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Using Chat GPT to Translate Song Lyrics

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Abstract: Students of foreign languages and not only use, nowadays, technology as part of their everyday lives. This means that they also use it in their learning activities. Once we consider teaching foreign languages with songs, which are also part of their everyday lives, we can allow students to use Chat GPT to translate their song lyrics. This artificial intelligence model has become very performant and students can realize how much they need or not to intervene in the text. They can use this as an exercise to propose new translation variants and realize how they can contribute creatively to translation.

Keywords: active participation, motivation, innovation, ethics

1. Introduction

Technology is part of our everyday lives, which makes it reasonable to include it in foreign language learning and teaching. Foreign language learning and teaching are related to a high degree to the everyday life world around us, since it is part of contemporary culture and civilization. During foreign language teaching and learning classes, everyday life topics are brought to our attention, and learners are encouraged to discuss about them. For foreign language learning classes, the students' needs are taken into account, which include their intended future professions, skills they need to acquire, as well as communication about what goes on around us every day, together with entertainment activities. Technology is part of both professional life and leisure time, which makes it easy to include in classes related to various domains of activity, including foreign languages. We may think, first of all, about teaching with technology, which has been going on since the days when cassette players and VHS videos were part of the everyday life technology. Foreign language learning and teaching has changed by including the developments of technology that have

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accompanied our everyday lives, by including CDs, DVDs, Youtube videos, online social media videos, language learning applications, mass online courses, and others. Nowadays, artificial intelligence has become a large part of our lives and of our teaching and learning activities as well. Foreign language learning and teaching makes no exception in adopting the use of artificial intelligence.

In the case of the present paper, the use of ChatGPT in foreign language teaching and learning is considered. ChatGPT has proved to be able to create very fluent translations, while also being highly aware of the contextual use of language. The skills of machine translation are especially appreciated when used in the case of literary works, poetry or song lyrics. In the case presented in this paper, the focus is on using Chat GPT in foreign language classes by students in order to translate song lyrics. The students will have as a task to choose the lyrics for a song of their choice, to use ChatGPT, and then to consider a version of translation of their own, by improving the one provided by ChatGPT.

Using song lyrics in the foreign languages classroom can help raise the students' interest, as they listen to music for entertainment. Using song lyrics in the foreign language classroom is also an opportunity to present learners with authentic foreign language linguistic and cultural content.

The present paper explores the teaching and learning potential of using ChatGPT as a translation assistant in classroom activities focused on song lyrics translation. The objective is to examine how such an activity not only supports language learning, but also prompts students' critical thinking and creativity in translation. By interacting with AI-generated texts, in this case, translations of song lyrics, students become active participants in the translation process, developing a better understanding of linguistic choices, stylistic nuances, and cultural adaptation. The students can be observers in the translation process, and understand how and why ChatGPT in this case has chosen a certain translation variant over another. The students can also try to propose their own translation variant, which can differ from the one proposed by ChatGPT, in order to improve the version suggested by AI. This approach aligns with current trends in learner-centered teaching and learning methods, and aims to connect students' everyday digital interaction with educational objectives.

The integration of artificial intelligence in the education field, and, especially, in the translation domain, has led to growing academic interest recently. Researchers in translation studies (O'Hagan 2013, 503-58; Yves 2019, 344-361) have emphasized the role of technology in shaping the translator's work, from computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools to neural machine translation systems. ChatGPT represents a new phase in this evolution (Jiao et al 2023), combining language generation with context-sensitive understanding. Especially in the translation field, the context has great importance, when we understand meaning. Although Chat GPT is known mainly for general text generation, it has also proved to have promising capabilities in translation tasks (Jiao et al. 2023). Song lyrics can be included here.

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2. Materials and Methods

This paper integrates ChatGPT-assisted translation exercises into a foreign language teaching context at university level. The author of the present paper teaches English as a foreign language for engineering students, as well as for translation and interpretation students. This exercise of translating song lyrics of their choice using ChatGPT and then improving the translation themselves can apply to students in both specializations. Students in engineering may enjoy using AI tools such as ChatGPT to help them in the translation process, and they can try to understand how this AI tool work. For students in the translation and interpretation section, this exercise can relate to their future work using machine translation and translation software tools, whose result they will be expected to improve by correction and by bringing in their own translation variant. For the students in the translation and interpretation specialization this can be a good training and simulation exercise, while for engineering students this can be an example of showing them that they can rely on AI tools for various tasks, including translation for entertainment purposes. If they like a certain song, in a foreign language other than English, thus, by extention, a language they do not know very well or at all, they may try to use ChatGPT for translation, a tool which is more improved that Google Translate (Cahyaningrum 2024, 450).

For a class activity, students can be asked to select English-language songs they are familiar with and use ChatGPT to generate Romanian translations of the lyrics. They then analyze these translations, comparing them to official or commonly accepted versions where available, and propose alternative translations where they find the AI output lacking.

Students can work both individually and in groups, or pairs, in order to perform the following activities: identify mistranslations or culturally insensitive renditions; reflect on word choices, idiomatic expressions, and poetic devices; justify proposed translation changes and discuss their stylistic or cultural rationale.

Song lyrics bring about specific challenges in translation due to their poetic structure, emotional tone, cultural references, and frequent use of idiomatic or figurative language (Low, 2016). Researchers such as Franzon (2008, 373-399) and Susam-Sarajeva (2016, 187-200) have explored strategies for translating song lyrics, including maintaining singability, and making this aspect a priority, preserving semantic accuracy, as well as cultural resonance. These strategies require both linguistic competence and creative interpretation. In this way, song lyrics translation becomes a relevant exercise for training future translators, as well as for helping engineering students understand the particular features of translation and the way AI tools such as ChatGPT can help them.

In the domain of foreign language teaching, using songs has been recognized as an efficient teaching method and tool (Degrave 2019, 412-420; Sulaymonova 2019, 72-74). Songs are believed to help learners acquire new vocabulary items (Kocaman 2019, 29, 116), internalize grammatical structures (Saricoban & Metin 2000, 1-7), which are present especially in everyday speech, as well as in the poetical register, and develop listening skills (Parra-Gavilánez & Calero-Sanchez 2020, 9111-

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9118) in an engaging context. This is because they enjoy listening to music, and it is a frequent entertainment activity. When students are made to interact with songs through translation activities, they also engage thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and adaptation of the text of the song lyrics, which are, at the same time, key competencies for both language learners and translators.

The use of AI tools such as ChatGPT in the classroom has been explored in pedagogical studies, which suggest that these tools can help student autonomy, critical engagement, and digital literacy (Dwivedi et al. 2023, 192, 122579). We can consider that research specifically addressing the use of ChatGPT in the context of song translation can be further on enhanced by the present paper, which aims to propose using translation of song lyrics starting from ChatGPT and continuing with the students' improvement of the translated text, at the level of university studies and for students specializing in both translation and interpretation and engineering. Both domains of specialization are technical, as the students in the translation and interpretation specialization at the Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest are training for translation in the technical field, and specialized non-philology areas. This means that they are training not to be literary texts translators. However, during their practical courses, they can have exercises related to literary translation as well. Translators and interpreters should have the capacity to adapt to various professional fields, after all. For engineering students, reading can be a pastime activity, and listening to songs can be a hobby and entertainment. Listening to music is, specifically, an activity associated with young age. The present paper proposes an activity where ChatGPT, emotional sensitivity, knowledge of a foreign language, and translation practice can contribute to combining teaching and learning with technology, translation pedagogy, as well as creative use of language.

3. Results

Based on the exercise of using ChatGPT to translate song lyrics of a song of the students' choice, function of the foreign language they are studying at university level, we notice that it can lead, for students, to increased awareness of stylistic and cultural nuances. Language becomes, therefore, for students not just word for word translation, but an entire process of interpretation of language use function of context and background knowledge. Emotional aspects are, especially, to be considered when translating song lyrics. The way the respective song lyrics are relevant to the personal experiences and emotions of students are, after all, one of the criteria in their choosing the respective song lyrics for translation in the first place. Based on this exercise, we can consider, as teachers, the importance of the students' active participation in translation exercises. Students can focus on creative variant choices for their translation versions. Teachers can also consider incorporating in such an exercise the development of critical thinking in digital literacy. Students can begin to question the reliability of AI translations and appreciate the importance of human contribution to the translation process, as human translators can ensure nuance, emotion, and appropriateness of a choice of translation version based on the context.

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The students can also reflect on the ethical and professional implications of using AI in translation. This is because they can consider that there are risks of depending too much on AI for translation, and set aside the importance of developing personal voice and judgement in such a task. At the same time, AI can misinterpret certain uses of language function of context, which can result in providing the public with a faulty translated version.

4. Discussion

Using AI tools such as ChatGPT in the teaching and learning process is currently a highly debated topic. This is due to the students' possibly inappropriate usage of AI tools in order to avoid completing and thinking for themselves of certain academic tasks. Students may rely too much on ChatGPT and other similar AI tools in order to solve their assignments without thinking too much about them themselves. This is an easy way out, similar to that of copying the assignment from a colleague, or simply relying on the help of a colleague for finishing an assignment, These are all practices that are against the ethical considerations in academic life. Ethics codes in teaching and learning have been created at the level of universities, and students are constantly encouraged to become familiar with them in order to successfully carry out their academic tasks without breaking the rules. Students may consider help from a colleague, if the respective colleague consents, as completely ethical, while the code of ethics can claim something completely different, since students are expected to work out their assignments themselves, unless it is group or pair work stated as such by the teacher. The ethics of AI is another emerging academic trend, as well as a trend related to the ethics of each and every profession. Such an exercise proposed in the present paper, of translating song lyrics, can bring students face-to-face with several ethical dilemmas, regarding if they can claim that it is their own and original work if they use AI tools such as Chat GPT to translate song lyrics. Once they bring in their contribution to the translation, and change significantly the translation provided by ChatGPT, students should be prompted by the teacher in this activity to consider if they can claim the work as their own. At the same time, suing ChatGPT as a helping tool can also bring further questions regarding their honesty in performing the assignment, as the translated version by ChatGPT can influence their own selection of certain terms and phrases in translation. The students could be asked if they should try their own translated version before using ChatGPT and improving that version with their own. Using ChatGPT brings on further questions regarding the students' genuine effort in solving the activity. This can be a first step in introducing them to academic ethics, as well as to ethics and deontology codes of various professions, ranging from the one of translators and interpreters to the one of engineers. While students specializing in translation and interpretation are aware that they should value originality and creativity in their professional field, so are engineering students, who can consider that innovation is a main aspect of the engineering field. After all, ground-breaking discoveries and innovations in

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technology have helped shape the comfortable lifestyle we lead today, not just improve professional satisfaction.

An exercise in translating song lyrics, even while using ChatGPT for help, can become satisfactory once students also bring in their own contribution. The students' motivation is, in this way, stimulated.

5. Conclusions

Such a translation and foreign language learning exercise can consider the following aspect: rather than replacing the role of the student or teacher, an AI tool such as ChatGPT can act as a prompt for reflection, critical thinking, and creativity of the human translator. In line with constructivist learning theories, the activity situates learning in meaningful, real-world contexts, while learners are encouraged to take an active role. Learners become creators of the translated version for the audience expecting a translated version for the song lyrics. From a translation studies perspective, the exercise helps future translators deal with the challenges of style, audience adaptation, and cross-cultural mediation. For engineering students, this exercise helps them understand that foreign language learning is not at all removed from engineering and scientific tools of present-day technology. Technology can deal, nowadays, precisely with understanding foreign language by providing translated version of texts, which human users can help improve, based on their additional knowledge of the context and background general culture and personal-experience acquired extra-linguistic knowledge.

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