Use of translation brief elements in AI translation prompts: ChatGPT vs Bard

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Abstract

With the advent of AI-powered language models such as ChatGPT and BARD, which can generate human-like text responses to a given prompt, research of the quality of machine translation (MT) produced by these models is mounting. Designing better translation prompts was suggested by Gao, Wang & Hou (2023) as a way to improve translation output. MT does not normally take into account the purpose of translation, the target readers' needs, and other requirements that are usually included in a translation brief to a human translator. This study explores the response of AI-powered models and their translation output to prompts that include elements of hypothetical briefs. Three passages from tourist brochures were submitted to ChatGPT and Bard with five different prompts of various complexity including information about the text function, purpose of translation and the target audience. While prompt-1 included no instructions other than to translate the text from English into Arabic, prompts 2 & 3 included instructions to produce a promotional tourist brochure, and prompts 4 & 5 included instructions to produce an encyclopedia article. Textual elements related to cultural references and promotional devices (such as imagery, personal deixis and emotive words) were identified in the passages, and their translation were compared across the five target texts. Analysis shows that neither model recognizes cultural references as elements that may require explication. Regarding textual promotional devices, however, Bard showed better responses than ChatGPT by introducing stylistic and structural changes when the prompts required a change of text function.

Biography

Dr Hala Sharkas is Associate Professor at the Department of Languages and Literature, the United Arab Emirates University. She was awarded with her MA and PhD in Translation Studies by the University of Portsmouth in the UK in 2001 and 2005 respectively. Her research interests are mainly in specialized areas of translation such as scientific and technical translation, health communication, and news translation. Since 2006, she has been teaching both general and specialized translation courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels, and giving public lectures and training workshops in the field of translation. She also served as external examiner to postgraduate students as well as peer reviewer for international journals. Before joining academia, she worked as a professional translator in the public and private sectors as well as a freelancer.