Journal of educational equipment: Applied research, Volume 2, Issue 321 (September 2024)
ISSN 1859 - 0810

Integrating ChatGPT into translation classes

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Received: 7/9/2024; Accepted: 13/9/2024; Published:20/9/2024

Abstract: *ChatGPT has brought significant transformation to various fields, including education, particularly in language learning. This paper explores the integration of ChatGPT into an advanced translation course within an English language program at a university in Vietnam. In this course, students were tasked with using ChatGPT to enhance their understanding of legal translation and support their translation of assigned texts. ChatGPT was both feasible and useful in the classroom setting, with students initially responding positively.*

Keywords: *ChatGPT, translation teaching, translation process, students' attitudes, teachers' strategies*

1. Introduction

Among these emerging translation tools, ChatGPT, an advanced AI language model developed by OpenAI, presents a promising addition to translation education. According to Lund and Wang (2023), ChatGPT is a flexible software that can carry out human-like particular activities such as offering clarifications, responding to factual inquiries, coming up with innovative ideas, and participating in formal and informal discussions. By leveraging such technology, educators can enhance the learning experience, making it more interactive and engaging for students. While teaching translation in Vietnam and integrating technology into translation classes are still limited, this paper presents a pedagogical proposal in which ChatGPT is used in a translation class in an English program at the tertiary level in Vietnam. Procedures and methods of integrating ChatGPT in translation classes will benefit translation educators in many similar contexts.

2. ChatGPT: Benefits and Challenges in Translation

ChatGPT is regarded as a generally useful translation tool. Research shows that ChatGPT can translate text like a human, with a high degree of accuracy and dependability (Alkhawaja, 2024; Sahari et al., 2023). Businesses and organizations can profit from ChatGPT's instant translation capabilities when they receive the right prompts. According to Sahari et al. (2023), ChatGPT facilitates initial translation time reduction, freeing up human translators to concentrate on accuracy assurance and refinement. When compared to other machine translation systems, ChatGPT typically produces results that are competitive. For instance, Hidayati and Nihayah (2024) discovered that because AI is capable of natural language processing and academic writing, translations provided by AI are more contextually correct than translations generated by Google Translate. Similarly, ChatGPT "impressively" outperformed Google Translate in terms of translation performance, as demonstrated by Alkhawaja (2024).

Despite ChatGPT's advantages, its translation capabilities may be limited. ChatGPT frequently has trouble translating texts with more intricate nuances and structures, although it does well when translating short, uncomplicated texts. According to Lau et al. (2024), AI translators are unable to understand the emotions and ideas of poets. ChatGPT appears to be ineffective in handling certain translation problems, such as separable phrasal verbs (Alosaimi & Alawad, 2024), even though the translations it generates are comprehensible. Furthermore, according to Banat and Adla (2023), ChatGPT is unable to translate culturally sensitive messages that call for context-rich processing data. Additionally, ChatGPT is more effective at mechanical activities like composing and editing translated texts than fine-tuning, which calls for more critical thought, according to Sahari et al. (2023). It must be acknowledged that research examining ChatGPT translation quality does not discount the need of human labor in generating accurate translations (Alkhawaja, 2024; Sahari et al., 2023). They maintained that even with ChatGPT's impressive translation capabilities, it was unable to match the expertise of human translators, whose involvement is necessary to guarantee a translation's high standards of coherence, fluency, and accuracy.

Awareness of the benefits and drawbacks of

ChatGPT in translation can allow educators to make appropriate and effective use of ChatGPT in translation classes while mitigating threats and concerns with ChatGPT.

3. A case study of ChatGPT use in a translation class

The author, a lecturer in translation at the University of Foreign Language Studies, conducted workshops on the use of ChatGPT in an advanced English course focused on legal translation. This course, offered in 2024, was designed for fourth-year students majoring in English within an English language program at a university in Vietnam. By this stage, the students had already acquired a strong foundation in translation theory and strategies through previous translation practice courses.

The workshops aimed to introduce ChatGPT as a tool to enhance students' understanding and processes in legal translation. Through a series of class activities, students explored ChatGPT's features and practical applications. In Workshop 1, they engaged in conversations with ChatGPT to gather information on key aspects of legal translation, while in Workshop 2, they applied ChatGPT in translating a tenancy agreement. Emphasis was placed on the importance of crafting effective prompts to elicit informative and relevant responses from ChatGPT.

In the first workshop, which focused on legal translation knowledge, students compared ChatGPT-generated responses based on their own input with results obtained through more detailed prompts. These prompts addressed various aspects of legal translation, including types of legal texts, common translation challenges, strategies for handling legal translations, and criteria for evaluating legal translations. The lecturer, who facilitated the workshop, provided feedback on ChatGPT's outputs and offered further insights into the complexities of legal translation.

In the second workshop, the students were shown how to use ChatGPT to assist their translation process. The students were guided to use ChatGPT in the English-Vietnamese translation of short extracts from the Australian text - "General Tenancy Agreement", using prompts. Specifically, prompts should contain contextual elements that provide helpful clues to boost ChatGPT's performance. After exploring the situational features of the ST, the students asked ChatGPT to explain the vocabulary and terminology of the ST. An example (in Vietnamese or English) included "Phân biệt 'Division, subdivision, item' trong cấu trúc văn bản" [Distinguish Division, subdivision, item' as parts of a document].

Next, the students chose to have the ST translated by ChatGPT or have their translations revised by ChatGPT. In the former case, the students were instructed to include the text type and features of the ST, for example, "Translate into Vietnamese the following extract from an Australian General Tenancy Agreement". In the latter, the students included specific criteria for a good translation. An example of this type of prompt is "Evaluate/Review the Vietnamese translation of an extract from an Australian General Tenancy Agreement (presented above) in terms of functional appropriateness, accuracy, and acceptability".

Finally, the students reflected on their translations and their use of ChatGPT. They were asked how they used ChatGPT during the translation of the Tenancy contract and what comments they had about ChatGPT in their translation process.

4. Students' reflection

For most students, ChatGPT was used to check the meaning of vocabulary and specialized words that are difficult to understand. ChatGPT can list the meanings and definitions of unknown words. "ChatGPT can present in detail the meanings of a word and its possible translations, providing some contextual clues to the understanding of the word", as cited by a student. Another student showed satisfaction with ChatGPT when they compared ChatGPT's explanation of meanings with results from other tools: "It can provide many translation choices for a word immediately, with more advanced word choices than ordinary dictionaries".

In addition to using ChatGPT to understand text features (including vocabulary, grammar, and topic), the students used ChatGPT to revise their translations. ChatGPT was recognised to be a useful tool for students to revise their translations. Expressions or stylistic choices suggested by ChatGPT could be a good source of reference for the students in translation. A student declared: "I learned more about ChatGPT's wording which seemed better than mine. It has a more academic writing style and creative word choices".

Although the students acknowledged ChatGPT's usefulness in their translation process, some expressed dissatisfaction about ChatGPT use. They complained that some information produced by ChatGPT was

not quite accurate due to the lack of awareness of the context. Therefore, it was recommended to compare ChatGPT's results with those found by other search tools as it was not a perfect tool. "We should not allow ChatGPT to do all the translation because it is only a support tool. ChatGPT cannot understand all the meanings conveyed in the text. Therefore, if we have the text translated completely by ChatGPT, the translation may become 'unnatural'. Chat GPT cannot transfer metaphorical meanings which can be only understood by referring to contextual clues", cited by a student.

While the students were excited and motivated to have ChatGPT in their translation process, they showed prudence. They proposed that translator students should not depend on ChatGPT's results involving accuracy and expressions. Instead, they can cross-check with other tools or use effective prompts to produce better translations. They also insisted that the role of human translation should not diminish as humans can help deal with complicated issues related to stylistic and cultural meanings.

5. Conclusion

The use of ChatGPT in translation classes appears feasible and has shown promising results, with students displaying favorable attitudes toward it. As an easy-to-use tool, ChatGPT supported students throughout the translation process by answering queries related to unfamiliar and complex vocabulary, as well as specialized terms, while also reinforcing their topic-related knowledge. It offered diverse and appropriate target equivalents, making translation more convenient and accessible. Despite some recognized limitations, teachers are encouraged to adopt various strategies to effectively integrate ChatGPT into their translation classes.

Teachers must address ethical considerations when using ChatGPT in the classroom to avoid excessive dependence on ChatGPT. This includes discussing the responsible use of technology and promoting appropriate online behavior. Educators must implement strategies that ensure students are developing their translation skills independently, rather than relying solely on AI assistance. Therefore, balancing the use of technology with traditional teaching methods is essential. While AI tools like ChatGPT offer new learning opportunities, they should not overshadow the foundational skills that are critical for effective translation. The instructor's role in guiding the use of AI is vital to ensure that students benefit from the technology without neglecting essential translation competencies.

While ChatGPT offers valuable language learning opportunities, it is important to balance its use with human interaction. Teachers should highlight the complementary role of ChatGPT, emphasizing that while AI can provide support, human communication remains essential for translation and translation refinement.

***Acknowledgement:** *The research is funded by the University of Foreign Language Studies, the University of Da Nang, Viet Nam.*

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