MT & AI: Friend or Foe?
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Dear Readers,

Are you afraid of artificial intelligence? Should you be? Or are you excited about the opportunities AI creates? Wherever you stand on the topic, chances are you’re not indifferent to it. Chances are also that it has affected your work in some way at this point. If it hasn’t, it’s only a matter of time.

In this issue, we’re taking a closer look at the current state of AI as it relates to our profession. Carola Berger has provided an in-depth look at how machine translation works (page 20). Ruth Boggs explains how she came to appreciate DeepL and is now using it as a productivity tool (page 24). And on page 27, I’ll tell you about my personal experience with the much talked-about ChatGPT.

This being the first issue of the year, we also have two recaps of the last ATA Conference, written by Susanne Henke (page 8) and Halla Bearden (page 10). You’ll also find our Annual Meeting Minutes (page 12) and, sadly, the last Listmaster Report written by Gerhard Preisser (page 15).

Our Translator in Profile this time is Robin Limmeroth, who has stepped up as assistant administrator of the GLD after serving as our webmaster. Find out more about her on page 32, and don’t forget to check out Karen Leube’s Word from the Administrator (page 4) for other important changes in the GLD! Our Collaboration Pool Coordinator, Heike Holthaus, also has an update for you on page 18.

European Coordinator Ellen Yutzy-Glebe will keep you informed about our GLD happenings in Germany (page 6), while Stella Waltemade has put together a calendar of upcoming T&I events across the globe.

We also have a book review by our Review Coordinator Rosalie Henke, who will tell you about Miriam Neidhardt’s Überleben als Übersetzer: Das Handbuch für freiberufliche Übersetzerinnen (page 34).

Before I let you dive into this issue, I’d like to introduce you to a new member of the interaktiv editorial team: Randal Gernaat has joined us as a proofreader to make sure that our content continues to be as error-free as possible. He jumped right in and started working on the issue at hand.

We hope you’ll enjoy reading this newsletter.

Mit sonnigen Grüßen aus San Diego,

Marion Rhodes
Word from the Administrator

By Karen Leube

As I write my first column as the GLD Administrator, it is snowing—with enough snow accumulating to have required me to shovel a path from the street to the house, a rare occurrence in Aachen these days. And yet it feels “normal,” since it’s January in Central Europe, and in the past, snow and ice were par for the course here at this time of year. When it comes to my work, ATA and the GLD, this winter doesn’t feel “normal.” For one, I am now the administrator of the German Language Division, a position I took over from Carlie Sitzman in November. So many things seem to be moving targets, whether it is the erratic translation market, changes at ATA, and new faces on the GLD Leadership Council. As my son once exclaimed after reading the book *Who Moved My Cheese* on managing change, “Just put the cheese back, and I will be fine!”

While some of us feel that machine translation and AI-based chatbots are pulling the rug out from under us, others are harnessing the efficiency of these tools for the benefit of their work—and taking their businesses to new heights. Still others are hunkering down in their niche specialties, hoping to ward off automation through their stylistic prowess. And some of us are preparing to transition to other (language-based) income streams. Earlier this year, I was invited to talk to T&I students studying at the University of Heidelberg on the topic of “Fachübersetzen im Wandel der Zeit.” While there is a lot to say about how nonliterary translation has evolved over the years (“Fachübersetzen” being one of those words we love to hate), surely what the students want to know is what’s in store for them in the years to come.

One area I wanted to focus on was collaboration and professional association membership. If you have been following our blog series entitled “7 Questions for GLD Leadership Council Members,” you know that none of us have trodden a straightforward path to date. We have a near even cross-pond exchange, with four of us US-born but based in Germany, and five Germany-born but US-based. Erin Riddle, one of our new digital events coordinators, is our token “US-born,” “US-based” LC member. And among our LC consultants, it’s two US-based Germans versus one US-based American.

Just in the past six months, one LC member has switched from full-time freelancing to a full-time in-house position, and another has done just the
At the German Language Division, we are working hard to provide our members with the networking and educational opportunities they need to navigate the uncharted waters ahead.

I’m so grateful to the GLD Leadership Council members who are working so hard on behalf of our members. Webmaster Robin Limmeroth agreed to step up as GLD assistant administrator when I moved to administrator. Marion Rhodes, Ilona Friedman, Ellen Yutzy Glebe, and our LC consultants Ruth Boggs, Gerhard Preisser, and Carlie Sitzman are continuing their service in their various LC roles. Rainer Klett is our wonderful new listmaster. Katrin Rippel Galati and Erin Riddle are our new digital events coordinators, and they kicked off the new year with the first Digital Social in January. Heike Holthaus is staying on at the helm of the Collaboration Pool. Kristina Cosumano is serving in the newly created position of new member coordinator.

But that’s not all. I’d like to extend a warm welcome to some other GLD members who are new to behind-the-scenes roles. Nathan Wiegand has agreed to recompile and manage a list of GLD members who specialize in old German script/handwriting. If that is your specialty and you are not yet on the list, please contact Nathan at nlwcdw@gmail.com. Beate Maier is compiling a list of sworn translators, i.e., Europe-based translators who can certify translations in line with local regulations. You can reach Beate at maier_services@hotmail.com if you would like to be added to the list. Both lists will be stored in the “Files” section of the GLD groups.io group.

And finally, I’d like to express my thanks to Noah Alter for setting up and “feeding” our new GLD LinkedIn page. Please follow our new page and help us by passing on interesting content for us to post.

Perhaps the tone of this piece seemed a bit glum at the outset. Yet as I compile the list of enthusiastic helpers, view the pictures of GLD activities on our newly overhauled division website, and eagerly anticipate our next in-person GLD meetup, the uneasiness is giving way to optimism: “Gemeinsam sind wir stark.”
I have a confession to make: still a little jet-lagged and feeling devoid of inspiration, I toyed with the idea of asking ChatGPT to write this column. After all, I’ve only just returned to Europe after six months in North Carolina with my family, and I was so busy during that period that I was largely oblivious to what was going on in the translation world on either side of the Atlantic and focused on getting my own work done. Even so, I could hardly have missed the frenzy around ChatGPT: It was suddenly being discussed in all kinds of mainstream media outlets (including Tagesschau and Slate) and sparking concerned discussion in nearly every professional forum I follow. The editors were worried about whether it would put them out of business, the historians wondered what it meant for the future of academia and whether it could fake footnotes, and the teachers asked themselves how they would motivate students to hone their writing skills if the machines were poised to take over anyway.

Are we on the cusp of a brave new world? Teetering on the precipice above a slippery slope that plummets into a society ruled by algorithms and AI? Or is this just the latest wave that will ebb soon enough as the shortcomings and difficulties are inevitably revealed?

Perhaps the frenzy will have died down a bit by the time this column makes its way into print, but questions will remain regardless—questions of ethics, economics, efficiency, and even our very existence. We might be able or even inclined to ignore some of these, like the question of what happens to those unfortunate souls who get hired to help train AI as to what it may and may not repeat of the vitriol it finds as it crawls around online. (Those questions, as the TIME article in the link above makes clear, apply not just to AI but also to social media networks, which have similar problems in controlling the vitriol itself.) While the machines may not (yet?) be able to produce stellar academic prose, the potential for plagiarism is immense, whether conscious (feeding it a text to rephrase so as to be unrecognizable) or unconscious (getting a reply to a prompt that is in effect regurgitated from a particular source). And, when AI operates based on existing examples that are permeated with bias and prejudice, does it perpetuate these attitudes in its output?

For language professionals like the readers of Interaktiv, however, some of these questions are existential and ignoring them would be to stick our heads in the sand. Will new technologies make competent linguists more efficient or render us obsolete? (Nina Sattler-Hovdar’s answer seems to be a “no” on both fronts, at least for now.) Will we go from translators and editors to fact-checkers trying to flag those cases where the AI has just blatantly invented or inadvertently misinterpreted things? (And here I highly recommend this article about a researcher who had the chatbot write his obituary!) I must admit that when DeepL got a lot of hype in the media just a few years ago, I told myself that, given my
pennant for editing, I did not need to worry too much about having enough work to do in the future. Even if my clients turned to MT, I figured, their texts would still need a thorough editing. So when DeepL recently launched their new service called DeepL Write, I did do a bit of a double take. While I haven’t succumbed to any nightmares about AI encroaching on my livelihood, I did wonder for a brief moment if it was too late to consider teaching after all.

How fitting, then, that the topic of the upcoming GLD in Europe workshop in Mainz is machine translation. The event, planned for early March, will probably be over by the time you read this, but I predict now that we will find the machines have some pretty amazing capabilities—but nothing that our talented colleagues can’t improve upon! And after three years of not seeing each other due to the pandemic, I also feel confident in predicting that we’ll value the human interaction all the more! Our worries this winter go far beyond the existential questions of AI and MT as we turn down the thermostats and keep a wary eye on geopolitical developments, but our being able to come together for an in-person event is nonetheless cause for celebration.
Annual Conference Recap: Die 63. ATA Jahreskonferenz aus deutscher Freelancer-Perspektive

By Susanne Henke

This article was initially published on susanne-henke.de/aktuelles/usa-ata63. It was adapted and published here with permission by the author.


Spätestens beim Abendempfang auf der Dachterrasse mit Blick über die Skyline von L.A. fängt man an, sich als Teil dieser besonderen Gemeinschaft zu fühlen, straft innerlich die Schultern und stürzt sich angenehm aufgeregt ins Getümmel.


Gestärkt vom gemeinsamen Continental Breakfast in ausgelassener Atmosphäre, geht es am ersten Morgen zur Auftaktveranstaltung, wo die amtierende ATA-Präsidentin Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo und ihre designierte Nachfolgerin, Veronika Demichelis, über die Konferenz-Highlights und aktuelle Entwicklungen und Zahlen zur American Translators Association informieren.

Jetzt gilt es, aus einem riesengroßen Weiterbildungsangebot zu wählen. Ich besuche während der Konferenz unter anderem die folgenden Vorträge:

- **How to Keep Track of Your Marketing Efforts with Ease**, präsentiert von Molly Yurick
- **Whys and Wherefores of Pronominal Adverbs in German to English Translation**, präsentiert von Michael Schubert, CT
- **The Language of Diversity—in German**, präsentiert von Lisa Rüth, die von der German Language Division

What's all the “ataTalk” about?

“ataTalk” is a forum for discussing ATA policy, activities, and governance. It’s a place where members can voice opinions and be heard by the association at large. Join in and find out what all the talk is about! (Please note that questions and problems that need to be addressed right away should continue to be directed to president@atanet.org.)
der ATA als Distinguished Speaker eingeladen ist

- **Institutional Websites: Tera Resources for Translators**, präsentiert von Françoise Herrmann
- **How to Build Your Network before You Actually Need It**, präsentiert von Judy Jenner
- **Unlocking the Power of Syntax in German**, präsentiert von Lisa Rüth

Neugierig? Die Vorträge sind nicht nur lehrreich, sondern auch meistens interaktiv angelegt, humorvoll und kurzweilig und machen definitiv Lust auf mehr! In meiner persönlichen Linksammlung mit Bildern am Ende dieses Artikels finden Sie weitere Informationen.


Was ich an der ATA-Konferenz sonst noch bemerkenswert finde:

- Die langfristige Terminplanung – erleichtert die Reiseplanung
- Die eigens programmierte Konferenzapp – sorgt für optimalen Überblick
- Der Fokus auf Networking – setzt genau da an, wo es bei vielen von uns hapert
- Die außerordentliche Kollegialität und Offenheit – wärmt das Herz
- Die Präsenz in den sozialen Medien – ist vorbildlich und heute ein Muss
- Angebote wie Mindful Movement, um gemeinsam den Tag einzuüllen, bis hin zur abendlichen Zumba-Session

Die Konferenz verbuche ich insgesamt als sehr positive und wichtige Erfahrung und der Abschied von den Kollegen und Kolleginnen fällt mir am Ende nicht ganz leicht. Nur gut, dass die ATA schon einen Veranstaltungsort und Termin für die nächste Jahreskonferenz festgelegt hat!

Displaying the ATA logo is a benefit that some members overlook

If you don’t, you’re missing out on an important way ATA can work for you. All ATA members may access and use the ATA logo. Learn more here: atanet.org/membership/ata_logo_guidelines.php
Annual Conference Recap: A Newbie’s Perspective

By Halla Bearden

In January 2022, I finished the coursework for an M.A. in translation & interpreting at the University of Vienna and moved back home to Houston, Texas. As I made the transition from translation student to professional translator, I quickly realized the value of personal connections in the language industry—and the fact that I had no personal connections in the U.S.

My first step toward getting involved with the T&I community here was to join ATA, including the German and Slavic Language Divisions. As I got to know colleagues in the association, one topic kept popping up over and over again: the annual ATA conference. At first, the not-insignificant cost of attending the conference—including registration, airfare, and hotel costs—made me hesitant to sign up. But the more I heard about other peoples’ experiences, the more I became convinced that the benefits of attending were absolutely worth the costs. By August, I knew I had to register—and ATA63 turned out to be the professional highlight of my year!

I arrived in L.A. in mid-October, excited and nervous. The first item on the conference agenda: Buddies Welcome Newbies. I found my way to the San Diego room, where a small group of people had already gathered, and sat down to chat. Within ten minutes, the room was completely packed with (literally) hundreds of other colleagues wearing the pink First-Time Attendee ribbon on their conference badges, along with experienced conference-goers there to offer support and guidance to the newbies. The event hosts passed out social bingo cards, with prompts written in the squares, such as “Someone who has three or more working languages” or “Someone who’s in the US for the first time.” Finding colleagues who checked the boxes in the squares was an easy and fun way to meet lots of new people, as well as a great conversation starter when encountering those same colleagues again later during the conference.

After the opening presentation the next morning, I checked the conference app for the location and topic of my first session. With a nearly endless array of sessions to choose from, narrowing down the choices and planning my schedule had not been easy. Given my goal to increase the amount of conference interpreting I do, the bulk of my ultimate selections focused on interpreting, including sessions such as “How to be a Better Booth Partner,” presented by Celine Colvin, and “How to Prepare for and Pass an Interpreting Exam,” presented by Corinne McKay. I found the sessions to be not only a great learning experience, but also a valuable networking tool—sticking around
afterward to chat with the presenters or with other attendees who had asked interesting questions during the session led to several helpful connections.

Since I wanted to squeeze the most out of every networking opportunity, I eagerly signed up for the division-specific dinners hosted by the German Language Division and the Slavic Languages Division, where I enjoyed good food and great company. (Pro tip: if you’re ever in L.A., have dinner at the 10e restaurant.) Since so much of the networking at the conference happens fast—a quick introduction, an elevator pitch, the customary exchanging of business cards—I appreciated the chance for smaller-scale, more focused networking with colleagues who shared one of my working languages. Another highlight of the GLD dinner was Germany-themed Jeopardy! While my trivia skills are generally quite poor, I was even able to answer one question, “What is ‘sus’?”, thanks to my since-abandoned pandemic habit of playing Among Us.

The end of the conference came all too quickly—but after an amazing four days of geeking out over translation and interpreting with new friends, what better way to cap things off than a dance party? Getting down on the floor to Michael Jackson and ABBA with colleagues was certainly a night to remember. After dancing, I stayed up a while longer with a few fellow recent graduates from T&I programs to swap stories from school and from our professional experiences thus far, which was both fun and therapeutic, since most of the friends I see regularly have fairly little knowledge of the world of T&I. We’ve stayed in touch since the conference, too, and I hope to see them in person again next year. Who else is already making plans for ATA64?

Die Liste wo einiges los ist!

The GLD List is one of our member benefits—an opportunity to collaborate with and learn from each other. Subscribers pose questions, assist others by responding to queries, or simply follow the conversation.


Subscribing is as easy as 1, 2, 3:

Send an email to:
ATA-German-Language-Division+subscribe@groups.io
1. In the subject line, enter: subscribe gldlist
2. In the body of your email, write your:
   – email address
   – full name
   – ATA membership number
Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting of the German Language Division

The Annual Meeting of the German Language Division was held on October 3, 2022, via Zoom prior to ATA63 in Los Angeles.

In the discussion among members who had tuned in early, mention was made of the public holiday in Germany, German Unity Day.

GLD Administrator Carlie Sitzman called the meeting to order at 11:00 am EDT. She displayed the agenda via screen sharing; the agenda had also been sent to the listserv earlier in the day.

Forty-two GLD members attended the virtual meeting.

Motions were made and accepted to accept the minutes of the previous meeting, which had been posted to the chat, as well as the agenda for the current meeting.

Carlie reported that she had been re-elected as division administrator and Karen Leube elected as assistant administrator (after being appointed to serve the previous term). Carlie gave a brief overview of the past year’s activities. These included various digital socials as well as the division’s first division webinar. She mentioned several vacancies on the GLD Leadership Council, including digital events coordinator (Elani Wales stepped down from this position in the summer) and GLD listmaster (Gerhard Preisser has given notice).

GLD Assistant Administrator Karen Leube reported on the GLD-related sessions at the upcoming ATA 63rd Annual Conference. She shared that Lisa Rüth would be the distinguished speaker. Lisa had been invited to be the GLD Distinguished Speaker for the 62nd Annual Conference but had been unable to enter the US due to COVID-related travel restrictions. Other German track sessions will be offered by Michael Schubert and Kenneth McKerrow. Sessions by Abigail Dahlberg and Ted Wozniak will touch on German-English translation (MT and financial translation; translating sustainability reports).

The German Language Division social event will be held on October 14 at 10e, a restaurant near the conference hotel. Response to the event has been good, and there is still space available for attendees. The deadline for signing up is October 10.

Karen reported that she and Carlie had noted that several Leadership Council members had elected not to attend this year’s Annual Conference for business-related reasons, among them a downturn in translation business due to machine translation. They had contacted the president and president-elect of ATA to express these concerns and asked for an opportunity to address these concerns at the upcoming conference. In addition, Karen started threads on the GLD and Business Practice listservs in which she asked members to share their experience with machine translation. When several members called for a forum for discussing the impact of machine translation at the Annual Conference (e.g., “town hall meeting,” panel discussion), Karen had posted a request for such a forum on the ATA Talk listserv. In response, the president-elect has asked the Language Technology Division to host discussions at breakfast on Thursday and Saturday morning at the
Annual Conference addressing various aspects of machine translation and its impact on the T&I industry. Karen encouraged GLD members to attend these discussions.

Karen reported that she had prepared a GLD member survey and conducted it from July to mid-August. Response was good; around 115 GLD members participated. She will be writing up the results and will post them on the GLD website. One interesting result was that at least half of the respondents have belonged to the GLD for at least 10 years. Only a handful of respondents had belonged for less than one year. At a recent Leadership Summit other division administrators reported that activities in their divisions also tended to be carried out by longer-term members. Strategies had been discussed for making new members feel welcome and encouraging them to volunteer. One approach could be a “buddy system” between seasoned members and “newbies.” Karen called for members interested in being division “mentors”/”mentees” to contact her or Carlie. In the chat it was suggested that this be included in emails to new members and that refresher emails could be sent to longer-standing members.

Leadership Committee reports:

• Marion Rhodes (editor-in-chief of interaktiv newsletter) reported that two issues had been published this year with the themes “25th Anniversary Edition” and “Evolving Languages.” Marion thanked her fellow interaktiv staff members for their work in the past year. She announced that the next issue, due out in spring 2023, would focus on machine translation and asked members for their contributions to the topic. She also encouraged members to volunteer to help with the editorial work.

• Robin Limmeroth, GLD webmaster, reported that relevant information is posted to the website (ata-divisions.org/GLD), which also gives access to previous conference presentations. She asked for uploads of any sessions that have not been posted yet. She reported that she had updated the GLD history and that she plans to feature German-English/English-German translation-related blogs on the website blog and asked for contributions and recommendations. When updating the division history, she came upon impressive statistics including the number of posts on the GLD listserv and the dramatic increase in the number of likes and followers on GLD social media (the GLD’s Facebook page has 590 likes, while its Twitter account has 1,043 followers, up from 262 and 213 in 2017).

• Dr. Ellen Yutzy Glebe, European coordinator, reported that she is currently living in the United States with her family and would be returning to Germany in the winter. Her responsibilities are currently being performed by Karen Leube. The annual workshop had not been held in 2022 due to the pandemic. Karen announced the next workshop would be held from March 10 to 12, 2023, in Mainz featuring Invited Speaker Jay Marciano. The workshop announcement was posted in the chat and will be posted on the GLD listserv shortly. Karen reported that Robin Limmeroth had arranged for the venue and had reserved a block of hotel rooms at a discount.

Karen reported that currently 158 GLD members live in 11 European countries and that there was a dedicated listserv
for this subgroup. She asked GLD members living in Europe to spread the word about the group.

- Ilona Friedman, social media coordinator, was unable to attend the meeting. She posts regularly on Facebook and Twitter and is planning to set up a GLD LinkedIn page. Members are encouraged to Click, Share and Like!

- Carlie Sitzman, acting digital events coordinator, thanked Jill Sommer for assisting Elani Wales and for hosting several digital socials. A new digital events coordinator is being sought. The DEC does not have to design the content of webinars or socials; however, currently there is a fair amount of coordination with ATA Headquarters that has to be undertaken, including verifying that participants are actually ATA members. This work is likely to become much easier in spring 2023, when Headquarters expects to be revamping its membership/community software.

- Heike Holthaus, new member & proofreading pool coordinator, reported on developments in the Proofreading Pool, which has been switched to LinkedIn. Heike has been in contact with the Austrian counterparts. Efforts made to step up the visibility of the Proofreading Pool may include changing the name to “Collaboration Pool” or a similar name that would more accurately reflect the function of the group.

- Last but not least, Listmaster Gerhard Preisser gave his highly anticipated annual report on the state of the GLD list. The full report will be posted separately on the GLD website. Gerhard gave a month-by-month report of the listserv highlights and even suggested that these could serve as an antidote to depression. Gerhard announced that he will be stepping down as listmaster after 13 years, effective at the end of 2022. Although Gerhard will be a hard act to follow, serving as listmaster is a fulfilling job, and Gerhard hopes that a set of capable hands will be found to take over, sooner rather than later.

Carlie thanked the GLD Leadership Council for its work for the division. She also thanked John Cantrell for his help with visiting potential venues for the GLD ATA Annual Conference social and Robin Limmeroth for organizing the upcoming GLD Members in Europe workshop in Mainz. Finally, she thanked Jacqueline Jugenheimer for presenting the first GLD webinar and Petra Rieker for interviewing Lisa Rüth for the GLD blog and for hosting the upcoming GLD Stammtisch to be held in Downington, PA, on October 5.

In new business, Carlie called for suggestions for a distinguished speaker for next year’s Annual Conference to be held in Miami, Florida, from October 25 to 28, 2023.

Robin Bonthrone encouraged all GLD members to attend the workshop to be held in March in Mainz and endorsed the expertise of Invited Speaker Jay Marciano.

Carlie thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Leube
Hallo!

Ich begrüße Sie wieder einmal herzlich zu meinem Jahresbericht als Listmaster der GLD-Liste.

Es wurde ja schon darauf hingewiesen, dass wir im Sommer eine Umfrage unter den GLD-Mitgliedern durchgeführt haben, bei der auch die eine oder andere Frage zu unserer Liste gestellt wurde. So wollten wir beispielsweise die Gründe wissen, weshalb sich so manches GLD-Mitglied den Genuss versagt, Teil unserer kleinen Community zu sein. Die Antworten reichten von „noch nie davon gehört“ über „kein Interesse“ bis zu „weiß nicht, wie das funktioniert“ und „dafür bin ich doch zu alt“. Erstaunlich, aber wahr! Besonders in Erinnerung geblieben ist mir eine Antwort, die ich Ihnen hier nicht vorenthalten will: „The listmaster report always tracks the QUANTITY of posts, but I would wish for more QUALITY.“ Da ich mir nicht nachsagen lassen will, auf Kritik nicht zu reagieren – auch wenn ich sie für vollends deplatziert halte –, werde ich den obligatorischen Rückblick auf die Zahlen der letzten 12 Monate so kurz wie möglich halten:

430 Mitglieder – 8 mehr als letztes Jahr!
1750 Postings – 50 mehr als letztes Jahr! 133 verschiedene Poster – keine Ahnung, wie viele es letztes Jahr waren, aber toll!

Und damit gleich zum Aspekt der Qualität, und die war wieder einmal überragend. Beispiele gefällig?

**Gleich nach der letztjährigen Konferenz** wurde auf der Liste das Thema Spam debattiert – eine Diskussion, die nach viel Hin und Her und unter Preisgabe überraschender Details zu Nigeria, China und, wer hätte es gedacht, auch Utah, in der Erkenntnis gipfelte, dass derartige E-Mails mit Vorsicht zu genießen seien. Das, meine Damen und Herren, ist in seiner Spezifizität höchste Qualität!

Im **November** wurde die Frage gestellt, wo denn all die Übersetzer abgeblieben seien („Where have all the Translators Gone?“). Sie konnte nicht abschließend geklärt werden, was ich jetzt eher nicht vermutet hätte, was aber beweist, dass unsere Mitglieder sich eben nicht mit dem Offenkundigen zufriedengeben, sondern entschlossen sind, den Dingen ganz, ganz genau auf den Grund zu gehen. Wenn das nicht für Qualität spricht!

Im **Dezember** gestand eine Kollegin, erst im Rentenalter wieder übersetzen zu wollen, und auch dann nur Projekte, die, ich darf zitieren, „mir am besten gefallen“. Ich verstand das als einen Aufruf an unsere gesamte Zunft, unter Verzicht auf schnellverdiendtes Geld nur noch in Themenbereichen zu arbeiten, die uns in Ekstase versetzen. Und weil wir bekanntlich dann zu Höchstleistungen auflaufen, wenn wir tun, was uns Spaß macht, ordne ich auch diesen Beitrag in die Rubrik „Qualität um jeden Preis“ ein.

Im **Januar** zeigte sich wieder einmal die ganze Bandbreite des terminologischen Know-hows unserer Mitglieder, die sachkundige Lösungen von A bis Z präsentierten, egal ob es um den „Angsthasen“ ging oder um die „Zahnarztrechnung“. Shakespeare war ebenso vertreten wie Kommissar Columbo, und angesichts der geballten Qualität der Übersetzungsvorschläge für das schöne deutsche Wort „tümlich“ ließ sich eine Kollegin gar zu dem Statement hinreißen: „Schwarmwissen ist echt cool!“

„Und weil wir bekanntlich dann zu Höchstleistungen auflaufen, wenn wir tun, was uns Spaß macht, ordne ich auch diesen Beitrag in die Rubrik „Qualität um jeden Preis“ ein.“
Es dauerte diesmal bis zum Februar, bis wir auf unser aller Lieblingsthema zu sprechen kamen: Kochen, Backen und Essen. Aus einer eher unverfänglichen Anfrage unter dem Betreff „Cookbook Editor Needed“ entspann sich eine überraschend kontroverse Diskussion zu elementaren Aspekten der Übersetzung von Kochbüchern, die letztlich in Liebesbekundungen für Stollen und Lebkuchen mündete. Alles natürlich von höchster Qualität!


Der Juni stand ganz im Zeichen der Aufklärung: Wir erfuhren, wie man sich beim Begriff „straddling“ die korrekte Beinhaltung vorzustellen hat, dass sich alte Festwerke als Vogelscheuchen eignen und dass die korrekte Berechnung deutscher Rentenansprüche in den USA auf einer komplizierten Formel aus Alter, Intelligenzquotient des zuständigen deutschen Beamten, der Zahl der in 30 Sekunden aus dem Gedächtnis aufgesagten Tatort-Kommissare und der nachweisbaren Sexpartner mit Mutter- sprache Deutsch basiert. Qualität hinten wie vorne!

Der Juli stand ganz im Zeichen des in diesem Kreis überaus beliebten Themas MT und „post-editing“. Eine diesbezügliche Diskussion erbrachte das eher nicht zu erwartende Ergebnis, dass wir uns alle besser fühlen, wenn wir so tun, als gäbe es das alles gar nicht. Ansonsten kam es zu einer Reihe von fundierten und qualitativ wertvollen Meinungsäußerungen zu diesem Thema, die vor allem eines deutlich machten: Wenn uns etwas nicht gefällt, ist unsere Ausdrucksgabe jeder künstlichen Intelligenz weit überlegen.

MT hielt uns auch im August auf Trab, wurde dann aber von dem ebenfalls emotionsbefreiten Thema der geschlechtsneutralen Sprache abgelöst, das mit so viel Sachlichkeit erörtert wurde, dass es, und das war angesichts der Qualität der diesbezüglichen Beiträge auch nicht anders zu erwarten, überhaupt keinen Stoff für diesen Bericht hergab.

Weil auch der September – außer jeder Menge Qualität, natürlich – nichts Aufregendes zu bieten hatte, bleibt mir etwas mehr Zeit als sonst für ein paar Schlussbemerkungen. Ich möchte zunächst noch einmal auf die eingangs erwähnte


Ich möchte diese Gelegenheit nicht verstreichen lassen, ohne mich bei Ihnen allen für Ihr Engagement auf der Liste über die Jahre hinweg ganz herzlich zu bedanken. Ich habe diesen Job gern gemacht, auch und vor allem, weil Sie ihn mir leicht gemacht haben. Ich habe, und das ist absolut nicht als Floskel gemeint, viel von Ihnen gelernt; Ihre Fragen, Antworten und Kommentare, meist praktischer und hin und wieder auch esoterischer Art, haben mir gezeigt, wie vielfältig unser Beruf doch sein kann, und sie haben mich zu einem besseren Übersetzer gemacht.

Ich freue mich auf ein persönliches Wiedersehen mit vielen von Ihnen in Los Angeles und bedanke mich für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit.

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**New: Handwriting and Sworn Translators Lists!**

**Nathan Wiegand** has agreed to recompile and manage a list of GLD members who specialize in *old German script/handwriting*. If that is your specialty and you are not yet on the list, please contact Nathan at nlwcdw@gmail.com.

**Beate Maier** is compiling a list of sworn translators, i.e., Europe-based translators who can certify translations in line with local regulations. You can reach Beate at maier_services@hotmail.com if you would like to be added to the list.

Both lists will be stored in the “Files” section of the GLD groups.io group.
The German-English Proofreading Pool Got a Makeover

By Heike Holthaus

Remember way back when Carlie Sitzman and Ruth Day acted on the idea to form the German–English Proofreading Pool? Oh, you never heard of it?

Well, let me fill you in: it all started as an informal partnership with our friends at UNIVERSITAS Austria. The idea was to create a list of translators from both sides of the Atlantic, who may be looking for a proofreader or a partner to collaborate on translation projects. The tool of the time was Yahoo! Groups.

Following the shutdown of Yahoo! Groups in December 2020, the Proofreading Pool moved to a LinkedIn Group instead.

**New location, new name, new rules**

About a year after being reinvented as a private LinkedIn group, we figured it’s time for a new name. After all, it’s not just about proofreading, but about collaboration.

So, in October 2022, we renamed it the German–English Translator Collaboration Pool. What a mouthful, but we wanted the name to accurately reflect who we are.

**What else has changed?**

👉 In November 2022, we invited our colleagues from ITI’s German Network, GerNet, to join. The invitation was well received, and the pool grew quickly. At the time of this writing we have surpassed 70 members!

👉 Posts are no longer reviewed before they are published in the group. We all know not to discuss rates publicly—right?

👉 This means that you won’t miss a thing anymore, because you can now turn on notifications.

👉 The group’s rules got a face lift, too. You can’t miss ‘em, they are pinned to the top of the feed on LinkedIn.
And while we were at it—why not create a little more clarity about what this pool is all about, who can join, how to join, and how it works? Check out the sidebar for details.

TIP: once you are a member of the LinkedIn group, make sure to turn on notifications.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments about the German–English Translator Collaboration Pool, please contact Collaboration Pool Coordinator Heike Holthaus at HolthausLanguageSolutions@protonmail.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>A group of colleagues among whom you can find a proofreader or translator to work with on your English &lt;&gt; German translation project.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>Any member of the GLD, UNIVERSITAS or GerNet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to join</td>
<td>Go to linkedin.com/groups/9121064 and request to join.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it works</td>
<td>When you need a partner for your translation project, either for proofreading or for translation, you can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) submit a post to the group with the details of your project, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) contact individual members who best meet your requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What else?</td>
<td>You received an inquiry from your client but can’t take care of the project yourself? Let your colleagues know by posting about it in this group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feature:
What Is Neural Machine Translation?

By Carola F. Berger

“Machine translation quality has reached human parity!”

“But machines do not understand meaning or context!”

Neither of these often-heard statements is entirely correct, at least not without context (bad pun intended). This article will provide this context and convey a higher-level understanding of how neural machine translation (NMT) engines work, without going into too many technical details. The takeaway:

Neural machine translation is pattern recognition on steroids.

In fact, all artificial neural networks are essentially performing pattern recognition—highly complex pattern recognition, but still merely pattern recognition. To explain this, let me back up a little and look at the previous version of machine translation engines, so-called statistical MT engines.

Statistical MT

As the name suggests, statistical MT (SMT) is based on statistics. First, the engine is supplied with training data consisting of source and target texts. The engine divides the training data into sequences of words, so-called n-grams, where an n-gram is a sequence of n consecutive words. A bigram is a pair of consecutive words, a trigram consists of three consecutive words, and so on. The SMT engine then calculates the probability that an n-gram in the target language is the translation of an n-gram in the source language. These probabilities are calculated and stored for all n-grams in the training data. When a user feeds a text for translation into the trained engine, the engine retrieves these probabilities from memory and constructs the translation based on the n-grams with the highest probability. In other words, the engine essentially computes fuzzy matches from its training data and constructs the translation as a combination of the highest fuzzy matches. Figure 1 shows a simplified, two-dimensional illustration.

The explanation above is somewhat simplified. Statistical MT is essentially low-dimensional pattern recognition, whereas neural MT is high-dimensional pattern recognition.
Neural Networks
First, let's look at general artificial neural networks, which are at the core of neural MT engines. In the following, the term neural networks refers to artificial neural networks, as opposed to biological neural networks, unless explicitly stated otherwise. Figure 2 shows a simple neural network (for the experts, a feed-forward neural network). Neural networks consist of several layers. The neural net in Figure 2 has three layers: one input layer, one output layer, and one hidden layer in between. Each layer consists of several nodes, or artificial neurons, illustrated as blobs in the figure. The neurons are more or less modeled after neurons in biological brains.

The inputs into a neural network (language, images, etc.) are converted into a numerical representation. These numbers are then fed into the next layer with different weights (different importance) and so forth, until they reach the output layer, where they are converted back into human-readable form and output to the external world. These connections are shown as arrows between the blobs in the figure. The strength of the connections can vary; that is, the importance of the connections is weighted differently. In the simplest case, the weights are either 0 (no connection) or 1 (full connection), but they can be any numerical value. The hidden layers are called hidden because they are not visible to the external world outside the neural network.

Even if the possible connections/weights and each node can only take on the values 0 or 1 (2 possibilities each), you get over 2 million possible combinations for the simple network shown in Figure 2. Imagine continuous values and more nodes and layers, and the number of possible values or connection patterns becomes enormous. How are these patterns determined? Let's look at machine translation.

Neural Machine Translation
In the case of machine translation, the input layer, often called encoder, converts text strings (language) into numbers, i.e., ‘embeds’ the words into a numerical space.

“...
actual “translation,” as further explained below. The output layer, often called \textit{decoder}, converts the numerical strings back into the target language.

The translation itself is performed by feeding these word embeddings or encodings through the network, with weights representing the importance of each corresponding connection. The hidden layers map input numbers (representing the source text) to output numbers (the target text) according to pre-trained patterns (features). Figure 4 shows this in an extremely simplified illustration to highlight the similarity (and difference) to statistical MT—compare to Figure 1.
Similar to the probabilities for SMT, the weights in an NMT engine are determined through a training process. First, the nodes and connections in the network are initialized with some random numbers. Then, huge amounts of training data in the form of billions of source sentences of a bilingual corpus are fed into the network. After each run or epoch, the output translation is compared with the desired output in the training set, and each of the weights is adjusted, with the goal to get closer to the desired output. This training process is repeated many times until the output is close enough to the desired output. In other words, the weights are trained by extracting very complex features (patterns) from large bilingual training corpora. While SMT calculates the statistical probability of fairly simple patterns (n-grams and the like) not unlike fuzzy matches in CAT tools, NMT calculates “matches” in enormously complicated patterns between words and even individual characters. Due to the large amounts of weights in the network, these patterns can be very complex and not (consciously) discernible by humans. However, in conclusion, NMT is still nothing but pattern recognition.

**Statistics on Steroids**

In some sense, neural MT engines take context into account, in the form of the aforementioned very complex patterns and word encodings. But that does not mean that NMT “understands” language. The patterns have to be trained with the help of billions of examples, whereas humans can learn new words and utterances after only a few attempts. Further, if an NMT engine encounters something completely unknown, the results are entirely unpredictable and usually nonsense (see for example here: [cfbtranslations.com/what-is-nmt-how-does-it-work](http://cfbtranslations.com/what-is-nmt-how-does-it-work)).

The final trained huge neural network, where all weights have been fixed after training, is known as a large language model (LLM). The much-hyped chatbot ChatGPT is built upon one such LLM with hundreds of billions of parameters. Just for fun, I asked ChatGPT to explain NMT. You can find the result here: [cfbtranslations.com/a-conversation-with-chatgpt](http://cfbtranslations.com/a-conversation-with-chatgpt). Who explained it better—the human (in this article) or the machine?

**Conclusion**

In short, despite the hype, neural networks cannot (yet) think; they perform pattern recognition. Artificial neural networks become more and more complex as computing power increases. But will they ever be able to “think”? Nobody knows. Despite tremendous advances in neuroscience, the biological brain is not yet understood. Therefore, nobody can currently predict whether these artificial neural networks will one day be capable of independent thought. Until then, humans in the (translation) loop are still very much needed, despite claims to the contrary. Who supplies the training corpora? Humans. Who trains the MT engines? Humans. Who provides feedback to the engines? Humans. And who saves the day when an MT engine goes off the deep end? Humans.

“...neural networks cannot (yet) think; they perform pattern recognition.”
Feature:
DeepL: Dirty Deeds, Done Dirt Cheap?
By Ruth Boggs

Sorry—I just couldn’t resist using this song title by fave cult hard rockers AC/DC for what is intended as my very light-hearted contribution to an undoubtedly serious issue.

I will leave it to my esteemed erudite colleagues with years of translation studies and translation degrees under their belt to debate the pros and cons of MT.

I’m not a professionally trained translator. My only translation credentials are ATA and State Department Certification, but I have been able to make a very good living in this business for almost 30 years. This is my completely subjective take on MT from the perspective of someone who is not only averse to, but also unapologetically uninterested in, learning overly complicated TM software programs.

When I was a newbie in this business, such programs were still rare. Terminology lists were often still compiled by hand, and bulky technical dictionaries were mined for terminology to prepare a translation. Times have changed considerably since then, and nowadays, thanks to online resources, it is difficult to get rid of those now largely obsolete dictionaries that used to be treated like prized possessions.

Let’s not waste time to get to the elephant in the room: DeepL. I occasionally use it, and I like it enough that I invested in the professional version. Which is not dirt cheap, but quite affordable.

Why am I risking contempt from colleagues by outing myself? Because DeepL has had a severe impact on many translators, including myself, who practically overnight have lost most if not all their business. Hence, we can’t afford not to talk about it.

“DeepL has had a severe impact on many translators, including myself, who practically overnight have lost most if not all their business. Hence, we can’t afford not to talk about it.”

Let me start with a caveat: I’m fully aware that DeepL is not a “one size fits all” program, and that it is of limited use in genres like literary translation, transcreation, marketing, medical, and such. I don’t work in any of those genres. Although now semiretired, my work focused mostly on patent, legal, and technical translation, and I’ve always stayed quite busy without using any TM tools. I had very few agency clients and worked mostly with direct clients such as government agencies and law firms.

In the mid-nineties, when a lot of translators started using Trados, I invested in a pricey Trados dongle, but never used it. It didn’t suit itself to patent translation at the time, and I was too busy with that and doc reviews and interpreting gigs to dedicate the time I would have needed to master a steep learning curve. Because I was using a Mac, I considered and rejected WordFast, and never experimented with any other TM tools or Google Translate.
When my law firm clients started to offer me machine translations (“feel free to use it if it helps”) when they requested a certified patent translation, I always politely declined.

“Don’t bother to send it, I’m not going to use it anyway.” And I didn’t. For many years.

So how did I get into DeepL? A couple of years ago, a law firm client introduced me to it.

That firm, based in the U.S., was working with a German law firm on a billion-dollar patent infringement lawsuit. I’d been working with them on the case for a few years, doing lots of rush translations the old-fashioned way, when one of their attorneys called me from Munich early one Saturday morning.

“We have a tight deadline to prepare a reply to the German court, but we only have a machine translation of the opponent’s brief, which was provided to us late yesterday afternoon by the translation agency our German partner firm works with. Their translators won’t be in until Monday morning to post-edit the MT, but we need to work on this over the weekend to make our deadline. It’s 120 pages.”

I empathized with their predicament, but respectfully declined, not knowing that I’d eventually have to eat my words.

“Sorry, but I don’t work with machine translations. Never have, never will. And besides, it’s impossible to translate a document of that size over the weekend.”

Lawyers are persuasive, and she was good.

“Of the 120 pages, only 20 are really crucial for my purposes; can you just take a look at those?”

Again, I declined. Then she pulled out the big guns.

“I’m desperate. We’ll pay you overtime, rush fee, whatever you want. Money is not an object. And we don’t need it certified, just an attorney work product translation.”

Sigh. I reluctantly agreed to the 20 pages, with a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach that I might regret it later. When I received the MT, I approached it with some trepidation and was mentally prepared for disaster, expecting to spend my whole Saturday on the 20 pages. I didn’t—it took me only about four hours to go through the 20 pages, and the job turned out to be an eye-opener that left me speechless.

The case was about a complicated pharmaceutical issue, and the unedited machine translation was at least 80% on the mark. There were some grammar
issues and terminology inconsistencies, but the many numbers, chemical equations, formulas, and nomenclature, which usually take a lot of time to reproduce, had been transcribed almost perfectly. I carefully reviewed every single word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph, and though the MT required post-editing, it was not the train wreck I'd expected it to be.

That day, it became clear to me that, at least for my niche in the translation market, DeepL would be a game changer. A considerable part of my revenue from rush “attorney work product” (AWP) translations that were needed practically overnight would fall by the wayside, and that's exactly what happened. In recent years, a large part of my regular translation projects has vanished.

I didn't have to do any client education on MT because my law firm clients understand that while DeepL saves them considerable time and rush fees for “I just need to know what it says” AWP translations, machine translations are far from perfect. When they need a certified translation, they call me, expecting to get one with a certification and the ATA seal on it, and I gladly deliver. I go through any DeepL machine translation with a fine-toothed comb and provide my clients with a certified translation that will stand up to scrutiny in court.

Among translators, there has been discussion about whether it is ethical to charge full rates when using MT. Incidentally, no law firm client offering me an existing MT to work with has ever asked me to lower my fee. And why should they? The MT they provide me with undergoes painstaking, extensive review, and post-editing. The final product, which is the only thing that matters, is no longer a machine translation but rather a final version that represents my language, expertise, style, knowledge, and years of experience. Sometimes, that post-editing process takes just as long as a “from scratch” translation would.

So, what's the benefit I get from DeepL? Since I've never worked with any TM tools whatsoever, I don't have extensive TMs generated over the course of many years. DeepL provides me with instant terminology resources. In most cases, MT gives me a good starting point that doesn't require me to completely reinvent the wheel. (By the way, after said wheel was invented, nobody insisted on continuing to travel on horseback or by donkey or camel because that's the way it had always been done. 😊)

In my niche of the translation market—and I keep repeating this because I want to stress that my arguments do not apply to ALL genres in general—DeepL represents progress, so why not embrace it the way we embraced typewriters, computers, and fax machines?

I was fortunate that when DeepL wiped out a large part of my business, I had a second leg to stand on: interpreting. Some colleagues who were not as diversified consequently had to give up their freelance practice for traditional employment. It was sad to see that, and I understand their frustration. But demonizing DeepL is not the answer.

MT is steadily evolving, and it won't go away. We must accept that and deal with it. Put it on the agenda for ATA64, give members who are working in languages and genres most impacted by it a voice, brainstorm to seek solutions. DeepL is here to stay—let's find ways to use it to our advantage.
Feature:
Should you fear ChatGPT?

By Marion Rhodes

For years now, we translators have faced competition from machines. With the advent of NMT and free online translation tools such as DeepL, many of us have noticed a drop in assignments and plummeting rates. Certain sectors have been more affected by AI than others, and those of us in the creative field have felt pretty confident that robots weren’t about to rob us of our jobs.

“Machine translation doesn’t work for marketing copy,” we said.

Well, my copywriting colleagues, there’s a new kid on the block, and this one might just try to steal your lollipop. It’s called ChatGPT.

What is ChatGPT?

Chat GPT stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer, a chatbot launched by OpenAI in November 2022. It’s designed as a research tool that will answer questions in a conversational way—an interactive version of Google if you will. For example, here is an answer it generated when asked “What to do in San Diego”:

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Some popular things to do in San Diego include visiting Balboa Park, which features museums, gardens, and the San Diego Zoo; spending time at the beach, such as at La Jolla Cove or Pacific Beach; visiting the USS Midway Museum; and exploring Old Town San Diego, which is home to historic buildings and Mexican-style shops and restaurants. Additionally, there are many outdoor activities to enjoy in San Diego, such as hiking in Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve or snorkeling at La Jolla Underwater Park.

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But that’s just scratching the surface of what this—free!—tool can do. For one thing, the model is trained on a diverse set of text data from various languages, which allows it to understand and generate text in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, French, German, and Chinese. And the texts it spits out are actually pretty decent. Unlike many machine translation tools, ChatGPT does not produce clunky grammar and stylistic nonsense.
Take this response to my German question below:

**Wie alt werden Katzen?**

Im Allgemeinen werden Katzen als erwachsen betrachtet, wenn sie zwischen einem und zwei Jahren alt sind. Die Lebenserwartung von Katzen hängt jedoch von verschiedenen Faktoren ab, wie zum Beispiel Rasse, Gesundheit und Pflege. Einige Rassen haben eine längere Lebenserwartung als andere.


Es gibt auch Rassen von Katzen, die eine längere Lebenserwartung haben, z.B. die Sphynx, die Maine Coon und die Siamesen. Eine gute Ernährung, regelmäßigere Veterinärbesuche und ausreichende Bewegung und Beschäftigung tragen dazu bei, dass eine Katze ein langes und gesundes Leben führen kann.

**What does this mean for you as a translator?**

Depending on what your specialization is, you may be more or less at risk of competition from ChatGPT and similar tools that are sure to follow. If you work in marketing like I do, you may well have reason to worry.

Ever since the launch of ChatGPT, the marketing world has been abuzz with talk about the possibilities. Say you have a U.S. company launching a product in the German market, and you want to save money on translation work. Instead of translating your existing assets, you could just have ChatGPT produce new versions for you:

Create a product description in German for the Keuring K-Elite coffee maker


Die Maschine verfügt auch über eine Hot-Water-on-Demand-Funktion, die es Ihnen ermöglicht, Tee, Kakao oder sogar Suppen in Sekundenschnelle zu genießen. Es hat auch eine "strong brew" Funktion für einen stärkeren Geschmack.

Die K-Elite ist auch sehr energieeffizient und verfügt über eine programmierbare Auto-Off-Funktion, die die Maschine automatisch abschaltet, wenn sie nicht verwendet wird, um Energie zu sparen.

There is one caveat. ChatGPT currently has a knowledge cut-off of 2021, so it won’t be able to include more recent information. And since it scrapes the entire internet for information without discriminating or providing sources, any “facts” provided by this bot should be taken with a grain of salt.

Still, the more details you feed into your request, the more accurate the response will be. Companies around the globe are currently experimenting with how to use ChatGPT to their advantage, and it’s not a stretch to assume that many will see—and use—it as a cost-cutting tool.

I can tell you from my own experience that marketing departments are more than a little intrigued by the possibilities. When I worked in-house for a large e-commerce aggregator, we had many discussions about how to leverage this new technology. At the time, we were hiring budget copywriters on Fiverr and outsourcing most of our translation work to the lowest bidder. The quality of ChatGPT output couldn’t be much worse, could it?

Curious if people would be able to tell machine-generated content from content written by a human, I conducted an experiment. I wrote a blog post for one of our brands, then used ChatGPT to auto-generate a blog post on the same topic by giving it a specific prompt: “Write an 800-word blog post in first person about x and include the following keywords: ….” I then showed both versions to my team and asked them to pick their favorite and guess which one was AI-generated.

While everyone unknowingly preferred my version (hurray!), they all agreed that it was hard to tell which one was written by AI. To less discerning eyes, the difference would be insignificant. Most important, ChatGPT’s texts are not plagiarized from other places on the web (you can run them through plagiarism checkers), so you’re always getting original content.

For now, ChatGPT comes with limitations. Besides being untrustworthy, it has trouble with length specifications. In my experiment, I kept getting 500- to 600-word articles despite asking for 800 words. I worked around that by asking another question on a specific subtopic and tacking that response on under a subheading.

I also had to manually insert outgoing links and rewrite some headlines to improve the SEO. So, there’s still some human effort involved. But overall, revamping the AI article took about a quarter of the time of writing my own, which is a significant benefit when you’re selling hundreds of brands and thousands of products.

Many businesses are already using ChatGPT to produce everything from
SEO content to Amazon listings. Here’s me asking for some Amazon bullets based on a product headline:

Write five amazon bullets for the Willow & Everett Wok Pan - Non-Stick Stainless Steel Stir Fry Pans With Domed Lid & Bamboo Spatula - Scratch Proof Cookware For Gas, Induction Or Electric Stove

- The Willow & Everett Wok pan is made of premium-grade stainless steel, providing excellent heat distribution and retention for perfectly cooked meals every time.
- The pan features a non-stick coating that makes it easy to cook with little to no oil, and easy to clean.
- The included domed lid helps to trap in heat and moisture, allowing you to braise and steam as well as stir-fry.
- The pan is suitable for use on all stovetops, including gas, induction, and electric stove.
- The set includes a high-quality bamboo spatula that is gentle on the non-stick surface, ensuring that your pan lasts for a long time.

Will this copy win a Webby Award? Not likely. But do people really care about creativity in product descriptions? My experience working with Amazon has shown that online shoppers tend to prefer factual copy when making purchase decisions.

Of course, this also works for other languages:

Write five amazon bullets in German for the Willow & Everett Wok Pan - Non-Stick Stainless Steel Stir Fry Pans With Domed Lid & Bamboo Spatula - Scratch Proof Cookware For Gas, Induction Or Electric Stove

- Die Willow & Everett Wok-Pfanne besteht aus hochwertigem Edelstahl und sorgt für eine hervorragende Wärmeverteilung und -speicherung für perfekt zubereitete Mahlzeiten.
- Die Pfanne verfügt über eine Anlaufbeschichtung, die das Kochen mit wenig oder gar keinem Öl ermöglicht und die Reinigung erleichtert.
- Der mitgelieferte, gewölbte Deckel hilft, Wärme und Feuchtigkeit einzuschließen und ermöglicht es Ihnen, zu braten und zu dampfen sowie zu braten.
- Die Pfanne eignet sich für alle Herdarten, einschließlich Gas, Induktion und Elektroherd.
- Im Set enthalten ist ein hochwertiger Bambus-Spatel, der sanft zur Anlaufbeschichtung ist und sicherstellt, dass die Pfanne lange hält.

I’ve seen bestselling products on Amazon with far worse descriptions.

Naturally, the advent of ChatGPT has already given rise to other tools designed to detect auto-generated content. We know that Google penalizes content that’s completely machine-generated, and teachers everywhere need ways to figure out whether their students’ essays are the products of their own brains or that of an AI tool. But as of now, those tools aren’t exactly reliable. The AI blog post I submitted to my team came back as “likely written by a human” when I ran it through one of these tools. Yeah, so much for that.
Will ChatGPT make us all unemployed? No. The AI writer is only as effective as the inputs it receives, and getting good copy out of it requires pretty specific, and sometimes several, queries. The output then has to be reviewed by a human and requires some editing if it is to be published. Moreover, the bot is currently unable to replicate the hallmarks of effective marketing copy: human emotion, brand identity, and the type of personal experience Google is looking for when ranking web content. I would caution against discarding this threat completely, though. I imagine it will further divide the market. There will always be premium brands that will pay for innovative, human-generated content (whether it be translations or original copy). But for many smaller businesses and companies handling large volumes of text, this, and future iterations of it, could become another way to save money in an ever-shrinking marketing budget.
Where are you based, and what brought you there?
I’ve been based in Mainz, Germany, since 1991. I grew up in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania and planned to be a German teacher, but a year abroad studying in Marburg changed my plans for the future completely. While there, I met my future husband and realized that, although I loved the German language, teaching was not for me. After completing my degree in Pennsylvania, I returned to Germany, this time near Kassel. My husband decided to study law and gave me the choice of Bayreuth or Mainz. During my travels, I had met someone who lived in Mainz and absolutely loved it, so I chose Mainz and immediately fell in love with this beautiful city and its friendly people.

What got you started in translation?
Like many people in our profession, I did not follow the traditional path. I loved languages and took Spanish and French classes in addition to German. After stints at Volkswagen and an Israeli security company running a bilingual office, I worked at a major international marketing research company. More and more translation requests landed on my desk, and I soon realized I wanted to spend the rest of my life translating.

What languages do you work in, and what are your areas of specialization?
I translate and transcreate from German to English, working mainly in marketing research, PR, advertising, university education, online training, and tourism. I’ve translated several coffee table books on various subjects, which is a lot of fun. I’m currently translating a volume of photographs on life at the beach.

What do you like most about being a translator?
Translations are like a puzzle to me—I love finding the perfect solution to express what the source text is communicating. It’s a great feeling when that final piece falls into place. I also love the conferences. It took me so long to finally attend my first one, and after that, I was hooked!

What do you like the least?
Most creatives are not fans of deadlines, and I’m no exception. I’m also not a huge fan of the bookkeeping side of being a freelancer.
What are your goals for the near future?
Being more active on Twitter and LinkedIn, watching continuing education sessions I’ve saved up, and finally finishing off my to-do lists!

What are your hobbies or other interests?
My kids are young adults now, so I’m finding myself in a phase of rediscovery and learning to focus more on myself. My somewhat geriatric dog Julius, who faithfully sleeps under my desk while I work, demands a lot of snuggles. I love baseball, especially the Phillies—I watched all the World Series games in the middle of the night, communicating with family in Pennsylvania and Oregon on WhatsApp. I’ve been a board member of the Mainz Athletics baseball club for many years, helping to further the sport I love, here in Germany. I also inherited a love of travel from my parents, and hope to emulate them by visiting all seven continents (only two more to go!).

Evolution of the profession

Follow Mox’s freelance-translator life at Mox’s Blog


Das Buch, das seit seiner Erstauflage im Jahre 2012 bereits in dritter Auflage erschienen ist, deckt alle Bereiche ab, mit denen freiberufliche Übersetzer erfahrungsgemäß in Berührung kommen: vom ersten Eindruck und der Akquise über technische Feinheiten beim Übersetzen und Korrekturlesen bis hin zur Rechnung.


Mir gefällt besonders der Schreibstil der Autorin. Er ist authentisch und nicht belehrend, so nimmt man gern den ein oder anderen Ratschlag an, egal wie lange man schon im Geschäft ist:

**Korrekturlesen passiv**

Jede gute Agentur wird die Texte ihrer freiberuflichen Übersetzerinnen Korrektur lesen lassen. Das tut die Agentur nicht, weil sie den Übersetzerinnen mit Misstrauen begegnet oder nach Fehlern sucht, um den Preis drücken zu können, sondern weil sie weiß, dass kaum jemand in der Lage ist, alleine einen Text absolut fehlerfrei zu erstellen; und je länger der Text ist, desto unwahrscheinlicher ist die Fehlerfreiheit. Die Korrekturleserin wird also nicht eingesetzt, um Ihnen Ihre Fehler aufs Brot zu schmieren und Sie...
zu belehren, sondern weil ein Text, der nach dem Vier-Augen-Prinzip bearbeitet wird, dadurch besser wird.

Das Buch gibt Neulingen einen guten Überblick über die Branche, verrät wertvolle Tipps, die auf den ersten Blick vielleicht logisch erscheinen, aber oft gerade deshalb gerne vergessen werden und hält auch für alte Hasen noch so manche Anekdote bereit, die im Arbeitsalltag weiterhilft:

Privates verstecken – Berufliches hervorheben

Haben Sie noch eine andere Website, mit der Sie andere Dienste anbieten, die sich mit dem professionellen Auftreten einer Übersetzerin vielleicht nicht vereinbaren lassen? Zum Beispiel einen Escortservice (alles schon da gewesen)? (…) Müssen Sie für diese Internetauftritte ein Impressum erstellen, in dem Ihr Name erscheinen muss? Dann sollten Sie dieses vor Suchmaschinen verstecken, damit ein potenzieller Kunde, der Sie googelt, nicht auf Ihr Zweitleben trifft. Kommt nun ein Besucher auf Ihre Zweit-Website, kann er Ihren Namen zwar im Impressum lesen, Sie googeln und so auf Ihren Internetauftritt als Übersetzerin stoßen (sofern Sie dort das Impressum nicht auch geschützt haben) – jedoch nicht umgekehrt, und genau darum geht es ja.


Auch, wenn manche Kapitel, wie etwa das über soziale Medien oder technische Neuungen generell, inzwischen etwas veraltet sind, ändert sich doch grundsätzlich an der Art und Weise der Kundengewinnung nichts. Nach wie vor wichtig ist:

- eine gut auffindbare Website,
- das Eintragen in Verzeichnismedien und das Verlinken auf Seiten von Herstellern, Verbänden etc.,
- die aktive Nutzung von Social Media wie XING, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, YouTube etc.,
- das Verfassen von Blogartikeln,
- das Veröffentlichen von Fachartikeln und die Präsentation von Vorträgen,
- Online-Werbung (z. B. Google AdWords) und das Schalten von Anzeigen in regionalen und überregionalen Zeitungen und Zeitschriften.

Viele Kapitel habe ich mit einem Nicken quittiert, manche Inhalte mit einem Lächeln überflogen, da sie nicht mehr komplett zeitgemäß sind, schließlich ist das Buch schon 10 Jahre alt, aber insgesamt habe ich sehr viel Interessantes mitgenommen, was mich doch mindestens in meinem Tun bestärkt.

Inzwischen arbeitet Miriam Neidhardt mit weiteren Gastautorinnen an einer Fortsetzung ihres Ratgebers.
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Zum Schluss gibt sie uns noch ein paar Einblicke und verrät, was uns im Nachfolgewerk erwartet:


Mal weiblich, mal männlich, jede*r so, wie sie oder er möchte. Alle anderen Geschlechter sind grundsätzlich mitgemeint.

4. Wer ist dein Zielpublikum für das Originalwerk und für die Fortsetzung?


Und als ich dann irgendwann wusste, was ich tue, wollte ich Kolleginnen helfen, die es (noch) nicht wissen, und Fragen beantworten, die ich damals hatte. Ich wollte das Buch schreiben, das ich vor 25 Jahren gern gelesen hätte. Das vor allem nicht so trocken geschrieben ist. Das war mir ein wesentliches Anliegen.


5. Gibt es noch etwas, das du gerne an unsere Leserschaft loswerden möchtest? Dann ist jetzt die Gelegenheit dazu:


Vielen Dank für das Interview!
## Calendar of Events 2023

The GLD calendar is available on the GLD website, where you can also add it to your Google Calendar, Outlook, iCalendar, and other calendar apps. Go to: ata-divisions.org/GLD/gld-calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Organization/Event</th>
<th>More Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 23 – 26</td>
<td>Cologne, Germany</td>
<td>RECHTSREIHE: BLOCK I Zivilrecht</td>
<td>seminare.bdue.de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13 – 15</td>
<td>Tashkent, Uzbekistan</td>
<td>TAUS Massively Multilingual Conference &amp; Expo 2023</td>
<td>cantonfair.net/event/22139-taus-massively-multilingual-conference-expo</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 14 – June 16</td>
<td>Hamburg, Germany</td>
<td>3-tägiges Kombiseminar: Deutsche Rechtssprache und Einführung in das Gerichtsdolmetschen</td>
<td>seminare.bdue.de</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 20 – 23</td>
<td>Cologne, Germany</td>
<td>RECHTSREIHE: BLOCK II Zivil- und Strafrecht</td>
<td>seminare.bdue.de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 03 – 04</td>
<td>Chicago, USA</td>
<td>DigiMarCon Midwest 2023 – Digital Marketing, Media and Advertising Conference &amp; Exhibition</td>
<td>digimarconmidwest.com/register</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 08 – 10</td>
<td>Utrecht, Netherlands</td>
<td>BP23 Translation Conference</td>
<td>bpconf.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 02 – 08</td>
<td>Ripton, Vermont</td>
<td>Bread Loaf Translators’ Conference</td>
<td>middlebury.edu/writers-conferences/translators-conference</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Looking for even more professional development opportunities? Check out our upcoming ATA webinars and workshops on the ATA website!
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 06 – 09</td>
<td>Malmoe, Sweden</td>
<td>LocWorld 49</td>
<td>locworld.com/events/locworld49-malmo-2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 12 – 15</td>
<td>Tampere, Finland</td>
<td>The 24th Annual Conference of the European Association for Machine Translation</td>
<td>events.tuni.fi/eamt23</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 23 – 25</td>
<td>Wolfenbüttel, Germany</td>
<td>18. Wolfenbütteler Gespräch</td>
<td>literaturuebersetzer.de/termine/jahrestagung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 03 – 07</td>
<td>Bristol, UK</td>
<td>Bristol Translates: Literary Translation Summer School</td>
<td>bcla.org/bristol-translates-literary-translation-summer-school-university-of-bristol-3-7-july-2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 9 – 13</td>
<td>Mainz, Germany</td>
<td>Crash-Kurs Leichte Sprache mit Ausblick</td>
<td>fb06.uni-mainz.de/weiterbildung/crash-kurs-leichte-sprache-mit-ausblick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 25 – 28</td>
<td>Miami, USA</td>
<td>ATA64</td>
<td>atanet.org/ata64</td>
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