

Future of News: Will Robot Readers Take Over? from VOA

Technology is forever changing the way we get our news. Many people now get a lot of their news on electronic (1) _____, instead of traditional media, such as newspapers, television or radio. An increasing number of people also report turning to social media for information.

Now, there is a new technology that could (2) _____ change the way we get the news: computer-created news readers.

Recently, China's state-supported news (3) _____ Xinhua launched what it called the world's first artificial intelligence, or AI news presenters.

The news readers - created by machine learning technology - are (4) _____ on two real-life Chinese newsmen. One is able to present (5) _____ in English; the other, in Mandarin Chinese.

In Xinhua's report about the (6) _____, it said machine learning was used to examine video images and sounds of the two newsmen. The system then created the AI robotic presenters, which look and sound like real people.

(7) _____ technology has been used to create video products known as "(8) _____ videos." A deepfake is a video that looks real, but was electronically changed. Such videos can make people appear to say things they never said or do things that never (9) _____ happened.

Xinhua said the AI presenters will be a great (10) _____ to the news team because they "can work 24 hours a day" on its website and on social media. One of the presenters even promised to "work (11) _____" to keep people informed. Xinhua claimed the AI newsmen were able to read the news "as naturally as" a human presenter.

Some machine learning experts said the system showed off China's (12) _____ progress in voice recognition, text-to-speech technology and data (13) _____. But several experts suggested that the term AI does not correctly describe abilities of the robotic news readers. On social media, many Chinese noted that the AI presenters did not seem real. People criticized them for not being more (14) _____.

A writer for the MIT Technology Review declared Xinhua's news reader announcement as "fake news." China's news presenter "isn't intelligent at all," the report said.

MIT Technology Review said the presenter itself is little more than "a digital (15) _____ that reads." It added, "The 'AI' in this case is the software that learns what makes a (16) _____-looking face and voice." While the demonstration was clearly (17) _____ of improved technology, it was "a very (18) _____ example of machine learning," the report said.

Some businesses have experimented with similar technology for possible use in news operations.

Britain's BBC recently (19) _____ a video that used machine learning to make it look like one of its news readers was speaking different languages. The London-based company that developed the system says its goal is to "remove the language (20) _____" for many different kinds of video across the internet.



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The news readers - created by machine learning technology - are based on two real-life Chinese newsmen. One is able to present newscasts in English; the other, in Mandarin Chinese.

In Xinhua's report about the launch, it said machine learning was used to examine video images and sounds of the two newsmen. The system then created the AI robotic presenters, which look and sound like real people.

Similar technology has been used to create video products known as "deepfake videos." A deepfake is a video that looks real, but was electronically changed. Such videos can make people appear to say things they never said or do things that never actually happened.

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Some machine learning experts said the system showed off China's latest progress in voice recognition, text-to-speech technology and data analysis. But several experts suggested that the term AI does not correctly describe abilities of the robotic news readers. On social media, many Chinese noted that the AI presenters did not seem real. People criticized them for not being more lifelike. A writer for the MIT Technology Review declared Xinhua's news reader announcement as "fake news." China's news presenter "isn't intelligent at all," the report said.

MIT Technology Review said the presenter itself is little more than "a digital puppet that reads." It added, "The 'AI' in this case is the software that learns what makes a convincing-looking face and voice." While the demonstration was clearly evidence of improved technology, it was "a very narrow example of machine learning," the report said.

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