Interpretation and Translation Planning in the Context of Artificial Intelligence

Cannon Han, JD, Director, ITARC
Dr. Jose Juan Lara Jr., Systems and Advocacy Senior Program Manager

As technology has become commonplace in daily life, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI), it is important to take a closer look at its impact on interpretation and translation planning for access for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking. AI interpretation and translation tools can be fast, but they often miss meaning and context, especially in high-stakes situations such as protective order hearings, forensic exams, or responding to a domestic violence call, where errors can carry serious consequences and raise ethical concerns.[1] We must consider that victims have experienced trauma, and human accuracy is critical to grasp the nuances of what the survivor is attempting to convey, and to understand what information is being shared with the survivors.

As AI tools become more common in everyday work, organizations are increasingly navigating when they may be helpful and when human expertise is essential.

A recent study examined how professional human interpreters and an AI speech-to-speech interpreting tool performed during a live press conference with fifty-six professional journalists. Comprehension scores were higher for the human interpreter group (4.5) than the AI group (3.7), and AI users were more likely to select "don't know," with 65% reporting uncertainty compared to 46% in the human group.[2] These findings suggest that AI may deliver information quickly but requires listeners to work harder to understand complex messages.

Similarly, a study of legal contract translations found that while AI tools can be speedy, they often miss the meaning and context that matter in legal systems.[3] These gaps can affect understanding and accuracy, both of which are important when translating information about victim rights and access to justice. It is also a matter of safety, as we could inadvertently compromise survivors' confidentiality when using AI tools.

For organizations serving victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking, this points to a key planning issue: accuracy alone is not enough. Many commercial AI tools store, log, and reuse user inputs on third-party servers, often without clear consent or transparency, creating serious privacy and safety risks for survivors if sensitive information is entered or later accessed by others.[4]

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[1] Wang, B. (2025). A Survey-Based Analysis About Consequential Risk of Errors and Ethical Complexities in the Use of AI-Powered Machine Translation in High-Stakes Situations. Digital Studies in Language and Literature. https://doi.org/10.1515/dsll-2025-0009

[2] Matsushita, K. (2026). Understanding AI interpreting in context: A comprehension-based evaluation of human vs. machine-generated interpretations in a real-world setting. International Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication, 11, 71–85. https://doi.org/10.12681/ijltic.44192

[3] Moneus, A. M., & Sahari, Y. (2024). Artificial Intelligence and human translation: A contrastive study based on legal texts. Heliyon, 10(6). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e28106

[4] National Network to End Domestic Violence, Safety Net Project. (2025). Artificial intelligence (AI) & victim services: A comprehensive guide for advocates. https://www.techsafety.org/the-safety-net-survivors-guide-to-ai

This is not an either/or conversation, but a yes-and approach. It calls for a 360-degree planning framework that combines quality assurance, human expertise, and AI tools within written organizational policies and frontline procedures to support access to interpretation and translation. The focus is not just on accuracy, but on whether information is understood and usable, an essential consideration for reducing risk and supporting safety for victims, service providers, the community, and offender accountability.

For interpretation and translation planning technical assistance, contact API-GBV Interpretation Technical Assistance Resource Center at itarc@api-gbv.org.