

ChatGPT and the Shaping of Literary, Cultural, and Media Discourses

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Abstract

Scholars and media institutions have long shaped literary and cultural canons. In the digital era, tools like ChatGPT increasingly mediate knowledge in literature, culture, and media. This study explores how ChatGPT constructs discourse and whether it reinforces dominant canons or integrates diverse perspectives across English and French. Using a qualitative comparative approach, ten questions on postcolonial literature, feminist theory, and media criticism were analyzed. Findings show that English responses are more theoretically detailed, while French responses are more descriptive. The results suggest an implicit hierarchy of knowledge shaped by dominant canons, highlighting the need for critical use of AI in the humanities.

Keywords: ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence, Cultural Studies, Media, Literary Discourse.

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1.0 Introduction

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence in academic contexts has dramatically transformed the modalities of knowledge production, transmission, and hierarchization. Among these tools, ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, is a central conversational model that can generate structured discourse on a range of topics, including pedagogical content and critical analysis. In the Human and Social Sciences field, this tool examines the circumstances under which knowledge is structured, shared, and interpreted across different languages. The growing use of ChatGPT across educational, literary, and cultural fields makes one rethink the challenges of discursive and cultural mediation in the digital era.

This study aims to explore how ChatGPT shapes literary, cultural, and media discourse. More specifically, it seeks to identify whether the model reinforces dominant references or integrates more diverse perspectives, and to determine how language (English and French) influences the selection of references, the depth of analysis, and the way ideas are expressed.

2.0 Literature Review

Many recent studies highlight the capacity of ChatGPT to accompany researchers and academics in their educational and research practices. Silva and Janes (2022) underline that this tool enables the creation of customized and interactive learning experiences while assisting educators in accomplishing their teaching tasks and accessing pedagogical resources. Similarly, Chung Kwan Lo (2023) states that ChatGPT is performant in fields that require critical thinking and is a valuable support for educators in content creation, translation, evaluation, and the generation of teaching materials.

However, several researchers highlight some negative aspects of artificial intelligence. Jameela and Deepthi (2023) warn against excessive reliance on AI, which can eventually lead to the loss of intellectual autonomy and a decrease in learners' critical thinking

capacities. They insist on the need for a balanced approach, treating ChatGPT as a support tool rather than a replacement for human autonomy. This perspective sheds light on the importance of well-designed AI use in education and research to preserve the analytic and critical competencies at the heart of Human Sciences.

Moreover, other works adopt a more critical stance and highlight the linguistic, cultural, and political biases that these technologies can transmit. Fleisig et al. (2024) show that the models GPT-3.5 and GPT-4 exhibit linguistic discrimination, favoring systematically "standard" varieties of English and answering stereotypically and imprecisely to non-standard dialects. Additionally, Ghafouri et al. (2023) note that, although ChatGPT's responses to economic subjects are balanced and cautious, its answers to social and political issues require greater care and moderation. This statement highlights the challenges and risks of generative models reproducing epistemological and cultural hierarchies.

These studies also underscore the opportunities and limitations of generative models in producing discourse. However, few studies examined how these tools draw on different knowledge in postcolonial literature, feminist theory, and media criticism; even fewer did so from a comparative perspective across two languages commonly used in research. It is in this scope that this paper is carried out. This paper aims to question the logic, hierarchization, and selection of references by qualitatively and comparatively analyzing ChatGPT's responses in English and French to questions in literature, culture, and media.

3.0 Methodology

This qualitative comparative study aims to explore how ChatGPT constructs literary, cultural, and media discourses. The objective is to evaluate whether this tool tends to reproduce dominant canons or to integrate diverse perspectives.

To do so, we carefully selected a corpus of ten questions that we posed and submitted to ChatGPT in English and French, to observe differences in the selected references, lexicon, and cultural knowledge. These questions contained three main themes: postcolonial literature, feminist theory, and media criticism.

The questions are the following:

- Who are the most influential authors in postcolonial African literature? / Quels sont les auteurs les plus influents de la littérature africaine postcoloniale ?
- How does postcolonial literature challenge Eurocentric narratives? / Comment la littérature postcoloniale remet-elle en question les récits Eurocentrés ?
- Can you recommend postcolonial novels that explore gender and identity? / Peux-tu recommander des romans postcoloniaux qui explorent le genre et l'identité ?
- Who are the main feminist theorists in the Anglophone world? / Qui sont les principales théoriciennes féministes dans le monde Anglophone ?
- How is feminism represented in Francophone cultural discourse? / Comment le féminisme est-il représenté dans le discours culturel Francophone ?
- Can you compare Western feminist thought with decolonial feminist approaches? / Peux-tu comparer la pensée féministe occidentale avec les approches féministes décoloniales ?
- How are women represented in contemporary media? / Comment les femmes sont-elles représentées dans les médias contemporains ?
- What are the dominant narratives in global media about the Global South? / Quels sont les récits dominants dans les médias mondiaux à propos du Sud Global ?
- Can you explain the role of media in shaping cultural identity? / Quel est le rôle des médias dans la structuration de l'identité culturelle ?
- How does ChatGPT select and prioritize cultural and literary references when answering? / Comment ChatGPT sélectionne-t-il et hiérarchise-t-il les références culturelles et littéraires dans ses réponses ?

These questions were submitted to ChatGPT's (GPT-4) paid version to guarantee richer, in-depth answers in both languages. This version choice is due to the observed limitations of the free version of GPT-3.5, which is usually generic and less contextualized.

The analysis of the responses was manual, using a qualitative analysis grid composed of the following criteria:

- Lexical and semantic choices,
- Suggested references (authors, theories, and cited works),
- The prioritized angles of analysis.

The tenth question has a self-reflexive approach. Its objective is to better understand how ChatGPT constructs its mechanisms of selection and hierarchization of information.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Postcolonial Literature

The first three submitted questions to ChatGPT aim to explore how artificial intelligence deals with postcolonial literature discourses, especially those related to notable figures and mechanisms of resistance towards Eurocentric narratives and gender and identity

representations. The results obtained in both English and French show convergence but also significant differences in matters of lexicon, references, and angles of analysis.

From a lexical and semantic point of view, the two versions adopt an academic, neutral, and informative tone. However, the answers in English are more precise in terminology and have a better structure of ideas. Expressions such as “reclaiming voice”, “disrupting linear histories,” and “cultural hybridity” are familiar to popular concepts in Anglophone Postcolonial Studies. Although the French version is rich, it tends to use simple vocabulary or paraphrasing. It is more descriptive than conceptual, as if it targets non-specialized users who are less familiar with the theories of postcolonial studies.

Concerning the suggested and used references, there is a big gap. The English version extensively cites prominent Anglophone figures, men and women such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Tsitsi Dangaremba, Buchi Emecheta, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Ama Ata Aidoo. On the contrary, the French version is more diversified linguistically, citing Francophone and Lusophone figures; however, it cites fewer female figures, especially the non-Francophone African ones. Some major figures like Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo, although mentioned in the English version, are absent from the French version. This difference shows an implicit hierarchy of references according to the geographical and linguistic context.

The angle of analysis prioritized in both languages is generally similar. They both highlight the strategies of resistance facing Eurocentrism, the subversion of languages, the denunciation of colonialism, and the exploration of cultural hybridity. However, the English version gives more attention to the issue of language as a mode of struggle and symbolic reappropriation of Western literary genres. Moreover, the English responses explicitly refer to some practices, such as questioning the canon by suggesting Wide Sargasso Sea or Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s voluntary rejection of the colonial language. The French responses mention these aspects but in a less in-depth manner, giving examples of authors rather than theoretical concepts.

Overall, these first questions show the difference in discursive treatment of knowledge according to the language used. English allows a more in-depth critique and a more extensive mobilization of the postcolonial field, while French has a more descriptive and less theoretical approach. It also focuses on Francophone Africa.

4.2 Feminist Theory

The second series of questions aims to analyze the treatment of feminist theories in the responses given by ChatGPT. The questions focus more on major Anglophone figures, feminist representations in Francophone narrative, and the differences between Western feminist theory and decolonial feminist approaches. Similarly to the postcolonial literature questions, the answers show a documentary richness but reveal editorial choices that deserve to be questioned.

On the lexical level, both versions adopt a didactic and structured tone. However, English distinguishes itself again by providing a critical conceptual precision. The expressions used, such as “coloniality of power”, “pluriversality”, “epistemic violence”, and “intersectional feminist praxis”, are absent in the French answers. The latter tend to paraphrase these ideas and concepts in a more general, simplified, easily read and understood language. The French lexicon prioritizes explanation, while the English version opts for a critical discourse often more grounded in Gender Studies.

Concerning suggested references, the English responses cite a comprehensive, chronological narrative of feminist waves from Mary Wollstonecraft to Sara Ahmed, referring to Bell Hooks, Judith Butler, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Chandra Mohanty. The French version mentions half of these figures in addition to Francophone thinkers like Françoise Vergès, Fatou Sow, and Awa Thiam, which adds a culturally interesting complement. Moreover, both versions cite queer theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Jack Halberstam.

The angle of analysis shows the tensions between universalism and feminist positionality. In both versions, ChatGPT clearly distinguishes the significant movements (liberal, radical, intersectional, decolonial, and queer), though the English version insists on an internal critique of Western feminism and its Eurocentrism and tendency towards hegemony. The English responses also highlight some specific tensions in the Francophone context, mentioning that France has always resisted introducing the concept of intersectionality before it became legitimately used in recent feminist discourses. The English text also mentions figures, such as Rokhaya Diallo, who denounce White feminism and defend inclusive anti-racist feminism related to islamophobia, social class, and LGBTQ+ rights. The English version additionally insists on the non-monolithic characteristic of Francophone feminism, mentioning the persistent tensions between universalist and intersectional approaches, between secular and religious voices, and between North and South feminisms. Even if the comparative analysis between Western and decolonial feminism is present in both versions, it is better articulated in the English one. While the French responses are structured around colonial history and critique of universalism, they remain superficial regarding theoretical and contemporary challenges.

What one can learn from these responses is not only the difference between the depth of analysis but also the implicit positioning regarding feminist knowledge. The English version suggests a dynamic mapping of debates and tropes, while the French version presents a synthesis designed for presentations or teaching purposes.

4.3 Media and Cultural Criticism

The third series of questions is about media representations, such as women in contemporary media, dominant narratives about the Global South, and the role of media in constructing cultural identity. The answers generated by ChatGPT in English and French reveal a clear desire to provide structured and informative responses. Yet the detailed analysis of both versions sheds light on apparent asymmetries and cultural biases.

From a lexical point of view, both versions use interesting critical vocabulary. The English version tends to use more theoretical expressions such as “intersectionality”, “hybrid identities,” and “neocolonial media landscape”, though. These concepts are also present in the French version, but are less explicit, use extensive paraphrasing, and use more descriptive terms such as “invisibilisation” and

“hybridation culturelle”. This lexical difference creates a gap of analytical density; English provides an academic reading grid while French tends to vulgarize and synthesize more.

Concerning references, there is an absence of proper nouns or concrete cases in both versions, except for #MeToo and Black Twitter. This limits the possibility of double-checking the sources or identifying cultural and geographical contexts. However, the English response also discusses mainstream and alternative media and structural challenges such as inequalities of representation, objectification, narrative power, as well as marginalized groups (LGBTQ+, racialized, and disabled women). As per the French response, it remains close to the Francophone and African realities, mentioning invisibilization in political and scientific spaces and fields, oversexualization in marketing, and the reappropriation by digital activists of the South. Therefore, it cites the local context but does not use conceptual tools as explicitly as in the English version.

The analysis angle in both languages shows different critical sensibilities. In English, the analysis is based on global power dynamics and the critique of Western cultural hegemony; the Global South is a space of crisis, threat, and dependency in a narrative made and written by the North. The French response insists on the plurality of narratives, the opposition between universalism and decolonial voices, and between representation and agency. The French answer focuses more on the role of alternative media in reconfiguring cultural norms.

Regarding the issue of cultural identity, both versions highlight the importance of media in transmitting values, constructing collective thoughts and beliefs, and the inclusion or exclusion of social groups. However, while the English version also looks at cultural globalization and the transmission of global identity models such as American pop culture, the French version focuses on the cohabitation between local traditions and global dynamics, which reveals a divergence between how both languages project the role of media. On the one hand, it is perceived as a tool of domination and cultural globalization. On the other hand, it is viewed as a space of tension between rootedness and modernity.

4.4 Meta self-reflexive question (Q10)

The tenth question's purpose is to ask ChatGPT a self-reflexive question about its criteria of selection and hierarchization of cultural and literary references. This self-referential question allows a better understanding of the invisible logic that controls the discourse produced by this AI tool. The obtained results in English and French are coherent but highlight different elements, such as linguistic filters and activated epistemic sensibilities, depending on the language of interaction.

From a lexical point of view, both versions use a transparent, technical language. The English version focuses on terms such as “relevance”, “prominence”, “contextual adaptation”, and “global audience”. In contrast, the French version adopts a theoretical lexicon using expressions such as “fréquence”, “hiérarchisation implicite”, and “accessibilité”. However, the English version seems to want to reassure the user by insisting on flexibility, adaptability, and a certain implicit ethic of representation, “balance of representation.” Meanwhile, the French version describes how the model functions, highlighting its statistical training and the total absence of critical subjectivity.

Regarding references, neither answer mentions any source. However, the device describes the choosing criteria that prioritize some authors over others. The model admits that it prioritizes figures frequently cited in its learning corpus, which is an implicit admission of the presence of a dominant canon or bias. It also confirms that it can include less popular voices if the question allows it. Depending on the wording, context, or language used, this condition is limited. The response shows that the user should actively orient the tool to shift the automatically suggested references.

As far as the angle of analysis is concerned, ChatGPT presents itself as a neutral agent that does not have any intentions. According to ChatGPT, there is no self-criticism but rather technical objectivity. It appears to be the most popular, accessible, or ‘secure’ source. The English version of the answer adopts a more strategic position, explaining that diversity is welcome when the questions allow it. Nevertheless, the French version insists on the structural limitations and the impossibility of ignoring or avoiding global tendencies without the user’s explicit request through an accurate formulation of the question.

To conclude, this comparative analysis of ChatGPT responses in French and English reveals significant gaps in how this AI tool uses cultural, literary, and critical references. Even if both versions provide informative and structured content, the English version is distinguished by its in-depth and theoretical treatment of knowledge. It also pays more attention to diversity and the hierarchization of knowledge. On the contrary, the French version of the answers adopts a more general and descriptive tone. The differences highlighted in this analysis showcase the importance of looking at any language as a communication tool and a mechanism by which artificial intelligence prioritizes narratives and sources over others.

5.0 Discussion

The article’s results join a series of other critical research which will be examined in this section. They question how artificial intelligence models such as ChatGPT participate in the shaping and hierarchization of knowledge. The analysis shows that AI models are not neutral. They vary according to the language, the questions’ wording, and the suggested references, illustrating a power dynamic that works through AI.

The recent literature confirms that ChatGPT tends to reproduce hegemonic norms and prioritize dominant identities at the cost of marginalized perspectives. For example, Devinney et al. (2024) highlight that large language models systematically emphasize gender stereotypes and link feminine themes to negative emotions, which explains our observations of the obtained responses about feminism. Similarly, Yuan et al. (2024) reveal that ChatGPT implicitly integrates cultural biases in its decision-making process and stands in a different psychological stance, misaligned with the global cultural values.

Language plays a crucial role in this dynamic. Wang et al. (2023) and AlKhamissi et al. (2024) show that the responses produced in English are culturally more aligned with dominant contexts, while the versions generated in other languages, like French, are misaligned or represent identities and references in an imbalanced manner. This is not simply a linguistic issue; it reveals a form of internal discursive hegemony made by AI models basically trained by an Anglophone corpus. Ghio (2024) affirms that if AI appears to democratize access to research, it can paradoxically also reinforce new hierarchies by disseminating the persistent centrality of specific languages, especially English.

From an epistemological point of view, Ahmed & Mahmood (2024) emphasize the role of ChatGPT in reproducing dominant, mainly capitalist, narratives by invisibilizing critical alternatives. The model answers questions and acts as an ideological mediator, ensuring ideas are visible according to their popularity, perceived neutrality, and global acknowledgment. Similarly, Rane (2023) perceives ChatGPT as a collaborator in the content creation and assistance within the Human Sciences.

These findings call for a critical vigilance towards the increasing use of AI within educational, academic, and cultural environments. If ChatGPT can be a helpful reflection tool, it can never replace human processes of contextualization, critical thinking, and confronting ideas and references. This paper suggests that users of AI models like ChatGPT should not only question the responses they receive but also consider what was not said, such as the angles of analysis and absent perspectives. Overall, critically using ChatGPT also involves learning to consider marginalized voices and overlooked points of view.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

This study shows that ChatGPT shapes literary, cultural, and media discourse differently depending on the language used. The comparison between English and French responses highlights differences in depth, references, and ways of explaining ideas. The analysis suggests that ChatGPT tends to follow dominant academic canons, potentially limiting the visibility of less mainstream perspectives. These results confirm that AI tools are not neutral and can influence how knowledge is presented and understood in the Human Sciences.

Based on these findings, it is important to use ChatGPT in a more critical and guided way. Users should not rely solely on AI-generated content; they should compare sources and actively seek diverse perspectives. In educational contexts, students should be encouraged to question the references suggested by AI and to reflect on possible biases.

This study has some limitations. It is based on a small sample of 10 questions and focuses only on two languages, English and French. In addition, the analysis reflects a specific moment, while ChatGPT is constantly evolving. Future research can expand this work by including more languages, a larger dataset, and different methods of analysis to better understand how AI shapes knowledge across contexts.

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Paper Contribution to the Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to literary studies, cultural studies, and media studies by offering a comparative analysis of how discourse is shaped by a digital tool across two languages. It provides insight into how linguistic context influences not only expression but also the selection of references and the depth of analysis. By focusing on postcolonial literature, feminist theory, and media criticism, the study brings a new perspective on how knowledge is mediated in digital environments. It also adds to ongoing discussions on language, representation, and bias in contemporary knowledge production, especially within the Human Sciences.

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