Translation and ideology in the age of ChatGPT
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Abstract

This presentation will apply insights from the literature on translation and ideology to the translation capabilities of the large language model (LLM) ChatGPT-4. Although ChatGPT lacks many of the things that make human beings ideological, such as values and beliefs, many observers have pointed to biases in its output. In this presentation I will investigate the extent to which ideology is present in translations produced by ChatGPT, demonstrate that ChatGPT can be made to adopt certain ideological stances, and discuss how the 'ideology' of an LLM differs from that of a human translator.

Using sources from my PhD thesis alongside other examples from the translation studies literature, I will analyze whether or not the translations produced by ChatGPT (in the absence of specific prompts) contain any evidence of ideological biases such as those observed in translations produced by humans. I will then explore the potential of ChatGPT as an overtly ideological translation tool: it can, for example, be made to translate a passage on human rights in a way that is favorable towards, or skeptical of, the concept of human rights. In both cases I will highlight the important ways in which the ideological mediation in translations by LLMs differs in origin and expression from that found in translations by humans. Having demonstrated the potential for ideological mediation in translations by LLMs, I will conclude by discussing the implications of my findings for the future of ideology in translation practice and theory.

Biography

Mr. Michael SHARKEY is a PhD candidate in the Department of Translation at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests include ideology in translation, institutional translation, and the translation of political texts. His PhD thesis is entitled *Rewriting Mao: Ideology and Manipulation in Translations of Volume V of The Selected Works of Mao Zedong* and looks at how portrayals of Mao Zedong in translation are influenced by the ideologies of different translating institutions. He received his MPhil in Modern Chinese Studies from the University of Oxford in 2020, where he was awarded the St. Edmund Hall Schools Prize and the Ko Cheuk-Hung Prize for best thesis.