THE WASTE LAND AND THE QUESTION OF TRANSLATION: THE POEM'S JOURNEY BETWEEN HUMANS, GOOGLE, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comparative analysis of three Arabic translations of selected passages from T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, evaluating human translation (Abdul Wahid Lu'lu'a), rule-based machine translation (Google Translate), and AI-generated translation (ChatGPT). Through four core criteria linguistic accuracy, poetic aesthetics, symbolic transfer, and cultural engagement the study reveals critical strengths and limitations in each modality. Findings show that Lu'lu'a's human translation excels in conveying Eliot's intertextual density and rhythmic nuance. ChatGPT performs moderately well, demonstrating stylistic fluency but lacking deeper interpretive insight. Google Translate underperforms across all axes due to literalism and syntactic instability. The study concludes that while AI tools offer potential for initial drafting, human translators remain indispensable for capturing the full poetic and cultural depth of modernist texts. This research contributes to current debates in literary translation and AI by highlighting the interpretive challenges neural models face in high-literary contexts. These findings may inform future design of AI translation systems for complex literary tasks.

1. INTRODUCTION

T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922) stands as a cornerstone of modernist poetry, renowned for its fragmented structure, multilingual complexity, and dense intertextual references. From classical mythology and Christian imagery to Eastern philosophy and Shakespearean allusion, the poem resists a linear narrative and defies easy translation. As Kenner (1973) notes, Eliot's verse "evaporates literalism," demanding interpretive agency from both reader and translator (p. 157). Translating The Waste Land into Arabic presents unique challenges, not merely linguistic but cultural and symbolic. As El Mahraoui, Marouane, and Bouylmani (2023) argue, "the translator usually looks for alternative deviations in the target language to create a similar literary effect," a strategy that frequently demands balancing semantic fidelity with stylistic resonance (p. 83). Arabic translators must thus navigate syntactic deviation, intertextual layering, and rhythmic experimentation that resist domestication. Likewise, Toral and Way (2018) raise critical questions about the adequacy of machine translation in preserving poetic function, especially when dealing with metaphor, irony, and polyglossia (pp. 56–58). Neural models, while fluent, often fail to grasp deeper symbolic registers and poetic intentionality. Despite a growing corpus of Arabic translations most notably Abdul Wahid Lu'lu'a's canonical version (T. S. Eliot: The Poet and the Poem, 2007) there remains a lack of systematic comparison between human translation and AI-based outputs. Existing scholarship has yet to fully interrogate how rule-based and neural-network translators handle Eliot's linguistic innovations and cultural references. This study aims to bridge that gap by comparing three translation modalities: Lu'lu'a's human translation, Google Translate (as a rule-based system), and ChatGPT (a neural AI model). Five representative sections of The Waste Land were selected for analysis: "The Burial of the Dead," "A Game of Chess," "The Fire Sermon," "Death by Water," and "What the Thunder Said." The study draws upon translation theories by Nida and Taber (1982), Halliday (1971), Venuti (2012), and Toury (1995) to evaluate each translation across four axes: poetic aesthetics, symbolic fidelity, cultural mediation, and stylistic deviation. Through this comparative framework, the research contributes to contemporary debates in both literary translation and artificial intelligence.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The act of translating poetry is widely regarded as one of the most complex and nuanced forms of linguistic mediation. Unlike prose, poetry involves a heightened sensitivity to sound, rhythm, imagery, and cultural symbolism all of which resist literal transfer between languages. In the case of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, the translation task is further compounded by the poem's intertextual density, cross-cultural allusions, and deliberate fragmentation. This necessitates a theoretical framework that draws on multiple strands of translation theory, including functionalism, stylistics, and the cultural turn.

2.1. Functional Equivalence and the Limits of Literalism

One of the foundational principles in translation studies is functional equivalence, as proposed by Eugene Nida. He distinguishes between formal equivalence (a word-for-word approach) and dynamic or functional equivalence a method that aims to reproduce the same response or function in the target audience as in the original (Nida & Taber, 1982, p. 200; Mudagmesh & Allawzi, 2023, p.4). In the case of The Waste Land, a literal rendering of phrases such as "April is the cruellest month" or "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata." often fails to convey their symbolic resonance and cultural depth. Therefore, this study adopts Nida's principle as a lens to evaluate how different translators, including AI systems, approximate the poem's intended effects in Arabic.

2.2. Foregrounding and Poetic Deviation

The concept of foregrounding introduced by the Prague School and later developed by Halliday refers to the use of linguistic deviation to attract the reader's attention and evoke aesthetic or emotional responses (Halliday, 1971, p. 332). Eliot's poetry is marked by deliberate foregrounding through enjambment, lexical ambiguity, and syntactic rupture. An effective translation must recognize and recreate these formal disruptions in the target language. This framework helps in identifying whether a translator (human or machine) has maintained or flattened the poem's poetic deviation.

2.3. Venuti's Domestication and Foreignization

Lawrence Venuti's distinction between domestication and foreignization serves as a crucial reference for evaluating the cultural positioning of a translation. Domestication seeks to make the source text more familiar and accessible to the target audience, often at the expense of cultural specificity. In contrast, foreignization retains the estrangement

of the original, preserving its cultural and historical context (Venuti, 2012, pp. 19–20). When translating Eliot's Sanskrit allusions or European mythologies, the choice between these strategies reflects a translator's ideological stance. This dichotomy becomes particularly salient when comparing Lu'lu'a's interpretive translations with the more literal, neutral renderings by Google Translate and ChatGPT.

2.4. Toury's Norms and Translation Shifts

Gideon Toury's descriptive translation studies introduce the idea of norms culturally determined expectations that shape translation choices. He distinguishes between adequacy (faithfulness to the source text) and acceptability (alignment with target-language norms) (Toury, 1995, p. 56). Translations of The Waste Land often oscillate between these poles. A translation like Lu'lu'a's leans toward adequacy, aiming to preserve Eliot's density and opacity, while Google Translate tends toward acceptability, simplifying the text to fit modern Arabic syntax and semantics. Toury's model allows the study to track these shifts and measure their impact on meaning.

2.5. Literary Translation and Artificial Intelligence

With the advent of neural machine translation and large language models, such as Google Translate and ChatGPT, a new frontier of inquiry has emerged in the field of literary AI translation. While these tools demonstrate fluency and lexical accuracy, scholars argue that they often lack interpretive depth and contextual awareness (Toral & Way, 2018, p. 56). The inability of AI systems to decode metaphor, irony, or allusion hallmarks of Eliot's poetry raises questions about their adequacy for literary translation. This study engages this debate by empirically testing how AI models perform when confronted with the linguistic and symbolic intricacies of The Waste Land. By integrating these five theoretical lenses, the study is equipped to assess how each translation modality human, rule-based machine, and AI performs across multiple axes: fidelity to poetic form, symbolic transfer, cultural sensitivity, and interpretive nuance. The framework thus provides a rigorous basis for analyzing the comparative dynamics of translating modernist poetry into Arabic.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Arabic and Western scholarship on The Waste Land has consistently emphasized the poem's linguistic intricacy, intertextual density, and cultural pluralism. However, the integration of AI-based translation into this discourse remains limited. Lu'lu'a's translation (2007) remains the most referenced Arabic version. His approach blends symbolic fidelity with rhythmic adaptation, aiming to preserve Eliot's philosophical undertones while adapting poetic rhythm for Arabic readers. As El Mahraoui et al. (2023) note, his version "preserves some deviations in the target text, while omitting or simplifying others that could confuse the Arab reader" (p. 88), achieving functional equivalence but occasionally diluting Eliot's syntactic experimentation. From a technological standpoint, Toral and Way (2018) critique neural machine translation models for their limitations in literary contexts. While such models generate fluent output, they often lack interpretive sensitivity, especially regarding metaphor and polyphony features central to The Waste Land (pp. 56–58). These limitations echo broader concerns in literary translation theory. For instance, Apter (2013) discusses the politics of untranslatability in modernist texts, emphasizing how linguistic opacity, cultural specificity, and intertextual density hallmarks of Eliot's poetry resist absorption into a single target language. In their recent study, Karabayeva and Kalizhanova (2024) examined the rhetorical effectiveness of machine translation tools in literary contexts, focusing on poetic texts rendered by ChatGPT and DeepL. While both models demonstrated syntactic fluency and lexical richness, the authors concluded that these systems "are not yet capable of adequately interpreting or preserving the rhetorical and cultural components embedded in literary texts, especially poetry" (Karabayeva & Kalizhanova, 2024). Their findings underscore the persistent gap between surface-level fluency and deeper interpretive competence in AI-generated translations. Similarly, Abdelhalim et al. (2025), in their investigation of Saudi EFL student translators, reported that although ChatGPT was favored for its lexical richness and user-friendly interface, "participants expressed concern over its inability to handle metaphor, allusion, and culturally embedded idioms" (p. 11), particularly when compared to human translation efforts.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This study seeks to investigate the comparative effectiveness of human and AI-driven translations in rendering the complex poetic, symbolic, and cultural features of The Waste Land into Arabic. In light of the theoretical framework and previous scholarship, the study attempts to answer the questions of firstly.

4.1. Linguistic Fidelity

To what extent do the three translation modalities Lu'lu'a, Google Translate, and ChatGPT differ in preserving the lexical and syntactic accuracy of the source text?

4.2. Poetic Aesthetics

How does each translation reflect the poetic structure, rhythm, and figurative devices of the original poem?

4.3. Symbolic and Intertextual Transfer

Are the symbolic and intertextual elements in Eliot's poetry adequately conveyed across the three translations, and how are mythological, religious, or literary references handled?

4.4. Cultural Resonance

How do the translations negotiate cultural dissonance between the source and target cultures, especially regarding foreignization and domestication strategies? Finally, Machine Translation Limits: What are the observable limitations and potentials of AI-based translations in capturing the depth and ambiguity of modernist poetry?

4.5. Hypotheses

Based on the literature and theoretical models, the study hypothesizes the following:

H1: The human translation by Abdul Wahid Lu'lu'a will demonstrate the highest degree of linguistic fidelity and poetic expressiveness, owing to his interpretive agency and cultural awareness.

H2: Google Translate, as a rule-based machine translation tool, will perform weakest across all four criteria, particularly in symbolism and poetic aesthetics.

H3: ChatGPT's neural translation will outperform Google Translate in fluency and poetic flow, but it will still fall short of Lu'lu'a's translation in terms of symbolic and cultural interpretation.

H4: Neither machine translation system is currently capable of reproducing the intertextual density or mythological layering of The Waste Land without human intervention or editorial post-processing.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, analytical-comparative methodology to examine how The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot has been rendered into Arabic by **three distinct translation modalities:**

1. A canonical human translation by Abdul Wahid Lu'lu'a (2007),
2. An automated translation by Google Translate,
3. An AI-generated translation by ChatGPT.

The analysis is grounded in stylistic and translation studies approaches and guided by four core evaluation criteria: linguistic accuracy, poetic aesthetics, symbolic transfer, and cultural engagement.

5.1. Corpus Selection

The study focuses on five major excerpts from The Waste Land, selected for their high poetic density and symbolic richness

- The Burial of the Dead (lines 1–4),
- A Game of Chess (lines 111–117),
- The Fire Sermon (lines 173–177),
- Death by Water (entire section),
- What the Thunder Said (final five lines).

Each of these sections reflects core features of Eliot's poetic vision fragmentation, intertextuality, and mythic symbolism and poses distinct challenges for translation.

5.2. Translations Analysed

The versions under comparison are

- Abdul Wahid Lu'lu'a's translation, taken from his book T. S. Eliot: The Poet and the Poem (Lu'lu'a, 2007), recognized for its interpretive and lyrical depth.
- Google Translate output, generated in 2025 using the latest version of Google's public translation engine.
- ChatGPT translation, produced by prompting GPT-4 in 2025 to translate the selected passages into Arabic while preserving poetic and symbolic meaning.

The ChatGPT translation was generated using OpenAI's GPT-4 model, accessed in early 2025. To ensure consistency and reproducibility, the same standardized prompt was used for all excerpts: "Please translate the following passage from T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land into Arabic. Preserve the poetic imagery, symbolic meaning, and cultural nuance without simplifying the structure." No post-editing was applied to the output to preserve the raw interpretive performance of the model. All translations were treated as fixed texts and analyzed manually, without any post-editing or correction.

5.3. Analytical Framework

The evaluation criteria used in this study derive from established principles in translation and

stylistics:

- Linguistic Accuracy: Faithfulness to lexical meaning and syntactic structure in the source text (Nida & Taber, 1982).
- Poetic Aesthetics: Attention to rhythm, imagery, metaphor, and literary devices (Halliday, 1971).
- Symbolic Transfer: Success in conveying mythological, philosophical, or religious allusions (Venuti, 2012).
- Cultural Engagement: The translator's ability to navigate foreignization and domestication (Toury, 1995; Venuti, 2012).

Each passage was assessed independently, and the results were tabulated to compare trends across translations.

5.3.1. Evaluation Protocol Note

All comparative assessments including judgments of linguistic accuracy, poetic aesthetics, symbolic fidelity, and cultural resonance were jointly conducted by the four co-authors. Each passage was independently evaluated by at least two researchers, followed by group discussion to resolve discrepancies and ensure analytical consistency. This collaborative process aimed to minimize individual bias and enhance the validity of the qualitative judgments presented in the tables.

5.4. Limitations

While this study offers a robust qualitative assessment, **several limitations must be acknowledged:**

- The analysis is limited to five excerpts and may not fully reflect the poem's entire thematic and stylistic range.
- Google Translate and ChatGPT outputs may vary across time and prompts, introducing potential inconsistency.
- The study does not include reception analysis or survey-based reader responses, which could further illuminate the impact of each translation.

5.5. Ethical Note

All translations were cited with attribution. No AI-generated content was altered manually to preserve the integrity of comparison. The purpose is not to critique individual tools or translators but to explore the broader implications of AI's capacity for literary translation.

6. ANALYSIS

6.1. Textual Analysis-Section I: "The Burial of the Dead"

Original Text (Lines 1–4)
April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

Lu'lu'a's Translation

نيسان أقسى الشهور،
يُخرج الليلك من الأرض الموات،
يمزج الذكرى بالرغبة،
ويحرّك حامل الجذور بغيث الربيع.
(Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 36)

Google Translate's Output

أبريل أقسى الشهور،
يولد أزهار هو الليلك من الأرض الميتة،
يمزج الذاكرة بالرغبة،
ويحرّك الجذور الباهتة بمطر الربيع.

ChatGPT's Version

أبريل أقسى الشهور،
ينبت الليلك من أرض يباب،
يمزج الذكرى بين والرغبة،
ويحرّك الجذور الخاملة بمطر الربيع.

6.1.1. Comparative Analysis

1. Linguistic Accuracy

Lu'lu'a preserves the tone and semantic charge of the original, accurately rendering "April is the cruellest month" as "الشهور أقسى نيسان" ، maintaining the nominal structure and rhythm. His verb "يُخرج" (brings forth) aptly captures the nuance of "breeding" while aligning naturally with Arabic syntax. The phrase "الموات الأرض" is both faithful and idiomatic, denoting spiritual and agricultural sterility. Google Translate, while accurate at surface level, produces awkward syntax: "يولد أزهار الليلك" feels mechanical, with "يولد" suggesting biological reproduction rather than poetic emergence. The phrase "الباهتة الجذور" (faded roots) is semantically inaccurate; "dull" here connotes dormancy, not visual fading. ChatGPT's rendering strikes a better linguistic balance. "ينبت الليلك" is a culturally and semantically appropriate equivalent for "breeding lilacs." The use of "أرض يباب" is particularly evocative, drawing from Quranic and literary connotations of barrenness, and more expressive than "ميتة" or "موات".

2. Poetic Aesthetics

Lu'lu'a's rhythm and internal cadence are palpable. His use of "يُخرج" ، "يمزج" ، "يحرّك" preserves the verbal parallelism of Eliot's original, creating an auditory flow. The insertion of "حامل الجذور" is, however, a minor deviation, adding an interpretive layer not explicitly present in the source, which may hinder conciseness. Google Translate lacks poetic cadence entirely. The repetition of passive syntactic constructions and awkward phrasing results in flat lines. "يولد أزهار الليلك" disrupts rhythm, and the phrase "والرغبة الذاكرة" feels

detached. ChatGPT improves upon this by preserving rhythmic symmetry: "والرغبة الذكرى بين يمزج، ...الخاملة الجذور ويحرّك" flows more fluidly. The poetic tone is stronger, with lexical choices like "ينبت" and "خاملة" contributing to aesthetic cohesion.

3. Symbolic Transfer

Eliot's juxtaposition of April (traditionally associated with rebirth) and "cruellest" introduces a core paradox: the pain of renewal. Lu'lu'a captures this contradiction, particularly through his strong verb "يُخرج" ، suggesting violent emergence. "الأرض الموات" aligns with the symbolic desolation of post-war Europe, a key theme in the poem (Kenner, 1973, p. 164). Google Translate, in contrast, fails to transfer this symbolism. "يولد" implies gentleness, contradicting the poem's tension. The rendering of "dead land" as "الميتة الأرض" is semantically correct but lacks the poetic gravitas or theological resonance of "موات" or "يباب" . ChatGPT achieves partial success here. "يباب أرض" echoes Qur'anic expressions (e.g., "فيها نبات لا يَباب أرضٌ") and enhances symbolic layering. Yet, its overall tone remains less charged

than Lu'lu'a's, possibly due to the absence of interpretive risk-taking.

4. Cultural Engagement

Lu'lu'a demonstrates profound cultural sensitivity. His use of "نيسان" rather than "أبريل" reflects localization without distortion. The adoption of "الموات" rather than the more clinical "الميتة" infuses the line with Arabic literary depth, echoing classical and Sufi imagery of death and rebirth. Google Translate makes no attempt at cultural adaptation, retaining Anglicized "أبريل" and using a sterile tone. ChatGPT demonstrates moderate cultural awareness: "أبريل" remains, which may feel foreign to Arabic poetic tradition, yet "يباب أرض" reflects a well-informed attempt to align with Arabic metaphorical terrain. Lu'lu'a's translation remains the most symbolically and poetically resonant. ChatGPT, while imperfect, surpasses Google Translate in fluency, lexical depth, and aesthetic sensibility. Google Translate provides a functional but soulless version, insufficient for literary or academic engagement with Eliot's work.

Table 1: Comparative Table "The Burial of the Dead" (Lines 1–4).

Criterion	Lu'lu'a	Google Translate	ChatGPT
Linguistic Accuracy	High fidelity to syntax and lexical meaning; verb choices (يُخرج، يمزج) are contextually precise (Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 36).	Surface-level accurate but lacks nuance; "يولد" misrepresents "breeding."	Generally accurate; "ينبت" and "أرض يباب" capture key elements with natural fluency.
Poetic Aesthetics	Strong rhythm and parallelism; expressive phrasing; slight verbosity with "حامل الجذور".	No poetic cadence; awkward phrasing and unbalanced rhythm.	Improved flow and balance; rhythmically clean; maintains verbal symmetry.
Symbolic Transfer	Excellent; captures renewal-as-suffering paradox; "الموات" evokes existential and cultural despair.	Weak; literal and emotionally flat; symbolism of "cruellest" and "dead land" is diminished.	Moderate; "أرض يباب" conveys barrenness, but lacks intensity of Lu'lu'a's imagery.
Cultural Engagement	Deep cultural alignment; use of "نيسان" and classical phrasing enhances resonance.	None; retains "أبريل," uses clinical phrasing.	Partial; "أبريل" remains foreign, but "يباب" reflects Arabic cultural-linguistic sensitivity.

6.2. Textual Analysis-Section II: "A Game of Chess" (Lines 111–117)

Original Text

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad.
Stay with me.
Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
I never know what you are thinking. Think."

Lu'lu'a's Translation

أعصابي مجهدة هذا المساء. أجل، مجهدة
ابقَ معي.
تكلم معي. لماذا لا تتكلم أبدًا؟ تكلم
بماذا تفكر؟ ماذا تفكر؟ ماذا؟
لا. أعرف أبدًا ماذا تفكر. فكر
(Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 41)

Google Translate

أعصابي سيئة الليلة. نعم، سيئة
ابقَ معي

تحدث إلي. لماذا لا تتحدث أبدًا؟ تحدث
فيما تفكر؟ ما التفكير؟ ماذا؟
أنا لا أعرف أبدًا ما الذي تفكر فيه. فكر.

ChatGPT

أعصابي مرهقة الليلة. نعم، مرهقة
ابقَ إلى جانبي
كلّمني. لماذا لا تتحدث أبدًا؟ تكلّم
عمّ تفكر؟ فيم تفكر؟ ماذا؟
لا أعلم أبدًا بما تفكر. فكّر.

6.2.1. Comparative Analysis

1. Linguistic Accuracy: Lu'lu'a renders the emotional register of "My nerves are bad tonight" with precise lexical choices: "مجهدة أعصابي" captures both the physiological and psychological connotation of "bad nerves." His repetition of "مجهدة" for "Yes, bad" aligns closely with the original structure and maintains coherence. Google Translate misrepresents "bad" with "سيئة" ، which feels

inappropriate in Arabic medical or emotional contexts it flattens the affective intensity. The phrase "ما التفكير؟" is also syntactically awkward and lacks meaning in Arabic. ChatGPT opts for "مرهقة" ، which is accurate and idiomatically sound. Its variant "إلى جانبي" for "Stay with me" softens the tone but reflects natural Arabic speech. However, "تفكر بما أبدًا أعلم لا" is stylistically less tight than Lu'lu'a's تفكر ماذا أبدًا أعرف لا.

2. Poetic Aesthetics: Lu'lu'a maintains repetition and rhythm, creating a breathless cadence that mimics the speaker's anxiety. The repeated verbs "تكلم، تكلم، فكر" simulate the desperation embedded in the monologue, preserving the poem's fragmented intensity. Google Translate produces a sterile version. Repetitions feel forced and mechanical, and phrases like "فيه تفكر الذي ما أبدًا أعرف لا أنا" disrupt the compact pulse of the original. ChatGPT's rendering enhances emotional cadence. Expressions like "كلّمني، تكلّم، فكّر" carry oral immediacy and spoken urgency. Repetition of "فكر" works well rhythmically. Still, the tone remains slightly more colloquial than Lu'lu'a's elevated register.

3. Symbolic Transfer: This section dramatizes a psychic breakdown within a sterile modern relationship. The staccato questioning "What? What are you thinking of?" illustrates fragmentation and isolation. Lu'lu'a successfully renders this disintegration through minimalism and direct repetition. Google's translation strips the symbolic fragmentation, opting instead for complete phrases and smoother transitions that undermine the sense of existential rupture. ChatGPT restores some of that emotional fracture, especially with "فكّر" and "ماذا؟" ، though its tendency toward fluency can reduce the jarring effect intended by Eliot.

4. Cultural Engagement: Lu'lu'a shows acute sensitivity to emotional cadence in Arabic: "أجل، مجهدة" uses high-register diction consistent with Arabic literary tone. Google retains Anglicized logical flow without adapting to Arabic rhetorical style. ChatGPT leans toward natural conversational tone, such as "كلّمني" ، which aligns with how contemporary Arabic might express intimacy. While accessible, this comes at a cost to the elevated register of Eliot's text. Lu'lu'a delivers the most emotionally and symbolically faithful translation, balancing restraint with intensity. ChatGPT offers a well-rendered, accessible version that evokes the original tone while introducing mild colloquialism. Google Translate underperforms, misrepresenting emotional registers and poetic tension.

Table 2: Comparative Table "A Game of Chess" (Lines 111–117).

Criterion	Lu'lu'a	Google Translate	ChatGPT
Linguistic Accuracy	High- "أعصابي مجهدة" conveys both emotional and somatic states; structure mirrors original well (Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 41).	Moderate- "سيئة" weakens the emotional depth; sentence structures are awkward.	Good – "مرهقة" is precise; "إلى جانبي" is idiomatic but softer in tone.
Poetic Aesthetics	Very strong-rhythm, repetition, and urgency preserved; verbal minimalism heightens dramatic tension.	Poor – phrasing is flat and mechanical; rhythm disrupted.	Strong-natural flow, effective repetition ("تكلّم"، "فكّر") though slightly more colloquial.
Symbolic Transfer	Excellent-retains fragmentation and emotional collapse through choppy repetition.	Weak – cohesive structure masks the poem's intended dissonance.	Moderate-preserves some emotional fragmentation, but slightly polished.
Cultural Engagement	High-elevated literary register; fits Arabic poetic tone.	Low – overly literal and tone-deaf to cultural expression.	Moderate-accessible tone, conversational phrasing, at slight cost to poetic elevation.

6.3. Textual Analysis Section III: "The Fire Sermon" (Lines 173–177)

Original Text

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Lu'lu'a's Translation

خيمة النهر هوت
أواخر الورقات
تنشبث ثم تغور في الضفة الرطبة
تجتاح الأرض السمراء، غير مسموعة
الحوريات انصرفن

(Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 44)

Google Translate

خيمة: النهر مكسورة
الأصابع الأخيرة من الأوراق
تنشبث وتغرق في الضفة الرطبة
الريح تعبر الأرض البنية، دون أن تُسمع
الحوريات رحلن.

ChatGPT

خيمة النهر قد انكسرت،
وأصابع الورق الأخيرة
تتعلق وتغوص في الضفة المبتلة
الريح تعبر الأرض البنية، بلا صوت
قد رحلت الحوريات.

6.3.1. Comparative Analysis

1. Linguistic Accuracy: Lu'lu'a employs elegant

and condensed Arabic, rendering "The river's tent is broken" as "هوت النهر خيمة" ، which implies not just physical destruction but also collapse an interpretive yet plausible reading. "الورقات أواخر" simplifies "last fingers of leaf" into a compact phrase that avoids literal awkwardness while preserving imagery.

Google Translate offers a literal version: "الأصابع الأوراق من الأخيرة" is technically accurate, but clunky and unnatural in Arabic. Similarly, "مكسورة النهر خيمة" is a word-for-word rendering that lacks the interpretive layering of Lu'lu'a's "هوت".

ChatGPT attempts a middle path: "الأخيرة الورق أصابع" retains the metaphor without becoming awkward. The phrase "انكسرت قد" is grammatically smoother than Google's passive construction, though less poetically suggestive than "هوت".

2. Poetic Aesthetics: Lu'lu'a's rhythmic choices short clauses, variation in verb forms, and elision mirror the movement of the river and wind. "تغور ثم تتشبث" evokes a visual descent. The final line "انصرفن الحوريات" is both abrupt and lyrical, reflecting loss.

Google's phrasing is flat: "وتغرق تتشبث" is accurate but redundant; "البنية الأرض تعبر الريح" lacks poetic tension. The final line "رحلن الحوريات" is pedestrian in tone.

ChatGPT's phrasing such as "وتغوص تتعلق" and "بلا" carries musicality. "الحوريات رحلت" is smoother than Google's version, though not as stylized as Lu'lu'a's "انصرفن".

3. Symbolic Transfer: This passage echoes themes of spiritual desolation and the decay of nature as a metaphor for cultural and moral disintegration. "The river's tent is broken" implies the destruction of sanctuary or sacredness.

Lu'lu'a subtly embeds these themes. His "النهر خيمة" "انصرفن الحوريات" and "هوت" allude to collapse and retreat of myth, resonating with classical Arabic elegiac tone.

Google fails to evoke these symbolic resonances. "رحلن" و ، "تغرق" ، "مكسورة" are literal, emotionally sterile.

ChatGPT partially succeeds. "انكسرت قد" and "المبتلة الضفة في تغوص" suggest motion and dissolution, while "الحوريات رحلت قد" hints at disappearance, though it lacks the layered allusion found in Lu'lu'a's version.

4. Cultural Engagement: Lu'lu'a's diction e.g., "انصرفن" ، "تغور" ، "هوت" echoes Arabic classical and Sufi tones of loss and transcendence. His adaptation renders Eliot's mythic loss into familiar poetic idioms.

Google shows no cultural localization.

ChatGPT's language, while accurate, leans toward contemporary phrasing and smoothness at the expense of elevated or culturally resonant diction.

Lu'lu'a once again offers the richest symbolic and poetic rendition, marked by interpretive precision and cultural embeddedness. ChatGPT provides a readable, stylistically fluent version, though less ambitious in its cultural and symbolic layering. Google Translate remains the most literal and least effective.

Table 3: Comparative Table "The Fire Sermon" (Lines 173–177).

Criterion	Lu'lu'a	Google Translate	ChatGPT
Linguistic Accuracy	High – "هوت" captures nuance of collapse; condenses the metaphor fluidly "أواخر الورقات" (Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 44)	Literal but clunky – "الأصابع الأخيرة من الأوراق" is unnatural; "مكسورة" is flat.	Good – "انكسرت" and "أصابع الورق الأخيرة" maintain metaphor while improving fluency.
Poetic Aesthetics	Excellent – rhythmic flow, suggestive verbs ("تغور"، "انصرفن") reflect poetic dissolution.	Weak – stiff repetition and literal phrasing; no musicality or cadence	Strong – smoother rhythm; uses euphonic phrasing ("تغوص"، "بلا صوت") with acceptable imagery.
Symbolic Transfer	Excellent – evokes mythic collapse and spiritual desolation through subtle diction.	Poor – no symbolic layering; translation remains on surface level.	Moderate – hints at symbolic departure but lacks deeper allusiveness.
Cultural Engagement	High – phrases resonate with classical Arabic elegy and spiritual tone.	Absent – no localization or poetic adaptation.	Moderate – culturally neutral but stylistically informed.

6.4. Textual Analysis – Section IV: "Death by Water" (Entire Section)

Original Text
Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Lu'lu'a's Translation

فلبياس الفينيقي، ميتٌ منذ أسبوعين،
نسي تصخاب النوارس، ولجّة البحر العميق،
ونسي. الربح والخسارة
تيّارٌ في غور البحر
فكّك عظامه في همس. وإذ راح يعلو ويبفّ
مرّ بمراحل شيخوخته والشباب،
وهو. يدلج الدوّامة
(Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 51)
Google Translate

فلبياس الفينيقي، ميت منذ أسبوعين،
نسي صراخ النوارس، وانتفاخ البحر العميق،
والربح. والخسارة

تيار تحت البحر
اختار عظامه بهمس. عندما صعد وهبط،
مرّ بمراحل عمره وشبابه
ودخل الدوامة.

ChatGPT

فلياس الفينيقي، الذي مات منذ أسبوعين،
نسي صرخات النوارس، وتموّج البحر العميق،
ونسي. حساب الربح والخسارة
تيار في قاع البحر
التهم عظامه همسًا. وبينما كان يصعد ويهبط،
مرّ بمحطات عمره وشبابه،
ودخل في الدوّامة.

6.4.1. Comparative Analysis

1. Linguistic Accuracy: Lu'lu'a demonstrates linguistic finesse: "أسبوعين منذ ميت" is clear, while "النوارس تصخاب" renders "cry of gulls" with onomatopoetic resonance. The phrase "الدوامة دلج" introduces classical diction for "entering the whirlpool," though it adds interpretive color. Google Translate mistranslates "picked his bones" as "اختار عظامه"، which is semantically incorrect. "البحر انتفاخ" for "swell" also misrepresents the oceanic motion. Syntax remains literal but awkward. ChatGPT improves significantly here. "العظام التهام" (picked his bones) reflects the implied violence, and "تموّج البحر" for "swell" is accurate. "صعد وهبط" captures "rose and fell" cleanly. "حساب الربح والخسارة" is a meaningful equivalent to the financial metaphor.

2. Poetic Aesthetics: Lu'lu'a's lineation and diction carry musical rhythm: "ويسف يغلو" balances motion and tone, and "همس في" evokes sonic atmosphere. Use of verbs like "دلج" elevates the poetic register.

Google's version is choppy. Phrasing such as "اختار بهمس عظامه" is nonsensical and destroys the image.

The flow is broken by clumsy syntax.

ChatGPT strikes a good middle ground: "التهام" "الدوّامة في دخل" is rhythmically vivid. "همسًا عظامه" may be plainer than "دلج" ، لكنه شعريًا مناسب. The cumulative repetition of verb phrases sustains a narrative rhythm.

3. Symbolic Transfer: The passage conveys the cyclical nature of time, mortality, and commercial futility ("profit and loss"). Water here is both purifying and annihilating.

Lu'lu'a retains symbolic ambiguity through phrasing like "والخسارة الربح نسي" and "شيخوخةٍ بمراحل مرّ" ، echoing spiritual passage through temporal stages.

Google fails symbolically; "عظامه اختار" is not metaphorical, just incorrect. "الدوامة دخل" feels abrupt and unsuggestive.

ChatGPT retains most of the symbolism. "نسي حساب الربح والخسارة" implies detachment from worldly pursuits. "عمره بمحطات مرّ" reflects life's stages, though slightly more didactic.

4. Cultural Engagement: Lu'lu'a shows deep literary knowledge: "دلج" evokes pre-modern Arabic diction; "لجّة البحر" references Quranic and classical imagery of oceanic depth.

Google lacks any such engagement, defaulting to literal phrasing. ChatGPT employs modern yet context-aware diction: "الدوّامة" ، "التهام" ، و "البحر قاع" carry poetic and symbolic tone suitable for contemporary readers, though less elevated than Lu'lu'a. Lu'lu'a's version is linguistically rich, symbolically layered, and stylistically elevated. ChatGPT's translation is strong in narrative clarity and metaphorical awareness. Google Translate falters due to mistranslations and stylistic flatness.

Table 4: Comparative Table "Death by Water" (Entire Section).

Criterion	Lu'lu'a	Google Translate	ChatGPT
Linguistic Accuracy	High – precise and expressive; "تصخاب النوارس"، "الدوامة دلج" are accurate and poetically charged (Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 51).	Weak – mistranslations like "اختار عظامه" distort meaning; literal and awkward syntax.	Good – "البحر تموّج" and "عظامه التهام" are contextually faithful and linguistically fluid.
Poetic Aesthetics	Excellent – strong rhythm, elevated diction, and metaphorical tone ("ويسف يغلو"، "همس في").	Poor – flat tone, disjointed structure, lacks lyrical quality.	Strong – vivid phrasing, natural flow, maintains poetic mood ("همسًا"، "الدوّامة في دخل").
Symbolic Transfer	Excellent – preserves mortality themes, life cycle, and futility of materialism through precise metaphor.	Poor – fails to convey cyclicality or symbolic resonance.	Good – effectively captures the metaphysical and narrative arc with modern poetic language.
Cultural Engagement	High – Quranic/classical resonance through words like "لجّة" and "دلج".	None – culturally tone-deaf, overly literal.	Moderate – idiomatic modern Arabic; suitable but lacks deeper cultural or intertextual signals.

6.5. Textual Analysis Section V: "What the Thunder Said" (Final Lines)

Original Text

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih

وهي ،Brihadaranyaka Upanishad من تأتي الختامية الجملة هذه
تأمّلي امخذ لتقديم إليوت إليها يلجأ التي الهندوسية الحكمة خلاصة تمثّل

وفلسفيًا دينيًا ومفتوح.

Lu'lu'a's Translation

أعطوا
تعاطفوا
سيطروا
سلام　　　　سلام　　　　سلام

(Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 57)

Google Translate

دامياتا   دايادهفام.   داتا.
شانتي شانتي شانتي   شانتي شانتي شانتي
ChatGPT
أعطِ.
ارحمْ.
النفس   اضبط.
شَانْتِه... شَانْتِه... شَانْتِه.

6.5.1. Comparative Analysis

1. Linguistic Accuracy: Lu'lu'a provides a grammatically sound and idiomatic rendering of the Sanskrit imperatives into Arabic: "أعطوا، تعاطفوا، سيطروا " ، الجمع بصيغة جميعها ، ما يعكس الخطاب الجماعي في النص الأصلي.

Google Translate يترك الكلمات كما هي بصيغة صوتية لاتيني، دون ترجمتها، مما يلغي معناها تمامًا.

ChatGPT يترجم المفردات بدقة إلى أفعال أمر مفردة: "أعطِ، ارحمْ" ، وهي معادِلات صحيحة معنويًا، رغم اختلاف الضمير "اضبط النفس" ، (جمع بدل مفرد).

2. Poetic Aesthetics: Lu'lu'a's short verbs and his trifold repetition of "سلام" maintain the meditative cadence of the original. ترجمته لـ Shantih بوصفها لفظة "سلام" تضيف طبقة روحية مألوفة للقارئ العربي، دون إخلال بالمصدر.

Google's rendering loses all musicality and cadence. It remains phonetically foreign with no interpretive or poetic resonance.

ChatGPT uses ellipses to separate "...شَانْتِه...شَانْتِه... ، " شَانْتِه" mimicking the visual and auditory space of the original. This creates a contemplative pause, enhancing the poetic closure.

3. Symbolic Transfer: Lu'lu'a succeeds في ترجمة Datta-Dayadhvam-Damyata كخلاصة أخلاقية دينية: العطاء، الرحمة، السيطرة على النفس، وهي مفاهيم محورية في الفلسفةالهندوسية. اختياره "شانتِه" بدل "سلام" يجعل الخاتمة مألوفة للقارئ العربي كما أن اختياره "سلام" بدل "شانتِه" يجعل المسلم والمسيحي، ويُقدَّم تأويلاً مفتوحًا.

Google's version fails completely to transfer the spiritual or ethical message. The transliteration without explanation renders the ending opaque.

ChatGPT's use of "اضبط النفس" و "شَانْتِه" يُبقي على الأصل الرمزي الهندي، ويُقدَّم التأمل والتأتوا زنّي بين المعنى التأمل، لكنه تاجيح لتعليق توضيحي غير المتخصص.

4. Cultural Engagement: Lu'lu'a contextualizes the text culturally he renders it بلغة عربية ذات طابع أخلاقي في أقعه وقد. التغريب دون إفراط مستبدّلًا الرموز، ومفهوم واضح ديني شرح وتلالها، الأوبنشاد الهندي أن هذه الكلمات من والإرشاد حاشيته (Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 57).

Google Translate shows no cultural awareness whatsoever.

ChatGPT opts for partial foreignization (retaining "شَانْتِه") while translating the imperatives into accessible Arabic. It balances source and target cultures but lacks deeper contextual guidance.

Lu'lu'a's translation is spiritually resonant and culturally embedded, offering interpretive clarity and rhythmic closure. ChatGPT provides an aesthetically pleasing and semi-faithful version, with a more universal tone. Google Translate, by leaving the lines untranslated, fails to fulfill even the basic interpretive function.

Table 5: Comparative Table – "What the Thunder Said" (Final Lines).

Criterion	Lu'lu'a	Google Translate	ChatGPT
Linguistic Accuracy	High – precise Arabic imperatives in plural form ("أعطوا، تعاطفوا، سيطروا") (Lu'lu'a, 2007, p. 57).	None – retains original Sanskrit terms without translation; no meaningful equivalence.	Good – accurate singular imperatives; semantic equivalents for all three terms.
Poetic Aesthetics	Excellent – repetition of "سلام" creates rhythmic, meditative closure that echoes Eliot's final tone.	Poor – no rhythm, no musical phrasing, purely phonetic reproduction.	Strong – ellipses and repetition of "شَانْتِه" simulate poetic pause and contemplative rhythm.
Symbolic Transfer	Excellent – renders the spiritual ethical triad with clarity and resonance; interprets "Shantih" as "سلام".	Absent – symbols are untranslated and their function lost entirely.	Good – preserves ethical and spiritual message; partial foreignization sustains symbolic aura.
Cultural Engagement	High – adapts into an Arabic spiritual register; explains source in footnotes.	None – culturally opaque and contextless.	Moderate – balances local clarity with preservation of foreign sound ("شَانْتِه").

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of five selected passages from The Waste Land across three translation modalities Abdul Wahid Lu'lu'a's human translation, Google Translate's rule-based system, and ChatGPT's neural AI model reveals substantial differences in linguistic fidelity, poetic rendering, symbolic transfer, and cultural engagement.

1. Linguistic Accuracy

Lu'lu'a's translation consistently demonstrated the highest degree of linguistic precision. His lexical choices, such as "الموات" for "dead land" and "دلج الدوامة" for "entering the whirlpool," reflect an awareness of semantic nuance and poetic tone. ChatGPT, while generally accurate, occasionally sacrificed syntactic depth for fluency, as seen in singular imperative forms like "أعطِ" instead of Lu'lu'a's collective "أعطوا." Google Translate consistently performed weakest in this regard, often producing awkward or incorrect phrases (e.g., " اختار عظامه" for "picked his bones").

Supports H1, H2, and H3.
2. Poetic Aesthetics

Lu'lu'a preserved the rhythmic and formal qualities of the original poem. His careful use of parallelism ("يُخرج، يحرّك، يمزج") and classical diction maintained Eliot's cadence. ChatGPT showed surprising poetic sensitivity, particularly in its use of ellipses, repetition, and metaphor ("شَأنْته···شَأنْته···شَأنْته"). While not as elevated as Lu'lu'a, it offered accessible, aesthetically engaging lines. Google Translate's output was consistently flat and mechanical, failing to register the poetic voice or emotional undertones of Eliot's writing.

Further supports H1 and H3.
3. Symbolic and Intertextual Transfer

The symbolic and mythological density of The Waste Land its references to fertility rituals, Upanishadic teachings, and the decline of Western civilization was best preserved in Lu'lu'a's version. His interpretive boldness (e.g., "هوت" for "is broken," "انصرفن" for "departed nymphs") allowed him to convey the cultural and philosophical resonance of the original. ChatGPT partially succeeded, especially with metaphors like "أرض يباب" and "البحر تموّج" , though its translations lacked the depth of scholarly intertextual awareness. Google Translate failed to convey symbolic meaning altogether due to literalism and lack of context.

Strongly supports H1 and H4.
4. Cultural Engagement

Lu'lu'a's translations were deeply embedded in Arabic literary tradition. His register, vocabulary, and rhythm mirrored the language of Arabic elegy and spiritual poetry, providing cultural equivalence for Eliot's allusions. ChatGPT demonstrated moderate cultural sensitivity, adapting phrases into natural, if more neutral, Arabic idiom. Google Translate remained alien to the cultural and spiritual context of the poem, defaulting to direct word-for-word conversion with no attention to resonance or tone.

Confirms H1 and H3; refutes any claim that AI can match human cultural engagement (H4).

8. SYNTHESIS

The overall findings confirm that human translation, especially when conducted by a skilled literary translator like Lu'lu'a, outperforms both machine and AI-generated translations in virtually all qualitative dimensions. While ChatGPT shows significant promise, especially in stylistic fluency and partial symbolic transfer, it still lacks the interpretive depth and cultural embeddedness required for rendering high-modernist poetry. Google Translate

remains inadequate for such tasks, emphasizing the limitations of automated literalism.

These findings highlight the ongoing importance of human agency in literary translation, particularly when dealing with texts as semantically layered and culturally hybrid as The Waste Land. They also suggest that while neural AI systems like ChatGPT represent a notable advancement, they still fall short in engaging with the philosophical, religious, and intertextual frameworks that shape poetic meaning.

9. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how three distinct translation modalities human (Abdul Wahid Lu'lu'a), rule-based (Google Translate), and AI-generated (ChatGPT) rendered selected passages from T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land into Arabic. Through close comparative analysis, the study sought to assess the fidelity, poetic sensibility, symbolic depth, and cultural engagement in each translation, guided by frameworks from functional equivalence, stylistics, and cultural translation theory.

The results demonstrate that Abdul Wahid Lu'lu'a's human translation surpasses the others in nearly every evaluative dimension. His linguistic precision, sensitivity to Eliot's intertextual depth, and his cultural contextualization of foreign symbols enable him to capture not only the literal meaning but also the spiritual and poetic complexity of the original poem. His translation exemplifies what literary scholar Roman Jakobson called "creative transposition" a movement beyond direct linguistic transfer into interpretive equivalence.

ChatGPT, though not flawless, emerges as a surprisingly competent alternative. Its fluency, rhythm, and partial symbolic rendering suggest that neural models are beginning to approximate literary intuition at the surface level. However, its lack of contextual depth, absence of intertextual grounding, and occasional flattening of affect reveal the inherent limitations of AI in tasks requiring deep human interpretive engagement.

Google Translate, by contrast, consistently fails to meet the demands of literary translation. Its rigid literalism, syntactic errors, and insensitivity to metaphor and tone render it unsuitable for poetic or culturally loaded texts such as The Waste Land.

This study ultimately reaffirms that the translation of modernist poetry especially works like Eliot's is not merely a linguistic act but a cultural, philosophical, and literary negotiation. Human translators remain indispensable in this process, particularly when dealing with works marked by

fragmentation, ambiguity, and spiritual density.

Beyond its comparative scope, this study invites further reflection on the ethical and developmental implications of AI in literary translation. The findings underscore the need for collaborative translation frameworks where AI tools serve not as replacements for human agency, but as augmentative assistants under expert literary supervision. Insights from this research may contribute to the refinement of future neural translation models particularly those trained to handle metaphor, intertextuality, and cultural nuance toward more ethically aligned and context-aware applications in the humanities.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- · Further comparative studies should examine longer selections or the poem in its entirety.
- · Interdisciplinary approaches integrating reader-response analysis or reception theory may add depth to AI translation evaluation.
- · Future research might also explore post-edited AI translations and their capacity to serve as drafting tools for human translators.

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