



Machine Translation in Society

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Articles

Understanding the societal impacts of machine translation: a critical review of the literature on medical and legal use cases

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- Screening 1,000+ records
- Potential to exacerbate inequalities – risks are not felt equally

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Machine translation use in the UK

- 1,200 sample of UK residents 18+ (mid-2019)
- Representative (census-matched) in terms of age, sex, and ethnicity
- **"I needed urgent help or was in a situation I consider serious – e.g., in hospital or at a police station" – 19 participants**



Vieira, L.N., O'Sullivan, C., Zhang, X. and O'Hagan, M. (2022) Machine translation in society: Insights from UK users. *Lang Resources & Evaluation* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-022-00698-2>

Open data: <https://data.bris.ac.uk/dataset/machine-translation-74b0cc02c0b74b9c2a0/>

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Respondents' accounts

"I use them to explain patients rights who are detained under the mental health act. It is important they have accurate information and an interpreter told me once that the written inform[ation] I had been given by google translate was almost unintelligible"

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Respondents' accounts

[...] I had a Polish patient who did not speak English. There was no one else on the ward who spoke Polish. [...] I had to ask her permission to check her [b]lood pressure. I had to explain the medication [I] was giving her. I had to ask about her pain levels. I had to ask if she needed help to mobilise to the toilet or help into bed. Without google translate on my phone [I] wouldn't have accurately given the information or got the information from her.

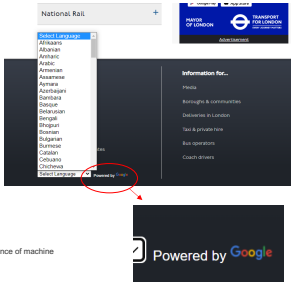
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Pervasiveness

"Use" not straightforward.
Machine translation is embedded in the environment – not necessarily consciously/overtly used.

Increasingly = "translation"



Vieira, L.N. (Forthcoming) "Translated by Google": On the permeating presence of machine translation tools.

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Persuasive availability

Officer: [Background Sound: Typing on Keyboard]

Defendant: *Okay...it is in front of the car because I'm going to look for it ... How?* The officer "admitted a live interpreter

Officer: *Do you understand?* would be a more reliable source" (USA v Cruz-Zamora 2018, 11).

Defendant: *No, how?*

Officer: [Background Sound: Typing on Keyboard]

Defendant: Ah, okay. Yeah...yeah. Go. Yes.

(USA v Cruz-Zamora 2018, p. 7)

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Action points – translation literacy

- Policy
- Banning it unfeasible/undesirable
- Education/staff training – translation literacy

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Critical Language Barriers

- More evidence
- Spoken/written uses
- Potentially exacerbating factors (imbalances of power, ethically charged contexts)



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Thank you!

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