



### ***“Is everyone equal in computer-translated “chat”?”***

*Technology can be very helpful – but only if it safely solves actual business problems, and does so without introducing a new set of unforeseen problems or risks.*

***“Language Technologies”*** are becoming increasingly popular, sparked by developments in “computer translation” systems (sometimes called “machine translation”). Many new and recent **Language Technologies** turn-out simply to be attractive-looking user-interfaces to “computer translation” systems which don’t properly address organisations’ actual business problems whilst also introducing new problems because of their reliance on “computer translation”, which is still too inaccurate and unreliable for many situations. The main benefit of many technologies is that they seem to be cheap to use and easy to access but – as is often the case – “the devil’s in the detail”.

#### **“Equal Partners” – Or Not? | Chat and IM Tools.**

Most *computer-translation* solutions work via “**chat**” or “**instant message**” interfaces which allow users to send messages to one another, with messages being *computer-translated* before being sent to the other user – and with the *computer-translation* aspect ‘bolted-on’ almost as an afterthought.

The vast majority of such systems are designed predominantly for the *consumer* marketplace – for friends, relatives or colleagues to ‘*chat*’ as equal partners in a conversation. This isn’t always an appropriate model, especially in scenarios where an “*official*” is communicating with “*a member of the public*”.

Systems of this kind will often have evolved organically, with no particular “design objectives” for professional use in “**official**”-to-“**public**” conversations. Put simply: “*if everyone’s equal then nobody’s in charge*”.

#### **When Someone Has To Be ‘In Charge’**

Tools designed specifically for organisational use between an *official* and *a member of the public* should adopt a different approach – allowing the *official* to have an elevated level of control over how the conversation starts, proceeds and ends. CommSOFT’s *Language Assistant*<sup>™</sup> is currently the only such tool available that incorporates such an *official-to-public* **elevated control** aspect in its design<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Translation Credibility – Computer-Translations**

Because most *chat* and *instant-messaging* systems see *computer-translation* of messages as a “design afterthought”, they are designed simply to assume that the *computer-translations* being used are “accurate enough”, and make no attempt to help with the accuracy (or inaccuracy) of those *computer-translations*.

CommSOFT's **Language Assistant**<sup>TM</sup> includes a multi-language *chat* tool called **LAInterActive**<sup>TM</sup>, which allows users to have ad-hoc *computer-translated* conversations.

However, **LAInterActive** includes leading-edge, proprietary **CT-CHECK**<sup>TM</sup> technology<sup>ii</sup> which uses algorithms to 'rate' the accuracy of *computer-translations*. Importantly, **CT-CHECK**<sup>TM</sup> checks *before you use* each *computer-translation*, giving you the ability to quickly review, consider and possibly re-phrase what you're trying to say, to help to ensure that the conversation is carried out as accurately as it can be.

*[Whilst this paper is not intended to be 'marketing' for CommSOFT's **Language Assistant**<sup>TM</sup> products it references these products as it is not possible to find examples of similar products with equivalent design criteria to reference as design examples.]*

## Summary

A well-designed **Language Technology** solution should include suitable treatment for all of the areas outlined above:

- **"Inequality-Control" within conversations;**
- ***Computer-translation* accuracy assistance; and**
- ***Computer-translation* pre-use checks, translation safety ratings and review.**

## References:

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<sup>i</sup> CommSOFT Internal Chat and IM Tools Review, December 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> **CT-CHECK**<sup>TM</sup> is 'designed into' **LAInterActive**<sup>TM</sup>.