UC DAVIS HEALTH | MEDICAL CENTER
Medical Interpreting Services

Medical Interpreting Services Department
Newsletter

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Celebrating National Native American Heritage Month

Source: Celebrating National Native Heritage Month

As early as 1916, when New York became the first state to declare an "American Indian Day," efforts have been underway to acknowledge the many contributions and achievements of Native peoples. In 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial commemoration, S.J. Res. 209 authorized President Gerald Ford to proclaim October 10-16, 1976, as "Native American Awareness Week." In 1986 Congress passed S.J. Res. 390, requesting that the president designate November 23–30, 1986, as "American Indian Week." Congress continued this practice in subsequent years, declaring one week during the autumn months as "Native American Indian Heritage Week."

In 1990 Congress passed and President George H. W. Bush signed into law a joint resolution designating the month of November as the first National American Indian Heritage Month (also known as Native American India n Month). "American Indians were the original inhabitants of the lands that now constitute the United States of America," noted H.J. Res. 577. "Native American Indians have made an essential and unique contribution to our Nation" and "to the world." Introduced by Hawaii senator Daniel Inouye and congressional delegate Eni Faloemavaega of American Samoa, the joint resolution stated that "the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon Federal, State, and local governments, interested groups and organizations, and the people of the United States to observe the month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities." In 2008 the commemorative language was amended to also include the contributions of Alaskan Natives. Every year, by statute and/or presidential proclamation, the month of November is recognized as National Native American Heritage Month.

In 1907 both Charles Curtis of Kansas and Robert Owen of Oklahoma were senators of Native American descent. Curtis was the great-great grandson of White Plume, a Kansa-Kaw chief who had offered assistance to the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804. A Republican Party devotee, and proud of his Kaw ancestry, Curtis often quipped that he was "one-eighth Kaw Indian and 100% Republican." Owen was a member of the Cherokee Nation. He taught orphaned Cherokee children and represented the Five Civilized Tribes as a federal Indian agent before entering politics as a Progressive Democrat. In 1993 Ben Nighthorse Campbell of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, became the third senator of Native American descent. Campbell grew up in California and moved to Colorado in 1978. He represented Colorado in the House of Representatives for six years before his election to the U.S. Senate in 1992. While in the Senate, Campbell was the first American Indian to chair the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. In 2023 Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, an enrolled member of Cherokee Nation, became the fourth senator of Native American descent.







November 2026 Calendar

National Native American Heritage Month
National Diabetes Month

1 – All Saints Day (Christianity)
2 – Day of the Dead (Mexico)
3 – Election Day (US)
8 – International Day of Radiology
8 – Diwali (Hinduism)
8-14 – Nurse Practitioner Week (US)
9 – Kindness Week (International)
10 – World Immunization Day
10 – World Science Day
11 – Veterans Day (US)
13 – World Kindness Day
18 – World COPD Day
26 – Thanksgiving (US)
29– First Sunday of Advent (Christianity)

From written to spoken: the challenges and possibilities of AI interpretation

Source: From written to spoken: the challenges and possibilities of AI interpretation



Artificial intelligence (AI) has made significant advances in the field of language translation in recent years, with machine-learning algorithms able to accurately translate large volumes of text from one language to another. These systems use techniques such as tokenization, part-of-speech tagging, dependency parsing, named entity recognition, and sentiment analysis to analyze and interpret the input text and generate equivalent output text in the target language. In some cases, the output may be post-edited by a human translator to ensure that it reads naturally in the target language. But what about AI interpretation?

While AI may be able to perform some tasks traditionally carried out by translators, it is unlikely to fully replace the role of human interpreters in the near future. One of the main reasons for this is the complexity of interpreting spoken language, which requires more than just a thorough understanding of grammar and vocabulary. Interpreters must also be able to listen to and understand spoken language in real-time, accurately conveying the meaning and intent of the original message. This requires a range of skills that are difficult for AI to replicate, including the ability to understand and interpret local dialects, idioms, and cultural norms.

For example, when working with international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) in the Middle East, interpreters may be called upon to work with local dialects such as Iraqi Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, or Syrian Arabic. These dialects can vary significantly from standard Arabic and may include unique idioms and expressions that are specific to the region. In addition, Arabic dialects often have a high degree of regional and social variation, which means that the same word or phrase can have multiple meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Disambiguating these nuances of meaning can be particularly challenging for machine translation systems, as they may not have access to the necessary contextual information. An interpreter who is familiar with these dialects and their cultural context will do better.

In addition to understanding local dialects and idioms, interpreters in the Middle East may also need to be familiar with the socio-economic status of the people they are working with. For example, in some areas, there may be significant disparities in wealth and access to education, which can impact the way people speak and the words they use. An interpreter who is aware of these differences will be better able to accurately convey the message to the target audience, as they will be able to understand the context in which the spoken language is being used.

Interpreting spoken language is a complex and active area of research in the field of artificial intelligence. Automatic speech recognition (ASR) systems, which are designed to transcribe spoken language into written text, use techniques such as acoustic modeling, language modeling, dialect identification, and dialect adaptation to analyze and interpret spoken input. However, interpreting spoken language in more complex and varied environments, such as conversations between multiple people with different accents and speaking styles, or in noisy or crowded settings, remains a challenge for ASR systems. In these situations, they may struggle to accurately transcribe the spoken input or may require additional context or guidance to disambiguate the meaning of the words.

To conclude, while AI may be able to perform some tasks traditionally carried out by translators, the complex nature of interpreting spoken language means that it is unlikely to fully replace the role of human interpreters in the near future. In order to accurately convey the meaning and intent of spoken language, interpreters must be able to understand and interpret local dialects, idioms, and cultural norms, something that is difficult for AI to do.



New Staff Profile: Gurinder Kaur

Gurinder is the newest addition to our Hindi and Punjabi interpreter team. Gurinder was born in India and moved to the United States in 2006. She grew up learning Hindi, Punjabi, and English. Gurinder has been a registered nurse for the past 25 years, she has experience in pediatrics, dialysis, education, and geriatrics.

Gurinder developed an interest in medical interpreting while working as a case manager for a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). After witnessing instances of inaccurate interpretation, she recognized a strong need for Punjabi interpreters and began assisting providers with interpretation in Punjabi and Hindi. She finds this work especially rewarding because it allows her to support both patients and providers.

Outside of work, Gurinder enjoys cooking delicious meals for family and friends and watching comedy movies. Her curiosity and commitment to learning continue to inspire her personal and professional growth.

Welcome to the team, Gurinder! We are excited to have you here!

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This issue was produced by UC Davis Health Medical Interpreting Services Department's editorial team.
https://health.ucdavis.edu/interpreting_services/

Questions? Comments?
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