

ChatGPT triggers new topics in academia

By DUAN DANJIE

Beijing Normal University recently hosted an online salon on "Viewing ChatGPT from Journalism and Communication." What breakthroughs will ChatGPT bring from the perspective of natural language models? Will it bring about a revolution in journalism and communication? What opportunities and challenges will it bring? Participating scholars from natural linguistics, journalism and communication, and computational communication exchanged views on these questions.

Changing ecologies

ChatGPT is the latest chatbot model developed by the American AI research company OpenAI. Impressively, only two months after its launch, the number of active users exceeded 100 million. Along with a strong learning capacity, it also possesses a high degree of "intelligence." It can not only chat with people, but also answer various complex professional questions. As an AI-powered natural language processing tool, ChatGPT conducts conversations by learning and understanding human speech, while interacting according to specific chat contexts.

Why has ChatGPT gone viral so quickly? Huang Minlie, an associate professor from the Department of Computer Science and Technology at Tsinghua University, said that AI has entered the era of humanoid interaction, generating dialogue models close to human levels. As a general task assistant, the ChatGPT model includes some non-traditional open-ended tasks. High-quality dialogue gives the false impression that the AI has consciousness and an awakened personality. A harmonious "AI-human" existence is an inevitable social trend.

According to Wu Ye, director of the Center for Computational Communication Research at Beijing Normal University, ChatGPT is a big step forward in improving AI technology's ability to process human language, but it's still too early to consider it an AI revolution. It merely extracts information from a massive knowledge base without rational thinking. Professional topics are often answered with loopholes, thus requiring multiple rounds of professional close interaction between human and machine

for continuous guidance and improvement.

"The advances of AI have mainly led the natural language processing technology," said Xu Xiaoke, a professor from the School of Information and Communication Engineering at Dalian Minzu University. Although ChatGPT cannot be counted as a breakthrough technology, it still represents a landmark AI application. For instance, in the field of journalism, it can be applied to the coverage of daily sporting events or financial and stock market reports to effectively reduce costs. It uses AI to generate content, altering the relationship between human and social bots and the ecology of coexistence of human and AI.

New research topics

ChatGPT merges with the identity of the communication subject, demonstrating the importance of AI content generation and dissemination. It is being embedded in people's daily lives due to its high degree of socialization. Zhou Baohua, a professor from the School of Journalism at Fudan University, said that for empirical research on journalism and communication, the use of AI technology for content generation and transmission is still in its infancy. Compared with previous mainstream applications, ChatGPT has moved from interpersonal communication to public communication, and has increased in both scale and public influence.

Regarding ChatGPT's impact on journalism and communication, Zhou noted that the development of human knowledge is tightly linked to media. In the face of a new knowledge medium, we should first consider how new knowledge is generated in the manner of AI-generated content (AIGC), while examining the relationship between certainty and uncertainty of machine generated content. Efforts are also needed to reveal the process of power operation and social construction behind ChatGPT. As knowledge production goes through networked public access and circulation, it calls for special attention from journalism and communication scholars. AI, represented by ChatGPT, should be treated as a real issue in communication studies.

According to Zou Jun, a professor from the School of Journalism and Communica-

tion at Guangzhou University, the biggest difference between ChatGPT and other search engines is that it can provide inspiration and creative generation, implying changes in the holistic information collection methods of communication studies. In the future, the application of AI in the journalism and communication industries may produce "Q&A style" news, that is, under certain circumstances integrate and generate information in light of the content that people want to know. With a high level of intelligence, this type of generation enables a personalized news service and reforms the news industry. In this process, more attention should be paid to the ethical issues of communication, striving to transcend technical logic and return to humanity.

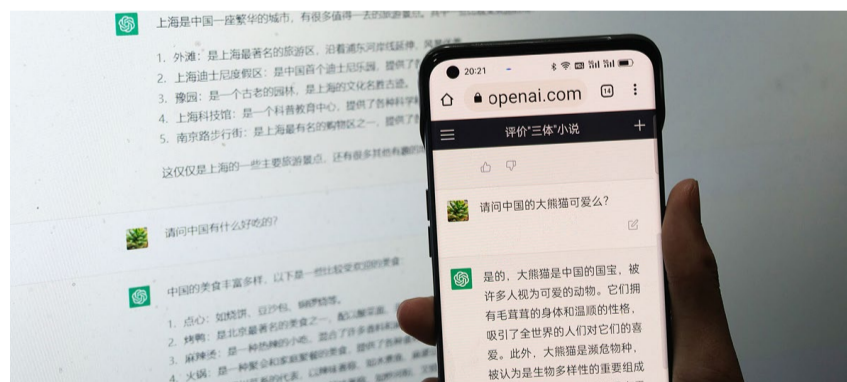
Risks and challenges

Though the emergence of ChatGPT is hardly surprising amidst the rapid AI development, we still seem unprepared. Speaking of the risks and challenges of ChatGPT, Zhang Hongzhong, director of the Research Center for New Media Communication at Beijing Normal University, compared it to the days of horse-drawn carriages, when we could not predict the potential dangers of automobiles or make rules for them. The emerging ChatGPT should be judged by the logic of technological development. ChatGPT is a breakthrough result of improved computing power. Meanwhile, AI including ChatGPT, is only a technical means, representing a more efficient and convenient technology and a technological iteration.

"ChatGPT still has many limitations at the current stage, including a lack of factuality, generative illusion, an inclination to generate lengthy replies, and relative conservativeness in active interaction," said Zhang Weinan, a professor from the Faculty of Computing at Harbin Institute of Technology.

Min Yong, an associate professor from the School of Journalism and Communication at Beijing Normal University, argues that the disruptive impact of recommendation algorithms will be more profound than that of ChatGPT, which still provides the Q&A mode of information distribution, while the former has already leveraged the AI technology to infer people's thoughts and motives to a degree.

"As AI makes continuous progress, the field of journalism and communication will likely incorporate the investigation of the effect of machine generation and dissemination," said Shen Fei, an associate professor from the Department of Media and Communication at the City University of Hong Kong. Shen suggested being vigilant against ChatGPT's "seemingly serious nonsense" on some occasions, which might result in factual errors, knowledge blind spots, and deviation from common sense.



Detailed replies from ChatGPT on specific questions in the Chinese language Photo: CFP

<<FROM PAGE 1

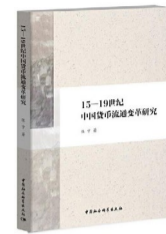
Advising on fields of social sciences

Zhang Yuyan, a member of the CPPCC National Committee and director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at CASS, has focused on how to better promote the healthy and stable development of China-EU economic and trade relations. Despite strengthened bilateral economic and trade ties in recent years, Zhang noted that the two sides also engage in competition in many fields.

To push the economic and trade cooperation between China and Europe to new levels, Zhang urged efforts to continuously consolidate bilateral economic and trade connections, expand investment areas, enrich investment forms, and develop China-EU economic and trade relations across the board.

On the new journey in the new era, how to accelerate and improve economic and social development is a matter of concern to Pan Yue, an NPC deputy and

dean of the finance department of the School of Economics at Xiamen University. Pan pointed out long-standing problems such as uneven standards for discreditable behaviors across regions, and a mismatch between punishment and those undesirable behaviors, which have undermined the confidence of market entities to a certain extent. As such, it is necessary to further improve the social credit system to help unleash economic vitality, Pan said.



A Study on the Changes in Chinese Currency Circulation Between the 15th and 19th Centuries

By Zhang Ning
China Social Sciences Press
April 2018

A monetary history in Ming and Qing eras

By YANG GUO'AN

A Study on the Changes in Chinese Currency Circulation Between the 15th and 19th Centuries, by Zhang Ning, a professor from the School of History and Culture at Hubei University, centers on the monetary and financial history of Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties—the formation and evolution of the monetary system that combined silver ingots and copper coins.

The book breaks through the demarcation line of the Ming and Qing eras, with currency circulation as the principal line. It not only clarifies the formulation and implementation process of national monetary policy from the top down, but also the actual situation of folk currency circulation from the bottom up, highlighting regional differences and characteristics. In exploring the evolution of the monetary system in which silver ingots and copper coins were used simultaneously, the author emphasizes the strengths and weaknesses of each as circulating currencies, opposing the traditional view that attaches more importance to silver than to coins.

Employing the method of regional analysis, Zhang aims to construct an analytical framework of financial geography. China is a vast territory divided by a great many mountains and rivers. When ancient transportation was undeveloped and regional economic links and market integration were relatively backward, the country formed relatively independent economic zones with respective characteristics and corresponding currency areas. The regional variations of money circulation in the Ming and Qing were built on historical, economic, and geographical patterns. It was influenced by multiple factors, such as the geographical location of money production and inflow, trade routes, the flow of merchant groups, and urban-rural disparities. The book clearly shows for the first time the distribution of the "land of coins" and "land of silver," which took shape in the mid-Ming and exerted influence until the early Qing, while summarizing the formation process of four major currency areas from the mid-Qing to the eve of the First Opium War (1840–42).

Certain antiquated concepts still limit mainstream understanding of monetary history, especially the long-held view that "silver ingots served large figures and copper coins served small figures." Through rigorous research, the author casts reasonable and well-founded doubt on this theory. It was a universal law in the two stages of the system of combined use of silver ingots and copper coins, but it only worked to a limited extent. Silver ingots and copper coins in folk currency circulation often did not abide by the above-mentioned boundary, but invaded each other's sphere of influence.

Yang Guo'an is a professor from the School of History at Wuhan University.