



Translation Technologies – Key Issues

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**.

Since the advent of “computer-translation” there are many new “translation technologies” – from mobile Apps to in-ear headsets – all of which claim to work accurately and safely.

Products based entirely on “computer-translation” never mention that “computer-translation” is still wildly inaccurate and unreliable – which makes it, and products based on it, unsuitable for professional, organisational use - especially in any context where there may be legal consequences arising from its use.

For example, the Danish Police have now banned the use of “computer-translation” (see ¹ below) after the collapse of a murder trial where a suspect was interviewed using a “computer-translation” system.

Language Technology Solutions – Requirements and Capabilities

Any language technology needs to satisfy some ‘basic’ requirements *over-and-above* simply being an interface to “computer translation”. Required capabilities include:

CAPABILITY	SOLUTION				
	CommSOFT Language Assistant™	Google Translate™	Skype™	Pilot™ (earpieces)	Apalon™ (App)
Can use certified (BS; ISO; ES) ² human translations for sensitive / legal scenarios?	✓	X	X	X	X
Can provide checked and ‘rated’ access to computer-translation?	✓	X	X	X	X
Automatic full, secure logging & tracing?	✓	X	X	X	PARTIAL

CAPABILITY	SOLUTION				
	CommSOFT Language Assistant™	Google Translate™	Skype™	Pilot™ (earpieces)	Apalon™ (App)
Can automate whole conversations (for speed)?	✓	X	X	X	X
Can utilise full multi-screen touch technology (ease of use)?	✓	X	X	X	X
Secure, logged & encrypted?	✓	X	X	X	X

The table above shows only a selection of commonly-available products. There is a proliferation of “front-end” products which simply provide access to “raw” computer translation and which lack many of the necessary capabilities for professional, organisational use because they are designed with “consumer” (public) use in mind – use where security, accuracy, logging, traceability and language standards are not considered important.

“If you’re ordering a cup of coffee on holiday then most translation solutions may be good enough – you’ll get a cup of coffee. It may not be the right cup of coffee, but it’s a cup of coffee. If your translations happen in a scenario that could have legal or other organisational consequences then you’ll need to use a solution that can guarantee accuracy as well as provide other capabilities – it’ll need to have been designed for professional, organisational use.”

References and Further Information

<http://translationjournal.net/journal/56google.htm>
<https://www.transifex.com/blog/2015/google-translate-reliability/>
<http://www.teacherswithapps.com/human-translation-vs-google-translate-in-2015/>
<http://tinyurl.com/z57ltk3>

¹ <http://www.evs-translations.com/blog/trial-by-jury-or-trial-by-google-translate/> <http://www.upi.com/Police-use-of-Google-Translate-mistake/66011355355771/>

² BS Translation Service Quality; ISO9001; EN 15038

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