Automatic Generation of Graded Texts in Old Church Slavonic

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Abstract

In the past few decades, graded readers have been valued within language education and have so much as extended onto the so-called classical (or 'dead') languages, such as Latin and Greek. The immersive reading and listening of adapted texts in these languages has been shown to increase students' proficiency, independence and motivation. However, as of now there is only a small number of related resources as well as of classical languages represented. The present study will investigate the current potential for (semi-)automatic generation of adapted classical-language readers while focusing on the Old Church Slavonic language. From a Natural Language Processing (NLP) point of view, work with the language is challenging due to the variety of dialects and diachronic variations it encompasses. The following steps are taken within our study: 1) Representative measurable characteristics of professional classical-language readers, such as the Latin *Lingua latina per se illustrata* and the Greek *Athenaze*, are analysed. 2) Automatic generation of adapted Old Church Slavonic text is attempted through the use of a sequence-to-sequence model (mT5) as well as a Large Language Model (GPT-5) in a one-shot setting. 3) The derived texts' quality is assessed through both human evaluation and a comparison of their textual characteristics with those of professional texts as defined in point 1). The edited versions of the GPT-based texts are shared for future reference and use.

Keywords: historical languages, ChatGPT, automatic adaptation, graded readers, Old Church Slavonic

1. Introduction and Motivation

Language practice with adapted texts in classical languages such as Latin and Ancient Greek (henceforth, Greek) has been shown to offer a number of benefits related to students' proficiency, independence and motivation when used either in isolation or in combination with more traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation method (Diller and Walsh, 1978; McMenamin, 2022; Philips, 1988; Venditti, 2021). An increase in the number and variety of relevant teaching materials that carry the already established ones' qualities would therefore be of significant help in advancing the study of classical and other culturally-significant languages. Currently, technological tools like ChatGPT are commonly used to facilitate the task of teaching professionals to create classroom and self-study materials. In our study, a discrete language will be experimented with, Old Church Slavonic (henceforth, OCS). On one hand, the language shares linguistic similarities as well as common registers (e.g. Biblical) with the classical languages in which established graded readers exist (in particular, Greek). On the other hand, OCS is significantly lower-resourced and less unified in terms of spelling and syntactic rules, thereby presenting a challenge. Little work has been done to date with OCS in the context of NLP. It is worth mentioning BERTislav, a model based on ruBERT and fine-tuned on a corpus of historical Slavic texts (Arkhipov and Trofimova, 2021). In contrast, other historical languages such as Latin and Greek have received notable, though still limited, attention within NLP and the development of digital tools for language learning. Existing datasets and tools in these languages include annotated corpora, interactive reading environments, and NLP-assisted resources (Crane, 1996; Blackwell and Smith, 2009; Johnson et al., 2017).

2. Background

2.1. Graded Readers and Classical Languages

Related to the concept of comprehensible input as put forward by Krashen (Krashen, 1982), graded readers of various modern languages have been in use for decades. They are typically associated with specific proficiency levels, such as per the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The language within them is learner-friendly, containing accordingly simplified grammar and only a limited number of unfamiliar words. These reading materials have been particularly noted to help reaffirm vocabulary knowledge (Wan-a rom, 2008) and, when used efficiently, to increase students' motivation and sense of com-

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munity (Hill, 2013).

Interestingly, albeit with certain modifications, graded readers have also extended to extinct, classical languages, such as Latin, and have been shown to offer the same benefits (Diller and Walsh, 1978; McMenamin, 2022; Philips, 1988; Venditti, 2021). The primary resources used in the current project have been selected based on the presence of graded text, general quality/reputation and, ultimately, a quest for variety (in the face of different sizes, time frames of composition, and textual genres), so as to increase the robustness of the carried out analysis. The represented classical languages are Latin, Greek and Biblical Hebrew (henceforth, Hebrew); each by two works. It is important to note that these languages differ significantly from one another as well as from OCS, the language of main interest to the project. Hebrew comes as the clearest outlier, as it does not issue from the Indo-European family (rather, it is an Afro-Asiatic language) and does not exhibit some of the other languages' key features (e.g. grammatical cases).

Hans Ørberg's *Lingua latina per se illustrata*[1] (henceforth, *LLPSI*), originally published in 1955, is revolutionary in its sole reliance on the target language in leading the reader from (approximately) zero knowledge to language proficiency. The book comes in two volumes, each of which includes a continuous narrative centred around life in Ancient Rome. The narrative in Volume 1 is authorial, whilst the one in Volume 2 moves through adapted to largely original selections of Roman authors, such as Ovid, Virgil and Cicero. The texts are separated in chapters and accompanied with captioned illustrations, grammatical notes and exercises. In turn, *Fabulae Faciles* (1903)[2] is a reader composed long before comprehensible input was coined as a term. It includes 100 short Latin stories, ordered in ascending difficulty and based on literary works and historical events, linked to Ancient Rome.

Similar to *LLPSI*, *Athenaze*[3] is a two-volume introduction to the Classical (Attic) Ancient Greek language. The first volume features related texts of increasing difficulty describing "the daily life of the ancient Greeks as it was shaped and given meaning by historical developments, political events, and the life of the mind as revealed in mythology, religion, philosophy, literature, and art" (Balme and Lawall, 2003). The second volume consists of mostly unadapted works of classical Ancient Greek authors, such as Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides. Unlike the case of *LLPSI*, the English language is present in *Athenaze* in the face of cultural information, exercise instructions, and translations of vocabulary items. In many aspects, *Logos*[4] is an even closer equivalent of *LLPSI* for the Greek language; in fact, its subtitle tellingly reads "Logos. Lingua graeca per se illustrata". This reader contains graded texts, accompanied with captioned illustrations, marginal notes, grammatical explanations and exercises - all in Greek. The beginning text is perceptively simpler to the one offered in *Athenaze*, and vowel length signs are excluded so as to facilitate pronunciation. *Logos* features thematically organised discrete stories rather than an uninterrupted narrative line, although narrative elements do emerge at a given point.

Miles Van Pelt and Gary Pratico's *Graded Reader of Biblical Hebrew* (2006)[5] (henceforth, *GRBH*) contains 30 Hebrew texts (202 Bible verses) in increasing levels of difficulty. The texts are compiled rather than adapted, and they come with verb lists, grammatical commentary and parsing exercises. Students are assumed to already have beginner knowledge of the language, and they are guided toward an intermediate level. Finally, *Biblical Hebrew Easy Stories*[6] (henceforth, *BHES*) consists of 52 unrelated stories that gradually increase in difficulty. Most of the stories are based on the Hebrew Bible, while others are authorial. This is not a stand-alone resource but part of a multi-faceted Biblical Hebrew course featured on the YouTube channel *Aleph with Beth* as well as on the associated website. The course is based on comprehensible input and currently contains over 200 video lessons.

2.2. The Old Church Slavonic Language

The term 'Old Church Slavonic' denotes the language of the first Slavic manuscripts, which date from the 9th-11th century AD (Lunt, 2001). The

[1] *Pars I: Familia Romana*, 2nd ed. (Focus [Hackett Publishing Company], 2011).
Pars II: Roma Aeterna, 2nd ed. (Focus [Hackett Publishing Company], 2017).

[2] *Ritchie's Fabulae Faciles: A First Latin Reader*, ed. John Copeland Kirtland (Project Gutenberg, September 2005)

[3] *Athenaze: An Introduction to Ancient Greek. Book I*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); *Book II*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

[4] *Logos. Hellenike glossa autoeikonographemeni* (Cultura Clásica, 2023).

[5] *Graded Reader of Biblical Hebrew: A Guide to Reading the Hebrew Bible* (Zondervan Academic, August 2006)

[6] *Aleph with Beth*, Betheden Ministries, (2020–). https://freehebrew.online/resources/.

language is characterised with around two centuries of use in a large geographical territory. The writing system is credited almost exclusively to Constantine the Philosopher, a Thessaloniki-born scholar and monk. It initially made use of the Glagolitic alphabet, which then evolved into Cyrillic. The latter system is largely based on Greek letters as combined with additional symbols for typically Slavic sounds. OCS has strong word declension, which includes seven cases, three genders, three numbers, and three simple tenses. Typically, words come in sequences of open and closed syllables, and the reading of the frequently used reduced vowels ъ and ь depends on the type of syllable. In manuscripts, word abbreviation (denoted by a tilde symbol between a word's first and last letters) is common for reasons of both emphasis (words with religious significance) and economy (frequently used words). There is only a limited number of established OCS manuscripts, which present the language's initial and unified characteristics. Most represented, the Gospels appear in five manuscripts, including Codex Zographensis (dated to the 1020s) and Codex Marianos (1030s). Extant OCS texts include Biblical translations, Saints' lives, prayers and sermons (Lunt, 2001).

The most significant challenge for scholars is the large variation within the OCS language. Although the language was initially mostly phonetic in nature, mismatches between spelling and pronunciation as well as alternative spellings started to appear as a result of changes in the spoken language. The differences in dialects, encompassing vocabulary, spelling and grammar, became progressively more significant. Examples of dialect-based variation include the pronunciation of nasal sounds and the use of uncontracted long adjectives. Eventually, OCS gave place to what are now seen as distinct 'Church Slavonic' languages, typical to the country or geographical location in question.

The two texts that are automatically adapted in the context of the current project are the first chapter of the Biblical book of 'Genesis' (henceforth, 'Genesis: 1')[7] and 'The Legend of Saint George and the Dragon' (henceforth, 'Saint George and the Dragon')[8]. The former is the Biblical account of the creation of the world in six days. It is selected as the lower-level (A1) OCS text to be achieved due to its short length, simplicity, and repetitiveness. In contrast, 'Saint George and the Dragon', a hagiographic adventure story with a significant narrative line, undergoes adaption into a higher level (B1). The 'Genesis' text, reconstructed by Tomáš Spevák, follows the norms of the early OCS period. 'Saint George and the Dragon', featured in a scholarly monograph by Alexander V. Rystenko, is normalised based on later forms of Old Church Slavonic (as reminiscent of Russian Church Slavonic).

For the full original OCS texts used, please refer to this GitHub repository.

3. Methods

3.1. ChatGPT and One-Shot Prompting

OpenAI's popular chatbot ChatGPT (as per GPT-5 and the product's official interface) was the large language model (LLM) we used for textual adaptation. Combined with relevant prompt engineering, ChatGPT has been shown to provide high results in tasks linked to textual simplification and summarisation, outperforming alternative models in terms of both automated scores and human preference (Bogireddy and Dasari, 2024; Leroy et al., 2024; Engelmann et al., 2023), including in non-English settings (Nikolova-Stoupak et al., 2024b; Pu et al., 2023) and in relation to literary text (Nikolova-Stoupak et al., 2024b).

One-shot prompting is a setting in which in addition to directions, the user provides the model with an example that illustrates the output's desired qualities. Previous research shows that in the presence of one-shot examples, LLMs tend to output sentences whose linguistic features match more closely those of sentences that have been professionally crafted for the purpose of language teaching (Nikolova-Stoupak et al., 2024a). In particular, compared to zero-shot generation, one-shot generation with ChatGPT offers multilingual literary adaptations that resemble the textual characteristics of human-made adaptations (Nikolova-Stoupak et al., 2024b).

As we discovered no suitable pair of original and learner-adapted OCS text to use in one-shot prompting, we decided to provide examples in another language. We opted for Latin as a high-resourced classical language that shares an alphabet with English, the highest-resourced language overall. More concretely, we selected two stories from *LLPSI* as a critically-acclaimed gold standard to exemplify the two discrete proficiency levels that we aim to produce OCS text in: one from the middle and one from the end of volume 1. The former is 'Litterae latinae' (Ch.18), which features a classroom-setting discussion of the specificities of Latin spelling. And the latter is

[7] Tomáš Spevák, *Old Slavic Library*.

[8] Alexander V. Rystenko, *Legenda o sv. Georgii i drakone v vizantiiskoi i slaviano-russkoi literaturakh* (Odessa: Ekon, 1909).

'De arte poetica' (Ch.34), in which Roman characters introduce Roman literature inside a fictional framework.

3.2. Textual Preprocessing

The selected professional classical readers were first preprocessed for use. All content apart from graded text in the target language was discarded. Optical character recognition was applied for texts that were not already in a machine-readable format as per the proprietary tool 'Pen to Print'[9]. To facilitate the measurement of textual characteristics, each source was converted to full uninterrupted text, devoid of titles, tabs and new lines. Punctuation was standardised (e.g. the Greek ';' was replaced by '?' and the Hebrew end-of-verse ':' was replaced by '.'). The readers that come in two volumes (*Athenaze* and *LLPSI*) were merged into single texts.

As we needed the classical readers to be analysed per proficiency level, we also took steps to divide them accordingly, a task that was not straightforward due to the absence of clear level denotation. For the purpose, we elaborated an additional processing pipeline, at the end of which relevant portions of the texts were extracted whose level closely matches that of the intended adapted OCS texts. Milton et al. (2010) argue that despite not being free of limitations, vocabulary size presents an efficient proxy for CEFR level. In a later study, they go on to estimate the relative vocabulary knowledge (in lemmas) of learners of different languages (English, French and Modern Greek), whose proficiency levels have been previously determined (Milton and Alexiou, 2009). The derived ranges, disregarding a clear outlier group of French learners in the UK, are the following for the first four levels: 894-1492 (A1), 1700-2237 (A2), 2194-3305 (B1), and 2450-4012 (B2).

We applied these conclusions in order to approximate the CEFR level of each of the two *LLPSI* texts we selected as examples in the one-shot prompt to ChatGPT. For the purpose, we calculated the vocabulary size[10] of the portion of the book all the way up to and including each text. Then, we mapped the resulting values to a proficiency level. The first extract was associated with 1385 lemmas, and the second - with 3212. The levels were unproblematically estimated as A1 and B1.

Next, we needed to extract A1- and B1-friendly portions of each of the professional readers in order to be able to analyse their textual characteristics and define gold value ranges per level against which to evaluate automatic output in OCS. Once again, we determined the relevant portions based on the encountered numbers of unique lemmas within them. In cases where a reader's vocabulary does not reach the B1 range, we only extracted the A1 portion[11]. When a given reader does not cover the full level's range, we extracted the text between the lower limit and the end of the reader[12]. *GRBH* demanded a different approach as it contains only 847 unique words, which is below the lower limit for level A1. We assumed the reason for this mismatch to be the reliance of knowledge outside of the presented text, as admitted by the authors. Following the authors' estimation that the text commences at an established beginner level and eventually reaches an intermediate level, we divided it into three approximately equal parts, the first and last one of which we labelled, respectively, as A1 and B1.

3.3. Generation with mT5

We experimented with sequence-to-sequence generation of adapted OCS text with the use of the mT5 model, which has been trained on 101 languages, including modern Slavic languages like Bulgarian, Russian, Serbian and Ukrainian (Xue et al., 2021). First, we performed continued pretraining of mT5-small on monolingual OCS data (a total of 23 282 sentences from the PROIEL[13] and TOROT[14] datasets). The derived model was trained for 5 epochs with a maximum sequence length of 256 and a learning rate of 2e-4.

Then, we moved onto task tuning the model for CEFR-level-based adaptation. For the purpose, we used a database of 36 textual pairs that consisted of an original text and its adapted counterpart in level A1 or B1 (typically, a professional graded reader from a series such as *Oxford Bookworms* or *CLE International*). The texts are in several modern languages[15], and their detailed

[9] https://www.pen-to-print.com/. The tool was selected due to its high-quality output in various languages and alphabets.

[10] based on the number of lemmas as parsed using *UDPipe*, following rule-based preprocessing that eliminates punctuation, proper nouns, macron- or diacritic-based differences, and some OCR-based errors

[11] This was the case with *Fabulae Facilis* (1739 words) and *BHES* (1423 words).

[12] e.g. *Athenaze*'s vocabulary comes at 2535, which is below the upper limit of level B1. Therefore, we took the portion of the reader between vocabulary size 2194 and its end as B1 sample.

[13] https://proiel.github.io/

[14] http://torot.korpus.cz/

[15] English, French, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Russian

descriptions are available in the project's GitHub repository (due to copyright reasons, the full texts are not made available). As the full textual pairs are too large to directly use in model training, we resorted to fragment alignment. We divided the adapted texts into chunks of approximately 300 words (while keeping sentences whole) and the full texts by the same number of chunks. Then, we performed forward and backward passes through the paired texts until the highest average cosine similarity[16] was achieved per chunk. In each pass, sentences were taken and added incrementally for neighbouring chunks until there was no net improvement in cosine similarity. This alignment method is similar to the one brought forward by Kajiwara and Komachi (2016). As some of the original texts were very large in comparison to their adapted counterparts, we imposed the following conditions: the maximal allowed length for the chunks pertaining to original texts was 4000 words (9000 characters in the case of Japanese); in cases where the corresponding adapted texts contained fewer sentences than the required number of chunks, the textual pair was disregarded. We also excluded chunk pairs whose similarity was below the threshold of 0.35 (which we determined through experimentation). In addition, we composed two discrete datasets to base our training on: a 'cleaner' one (104 excerpts) that included only pairs where the original text is up to three times larger than the adapted one; and a 'noisier' one (1172 excerpts) that included all texts. We used the two CEFR levels as a control token at both training and generation. All training was performed using one GPU Nvidia L40S 45GB.

3.4. Evaluation

3.4.1. Quantitative

The professional classical-language graded readers, as presented in Section 2.1 and grouped into two separate CEFR levels (A1 and B1) as per Section 3.2, were analysed with the use of shallow characteristics that have been established as relevant to readability (i.e. the measurement of a text's complexity as associated with the determination of its suitable audience, typically in terms of age or grade level) (DuBay, 2007). The specific features selected are highly language- and format-independent and, where relevant, rely on computational resources that are readily accessible, including for low-resourced languages. The features pertain to the following general categories: 'length-based', 'vocabulary-related', 'syntax-related' and 'discourse-related' (see Table 1).

As proficiency level is already taken into consideration within the quantitative analysis, we decided against further, length-based regularisation of type-to-token ratio (TTR). Content and function words are defined as, respectively, Universal Dependencies (UD) tags NOUN, PROPN, VERB, ADJ, ADV and AUX, ADP, DET, PRON, PART, CCONJ, SCONJ. 'Punctuation variety' denotes the ratio of non-full-stop over full-stop punctuation. For the purposes of lemmatisation and part-of-speech (POS) tagging, the open-source pipeline *UDPipe*, which makes use of models trained on UD treebanks and covers all concerned languages, was employed via its web-based API.[17] This feature selection is not meant to offer an exhaustive analysis; rather, it serves as a basis for the comparison of various relevant aspects of the investigated texts.

Feature type	Selected features
Length-based	avg # letters/word avg # words/s-ce
Vocabulary-related	word-based TTR lemma-based TTR
Syntax-related	avg # verbs/s-ce avg % function words/s-ce
Discourse-related	avg # pronouns/s-ce punctuation variety

Table 1: Textual features selected for the quantitative analysis of classical-language readers.

3.4.2. Qualitative

The output texts' qualitative evaluation consisted in an in-depth analysis, focused on the following textual aspects: understandability (level-appropriate vocabulary and grammar), correctness (absence of mistakes at the level of vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation), consistency (both internal consistency, such as verb tense usage, and with respect to diachronic and geographical variation), textual coherence (natural textual flow, easy anaphora resolution, absence of unnecessary redundancy) and aesthetic appeal (a more subjective measure involving the text's overall literary quality, length and register).

[16] per PARAPHRASE-MULTILINGUAL-MINILM-L12-V2

[17] https://lindat.mff.cuni.cz/services/udpipe/. The specific models used are: *latin-perseus-ud-2.15-241121*; *ancient_greek-perseus-ud-2.15-241121*; *ancient_hebrew-ptnk-ud-2.15-241121* and later *old_church_slavonic-proiel-2.15-241121*. In the case of multiple models being available for a language, the choice was made based on the quality of lemmatisaton as verified manually.

On the basis of this analysis, the text was manually improved so as to correct errors, remove inconsistencies and increase understandability and aesthetics. The analysis was performed by the authors. We noted common as well as differing observations compared to those resulting from the quantitative analysis.

4. mT5 Experiment

Unfortunately, the result of our experiment with mT5 and adaptation of the two source OCS texts into CEFR levels A1 and B1 was largely negative: the quality of the output was too low to allow for further analysis, and it started with the token <EXTRA_ID_0>, which implies that the associated task was not learned. Typical output ranged from repetition of the same few OCS letters to a string of words that resemble the input text (e.g. бъ: ꙗко добро· и бысть тако).

In order to determine whether it was the inclusion of OCS that impeded the model's performance, we also prompted the model (in its original version as well as the one further trained for OCS) to adapt a French textual extract[18]. In the case of the base model, the output still started with <EXTRA_ID_0> while curiously, the further trained model directly performed text generation, whose quality was, however, also poor. When trained on the full ('noisy') adaptation dataset, the model output French text of better quality, in that it included a number of actual French words rather than pseudo-French, which was dominant when the 'clean' dataset was used.

We therefore concluded that the main problem within the task was the insufficiency or non-suitability of the utilised adaptation dataset rather than the implication of OCS. We moved on to evaluation of solely ChatGPT's output.

5. Results

5.1. Quantitative Evaluation

Please refer to Table 2 for the detailed results of all texts' quantitative evaluation.

Firstly, we explored ChatGPT's output for deviations from the gold standard per feature for the intended proficiency level[19]. The values for 'number of letters per word' and 'number of words per sentence' are lower than the established standard for both OCS texts. For 'Saint George and the Dragon', TTR (for both words and lemmas) is higher than the standard, speaking of higher lexical variety. We also calculated the ratio between the two types of TTR for each text, as an estimation of the weight of inflection in lexical variety. In this respect, the two OCS texts do not deviate from the standard. The number of verbs per sentence has a reduced value for both texts, thereby indicating syntactic simplicity. The number of pronouns per sentence (which relates to the need for anaphora interpretation) is also below the baseline for the B1 text. Finally, punctuation variety, which in related to the variety in sentence types, is low for both automatically generated texts.

What follows are observations concerning the relationship between the different variables' values at the A1 versus B1 proficiency level in the context of the same graded reader, where applicable[20]. The average numbers of both 'letters per word' and 'words per sentence' tend to be higher for the higher proficiency level[21], and the two OCS texts fall neatly within this trend. The same goes for the two types of TTR as well as the numbers of verbs and pronouns per sentence[22]. Concerning 'percentage of function words' and 'punctuation variety', no clear trends are established in relation to the professional texts.

Althought it would be interesting to explore the connection between 'language' and the utilised metrics, only limited conclusions can be reached given the presence of solely two texts per language within the corpus. Hebrew is associated with the smallest 'number of letters per word', which is natural given the language's *abjad* (consonant-based) writing system. The gap between word- and lemma-based TTR is highest for Latin texts (the former being larger by 0.13-0.17).

5.2. Qualitative Evaluation

See Figures 1 and 2 for extracts of the output texts as juxtaposed to their manually edited versions. See Appendices A and B for the full output and edited texts.

The language in the adapted 'Genesis: 1' text strikes as beginner-friendly. The sentences are short and the text makes effective use of the repetitive structure present in the original. The verses are numbered and a line is skipped following each narrative unit, facilitating reading. Yet, complexity

[18] from an authorial book; present in the associated repository

[19] Due to the corpus' limited size, we did not go on to calculate the size of the deviations.

[20] Due to the small corpus size, only overall trends are noted, i.e. which level tends to be associated with a higher value for the variable, rather than exact ratios.

[21] with the exception of *Athenaze* in the case of the latter

[22] In both cases, *GRBH* is an outlier at exhibiting smaller values in relation to B1 text.

Text	*LLPSI*	*LLPSI*	*Fabulae Faciles*	*Athenaze*	*Athenaze*	*Logos*	*Logos*	*GRBH*	*GRBH*	*BHES*	'Genesis: 1'	'Saint George and the Dragon'
Level	A1	B1	A1	A1	B1	A1	B1	A1	B1	A1	A1	B1
Language	Latin	Latin	Latin	Greek	Greek	Greek	Greek	Hebrew	Hebrew	Hebrew	OCS	OCS
Avg letters/word	5.23	5.35	5.66	4.78	5.20	4.58	4.97	4.42	4.53	4.37	3.70	4.37
Avg words/s-ce	12.51	14.49	18.68	35.01	25.22	12.53	17.42	13.43	13.70	9.08	7.54	9.00
TTR (words)	0.36	0.42	0.40	0.40	0.52	0.33	0.40	0.50	0.57	0.28	0.42	0.69
TTR (lemmas)	0.21	0.25	0.27	0.30	0.40	0.25	0.30	0.43	0.50	0.20	0.37	0.57
Avg verbs/s-ce	1.43	1.84	3.19	4.08	4.20	1.33	2.29	2.48	2.10	2.46	1.23	1.65
Avg % funct. words/s-ce	27.89	30.38	34.54	33.11	33.11	31.31	33.78	30.86	22.34	32.50	33.51	33.49
Avg pronouns/s-ce	0.44	0.59	0.75	1.46	1.65	0.63	0.84	1.26	1.16	1.29	0.35	0.62
Punctuation variety	3.02	3.23	2.02	6.66	3.19	3.71	3.46	2.83	2.95	2.13	0.97	1.65
Total s-ces	905	1317	366	198	107	458	487	92	98	728	40	29

Table 2: Statistics pertaining to the professional texts and the automatically generated OCS texts. For the latter, the *intended* level is noted, and the values are underlined when they fall outside of the range established by the professional texts for the variable and level. All values are rounded to the second digit after the decimal point.

is occasionally high due to close reliance on the original language. For instance, in (21) ("И сътво_ ри ѣъ человѣка: мѫжа и жен8 сътвори и."[23]), the use of *и* as both a conjunction and a personal pronoun is likely to confuse a beginner learner. We propose a shorter alternative: "И сътвори ѣъ чло_ вѣка: мѫжа и жен8."[24] Similarly, anaphora resolution may be difficult in the following verb-less construction: (23) "И виде ѣъ вся, ѧже сътвори. И се, добро зѣло."[25].

We noted a few stylistic issues within the text. The letters оу and 8, which are equivalent in representing the sound /u/, are both present in the text, unlike in its original counterpart. The same goes for the pair з and ꙁ (/z/). In order for beginner students not to be led to wrongfully attribute specific reasons to the choice of letters, we would suggest the use of a single letter in these cases.

Occasionally, the adapted text's spelling speaks of a later variety of OCS than that of the original text. For instance, the letter *е* sometimes replaces ѥ and ѣ (e.g. единъ[26]; посредѣ[27]). We deem that it would be more fitting to make use of the language's earlier spelling conventions as laid out in established grammar materials. Also, prepositions and pronouns are occasionally not separated from the word they modify (e.g. съберетъ_ сѧ[28]; the original reads съберетъ сѧ). Whilst such spelling does sometimes occur, consistent separation of these words at level A1 would increase readability and help students achieve notions of word formation.

Moving towards stricter mistakes rather than stylistic choices, we noted the use of the letter я (e.g. вся[29]), which is not typical to OCS but to later Slavic languages[30]. The Russian word меншее[31] is used in place of the OCS equivalent мьнѣе[32], as found in the original. Several errors are noted in relation to cases or declension types e.g. (9) во_ ды[33] (correct: водъ[34]); (13) дн8[35] (correct: дни[36]); (21) жен8[37] (correct: женѫ[38]). Finally, there is a spelling mistake in the word четв8ртыи[39](correct: четвьртыи[40]).

The adapted story 'Saint George and the Dragon' is given the title `Чюдо сѣаго Гєѡргіѧ'[41]. The text includes relatively short and simple sentences and clearly discernible dialogue. In our opinion, the rendition may be a little too short, thereby limiting the story's action and losing some of its aesthetic appeal. Influences of later Slavic languages are more frequent than in 'Genesis: 1'. Apart from the letter я (змия)[42], the letters ё and й, non-existent in traditional OCS, appear (нёмъ[43]; твой[44]). Occasionally, е replaces the traditional ѣ (наконецъ)[45]. The letters ъ and ь are sometimes confused, such as in the word царъ[46],

[23] i stvori bog chloveka: mǫzja i zhenu stvori i "And God created the human: man and woman he created them."

[24] "And God created the human: man and woman."

[25] i vide bog vsya, yazhe strovi. i se, dobro zelo "And God saw everything that He created. And it [was] very good"

[26] edin, 'one'

[27] posred 'in the midst'

[28] sberetsę 'gather-REFL'

[29] vsya 'all'

[30] The OCS equivalent is ѧ.

[31] menshee 'smaller'

[32] menyeye

[33] vodi

[34] vod 'water-ACC.PL.F '

[35] dnu

[36] dni 'day-DAT.SG.M'

[37] zhenu

[38] zhenǫ 'woman-ACC.SG.F'

[39] chetvurtiy

[40] chetvretiy 'fourth'

[41] chudo svetago georgiya 'Saint George's Miracle'

[42] zmiya 'snake'

[43] nyom 'it-LOC.SG.M'

[44] tvoy 'your-ACC.SG.M'

[45] nakonets 'finally'

[46] tsar 'king'

Original	12 И рече ѣ̈ъ: да бѫдѫтъ свѣтила на небеси, свѣтити *землѭ*. 13 И сътвори ѣ̈ъ два свѣтила: свѣти_ло *вєлико* дн8, и свѣтило меншее но_щи, и *звѣзды*. 14 И виде ѣ̈ъ, ѥко добро. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ *оутро*, дьнь четв8рты̑и.
Edited	12 И рече ѣ̈ъ: да бѫдѫтъ свѣтила на небеси, свѣтити zемлѭ. 13 И сътвори ѣ̈ъ два свѣтила: свѣти_ло велико дни, и свѣтило мьнѥѥ нощи, и zвѣzды. 14 И виде ѣ̈ъ, ѥко добро. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ 8тро, дьнь четверты̑и.

Figure 1: 'Genesis: 1': an extract of original vs. edited output. Legend: underline = mistake; *italics* = stylistic choice (the distinction may be ambiguous).

although this is not an uncommon occurrence in later OCS manuscripts. Accents are sometimes placed above vowels (e.g. что́[47]) in an unpredictable way, possibly due to interference from Greek. Shorter verb conjugations of a more recent nature are also opted for, particularly in the case of imperfect forms: живѣше[48]; метаху[49] (in place of живѣаше; метааху). We consider that a learner would benefit from use of the established imperfect forms, which are more easily recognisable due to the distinctive presence of two adjacent vowels.

An inconsistency comes in the face of the spelling of the word гражане[50], which is neither South nor East Slavic in nature, as the former would call for the presence of жд /zhd/ instead of ж /zh/, and in the latter, the root would read город[51] rather than град[52]. A declension mistake is found in the adjective лютъ[53], which should be люто[54] in agreement with the neuter noun, змии_ще[55]. Two cases of wrong word choice also came to our attention. Saint George addresses the princess as госпоже[56], whilst appropriate words for a young unmarried woman would be дѣвица[57] and отроковица[58]. Also, after the hero has slayed the dragon, he is said to be 'leading' (веди)[59] it to the city. A more suitable word would be влеци[60].

Original	Бысть градъ Ласиа, и в нёмъ царъ именемъ Соломонь. Близъ града *бѣ_ше* озеро велико, и в томъ озерѣ *жи_вѣше* змиище лютъ.
Edited	Бысть градъ Ласиа, и в ньмъ царь именемъ Соломонь. Близъ града бѣа_ше озеро велико, и в томъ озерѣ жи_вѣаше змиище люто.

Figure 2: 'Saint George and the Dragon': an extract of original vs. edited output. Legend: underline = mistake; *italics* = stylistic choice (the distinction may be ambiguous).

6. Discussion

The Transformer model, mT5, failed at the CEFR-guided textual adaptation task when trained on a corpus of professional graded readers in multiple languages, even when prompted in a more high-resourced language that it already has knowledge of. In contrast, GPT-5's output demonstrates strong linguistic and pedagogical qualities, such as short sentences, simple grammar and, where applicable, dialogue. The undergone quantitative analysis shows that the difference between the generated texts in terms of level matches all trends established in relation to professional texts. In turn, the qualitative analysis helps confirm some quantitative observations. A general 'lack of action' is observed in relation to the B1 text, and the value for the feature 'number of verbs' is indeed lower than the gold standard established for the level. The qualitative analysis also helps uncover possible microscopic problems that are not obvious at the quantitative level: for instance, a couple of verses in the A1 text are of high difficulty, whilst the quantitative analysis speaks, if anything, of excessive simplicity.

The LLM also demonstrates a level of specific proficiency in OCS. Words and declensions as well as alternative characters that are not present in the provided unadapted texts are used in the output. Still, the resulting text is not mistake-free, in particular in relation to grammatical cases and to word choice when it comes to more complex vocabulary. There is a perceptible tendency for later

[47] chto 'why'
[48] zhiveshe 'live-IMPF.PST.3SG'
[49] metahu 'throw-IMPF.PST.3PL'
[50] grazhdane 'citizens'
[51] gorod
[52] grad
[53] lyut 'fierce'
[54] lyuto
[55] zmiishte 'snake, dragon'
[56] gospozhe 'Madam'
[57] devitsa
[58] otrokovitsa
[59] vedi
[60] vletsi 'to drag'

versions of OCS or even modern Slavic languages to interfere with the output, which can be seen as a natural consequence of these languages' (in particular, Russian's) higher resourcedness. The original text that uses later language conventions resulted in higher interference with modern languages. Also, when a rarely used letter, such as $оу$, was present in the original text, it also appeared in the output. These tendencies demonstrate significant reliance of the model on the input OCS text, which in turn would make automatic (such as rule-based) correction and/or standardisation of the issuing text inconvenient. Manual editing took us about an hour per text and remains the method we currently recommend in order for usable text to be achieved.

7. Conclusion

While a Transformer model is not up to the task of adapting OCS text, GPT's output is promising in granting economy in time and effort to language and teaching professionals. However, the work of specialists in terms of error correction and linguistic standardisation is currently indispensable in order for the resulting text to be made usable for learners. The deliverable graded texts may be used as part of a formal academic course or for personal study based on cultural, liturgical or academic interests. The described methods of human and automatic evaluation are largely applicable to related tasks of textual generation.

Ethics Statement

When dealing with historical languages, it is important to acknowledge their role as cultural heritage, as well as to note that text issuing from language models has no 'authenticity' as such.

Limitations

It is worth noting that only two primary OCS texts are used within the project, and they are reconstructed. Therefore, the original language in its fullness is far from being represented. Also, the limited number of classical readers available complicates the tasks of defining their linguistic features. In addition, as demonstrated by the diversity in these resources, there is no clear formula as to what makes up an ideal graded reader e.g. adapted text in isolation or as accompanied with explanatory notes, translations and exercises. Concerning the mT5 experiments, it remains uncertain whether a larger corpus of adaptation examples has the potential of leading to a significant improvement of results.

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A. ChatGPT Output: Graded Texts in Old Church Slavonic

A.1. Genesis: 1

БЪТИЮ, ГЛАВА 1

1 Въ нача́лѣ сътвори ѣъ небо и землѫ.

2 Земля бѣ пуста и тьма бѣ на водахъ. Д8хъ бжии хожда́ше на водахъ.

3 И рече ѣъ: да бжде́тъ свѣ́тъ. И бѣ свѣ́тъ.

4 И виде ѣъ свѣ́тъ, ꙗко добръ. И разл8чи ѣъ свѣ́тъ отъ тьмы.

5 И нарече ѣъ свѣ́тъ дьнь, а тьм8 нарече нощь. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ оу̑тро, дьнь еди́нъ.

6 И рече ѣъ: да бжде́тъ тврьдь посредѣ водъ. И бѣ тврьдь.

7 И нарече ѣъ тврьдь небо. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ оу̑тро, дьнь вторы́и.

8 И рече ѣъ: да съберетъсѧ вода, и да ꙗвитьсѧ с8ша. И бѣ тако.

9 И нарече ѣъ с8ш8 землѫ, а воды нарече мо_ рѧ. И виде ѣъ, ꙗко добро.

10 И рече ѣъ: да прорастить земля трав8 и древо плодоносно. И бѣ тако.

11 И прорастѣ земла трав8 и древо. И ви_де ѣ, ꙗко добро. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ оутро, дьнь трети́и.

12 И рече ѣ: да бѫдѫтъ свѣтила на небеси, свѣтити землѭ.

13 И сътвори ѣ два свѣтила: свѣтило вели́ико дн8, и свѣтило меншее нощи, и звѣзды.

14 И виде ѣ, ꙗко добро. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ оутро, дьнь четв8рты́и.

15 И рече ѣ: да изведѫтъ воды рыб8, и да летаютъ птици надъ землѭ.

16 И сътвори ѣ рыб8 и птиц8. И благослови ꙗ ѣ: растите сѧ и мъножите сѧ.

17 И бѣ вечерь и бѣ оутро, дьнь пяты́и.

18 И рече ѣ: да изведетъ земла скотъ и звѣрь.

19 И сътвори ѣ скотъ и звѣрь. И виде ѣ, ꙗко добро.

20 И рече ѣ: сътворимъ чловѣка по образ8 наш8.

21 И сътвори ѣ чловѣка: мѫжа и жен8 съ_твори и.

22 И благослови ꙗ ѣ: растите сѧ и плодите сѧ, и наполните землѭ.

23 И виде ѣ вся, ꙗже сътвори. И се, добро зѣло.

24 И бѣ вечерь и бѣ оутро, дьнь шести́и.

A.2. The Miracle of Saint George

Чюдо сѵ̑таго Гєѡргїꙗ

Бысть градъ Ласиа, и в нёмъ царъ именемъ Соломонь. Близъ града бѣше озеро велико, и в томъ озерѣ живѣше змиище лютъ.

И сходяше змиище на землю, и всѧдневно по_жираше люди. И рекоша гра́жане къ царю:

— Царю, аще не дадимъ змиищу чловѣка, вси погибнемъ.

И метаху жребии, и по жребию давали дѣти своѧ змиищу. Наконецъ жребий паде на дщерь цареву. Царь плакаше горько и рече:

— Чадо моѥ, иди нынѣ къ змиищу.

И обрѣтена бѣ дѣва у озера, плачющиѧ сѧ.

И прииде сѵ̑тыи Гєѡргїи, воинъ христїанинъ. И рече къ дѣвѣ:

— Что́ плачеши, госпоже?

Рече дѣва:

— Здѣ обрѣтаетъ мя змиище, и погыбну. Бѣ_жи скоро, добрый чловѣче, да и ты не умреши.

Рече сѵ̑тыи Гєѡргїи:

— Не бойсѧ, дѣво. Поможетъ намъ Христо́съ.

И се змиище изыде изъ воды, велико и страш_но. Сѵ̑тыи же Гєѡргїи сотвори крьстное зна́мение и рече:

— Господи Іисусе Христе, помози ми.

И устреми коня своего, и копіемъ порази змия въ главу, и низверже его на землю.

И рече сѵ̑тыи къ дѣвѣ:

— Възложи поꙗсъ твой на змиище и веди во градъ.

И видѣша людие чюдо велие. Удивиша сѧ и устрашиша сѧ. Рече же сѵ̑тыи Гєѡргїи:

— Не бойте сѧ. Вѣруите во Господа нашего Іисуса Христа, и крестите сѧ, и избавитъ васъ отъ всякаго зла.

И вѣрова царъ и вѣрова людие, и крестивши_сѧ. И бѣ радость велика во граде.

B. Corrected Output

B.1. Genesis: 1

БЫТИѤ, ГЛАВА 1

1 Въ началѣ сътвори ѣ небо и землѭ.

2 Ꙁемлꙗ бѣ пуста и тьма бѣ на водахъ. Д8хъ бѫ́ии хождаеше на водахъ.

3 И рече ѣ: да бѫдетъ свѣтъ. И бѣ свѣтъ.

4 И виде ѣ свѣтъ, ꙗко добръ. И раꙁл8чи ѣ свѣтъ отъ тьмы.

5 И нарече ѣ свѣтъ дьнь, а тьм8 нарече нощь. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ 8тро, дьнь еди́нъ.

6 И рече ѣ: да бѫдетъ тврьдь посрѣдѣ водъ. И бѣ тврьдь.

7 И нарече ѣ тврьдь небо. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ 8тро, дьнь вторы́и.

8 И рече ѣ: да съберетъ сѧ вода, и да ꙗвить сѧ с8ша. И бѣ тако.

9 И нарече ѣ с8ш8 ꙁемлѭ, а воды нарече морѥ. И виде ѣ, ꙗко добро.

10 И рече ѣ: да прорастить ꙁемлꙗ трав8 и древо плодоносно. И бѣ тако.

11 И прорастѣ ꙁемла трав8 и дрѣво. И виде ѣ, ꙗко добро. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ 8тро, дьнь тре_ти́и.

12 И рече ѣ: да бѫдѫтъ свѣтила на небеси, свѣтити ꙁемлѭ.

13 И сътвори ѣ два свѣтила: свѣтило велико дни, и свѣтило мьнѥѥ нощи, и ꙁвѣзды.

14 И виде ѣ, ꙗко добро. И бѣ вечерь и бѣ 8тро, дьнь четверты́и.

15 И рече ѣ: да изведѫтъ воды рыб8, и да летаѭтъ птица надъ ꙁемлѭ.

16 И сътвори ѣ рыбѫ и птицѫ. И благослови ꙗ ѣ: растите сѧ и мъножите сѧ.

17 И бѣ вечерь и бѣ 8тро, дьнь пяты́и.

18 И рече ѣ: да изведѫтъ ꙁемлꙗ скотъ и ꙁвѣрь.

19 И сътвори ѣ скотъ и ꙁвѣрь. И виде ѣ, ꙗко добро.

20 И рече ѣ: сътворимъ чловѣка по образ8 наш8.

21 И сътвори ѣ чловѣка: мѫжа и женѫ.

22 И благослови ꙗ ѣ: растите сѧ и плодите сѧ, и наполните ꙁемлѭ.

23 И виде ѣ҃ъ всѧ, ѩже сътвори. И се бѣсть добро зѣло.

24 И бѣ вечерь и бѣ 8тро, дьнь шести́и.

B.2. The Miracle of Saint George

Чюдо сѣ҃таго Гєѡргіѧ

Бысть градъ Ласиа, и в нѣмъ царь именемъ Соломонь. Близъ града бѣаше озеро велико, и в томъ озерѣ живѣаше змиище люто.

И сходѧаше змиище на землю, и всѧдневно по_жираше люди. И рекоша граждане къ царю:

— Царю, аще не дадимъ змиищу чловѣка, вси погибнемъ.

И метааху жребии, и по жребию давали дѣти своѧ змиищу. Наконѣцъ жребии паде на дщерь цареву. Царь плакаше горько и рече:

— Чадо моѥ, иди нынѣ къ змиищу.

И обрѣтена бѣ дѣва у озера, плачющиѧ сѧ.

И прииде сѣ҃тыи Гєѡргіи, воинъ христіанинъ. И рече къ дѣвѣ:

— Что плачеши, отроковице?

Рече дѣва:

— Здѣ обрѣтаетъ мѧ змиище, и погыбну. Бѣ_жи скоро, добрыи чловѣче, да и ты не умреши.

Рече сѣ҃тыи Гєѡргіи:

— Не бои сѧ, дѣво. Поможетъ намъ Хри_сто́съ.

И се змиище изыде изъ воды, велико и страш_но. Сѣ҃тыи же Гєѡргіи сотвори крьстное знамение и рече:

— Господи Іисусе Христе, помози ми.

И устреми конѧ своего, и копіемъ порази змиѧ въ главу, и низверже его на землю.

И рече сѣ҃тыи къ дѣвѣ:

— Възложи поѧсъ твои на змиище и влечи во градъ.

И видѣша людие чюдо велие. Удивиша сѧ и устрашиша сѧ. Рече же сѣ҃тыи Гєѡргіи:

— Не боите сѧ. Вѣруите во Господа нашего Іисуса Христа, и крестите сѧ, и избавитъ васъ отъ всѧкаго зла.

И вѣрова царь и вѣрова людие, и крестивши сѧ. И бѣ радость велика во граде.