversational environment, the edited Persian text became available as part of the context for subsequent interactions within the same conversation. ChatGPT generally followed the revised conventions in subsequent translations, including preferences concerning orthography, terminology, and writing style. Occasionally, however, the translator needed to remind the system to attend to earlier edits and maintain the established conventions.

The activities undertaken at these three scales were closely connected. Project-wide conventions guided chapter preparation and paragraph-level decisions; chapter-opening examinations brought relevant materials and previous agreements into the translation of new passages; and revisions and author-reviewed chapters contributed to the resources available for later work. The translator's involvement therefore extended across the organization of the book as a whole, the management of individual chapters, and the evaluation and revision of successive translations. These interconnected activities provide the basis for examining the contextual dimensions of the translator's involvement in the following section.

4. Results and Discussion

The activities described in Section 3 included prompting, editing, and the management of translation resources. Their significance, however, also lies in the relationships among activities carried out at different points in the project. This section examines those relationships through context preparation and ongoing context development, before considering how they supported minimal prompting alongside sustained human involvement.

4.1. Context Preparation and Development

The translator employed two interrelated contextual practices throughout the project: context preparation and ongoing context development. Context preparation involved organizing and mobilizing resources to guide translation, while context development involved progressively expanding and refining those resources through translation, revision, and feedback. These practices were closely connected, since decisions and translations produced earlier in the project could become part of the context prepared for subsequent work. Examining their relationship helps explain how the translator organized the conditions of translation across the project, chapter, and paragraph scales.

Context preparation was not simply the accumulation of material. It required the translator to distinguish resources by their purposes and authority: the English chapters defined what was to be translated; the author's earlier Persian drafts offered insight into preferred philosophical formulations; and finalized, author-reviewed chapters provided precedents for settled target-language decisions. Project instructions and interactional agreements regulated the procedures through which these resources were brought into use. The translator's contribution thus included determining which forms of guidance were pertinent to a given translation activity, rather than treating all available context as interchangeable.

The chapter-opening procedure illustrates how these distinctions were put into practice. The translator initiated separate examinations of the author's Persian drafts, finalized chapters, and earlier agreements before beginning paragraph-by-paragraph translation. Analytically, the significance of this sequence lies in the deliberate assignment of different roles to those materials: authorial formulations were consulted for conceptual and linguistic guidance, while approved translations and agreements served as precedents for consistency. Preparation was also renewed during later passages when established conventions had to be recalled. This resonates with Risku's (2013) discussion of knowledge management in translation, while drawing attention to the translator's decisions about how resources should be introduced into successive LLM interactions.

One component of this preparation resembles the source-priming procedure investigated by Hu et al. (2025), in which a source document is supplied before its segments are translated through a multi-turn conversation. However, source priming captures only part of the preparation undertaken in this project. The translator also introduced authorial Persian materials, mobilized previously approved target-language chapters, and reactivated procedural agreements. Moreover, the finalized chapters were not simply collections of aligned source–target examples. They constituted extended passages of an emerging translation that had already undergone human evaluation and authorial review. The significance of context preparation therefore lay not merely in the amount of information supplied, but also in the translator's coordination of resources serving different functions within the same translation project.

Alongside context preparation, ongoing context development concerned the resources generated through translation activity itself. At the paragraph scale, a revision could both improve an immediate rendering and establish a preference for subsequent passages. Corrections involving terminology, Persian phrasing, punctuation, and orthographic conventions made preferred forms available in later

interactions. ChatGPT generally followed these preferences in subsequent translations, although occasional reminders were needed. Such revisions could therefore serve both immediate and prospective purposes.

At the chapter scale, finalized, author-reviewed translations gave earlier decisions a more settled status as precedents. Their role differed from that of the author's earlier Persian drafts: the drafts offered formulations relevant to the source text, while the finalized chapters reflected translation choices reviewed and approved for the emerging Persian manuscript. In bringing these resources into subsequent chapters, the translator coordinated contributions of different origin and authority. The working context was therefore shaped both by resources introduced before translation and by resources produced and approved through the translation process.

This relationship between context and activity has a conceptual affinity with Dourish's (2004) account of context as something constituted and maintained through interaction rather than simply defined beforehand. Although his argument does not concern the specific mechanisms through which LLMs process contextual information, it offers a useful perspective on how the conditions of translation developed in the present project. Contextual resources were intentionally introduced, but they were also progressively supplemented through interaction, revision, and the incorporation of approved translations. The translator therefore worked with a context that was both prepared for translation and developed through translation activity.

The prospective use of feedback is not itself distinctive to this case. Yang et al. (2023), for example, describe a human-in-the-loop translation pipeline that stores previous interactions and feedback for retrieval during later translations. Unlike this purpose-built feedback-retrieval system, the present workflow relied on the translator's coordination of authorial drafts, working agreements, direct revisions, and approved chapters within a conversational project environment. The relevant distinction therefore concerns how differently situated resources were organized and brought into subsequent translation activities.

The relationship between context preparation and ongoing context development is especially important. Preparation drew on resources accumulated through earlier translation activity, while that activity generated further decisions and approved texts that could be mobilized in subsequent preparation. For example, a terminological or stylistic decision made during the translation of one paragraph could inform later passages within the same conversation, become part of a finalized chapter, and subsequently serve as a precedent when another chapter was prepared. Earlier translation activity could therefore change the contextual conditions of later activity. This connection extended across the three scales described previously and gave the translator's involvement a cumulative dimension that cannot be fully understood by examining individual translation requests or revisions in isolation.

The translator's contribution therefore included not only evaluating and revising individual renderings but also shaping the resources and conventions available for later work. The following subsection considers one particularly visible consequence of this wider involvement: abbreviated continuation prompts.

4.2. Minimal Prompting and Sustained Human Involvement

One particularly revealing feature of the translation project was the contrast between the brevity of many translation requests and the extent of the translator's involvement in the wider workflow. Once the chapter-opening preparations had been completed and the paragraph-by-paragraph procedure established, many subsequent requests consisted simply of "next." Depending on the length of the passages, the translator sometimes used variations such as "next and next" or "next three." These

instructions contained almost no explicit information about the source text, translation direction, terminology, or stylistic requirements. Nevertheless, they served a clear purpose within the established workflow: to continue translating the English chapter according to the procedures and conventions already introduced.

These abbreviated instructions were intelligible because the source chapter, relevant references, and sequential procedure had already been established. “Next” therefore functioned as a context-dependent convention for continuing an agreed activity, not as a self-contained translation instruction. Its brevity depended on what had been organized beforehand and on what remained available within the interaction.

A comparable dependence on conversational context has been observed in research on translation prompting. Zhang et al. (2025), examining postgraduate translation students’ interactions with generative AI, identified prompts whose meaning depended on earlier exchanges rather than being fully expressed in the immediate instruction. Their example, “make it [the text] more logical,” illustrates how a brief request can refer to material already introduced in a conversation. The present case shares this contextual dependence but differs in the sustained and recurrent character of the procedure. Whereas the example discussed by Zhang et al. refers to an earlier text, “next” functioned as a recurring instruction within a book-length translation workflow. Its interpretation depended not only on a preceding passage but also on an established sequence of translation activities and conventions maintained across the project.

This observation also resonates with Clark and Brennan’s (1991) discussion of grounding in communication, particularly their principle of least collaborative effort. Their account suggests that communication can become more economical when participants have already established information necessary for coordinating an activity. Applied cautiously to the present case, this perspective helps explain why repeated translation requests could become considerably shorter once the relevant procedure had been established. The comparison does not imply that ChatGPT possessed human-like common ground or mutual understanding. Rather, it highlights how the informational requirements of an individual instruction depend on the interactional conditions within which it is issued. The brevity of “next” was therefore made possible by work undertaken through earlier interactions, rather than by the absence of such work.

A related comparison can be made with Hu et al.’s (2025) investigation of multi-turn document translation. Their approach retains preceding conversational turns and, in its source-primed variant, introduces the source document before sequential translation begins. However, the relevant source segment and translation instruction are still supplied at each turn. In the present project, the English chapter was already available, and the translator frequently requested continuation without repeating either the passage to be translated or the translation instructions. Furthermore, the conversational context included resources and decisions introduced or developed through the translator’s continuing involvement. The comparison is therefore useful not as evidence that abbreviated prompting produces better translations, but as an illustration of how sequential LLM translation can be organized through different arrangements of contextual information and human intervention.

Importantly, the reduction in prompt length did not entail a corresponding reduction in human involvement. The translator continued to examine each Persian rendering against the English source, evaluate philosophical terminology and expression, and determine whether the passage was acceptable for inclusion in the manuscript. Where necessary, the translator revised the generated text directly, discussed alternative formulations, or reminded ChatGPT to observe previously established conventions. These interventions included substantive translation decisions as well as stylistic, orthographic, and punctuation preferences. The translator generally found that such revisions informed later renderings, although occasional reminders were needed to maintain consistency. Thus,

even when the immediate request was limited to “next,” the translator remained engaged in evaluating and directing the translation.

The significance of “next” is therefore not prompt brevity alone, but the difference between what an individual request displays and the work involved in sustaining the activity it advances. Earlier preparation allowed established conventions to be invoked without repeated instructions, while continuing evaluation and revision could contribute further decisions to the context available for later work. Minimal prompting was thus compatible with a workflow whose contextual resources continued to develop.

These observations qualify a strictly phase-specific description of human intervention in this case. Pre-editing, post-editing, and prompt engineering identify relevant activities but, considered separately, do not fully characterize their cumulative relationships across the project. The recurrent use of “next” makes this distinction particularly visible: minimal prompting did not mean minimal human involvement.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how translator involvement was organized and sustained during an English–Persian book-translation project undertaken with ChatGPT. The analysis showed that this involvement extended beyond individual editing and prompting activities to encompass the organization of resources, conventions, and translation decisions across the project, chapter, and paragraph scales. These activities were interconnected, with earlier work contributing to the conditions under which subsequent translations were produced. The translator’s role therefore cannot be adequately characterized through phase-specific interventions alone.

Two interrelated contextual practices were particularly important: context preparation and ongoing context development. The translator not only introduced and coordinated resources with different functions but also incorporated revisions and approved translations into the context available for later work. Individual interventions could thus serve both immediate and prospective purposes. The recurrent use of minimal prompts such as “next” illustrates this relationship: brief instructions operated within an established and evolving workflow that continued to require substantial human involvement.

These findings have implications for how human intervention in AI-assisted translation is examined. Pre-editing, post-editing, and prompt engineering remain useful categories, while research on contextual information and feedback reuse provides important complementary perspectives. The present case suggests that examining the extended translation workflow can help explain how these activities and resources are connected over time. In particular, it draws attention to the temporal dimension of translator involvement, whereby decisions and revisions made during earlier translation activities can become resources for subsequent work. This perspective complements existing approaches by emphasizing the relationships among interventions rather than treating them solely as discrete activities.

As a retrospective, practice-based case analysis of a single translation project, this study does not establish the comparative effectiveness of the workflow or its effects on translation quality and efficiency. Further research involving other translation projects, language pairs, and technological environments could examine how similar contextual practices operate under different conditions. Nevertheless, the case illustrates an important dimension of sustained AI-assisted translation: the significance of human intervention may lie not only in its immediate contribution to a translation, but also in how it shapes the contextual conditions of subsequent translation activity.

AI Declaration

ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used to assist with supplementary literature searches and final language polishing. The author critically reviewed and revised all AI-assisted content and takes full responsibility for the final manuscript.

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