Foreword to the Special Issue

Professional and Non-Professional Language Mediation in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Between 19 and 21 March 2025, the Department of Translation and Interpreting of the Faculty of Humanities at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE FTT) hosted the twenty-seventh edition of its long-established TransELTE conference on Translation Studies. The central theme of the 2025 conference was the role of artificial intelligence in language mediation. Over the course of the three-day event, participants attended thirty presentations by researchers from twelve countries, offering a comprehensive overview of the latest research findings and professional developments in translation and interpreting. This volume brings together a selection of papers presented at the conference, providing insights into current issues in Translation and Interpreting Studies, as well as the challenges facing the profession.

Since its inception, the TransELTE conference series has sought to build bridges between research, education, and professional practice. It has consistently provided a forum where researchers, educators, translators, interpreters, and other language professionals can share their findings and experiences while engaging in dialogue about the future of the profession. Such dialogue is particularly important today, as rapid technological advances are fundamentally reshaping the field of language mediation. The emergence of artificial intelligence has not only introduced new tools into professional practice but has also prompted us to rethink our concepts and theories of translation, interpreting, and language mediation itself.

Artificial intelligence, however, is only one—albeit a highly influential—aspect of the profound transformations currently affecting the profession. Accordingly, the conference programme addressed a much broader range of topics. In addition to exploring the opportunities and risks associated with AI, presentations examined issues such as translation quality, the evolving role of language professionals, new developments in audiovisual translation, crisis communication, asylum interpreting, and the technological and ethical challenges that are shaping the future of language services.

A common conclusion emerging from the presentations is that artificial intelligence offers significant opportunities to streamline workflows, enhance productivity, and improve the accessibility of language services. At the same time, it raises

professional, ethical, and societal questions that require careful consideration. While embracing technological innovation, we must not lose sight of the fact that translation and interpreting remain fundamentally human activities. At the heart of every translation process stands the language professional, whose expertise, judgement, responsibility, and creativity give meaning and value to the use of technological tools.

Language professions have always been characterised by continuous change. Although today's challenges are unprecedented in many respects, translators and interpreters have repeatedly adapted to technological, social, and economic transformations throughout the history of the profession. The challenge now, as in the past, is to build on their core competences while finding an appropriate balance between human expertise and emerging technologies, and to prepare future generations of language professionals for an increasingly dynamic environment. Achieving this requires continuous interaction between research, education, and professional practice—something the TransELTE conference series has fostered for nearly three decades.

We hope that this special issue, featuring selected papers based on presentations delivered at the conference and covering topics ranging from the rethinking of translation theories to translators' career paths, communication accessibility, sustainability, and the interplay between technology and translator/interpreter education, not only captures the richness of the scholarly discussions that unfolded during the conference but also contributes to the international academic dialogue on the future of language mediation, fostering new ideas, research agendas, and professional collaborations.

Guest Editors

The publication of this Special Issue was supported
by the University Excellence Fund of Eötvös Loránd University