Machine Translation

Machine translation refers to fully automated software that can translate content from one language into one or more other languages. Recent systems are based on artificial intelligence and use 'neural networks' to translate. These systems learn patterns from pre-processed data.

This new ´neural machine translation´ is just a mouse-click away for anybody who wants to get the gist of content in a language they do not understand, be it for business or for private use. The quality will vary, depending on the languages involved, but most of the time it will do the job, especially when perfect quality is not required.

Automated translation is also used by professional translators and translation companies as a tool to speed up and enhance their work.

But machines are not replacing humans in the translation profession – rather they complement the human factor. Translators are not likely to be out of a job any time soon – purely on account of the exponential growth in content around the world, especially online. This has increased demand for multilingual communication, and without the valuable tool of automated pre-translation, human translators would struggle.

Since work on computerised translation began, we've been promised that machines would do the job as well as humans within a few years. More than 50 years later, this is clearly still not the case, though a lot of progress has been made in recent years, thanks to higher-powered computers and artificial intelligence. That said, the crucial difference remains that, unlike humans, machines don't yet *understand* what they're translating.

Be aware of the pitfalls

No matter how good machines have become, relying on their output without having it checked by a human translator can be risky. What might look like very readable could be hiding some serious mistakes, with words and concepts in the original (foreign language) text incorrectly transferred to (or even omitted from) the output text.

For some uses, this risk may be acceptable – but machine translation is definitely not the best solution for all text types or circumstances.

If you do decide to use it in any business-related context, one important thing to be aware of is that some providers of the service may claim ownership of whatever text you send them. So your confidentiality and intellectual property rights may not be guaranteed. You may want to check first whether the provider guarantees confidentiality or not.

Free, confidential machine translation – from the European Commission

Confidentiality is where the Commission´s own system – **eTranslation** – is different. Working best for texts on EU-related matters, it is intended for public administrations, small businesses and universities across Europe.

It is free of charge, easy to use and guarantees the security and confidentiality of your data.

'Translation all around us'

#DiscoverTranslation

A campaign to promote the translation profession to audiences outside the language industry

Translation