

Research on Pre-Interpreting Preparation Assisted by ChatGPT

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Abstract: Interpreters' level of preparation plays a crucial role in the success of interpreting tasks. Thorough and meticulous preparation beforehand not only improves the accuracy and fluency of interpreting output but also reduces interpreters' workload. However, pre-interpreting preparation is not an easy task, requiring ample time for information search, literature reading, and terminology organization. ChatGPT, a chat application developed by OpenAI, integrates information search, integration, and creation using GPT (Generative Pre-Trained Transformer) language model technology. With high response speed, self-consistent logical system, and relatively accurate information provision ability, applying ChatGPT to pre-translation preparation significantly reduces interpreters' difficulty and enhances efficiency from both linguistic and professional aspects. Nonetheless, while enjoying the convenience brought by ChatGPT, interpreters should actively deal with the challenges it brings and make reasonable use of ChatGPT from the perspectives of information accuracy, security, etc.

Keywords: Interpreting; Pre-task preparation; ChatGPT

1. Introduction

Preparation before interpreting is a necessary step for successfully completing interpreting tasks. For professional interpreters and interpreting students, sufficient and effective pre-interpreting preparation can significantly reduce interpreters' cognitive load and improve the quality of interpreting (Díaz-Galaz, Padilla and Bajo 2015, 1), and the success of interpreting largely depends on interpreters' pre-task preparation (Zhang 2003, 13). Professional translators therefore tend to prepare well in advance (AIIC 2016) (Gile 2002). Preparation before interpreting is a manifestation of interpreter's high sense of responsibility and morality (Xiao 2010, 83).

In fact, pre-interpreting preparation involves many trivial aspects. Daniel Gile (2009, 144-149) divides pre-interpreting preparation into long-term knowledge build-up and ad hoc knowledge acquisition, with ad hoc knowledge acquisition further divided into advance preparation, last-minute preparation, and in-conference knowledge acquisition. Xiao Anfa (2010, 83) divides pre-interpreting preparation into background knowledge preparation, technical preparation, and theoretical preparation, with technical preparation being particularly important for interpreting. Based on the originator of Interpretation School in Paris, Bao Gang (1996, 42) summarizes that pre-interpreting preparation should include preparation in bilingual language, psychological factors, cultural accumulation, encyclopedia knowledge, and industry-specific information.

Although interpreter training emphasizes accumulation of language, cultural, encyclopedic, and background knowledge, and trainers provide students with knowledge accumulation content and channels, in the information age, the speed of knowledge growth far exceeds human learning speed. Even experienced professional interpreters who specialize in certain fields do not necessarily have all the knowledge in that field (Gile 2009). Additionally, in conference interpreting, speakers may only reveal their speech content when the interpreter arrives due to last-minute changes or confidentiality, which greatly compresses the interpreter's preparation time. Therefore, how to quickly obtain and understand as much professional information as possible has become the key to successfully completing interpreting tasks.

ChatGPT is a sibling model to InstructGPT, which is trained to follow an instruction in a prompt and provide a detailed response. As the most intelligent chatbot to date, ChatGPT can understand and analyze user requests, complete complex tasks, and respond

in natural language through massive data storage and efficient algorithm design, it even possesses multi-turn conversation memory (Brady and Wang 2023). Although OpenAI states on its website that ChatGPT “sometimes write plausible-sounding but incorrect or nonsensical answers”, it undoubtedly performs exceptionally well in information search and data integration compared to traditional search engines. Especially with the release of ChatGPT-4 in March 2023, its learning ability, accuracy, and creativity in professional fields have greatly improved, and it can even create media content. Previous issues such as lack of common sense and inability to learn the latest online information have also been resolved.

2. Advantages of using ChatGPT for pre-interpreting preparation

Since its launch, ChatGPT has attracted a lot of attention, especially in education, programming, law, and news writing fields due to its convenience and outstanding performance. Applying ChatGPT to pre-interpreting preparation can greatly improve the efficiency, enhance the output, and reduce cognitive load of interpreters. Specifically, its advantages can be reflected in two aspects: language preparation and professional knowledge preparation.

For language preparation, ChatGPT can assist interpreters in both the long-term accumulation and short-term reinforcement of language skills. ChatGPT can simulate communication contexts in real-life situations through dialogue to provide rich materials for language accumulation in the long term. In the short term, ChatGPT’s powerful translation and editing functions can complete translations in milliseconds, providing strong support for last-minute preparation. Even if the host provides the speech content at the last minute, interpreters can quickly translate the text to ensure output quality. Additionally, with the introduction of image recognition in ChatGPT-4, paper documents can also be quickly translated through pictures, and the language style of the target text can be imitated for further optimization.

It is worth noting that ChatGPT has a multi-turn conversation memory function, allowing interpreters to complete multiple tasks such as translation, terminology explanation, and background information search in one interface, reducing errors caused by repeatedly switching windows or copying and pasting information. This can effectively relieve interpreters tension during onsite work.

The auxiliary role of ChatGPT in interpreters’ professional knowledge preparation is mainly reflected in terminology accumulation and literature-assisted reading. With the advancement of technology, new terms emerge in various industries, posing great challenges to interpreters. In the past, interpreters mainly relied on consulting professional books and literature, using previous conference materials, searching existing terminology databases on the Internet, or establishing personal terminology databases for pre-interpreting preparation. However, the collection and screening of various professional information often require a lot of time. With the help of ChatGPT, interpreters can directly find out existing terminology databases through commands and have bilingual explanations for the terms. Additionally, ChatGPT has powerful literature-assisted reading capabilities, allowing interpreters to input professional materials into the dialogue box, summarize the content, and list terminology. With ChatGPT’s assistance, interpreters can quickly read, summarize, and organize many professional materials in a short period, and the entire process is conducted through dialogue. Interpreters can then require ChatGPT to provide more detailed answers through commands. Its fast-processing speed and high accuracy mean that even during meetings, interpreters can quickly obtain, process, and refine information.

3. Challenges

As the most intelligent chatbot to date, ChatGPT excels humans in so many ways, especially since the introduction of GPT4, which has greatly improved its creativity and accuracy. However, issues still exist in actual use.

Firstly, ChatGPT is not user-friendly for Chinese, as registration and usage require phone numbers of certain regions. Additionally, ChatGPT’s training data mostly consists of English, so compared with English, its Chinese language capacity is only passable. Interpreters who rely on ChatGPT as their primary tool for preparation need to polish the wording. Secondly, the accuracy of information still needs to be verified. Unlike conventional search engines that involve user participation in information screening, ChatGPT presents confirmed information directly in a dialogue, which can greatly reduce the tediousness of retrieval work but may provide errors, falsehoods, and biases. OpenAI has previously acknowledged that ChatGPT may sometimes provide incorrect or biased responses due to the influence of training data. If interpreters trust ChatGPT’s content too much during pre-interpreting preparation, it is very likely to cause unacceptable mistakes.

In terms of information security, ChatGPT will remind users during registration that “conversations may be reviewed by AI trainers to improve the system. Please do not share any sensitive information in conversations.” This means that all content input into ChatGPT will be more or less learned by it. If interpreters use ChatGPT for direct translation or content organization, they may

unintentionally leak confidential information. Once other personnel happen to be searching for the confidential documents that the interpreter has accessed, they may access the originally confidential information through ChatGPT, resulting in unpredictable effects on clients.

4. Conclusion

The popularity of ChatGPT relies on its high responsiveness, self-consistent logic system, and accurate information provision ability. Applying ChatGPT in pre-interpreting preparation can greatly improve efficiency and reduce the workload and cognitive burden of interpreters, whether they are professional or student interpreters. However, over-reliance on ChatGPT can indeed bring unpredictable risks to interpreting tasks. Therefore, interpreters should actively verify the information provided by ChatGPT to ensure the correctness of the output. At the same time, interpreters should also protect clients' privacy and avoid confidential information leakage caused by ChatGPT.

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