SVA Schweizerischer Verband der Akademikerinnen
ASFDU Association Suisse des Femmes Diplômées des Universités
ASL Associazione Svizzera delle Laureate
ASA Associaziun Svizra da las Academicras

AI and Language

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Abstract

ChatGPT & Co. offer us a future in which translation by humans, and perhaps the very act of translation itself, could theoretically become extinct. Even before the advent of ChatGPT, machine translation capability was advanced and has much reduced the need for human involvement in the translation process. Generative AI now conjures up the possibility of creating parallel texts in different languages from scratch, potentially without any need for what Roman Jakobson labelled "interlingual translation" – translation between distinct languages.

This is our present reality. Yet French translation theorist Antoine Berman once speculated that even if each of us could speak and understand all of the world's languages, the practice of translation would not die out, because translation is about more than simply communication: it is an act of interpretation, a process of exchange and assimilation, an art form.

In this short talk, I will look at what the act of translation entails and how the human translator and the machine might fruitfully interact. Can we both plug into the linguistic hivemind and retain a sense of individuality, of distinctiveness? Are there lessons that we can take from translation's relationship to generative AI that are applicable to human language use as a whole?

Bio

Chantal Wright ist seit 2024 Professorin für Creativity and the Language Industry an der Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften in Winterthur. Zu ihren Veröffentlichungen gehören *Literary Translation* (Routledge, 2016) sowie eine englische Übersetzung Antoine Bermans *L'Âge de la traduction* (*The Age of Translation*, Routledge, 2018). 2014 bis 2022 war Chantal Wright Reader (Associate Professor) an der Universität Warwick in Grossbritannien, wo sie 2017 *The Warwick Prize for Women in Translation* gründete. Sie übersetzt Literatur aus dem Deutschen und Französischen ins Englische und arbeitet zurzeit an einer Co-Übersetzung des Briefwechsels zwischen Ingeborg Bachmann und Max Frisch («*Wir haben es nicht gut gemacht*», Piper/Suhrkamp, 2022) zusammen mit ihrem britischen Übersetzerkollegen Simon Pare.