

Internet Threats No One Ever Warned You Against

One of the biggest internet lies is: “I have read and agreed to the terms and conditions”. How many times have you ticked the box without even bothering to read the text?

Whenever you sign any official document, you read all the clauses carefully, because you know that if you don't, it may have dire consequences. Yet when using free online tools and applications we are no longer this cautious. When using some services, you automatically agree to their terms and conditions, and when they decide to change them you agree with the new terms and conditions by unawareness without even noticing.

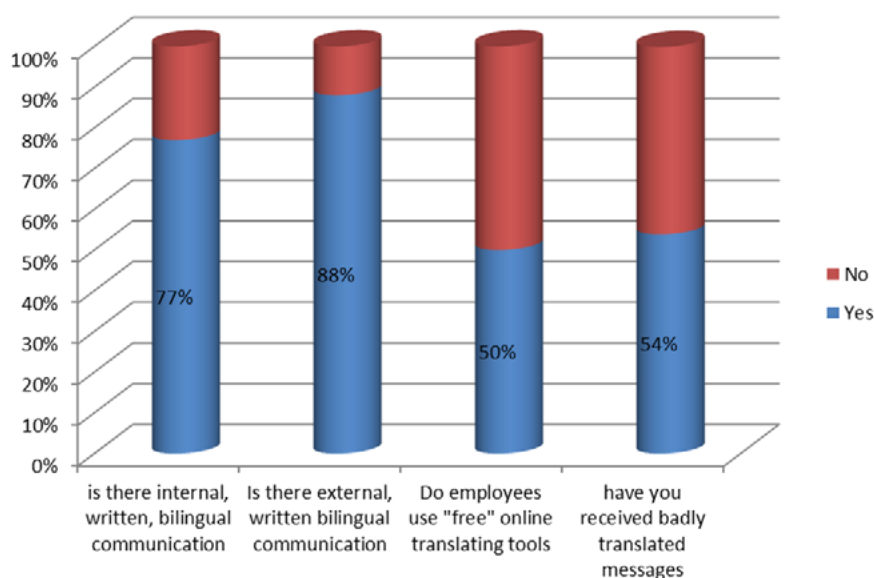
Were you aware of that?

More and more big companies are.

Let's take the Volkswagen Group as an example.

Jörg Porsiel from Volkswagen Group's Translation Management department points out that “for reasons of data security, the use of machine translation on the internet is not permitted throughout the [Volkswagen] Group. Access to the relevant web sites has been blocked.” On the other hand, a contradictory example can be found from a survey conducted by the Lingosec research team this year: about 50 % of the companies interrogated say that they use tools accessible on the internet to translate their multilingual internal and external documents, even the ones classified as confidential.

A section of the results of the Lingosec survey



Before examining the consequences, let us take a closer look at the main free online translation services available today.

Let's Google it!

There are multiple examples, so let's take a closer look. Have you ever used Google online translator? I'm sure you have because it's a well-trained translation engine, and the quality of the translations is getting better every day. As a matter of fact, when you feed your content into it, you contribute to making it better. But are you rewarded for your help? Well, every good deed of yours will be punished.

Google Terms of Service say it clearly:

"When you upload or otherwise submit content to our Services, you give Google (and those we work with) a worldwide license to use, host, store, reproduce, modify, create derivative works (such as those resulting from translations, adaptations or other changes we make so that your content works better with our Services), communicate, publish, publicly perform, publicly display and distribute such content. The rights you grant in this license are for the limited purpose of operating, promoting, and improving our Services, and to develop new ones. This license continues even if you stop using our Services". (Google, 2012)

In other words - by uploading any content to any one of Google's services, including Gmail, Docs or Translate, you allow Google to use your texts and share all rights to the information and, therefore, Google is not liable for any foreseeable losses or damages. They have a proper clause for this too:

"IN ALL CASES, GOOGLE, AND ITS SUPPLIERS AND DISTRIBUTORS, WILL NOT BE LIABLE FOR ANY LOSS OR DAMAGE THAT IS NOT REASONABLY FORESEEABLE. (Google, 2012)

Feel alarmed yet?

Well, you should, because it will be really hard to prove that just because you did not read the terms and conditions you probably violated some confidentiality or non-disclosure agreement and your sensitive data became shared property. How is it even possible that when you upload your content onto a particular service, it is visible somewhere else? Remember, Google is a global provider of different kinds of services; all of it is combined and has a common privacy policy. If you share any of your information using Google, you have to remember this clause:

"Our Services display some content that is not Google's. This content is the sole responsibility of the entity that makes it available". (Google, 2012)

So, is there a chance that the content you put in a Google service, like Google Translate, today maybe found one day by another internet user through the Google search engine?

Microsoft rules

Google is not the only player on the market; as a matter of fact, what you are witnessing is a clash of the Titans. So if you don't like Google's terms and conditions, you can always use Microsoft's Bing Translator. Is it any safer? Let's take a look at what we agree to by using Bing:

"Except for material that we license to you that may be incorporated into your own content (such as clip art), we do not claim ownership of the content you provide on the services. Your content remains your content, and you are responsible for it. We do not control, verify, pay for, or endorse the content that you and others make available on the services".

Sounds much better, right? Just as long as you don't share your content in the public areas of any Microsoft service where you may assume that "your content remains your content". Otherwise you give others access to your content as well as granting them free, nonexclusive permission to use, reproduce, distribute, display, transmit, and communicate it to the public. But don't get too excited yet. Before you decide to use their translator, spare another few minutes to read the text below:

"If you use or share content on the services in a way that infringes others' copyrights, trademarks, other intellectual property rights, or privacy rights, you are breaching this agreement. You represent and warrant that for the duration of this agreement you have (and will have) all the rights necessary for the content you upload or share on the services and that the use of the content, as contemplated in this section 3.2, won't violate any law".

So remember, that by using Bing to translate any official documents and contracts, you violate your company's or your client's non-disclosure agreements. By translating any of those confidential texts, you are actually violating regulations that require you to hold all information and material in strict confidence and not to disclose any information or material to a third party.

The point is that by using Google Translate, we give Google access to both source and target texts. Google can replicate those matches whenever anyone else tries to translate even remotely similar text strings and Microsoft can use, modify, adapt, reproduce, distribute, and display content uploaded to those services where you share your information. Still, in both cases when using free online translation engines you violate non-disclosure agreements that limit the availability of the information and material to those who have reasonable need to see and use it for a specific purpose - this is how it works. The internet may seem like a good friend who will give you anything you want for free, but there is in fact no such thing as "for free". It is every company's decision to use or not to use free online services; however, it's important that you're aware of the potential consequences. As a result of using free online translators, confidential information can easily reach third parties.

It's a translator's job

While most translators understand the importance of security, these concerns often take a back seat when a deadline is approaching. Translators should understand that all content uploaded to Google Translate or Bing Translator is used by those companies for future translation unit matches and language modeling. While collaborating with professional Language Service Providers (LSP's) you might assume that the data confidentiality problem does not exist anymore. However, LSP's often lose control over your text after sending it to the individual translator, who is often pressed with several deadlines. The growing practice in translator circles is to use Google's translating tools (a free Google CAT-tool) where Translation Memories are stored. For example, the most commonly used CAT tool (SDL Trados) has the option of using Google Translate for translations. It is also not unusual that translators use Google Translate for a first draft translation and post-edit the Google output to a human translation level. That allows them to speed up substantially the translation process of less complex text. That is why you should use software that enables this practice whilst keeping your content secure and; allows you confide your most sensitive data.

No longer science fiction

Let's look into the future, not so distant, I can assure you. Imagine that several employees in your company use a free online translator, a tool that you are not able to control. Those pieces of information put into the translation machine are analyzed, identifying your company by the personal data of each employee, their current location, LinkedIn profile, scan of content of private mail boxes etc. Then the information gathered from several sources is associated to create a solid database of your confidential data. Not so difficult considering the rapid growth of modern technology. Ensure today that your sensitive data will still be secure tomorrow.

Are there any other options?

If you don't want to stop using Google Translate or Microsoft Bing, remember to use it only for translating trivia, but when it comes to more sensitive information please think twice before you proceed. Remember that there are alternatives that eliminate the risk of data loss during the translation process. Nowadays in a globalized world information circulates rapidly and can be stored and brought out at any time. To develop your business you need to be sure that all the content produced inside of your company is protected. Therefore you need to verify that your confidential information is secure before using free online translation tools, sending a document to an external translator or translation agency and sharing it in any other way with third parties. Data masking is a perfect solution for you in order to protect your content from both internal and external security threats. It eliminates the risk of exposing sensitive information to unauthorized users, increases protection against data theft and provides a heightened sense of security to clients, employees, and suppliers. Every company should have the right to be sure that every piece of information is perfectly secure within the translation and data sharing process.



Paul Walentynowicz

Lingosec
www.lingosec.com