

To the delegates of the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit:

As essential facilitators of successful plurilingual communication, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and other professional associations of conference and/or community interpreters play an integral part in the debate about creating ethical standards for a safe and responsible use of AI in interpreting.

The replacement of human interpreters by AI (AST or automated speech translation) should be clearly distinguished from Computer-Assisted Interpretation (CAI) tools, which are designed to support interpreters. CAI tools require their own set of standards to ensure transparency, efficacy, data privacy, and accountability. While we see a need for a continuous improvement of CAI tools to better serve language experts, our main concern and focus of this letter is AST tools. The end user of AST (or AI interpreting) tools is the general public, often overestimating the reliability of AI outputs.

In order to better inform and prepare communicators potentially using AST tools, we would like to draw your attention to the following risks and opportunities.

AI interpreting products are still under development, often without the involvement of professional interpreters to advise the process. Developers are still facing serious challenges like hallucinations, catastrophic forgetting, racial and gender bias, synthetic data as a source for large language models, or a lack of equity among languages.

Unlike human interpreters, who address entrenched and assumed biases, AI reinforces them. This has significant implications for human interactions and for democratic systems, which rely on dialogue and critical thinking.

Let's seize the opportunity to positively influence and regulate the development and the deployment of AI interpreting tools. Standards for developers and providers of AST tools should include (among others):

- Transparency of data sets used to train the AST tool, including information on consent, copyright (including that of content and individual voices) and data privacy.
- Mandatory disclosure of the AST tool's proficiency level for each specific language, including potential biases, omissions, and errors that may occur, even in high-resource languages. This disclosure should indicate levels of severity with examples of potential harm and address questions of accountability and liability for the output produced.
- Easy comparison of output quality through the use of a standardized scoring system rating completeness, accuracy, understandability etc. to help users make informed decisions, as well as the adoption of minimal quality assurance standards across all platforms and providers.
- Labeling or watermarking output translated or interpreted by AI as well as indicating when output is created by human translators or interpreters to help communicators differentiate between the two.

- Indicating areas of the produced output where the tool has low confidence by using visual cues, such as color coding (e.g., in automatic captions), a traffic light system, or probability percentages.

When implemented correctly and used in a safe environment, AI interpreting could potentially contribute to broader language access at reasonable cost for more people around the globe. However, the use of AI interpreting tools should remain voluntary and must be contingent upon well informed consent of those who are entitled to interpretation. These groups or individuals should always be able to decline AI services and choose human interpretation instead.

When drafting laws and standards for a safe and responsible use of AI tools in general, interpreting should be considered a high risk activity (e.g. in the EU AI Act) given the critical and sensitive nature of many interpreting settings.

Our members—including practitioners with decades of industry experience, scientists specializing in interpreting studies, and business-savvy consultant interpreters—are committed to supporting your deliberations with their expertise and respectfully request active inclusion in the process.

Sincerely,

AIIC France

AIIC Science Hub AI Workstream