3-minute position statement

by panellist

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In a Tokyo talk last February, I summarised my position on the use of ChatGPT in lexicography with '**The end of lexicography, welcome to the machine**'. I still stand by this claim.

In reply to Michael Rundell's rebuttal at last week's ASIALEX conference in Seoul – in which he concluded that "**ChatGPT does not herald the end of lexicography**" – I can now add that:

(1) I believe that ChatGPT makes *dictionaries* redundant;
(2) I believe that ChatGPT makes *lexicographers* redundant; *and*
(3) I believe that ChatGPT makes the current *post-editing lexicographic tools* redundant.

I say this, and I believe this, not because it is true, but because the mere existence of ChatGPT gives us the illusion that this <u>is</u> possible.

(1) If dictionaries were not already redundant in the era of mere <u>search engines</u>, they certainly are in today's age of AI chatbots. [Think: 'Bing Chat'.]
(2) As it stands, the dictionary writing system TshwaneLex now has an OpenAI section, where users may enter their 'OpenAI secret key' for any of the <u>OpenAI functionality</u> to work. Using either built-in default prompts or their own custom prompts, entire dictionaries may now be compiled – literally overnight, and in beautiful structured XML – without any further intervention, making lexicographers redundant.
(3) Such a <u>single prompt instruction</u> is certainly an improvement over the current semi-automated tasks of
   a. corpus building,
   b. corpus annotation,
   c. headword-list creation,
   d. word-sense divisions [Think: Word Sketches and word embeddings],
   e. the pinpointing of salient collocations,
   f. the creation of definitions and/or translations,
   g. the selection of corpus-derived examples [Think: GDEX],
   h. the addition of related words, etc.

   … all of which need human intervention.

Of course, this brings us to the **quality** of such a fully-automated 'product'. Well, in an age of 'invisible lexicography', where users treat their smartphones as black boxes that can do everything and anything, the quality may not matter anymore. If users performed AI-enhanced searches, all they wanted was an answer, and they got that.

Further, if publishers – some may perhaps want to call them *rogue publishers* -- want to release a dictionary without any human intervention, given it is now possible, THEY WILL DO IT, IT WILL HAPPEN (and it already *has* happened).

Therefore, if we still want to meet in two years from now at a, dare I say, HYPOTHETICAL eLEX conference, we will need to start taking ChatGPT more seriously, and treat it as a fully-fledged lexicographer. If we still want to try convincing the general public that humans are actually better than LLMs, we will have to backtrack and insist that we went back to the art and craft of compiling dictionaries, doing much more manually than is actually the case.