

A Comparative Study of Human vs. AI-Generated Translations in English Literary Texts: Irony and Style in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"

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*Puji Heriyanto, Umami Nur Laila Sulistyani^{ab} 

¹²Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: pujiheriyanto694@students.unnes.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the differences between human and AI-generated translations of Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* in terms of literary style and irony. This short story was specifically selected as the research object due to its highly compressed narrative structure and pervasive, subtle irony, which provide a rigorous benchmark for evaluating interpretive translation competence. Employing a qualitative comparative methodology, the study analyzes specific passages from the source text alongside Indonesian translations generated by a human translator and the ChatGPT AI system. The investigation primarily focuses on irony translation, the preservation of literary style, translation quality according to Nababan's framework, and translational shifts in the AI output. The findings reveal that human translation more successfully preserves implicit meaning, ambiguity, emotional complexity, and stylistic features such as figurative language and symbolism. Conversely, AI-generated translation frequently reduces subtle rhetorical effects and produces a more neutral narrative tone by prioritizing readability and clarity through explicitation. According to Nababan's framework, while human translation excels in maintaining pragmatic depth and achieving higher acceptability, AI translation exhibits superior readability. Furthermore, semantic neutralization and explicitation are identified as the two primary shifts in AI translation. These results imply that although AI can generate fluid and readable sentences, it still struggles to preserve the aesthetic and interpretive dimensions of literary works.

Keywords: *Literary Translation, Irony, Stylistic Fidelity, AI-Generated Translation, Chatgpt, Translation Quality*

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INTRODUCTION

The translation industry has been greatly impacted by the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) (Al Rousan et al. (2025)). Because of their effectiveness, accessibility, and speed in producing grammatically correct translations, AI-based translation technologies are becoming more and more popular. These advancements have made AI a viable substitute for human translators, especially for functional and general texts. However, as literary writings demand more than just language correctness, the use of AI in literary translation is still up for debate (Al Rousan et al., 2025). They need a deep awareness of rhetorical tactics including irony, emotional nuance, and diverse stylistic elements.

The process of translating meaning from a source language into a target language while preserving equivalency and naturalness is usually referred to as translation (Lahiani, 2025). According to Nababan et al. (2012), there are three primary ways to evaluate the quality of a translation: accuracy, acceptance, and readability. Readability is the degree to which target readers can easily comprehend the translated content; acceptability is the degree to which the translation is natural in accordance with target-language standards; and accuracy is the degree to which the meaning of the original text is accurately represented. In literary translation, where content is frequently latent and intimately linked to artistic expression, these elements are especially important (Bi, 2025).

Because literary translation has artistic value, metaphorical language, and interpretive depth, it poses different difficulties than non-literary translation (Belhassen & Hamda (2025)). Sakai (2006) contends that literary translation involves a cultural and interpretive effort in addition to a language transfer. Irony is one of the hardest literary strategies to interpret since it frequently communicates meanings that are different from the literal language (Singh & Kumari, 2025). The author's intended effect may be lost if irony is misrepresented in translation since it plays a crucial role in determining thematic depth and reader perception.

According to earlier research, human translators often show a higher level of awareness of stylistic and contextual details in literary works (Belhassen et al., 2025). Human translation often achieves superior contextual appropriateness, particularly in texts involving interpretive judgment (Halimah, 2018). In a similar vein, Hasibuan (2020) highlights that while machine translation has made progress in terms of grammatical accuracy, it still lacks cultural sensitivity and interpretive skills, both of which are critical for literary translation.

Large language models and neural machine translation have made it possible for AI tools like ChatGPT to provide translations that are both understandable and fluid. According to Poláková et al. (2024), AI-based translation technologies are capable of producing outputs that are understandable and cohesive. However, current international research has come to the conclusion that, despite their fluency, AI-generated translations frequently fail to capture more complex literary elements. According to Karabayeva & Kalizhanova (2024), AI systems often fail to preserve literary writings' authorial voice and stylistic integrity. Similarly, (Belhassen & Hamda, 2025) point out that literary translations produced by AI sometimes lack rhetorical nuance and emotional resonance, especially when it comes to figurative language and irony. According to a stylometric study by Yao & Liu (2026) AI translations may mimic surface-level style patterns but frequently fall short of capturing deeper rhetorical and emotional levels that need interpretive knowledge.

Recent scholarship between 2023 and 2026 has increasingly scrutinized the deployment of large language models (LLMs) in creative writing and translation. While early neural machine translation (NMT) studies focused heavily on generalized grammatical accuracy, current investigations into AI-assisted literary translation highlight a persistent tension between surface linguistic fluency and deep aesthetic adequacy (Glesias, n.d.). For instance, a comprehensive experimental study by Helvetiass (2024) on AI in literary translation warned of a noticeable "impoverishment of language," explicitly demonstrating that generative AI frequently flattens emotional, empathetic, and ironic undertones that fundamentally require human cultural cognition to recognize. This is closely tied to ongoing industry controversies regarding the automation of fiction translation, which consistently underscore that machine-generated outputs require intensive human post-editing because AI inherently struggles with highly context-specific narrative nuances and minority language expressions (Wang et al., 2026). Furthermore, classroom-based empirical assessments confirm that while interactive models like ChatGPT can speed up the translation process, they often resort to poetic regularization, literalist constraints, or under translation when tasked with rendering complex creative texts, thereby failing to preserve micro-stylistic features like rhythm and imagery (Abdullah et al., 2026).

Despite this expanding body of literature, a critical research gap remains unaddressed. The vast majority of contemporary studies from 2023–2026 broadly evaluate machine translation using generalized automated metrics or focus exclusively on major Western European language pairs, largely ignoring the specific syntactic and pragmatic shifts that occur in English-to-Indonesian literary translation. Crucially, previous research has predominantly analysed either broad fluency or general error typologies in functional text genres, leaving a major blind spot regarding how AI navigates the deliberate preservation of structural ambiguity and micro-stylistic devices—such as irony—in classic short fiction. Previous evaluations have failed to systematically map the stylistic loss when an AI encounters a highly compressed narrative like Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*, where the thematic resolution relies entirely on implicit subtext rather than overt semantic statements.

Furthermore, there is a distinct lack of empirical work that integrates a rigorous translation quality evaluation framework, such as Nababan's model (accuracy, acceptability, and readability), to contrast ChatGPT's performance directly against published, professional human translations of complex literary irony.

The current study compares human and AI-generated translations of Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* in order to fill this research vacuum. This short story is renowned for its succinct literary style and subtle sarcasm, especially in its sardonic conclusion and narrative progression. A strong ironic impact that necessitates careful interpretation is produced by the story structure and surprising conclusion (Abduganievna, 2025). This study thus offers an interesting and pertinent object for translation studies. Literary works like this short tale aid in the development of students' awareness of hidden meaning, tone, and stylistic nuance in the context of English language learning, particularly in translation courses. Learners may enhance their translation skills and get a deeper understanding of the intricacy of meaning transmission between languages by examining how irony and literary style are translated. As a result, comparing human versus AI-generated translations not only advances translation studies but also provides pedagogical insights for teaching English, especially when it comes to literary translation (Abdelhalim et al., 2025). This study investigates how ironic and stylistic elements are maintained or changed in human translation as opposed to AI-generated translation provided by ChatGPT using Nababan's translation quality evaluation framework—accuracy, acceptability, and readability. This study is distinctive because it offers a sophisticated assessment of AI's advantages and disadvantages in literary translation through an integrated examination of literary aspects and translation quality.

Four research questions are discussed in this study: (1) how irony in *The Story of an Hour* is rendered differently by human translators and AI-generated translations; (2) how much literary style, including tone, diction, and symbolism, is preserved in human and AI translations; (3) how irony affects accuracy, acceptability, and readability; and (4) what kinds of irony-related shifts occur in AI-generated translations.

METHOD

To investigate how irony and literary style are translated from English into Indonesian in both human and AI-generated translations, this study employed a qualitative methodology and document analysis. The data for this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Selected words, phrases, clauses, and sentences from the original text that included stylistic aspects, metaphorical expressions, and linguistic irony made up the primary data. The sampling criteria were strictly defined to include textual units that met the following parameters: (1) containing clear instances of verbal, situational, or dramatic irony that directly affect the narrative progression; (2) possessing rich micro-stylistic features, such as vivid symbolism, sensory imagery, or emotionally charged metaphors; and (3) presenting potential translation challenges due to implicit meanings or structural ambiguity. Based on these criteria, a total of 14 key textual units were extracted as the core dataset for comparative analysis.

The original short narrative *The Story of an Hour*, written by Kate Chopin in 1894, served as the main source of information. References are based on paragraph numbering in the narrative's sequence because the text lacks regular pagination. In order to gather data, the original text was closely studied to find pertinent textual units pertaining to irony, tone, diction, and symbolism. Two translated versions of these units—a human translation (HT) and an AI-generated translation (AIT)—were then compared. The human translation (HT) was derived from an Indonesian version that R. Prasetianti published online on Medium. This version represents a naturally created human translation that incorporates individual interpretive and stylistic decisions, despite being obtained via an internet platform.

To ensure greater transparency and reproducibility, the AI-Generated Translation (AIT) was produced using OpenAI's ChatGPT (specifically the GPT-4o architecture, accessed in February 2026). The generation was executed using standard API and default web interface

parameters (with a temperature setting of 1.0 to allow for standard creative text generation). To obtain a raw, baseline literary output without prompt engineering bias, a direct and neutral translation prompt was entered into the system: "Translate the following literary text into natural and grammatically correct Indonesian, preserving its original tone." The exact historical textual units selected from the source text were inputted chronologically to maintain contextual continuity for the model.

Each data unit was arranged into a comparison table for analysis that included the Source Text (ST), Human Translation (HT), and AI-generated Translation (AIT). Nababan's translation quality evaluation methodology, which comprises three primary criteria—accuracy, acceptability, and readability—was used for the descriptive analysis (Nababan et al., 2012). Readability is the ease with which readers can comprehend the text; accuracy is the extent to which the original meaning is maintained; and acceptability is the degree to which the translation sounds natural within the linguistic and stylistic norms of the target language. The investigation also examined how irony and literary style—specifically tone, diction, and symbolism—are preserved, altered, or lessened in the two translations. Finally, the study looked at the specific categories of translation shifts that take place, paying close attention to explicitation and semantic modifications in the output produced by the AI system.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Comprehensive Comparative Analysis Table

The following table presents a detailed comparison of selected textual units containing elements of irony and literary style. In total, **14 clauses** were identified and analyzed as the primary data for this study:

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Human and AI-Generated Translations of Irony and Literary Style

No.	Source Text (ST)	Human Translation (HT)	AI-Generated Translation (AIT)	Qualitative Note
1.	"...afflicted with a heart trouble" (Chopin, 1894, para. 1)	"...menderita penyakit jantung"	"...memiliki masalah pada jantungnya"	AIT uses more verbose phrasing.
2.	"She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment." (Chopin, 1894, para. 2)	"Ia segera menangis dengan luapan emosi yang tiba-tiba dan liar."	"Ia langsung menangis dengan emosi yang mendadak dan tak terkendali."	HT preserves the evocative "wild" tone.
3.	"...tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life." (Chopin, 1894, para. 4)	"...pucuk-pucuk pepohonan bergetar oleh kehidupan musim semi yang baru."	"...ujung-ujung pohon tampak bergetar oleh kehidupan musim semi yang segar."	AIT neutralizes the specific imagery of "aquiver".
4.	"The delicious breath of rain was in the air." (Chopin, 1894, para. 4)	"Udara dipenuhi oleh aroma hujan yang menyenangkan."	"Aroma hujan yang segar terasa di udara."	HT captures the sensory aesthetic of "delicious".
5.	"But now there was a dull stare in her eyes." (Chopin, 1894, para. 6)	"Kini matanya menatap dengan pandangan yang hampa."	"Namun kini sorot matanya tampak kosong."	HT uses "hampa" to reflect psychological depth.

6.	"It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought." (Chopin, 1894, para. 6)	"Pandangan matanya bukanlah tatapan introspeksi, melainkan pemikiran yang cerdas yang terbelenggu."	"Tatapan itu bukanlah hasil perenungan, melainkan lebih menunjukkan terhentinya pikiran yang sadar."	AIT provides a more literal, clinical explanation.
7.	"Free, free, free!" (Chopin, 1894, para. 8)	"Bebas, bebas, bebas!"	"Bebas, bebas, bebas!"	Both achieve identical literal accuracy.
8.	"Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body." (Chopin, 1894, para. 8)	"Nadinya berdenyut cepat, dan aliran darah yang mengalir menghangatkan serta merilekskan seluruh tubuhnya."	"Denyut nadinya semakin cepat, dan darah yang mengalir membuat tubuhnya terasa hangat dan rileks."	AIT restructures the sentence for modern fluency.
9.	"A powerful will bending hers..." (Chopin, 1894, para. 9)	"Kehendak yang kuat membengkokkan kehendaknya..."	"Kehendak yang kuat memaksanya untuk tunduk..."	AIT explicates the power dynamic.
10.	"And yet she had loved him – sometimes." (Chopin, 1894, para. 10)	"Namun, ia memang mencintainya – kadang-kadang."	"Meski demikian, ia pernah mencintainya, meskipun tidak selalu."	AIT explicates the irony, losing its punch.
11.	"She was drinking in a very elixir of life." (Chopin, 1894, para. 12)	"Ia sedang meneguk ramuan kehidupan sejati."	"Ia seakan meneguk sari kehidupan yang sangat murni."	HT preserves the symbolic "elixir".
12.	"There was a feverish triumph in her eyes." (Chopin, 1894, para. 14)	"Ada kemenangan yang menggelora di matanya."	"Matanya memancarkan kemenangan yang penuh gairah."	HT maintains the intense, paradoxical imagery.
13.	"She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long." (Chopin, 1894, para. 13)	"Ia menghela napas dalam doa singkat agar hidupnya panjang."	"Ia memanjatkan doa singkat agar hidupnya berlangsung lama."	Both convey the ironic reversal of her previous wish.
14.	"...of the joy that kills." (Chopin, 1894, para. 16)	"...kebahagiaan yang membunuh"	"...kebahagiaan yang mematikan"	HT preserves the active, ironic metaphor.

Overview of Qualitative Findings

Irony

The analysis reveals a fundamental divergence in how the two translation agents handle Kate Chopin's irony. The Human Translation (HT) consistently maintains the implicit nature and the "ironic bite" of the Source Text (ST) by preserving brief, ambiguous phrasing. For instance, in rendering the paradoxical phrase "*the joy that kills*," the HT utilizes the active metaphor "*kebahagiaan yang membunuh*," allowing the structural irony of the protagonist's death to resonate naturally. Conversely, the AI-Generated Translation (AIT) via ChatGPT tends to minimize this rhetorical force by opting for more clinical and descriptive vocabulary, such as "*mematikan*," which dampens the emotional and ironic complexity intended by the author.

Literary Style

In terms of micro-stylistic preservation—encompassing tone, diction, and symbolism—the human translator demonstrates a superior capacity for creative mediation compared to the AI system. The HT successfully retains the sensory and aesthetic weight of Chopin's prose, as seen in the translation of symbolic elements like "*elixir of life*" into "*ramuan kehidupan sejati*" and evocative imagery like "*aquiver*" into "*bergetar*". In contrast, the AIT frequently flattens these literary nuances. It neutralizes lyrical and poetic expressions into utilitarian, modern phrases (e.g., transforming "*elixir of life*" into the literal "*sari kehidupan yang sangat murni*"), thereby reducing the text's overall aesthetic value.

Translation Quality

Based on Nababan's framework, the qualitative findings demonstrate a clear trade-off between the two versions across the dimensions of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Both HT and AIT achieve high denotative accuracy by correctly transferring the core factual data of the plot. However, the HT achieves significantly higher acceptability scores within the Indonesian literary genre due to its use of evocative, contextually appropriate diction. On the other hand, the AIT scores higher in readability. The AI's tendency to resolve complex sentence structures and clarify implicit details makes the text easier to parse for a general reader, though it compromises stylistic depth.

Translation Shifts

The investigation identifies distinct translational shifts predominantly within the AI-generated output. The most pervasive shift is explicitation, where the AI actively unpacks and explains the narrative's subtle ironies instead of letting them show implicitly. A prime example occurs when the AI expands the concise, sarcastic word "*sometimes*" into a full explanatory clause, "*meskipun tidak selalu*". Additionally, the AIT frequently employs structural and category shifts—such as adding logical conjunctions—to enforce a smooth grammatical flow. While these shifts successfully enhance target-text fluency, they inadvertently disrupt the original narrative rhythm that reflects the protagonist's internal psychological state.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the complex relationship between technological efficiency and interpretative depth in literary translation.

The Dichotomy of Irony: Ambiguity vs. Explicitation

The first study topic looked at the differences in ironic rendering between AI and human translators. The findings show that although both agents accurately recognise sarcastic phrases' denotative meaning, their rhetorical executions are essentially different. The "ironic bite" is maintained by the human translator by preserving the succinct language of the Source Text (ST). For example, in Data 14, the human translator employs "*kebahagiaan yang membunuh*," reflecting Chopin's original "joy that kills" in an active and contradictory way. The AI, on the other hand, employs "*memastikan*," which is correct but leans toward a clinical description that diminishes emotional resonance. This result corroborates the findings of (Siregar & Zawawi, 2025), who discovered that AI's literalistic limitations frequently prevent it from capturing sarcastic or sardonic meaning.

This discovery has significant ramifications for teaching and translation practice. It implies that in order to maintain nuanced meaning and emotional effect in professional translation, AI-generated outputs need to be carefully edited by humans, especially when working with rhetorical techniques like irony. In educational settings, it emphasises the necessity of teaching students how to critically assess and improve machine-generated translations in addition to teaching them how to utilise AI tools, particularly in literary texts where ambiguity and stylistic nuance are crucial.

Preserving Literary Style and Symbolism

The human translator exhibits a significantly stronger ability for creative mediation in terms of tone and symbolic preservation. The metaphor "elixir of life" in Data 11 is translated by a human as "ramuan kehidupan sejati" while retaining the original's mystical and symbolic significance. However, this is neutralised by the AI into "sari kehidupan yang sangat murni," which loses its lyrical tone but offers a literal explanation. According to [Jasim & Awqati \(2025\)](#), AI systems can mimic basic literary structures, but they are severely limited in their ability to generate full concepts that call for true human creativity. This "flattening" of style leads to a loss of what ([Doan, 2025](#)) refers to as stylistic faithfulness, in which the text's aesthetic value is given up for literal clarity. Stylistic integrity is diminished as a result of this propensity to "flatten" stylistic elements ([Doan, 2025](#)). The degree to which a translation retains the original text's aesthetic, expressive, and rhetorical elements such as tone, imagery, and emotional nuance—is referred to as stylistic faithfulness in this context. The translation may still be grammatically correct when these components are neutralised or reduced, but the complexity and nuance that define literary writing are lost. Because emotive language is substituted with more literal and explicit forms, the text's aesthetic effect is reduced.

Irony-Related Shifts and Character Psychology

The identification of certain changes in the AI's output is a crucial finding in this work. Explication, in which the AI explains the irony instead of displaying it, is the most common change. The AI in Data 10 expands Chopin's brief "sometimes" into a whole sentence: "meskipun tidak selalu". This change turns a nuanced, sardonic acknowledgement into a clear explanation. In order to guarantee logical flow, the AI also often uses category shifts, such as inserting the conjunction "Karena" at the beginning of the story. Although these changes increase fluency, the narrative rhythm that depicts the protagonist's mental state is disturbed. This supports the claim made by ([Kristen & Wacana, 2025](#)) that grammatical changes in translation can change how much psychological strain is portrayed in the original text.

Translation Quality Assessment: Accuracy, Acceptability, and Readability

The paradigm put forward by [Nababan et al. \(2012\)](#), which comprises three crucial elements accuracy, acceptability, and readability is the foundation for the assessment of translation quality in this study. According to the investigation, there is a clear performance difference between AI-generated translation (AIT) and human translation (HT), especially when it comes to conveying meaning and stylistic nuance.

Both the HT and the AIT exhibit a high degree of denotative correctness in terms of accuracy, effectively communicating the essential events and factual substance of the source text. At the level of pragmatic meaning, however, a difference becomes apparent. The HT tends to sustain the intended emotional and rhetorical impact by more successfully preserving the illocutionary power of Chopin's sardonic remarks. For instance, the HT translates "joy that kills" as "kebahagiaan yang membunuh," maintaining the original's emotive and contradictory power. The AIT, on the other hand, translates it as "mematikan," a decision that, although semantically correct, leads to what might be called semantic flattening, diminishing the deeper emotional and sarcastic resonance through a more neutral vocabulary selection.

In terms of acceptability, the HT is typically more in line with literary translation's stylistic and cultural standards. It makes use of more emotive, often antiquated language that is consistent with the original text's literary and historical setting. The translation's naturalness within the literary genre is improved by this stylistic sensitivity. However, although being grammatically acceptable and structurally obvious, the AIT frequently generates sentences that seem too clinical or contemporary. The reader's immersion in a great literary work may be disturbed by this propensity. Additionally, the HT exhibits greater cultural and contextual awareness, especially when translating symbolic terms like "elixir of life," which are expressed more poetically than the AI's less evocative, more utilitarian counterpart.

The AIT is simpler to read than the HT in terms of readability. This is mostly because of the AI's propensity for explicitation, which simplifies difficult statements and makes implicit meanings more clear. For example, the sardonic and succinct "sometimes" is stretched into "meskipun tidak selalu," which clarifies the meaning but lessens the subtlety of the style. The HT is still usually intelligible, but it tends to maintain rhetorical depth and ambiguity, often needing the reader to put in more effort to understand. This feature may contribute to what is sometimes referred to as the aesthetic "pleasure of the text" and is consistent with the nature of literary works, where meaning is not always immediately apparent.

CONCLUSIONS

This comparative study advances the discourse on AI-assisted translation by shifting attention from mechanical fluency to pragmatic and aesthetic fidelity in literary texts. The findings reveal a cognitive divide between human and machine translation: while ChatGPT enhances surface-level readability and clarity, it tends to reduce structural ambiguity, irony, emotional subtexts, and stylistic nuances through explicitation and semantic flattening. These tendencies indicate that AI prioritizes communicative clarity over preserving authorial voice and artistic meaning. Therefore, human interpretive intervention remains essential for safeguarding the aesthetic integrity and multilayered meanings of literary works. Pedagogically, translation education should emphasize critical text analysis, stylistic awareness, and post-editing skills, enabling students to treat AI as a preliminary drafting tool rather than an absolute authority. Although AI can effectively support functional translation, literary translation remains a deeply human, cultural, and empathetic practice. Future research should examine how advanced LLMs and specialized prompting strategies perform across diverse literary genres and larger corpora.

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