

International Conference and Teacher Training Conference

The Wider Implications of Machine Translation: Theories, Predictions and Practices

Regards croisés sur les implications profondes de la traduction automatique : théories, prévisions et pratiques

Maschinelle Übersetzung und ihre Auswirkungen: Theorien, Prognosen und Anwendungsbereiche

June 15-16 2023, Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Description

Machine translation (MT) has become an intrinsic part of our work and academic life in general. A recent survey (Delorme Benites et al. 2021) has revealed that it is a ubiquitous tool at Swiss universities, used by everyone from academic support staff, through teaching staff and researchers to students. Research on MT literacy (O'Brien & Ehrensberger-Dow 2020) has shown the importance of discussing the tool with users and sharing information with them (Bowker & Buitrago Ciro 2019; Bowker 2020; Pellet & Meyers 2022). This is at the heart of the four-year swissuniversities "Digital Literacy in University Contexts" project (2021-2024; ZHAW, UniNE, BFH, PHZH)¹.

Numerous studies have now been carried out all over the world to assess learners' (Hellmich 2021; Wei 2021; Dorst et al. 2022; Tsai 2022) and teachers' (Stapleton & Leung 2019; Groves & Mundt 2021; Vinall & Hellmich 2021) awareness and/or use of MT and to investigate how it could help with language learning (Niño 2020; Yamada 2020; Carré, Kenny et al. 2022; Urlaub & Dessen 2022), especially with L2 writing (Kol, Scholnik & Spector-Cohen 2018; Lee 2020; Chung & Ahn 2021; Xu 2022). More and more teachers are experimenting with including MT as a tool in their language classroom (see some recent examples in Vinall & Hellmich 2022). These research projects are interesting because they testify to both the importance and usefulness of including MT in language teaching. However, this trend raises a range of serious issues when we consider findings from translation studies and corpus linguistics.

Firstly, several researchers have underlined how MT output presents less lexical and morphological variety than human translation (Loock 2020; de Clerc et al. 2021; Vanmassenhove, Shterionov & Gwilliam 2021). This phenomenon has been called 'machine translationese'. How does this impact the kind of writing that learners are producing in the L2? Resende et al. (2020) have observed priming effects of MT on L2 English learners. What

¹ For more information, see URL : <https://www.zhaw.ch/fr/linguistique/digital-literacy-in-university-contexts-diglit/>

are thus the implications of using machine translationese as a model for language learning?

Another important issue is the impact that MT use could have on language classroom content. Several concerns have emerged related to the fact that MT use allows L2 learners to produce and understand a written text at at least B1 level of the CEFR descriptors (Delorme Benites & Lehr 2021). It could be assumed that this increased facility for learners to write and read in the L2 thanks to MT will simply increase the focus of teaching on speaking and/or listening tasks. However – and knowing that in the very near future, MT will also be massively available for oral communication – the challenge is rather to re-consider which types of communication tasks will be important for learners to master in the L2 and to what extent it is judicious that they perform these using the machine. Moreover, this increased use of MT for L2 writing raises the question of whether to include translation and post-editing in language teaching curricula. Translation as a communication task has long played a minor role in language classrooms, and post-editing MT output is usually taught only within specialised translation courses. Should we now include post-editing in the language classroom and in the learning outcomes of language courses? This is debatable, as research has shown that the quality of neural MT output makes it very difficult for students to identify and correct MT errors (Loock & Léchaugette 2021). A pressing concern currently being debated among language teachers is the question of assessment, most importantly for written work done outside the classroom. For example, several language teachers have advocated changing the focus of tasks by including MT and asking questions focusing more on metalinguistic awareness (Knowles 2022; Pellet & Myers 2022).

Finally, as with any other digital learning tool, there is the issue of learners' dependence on MT. Where do we draw the line? What should they be able to achieve without and with the help of MT? This question is part of MT literacy. Moreover, as advocated by colleagues (Delorme Benites & Lehr 2021), current language skills descriptors need to be adapted to reflect the legitimacy of MT as a communication tool and policies regarding the use of MT in tertiary and, more widely, in secondary education need to be drawn up.

This international conference aims to gather international researchers from different fields working on MT (translation, corpus linguistics, second-language acquisition, teaching methods, etc.), members of various Swiss project teams focusing on MT and language centre directors and teachers to discuss these issues at a theoretical and practical level.

Programme

Thursday June 15 2023

- 9.00-9.45: Registration - Coffee
- 9.45-9.50: Welcome (Stefanie Neuner-Anfindsen/Elisabeth Paliot + Sara Cotelli)
- 9.50-10.h20: Plenary 1: **Is AI to language learning what the calculator is to maths?**
Speakers: Alice Delorme Benites (ZHAW) and Sara Cotelli Kureth (UniNE)
- 10.30-11.30: Discussion 1 (4-5 groups according to the language FR, DE, EN, IT)
- 11.30-11.50: Coffee break
- 11.50-12.30: Plenary 2: **Post-editing raw MT output – definition and considerations for language teaching.** Speakers: Elana Summers/Caroline Lehr (ZHAW)
- 12.30-1.30: Lunch break
- 1.30-2.30: Discussion 2 (same groups)
- 2.40-3.30: Plenary 3: **Machine translationese – Working title.** Speaker: Rudy Look (Université de Lille)
- 3.30-3.50: Coffee break
- 3.50-4.50: Discussion 3 (same groups)
- 5.00-6.00: **UniNE Language Center’s 10th anniversary session: “Machine translation at Swiss universities” (DigLit project)** → open session to UniNE colleagues and guests
- 18h30: Drinks and buffet (registration necessary)

Friday June 16 2023

Invited speakers (max 8) will present on a topic of their choice, related to their research area and pertaining to the description above.

20-minute presentations and 15-minute Q&A: 9am-5.30pm

Speakers (confirmed):

- Luisa Bentivogli (BFK):
- Lyn Bowker (University of Ottawa): “From machine translation literacy to machine translation literacies: Reflections on an evolving concept”
- Catherine Ferris & Raphaël Perrin (Pädagogische Hochschule St. Gallen)
- Emily Hellmich & Kimberly Vinall (University of Berkley)
- Dorothy Kenny (Dublin City University):
- Masaru Yamada (Rikkyo University, Tokyo): “Language Learning as Prompt Engineering with Machine Translation and Large Language Models (Chat GPT)”

+ 1 Poster session for Phd candidates who are working on MT or teachers sharing action-research projects.

Organising team

Scientific organisation: Sara Cotelli Kureth with “Digital literacy in University Contexts” project team (Alice Delorme Benites, Caroline Lehr, Elana Summers, Elizabeth Steele) and SSH-CHES AG Weiterbildung (Daniela Fernando, Elisabeth Paliot)

Practical organisation: Sara Cotelli Kureth, Arielle Loup (UniNE Language Centre)

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Venue

Université de Neuchâtel
Centre de langues
Av. du 1^{er}-Mars 26
2000 Neuchâtel
Room D67

Building with the red circle

Rooms:

Registration:

Talks: D67



Travel to the UniNE

On foot

The train station is a 10-minute downhill walk to the university. Exit the station west and then cross the road and take the Ruelle Vaucher, cross the Jardin anglais and the Avenue du 1^{er}-Mars.

By public transport

A funicular (Funambule) in the train station takes you opposite the building. It runs all day, every 3-5 minutes.

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