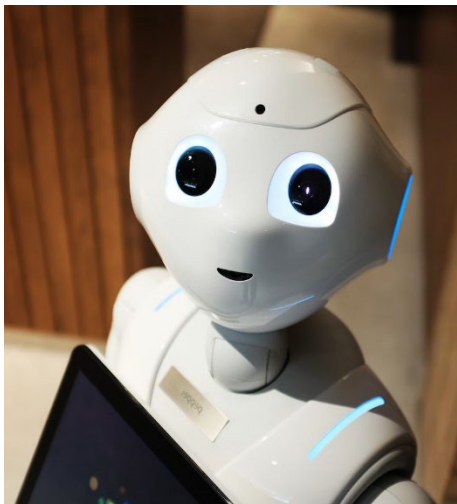




Q1 2023: Did you know?

Machine Translation vs. Human Translation

The big debate in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) era is whether Machine Translation (MT) can replace Human Translation (HT). The simple answer is no. AI will never replace human translators because machines are unable to capture the nuance that comes from each language's different grammatical rules, semantics, syntax, and cultural influences. Also, machine translation cannot detect context, preferences, or industry-specific terms. Therefore, if accuracy is critical or even important, human translation is essential.



The argument for machine translation tends to be about the benefits of speed and cost. However, consider the impact of even a slightly different translation if the wrong information is communicated as a result of the translation. What is the risk if that occurs? Not only can it severely impact the reputation of a company or organization, but it can literally cause physical harm, such as in cases with Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) or Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) documents. Wouldn't it be best to use a Subject Matter Expert (SME) when attempting to translate industry-specific terms or jargon? Machine translation uses simple algorithms for the same phrase and cannot decipher

exactly how it should be translated based on the industry. Therefore, the translation is only as good as the algorithm. Also, machine translation merely deciphers and translates the source as presented. It does not recognize human errors in the source, such as typos, grammatical errors, or context errors. This is often referred to as "garbage in, garbage out." With that said, although there is a benefit to having free tools, such as Google Translate, at your fingertips to utilize for translating general, low-risk sources of communication, they simply can't replace humans. To be honest, I don't think I would even feel comfortable relying on algorithms for translating simple communications where tone matters and just the right words have been carefully selected. With that said, would you want to completely rely on AI algorithms to translate a "love letter" that may affect the rest of your life? Again, simply put, human translation is here to stay and will always be necessary.