Секция «Лингводидактика: ИКТ в обучении иностранным языкам»

AI in interpreter training: evolution or revolution?

Научный руководитель – Михайловская Мария Валерьевна

Mikhailovskaia Maria Valerievna
Сотрудник
Московский государственный университет имени М.В.Ломоносова, Факультет иностранных языков и регионоведения, Кафедра лингвистики и межкультурной коммуникации, Москва, Россия
E-mail: m_ mikhaylovskaya@mail.ru

During the past decades, artificial intelligence technology has literally penetrated all spheres of human life, and language service industry is no exception. A real breakthrough in technologies could not go unnoticed for professional translators who felt compelled to explore the possibilities of artificial intelligence and find efficient ways of developing software, such as Computer Aided Translation (CAT) tools, to enhance productivity and quality of their performance.

It is noteworthy that a CAT tool is a computer programme that assists in translating text documents faster and easier through its four main functions. Firstly, such tools split the text to be translated into numerous segments to render the translation process more convenient and time-saving. Secondly, he translation of each segment is saved along with the source text. Source text and its translated version are treated as a translation unit. The quality control function embedded in the programme allow to navigate through the text and find the segments that need to be double-checked or revised. Thirdly, a CAT tool saves each translation unit in a database, which is referred to as translation memory (TM). These translation units can be re-used for any other text of similar type. The fourth function of a CAT tool is the automatic look-up in existing terminology databases coupled with automatic insertion of the search results.

Apart from the aforementioned functions, the translation software may include text search tools, concordance tools, statistical tools, alignment tools and quality checking through automatic watch list, which contribute to producing a consistent and coherent translation. The use of CAT tools seems to have become so ubiquitous that it is hard to imagine any high-quality translation to be carried out without the translator's resorting to them.

Evidently, professional conference interpreting has also undergone some drastic changes due to recent technological advances. Moreover, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has altered the way interpreting is performed, triggering the spread of remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI). However, RSI-related issues are not the focus of the present research and merit separate consideration.

After the emergence of numerous CAT tools, it became abundantly clear that computer-assisted interpreting software or CAI tools needed to be developed to help interpreters optimize their performance. In 2018, Ortiz and Cavallo carried out a detailed review of available CAI tools and classified their use in three types: a) training; b) preparation for the interpreting assignment; c) the actual interpreting phase [Ortiz, Cavallo, 2018].

From the perspective of manifold functionalities, CAI tools can also be categorized into three groups, namely: a) terminology management tools (Intragloss, InterpretBank, Interplex); b) speech recognition tools, designed to convert human speech signals into a sequence of words, or voice-to-text applications (Voice Dictation for Pages, Voice Pro, AudioNote); c) note-taking applications (Nebo 3.0, Notability, Evernote, BambooPages).

Moreover, Fantinuoli proposes to differentiate technologies "depending on the level at which they interact with the interpreter and the interpreting task", singling out two groups: a) process-oriented technologies that comprise terminology management systems, knowledge extraction

software, corpus analysis tools and the like; b) setting-oriented technologies that include ICT tools and software "accompanying" the interpreting process proper, such as booth consoles, remote interpreting devices, training platforms, etc. [Fantinuoli, 2018:155]

The ever-increasing use of technology in professional interpreting necessitated further AI technology integration into interpreter training. Therefore, the mid-1990s saw the emergence of a new field of Interpreting Studies which was labelled as "Computer Assisted Interpreter Training". The impetus behind CAIT is "to exploit the multimedia capabilities of ICT to enhance the teaching and learning of interpreting in various ways" [Sandrelli, De Manuel Jerez, 2007]. Basically, CAIT relies on three major approaches: a) the implementation of digital speech banks or repositories that provide students with relevant materials for classroom use or self-study; b) "intelligent" training platforms that generate various exercises and incorporate new utilities to increase interaction between the computer and users as well as to situate learning in more realistic contexts; c) Virtual Learning Environments, designed to make the teaching and learning of interpreting more immersive by applying aspects of simulation technology, similar to the one used in computer games [ibid.].

It would be fair to conclude that AI technology integration and rapid digitalization of interpreting profession necessitated the optimization of interpreter training, since what might first have seemed as a revolution, has already become natural evolution of these activities. Although some CAI tools seem to be largely immature for use in interpreter training and novice interpreters turn out to have been experiencing extra cognitive difficulties while using them, we would like to hold hope that in the near future CAI tools will offer more advantages than disadvantages for trainees to embrace and benefit from. Undoubtedly, universities offering courses in conference interpreting should aspire to smoothly integrate AI-based solutions in their curricula, introducing budding interpreters to the concept of computer-aided interpreting. The integration of AI technology in interpreter training, which at the moment lacks sufficient empirical investigations, undeniably represents a promising area of research.

Источники и литература

1) Fantinuoli, C., 2018. Computer-assisted interpreting: challenges and future perspectives. In Trends in E-Tools and Resources for Translators and Interpreters, pp. 153-174. Koninklijke Brill Nv, Leiden.

2) Ortiz, L. & Cavallo, P. 2018. Computer-Assisted Interpreting Tools (CAI) and options for automation with Automatic Speech Recognition. TradTerm, Vol. 32, pp. 9-31.

3) Sandrelli, Annalisa and De Manuel Jerez, Jesus. 2007. The Impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on Interpreter Training. In The Interpreter and Translator Trainer (ITT) 1, No.2: pp. 269 – 303.