MRS Evidence Matters
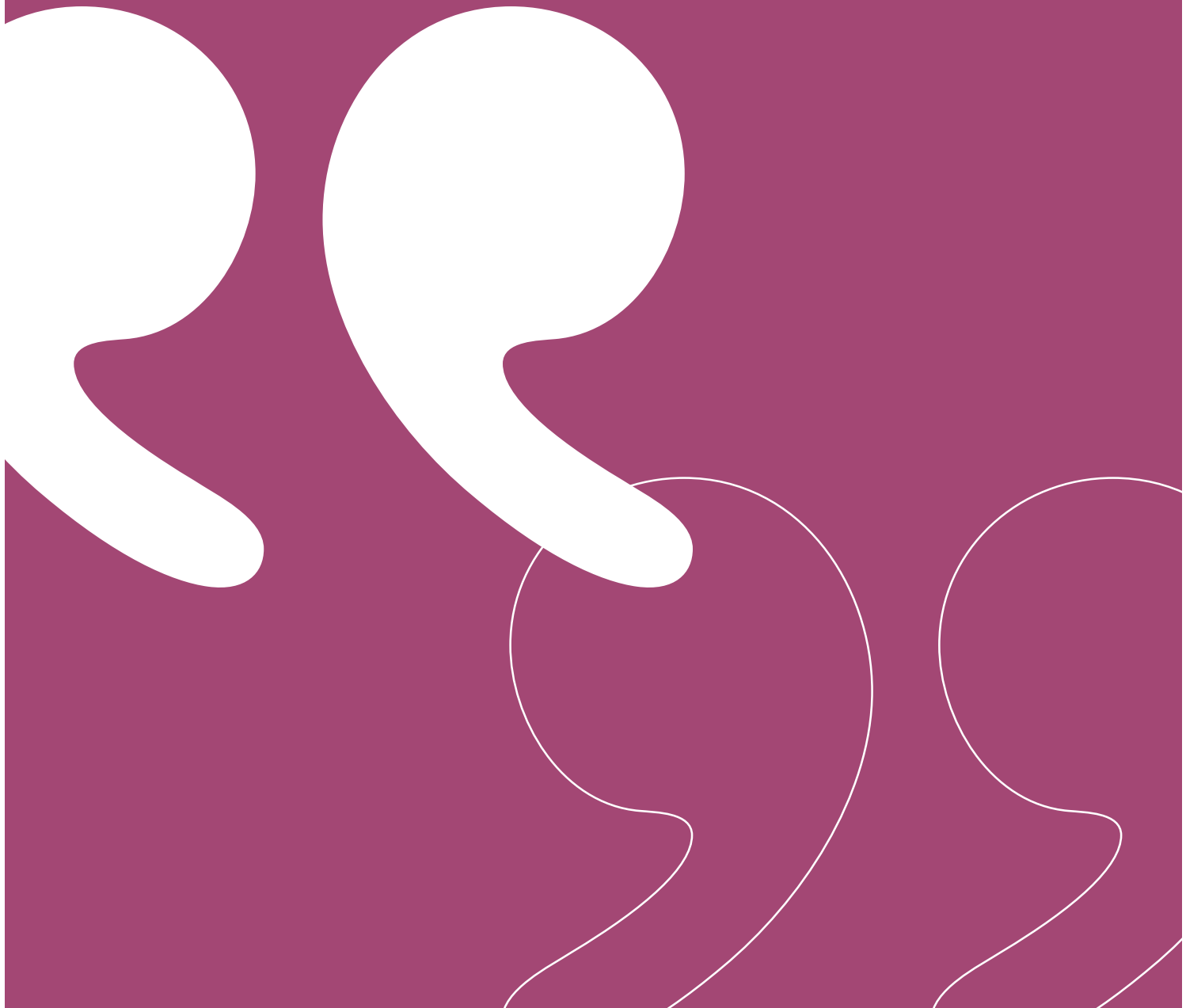
MRS/ATC CHECKLIST FOR BUYING TRANSLATION SERVICES

MRS has produced this checklist in collaboration with the Association of Translation Companies (ATC) to provide best practice guidance for buying translation services.

The checklist includes guidance on:

- Data protection and GDPR compliance

- Translation of structured data (pre-field)

- Translation of unstructured data (post-field)

- Competences and qualifications of linguists

The research and insight sector is under extreme pressure for speed, and significant global decisions are made based on research data translated within a very short time frame, and with little margin for error.

Finding the right translation accredited MRS Company Partner is critical for the success of your global research projects. Use this checklist to check potential Partners' reliability and expertise within the research and insight sector. While no supplier will be able to produce a perfect and faultless translation, every time, this checklist will help practitioners to partner with suppliers who provide expert, quality-managed services, working to find the right decision, every time.

The checklist should be used along with the MRS Code of Conduct and Guidelines.

Data Protection, Legal and Regulatory Obligations

When managed expertly, the translation supply chain forms a closed loop where content for translation is protected from data breaches throughout the chain – from data supplier to translation supplier, and from translation supplier to linguists across the world – and back again.

Apart from protecting clients' sensitive commercial data, if there is personal data present in the content for translation, it must be processed in accordance with appropriate data protection legislation, e.g., in the UK this would be the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR.

Key Points

- An important and early decision in the research process is to identify a data controller, a joint controller/s (if there is one or more), and any data processor/s.

- Which parties in the research and insight supply-chain fulfil which role will be determined by the individual circumstances of any given project. The controller and joint controller/s determine why and how personal data is processed. A processor conducts the processing on behalf of a controller or joint data controllers.

- When data is supplied to a translation supplier by another organisation to provide translation services, such as from a research supplier or a client, the translation supplier will be a processor for the supplied data.

- Those parties that are identified as either joint controllers or a controller of the data throughout the translation supply chain must ensure that appropriate and adequate safeguards and contractual agreements are place with the language service supplier (which would be a processor) and any freelance linguists across the world (which would also be sub-contracted processors).

- Other obligations include the protection of personal data including data being transferred through the supply-chain from clients, research suppliers, translation companies and linguists. All must have appropriate IT security measures and safeguards in place to protect sensitive commercial data during transfer and storage.

Questions to Ask

- Have you identified whether your content for translation contains personal data?

    - Are you able to identify personal data in content for translation? If not, consider who can, and at what stage of the translation process. Personal data can typically be present both in written and in audio-visual verbatim responses.

    - Are you able to anonymise personal data in content for translation, or work with your translation supplier to do that, without jeopardising the quality of the data? If there is no personal data in content for translation, GDPR may not apply to datasets.

- Are you complying with your obligations as a Controller of personal data in content for translation?

    - Have you ensured that the personal data is lawfully collected?

    - Have you put in place appropriate contractual agreements with all processors, e.g., your translation supplier? Have you ensured that they in turn have put in place appropriate contractual agreements and safeguards within their organisation and with their sub-processors e.g., linguists across the world?

    - Have you given your consent to the transfer of the data to third countries, if required for translation purposes?

- Are appropriate IT security measures in place to protect data during transfer and storage?

    - How do you protect data during transfers between you and your translation supplier?

    - Is your translation supplier certified to ISO 27001 information security management?

    - What IT security measures and safeguards does your translation supplier have in place, and how do they ensure that content for translation is protected during transfer and storage at all stages of the translation process, including across borders, throughout the world?

Translation of Structured Data (pre-field)

Pre-field work and the translation of structured data (questionnaires, discussion guides and screeners) typically includes several different processes.

Key Points

- The basic workflow for the translation of structured data includes:

  - Translation, revision by another linguist, and checking of translated files

  - Layering the translation into an exported overlay file ensuring full functionality in the translated language (structure, word inflections, piping, inserts, code)

  - Link checking in a live link test and final edits of the overlay file

- Cultural adaptation of content for translation may be necessary to ensure research questions make sense and are appropriate for the target market. Technical adaptation of research may be required e.g., for correct word wrapping and functionality around text direction in different languages. For example:

  - Demographics questions around household income, ethnicity or gender may need to be adjusted for certain target markets.

  - Right-to-left languages may require sliders to be adjusted to move from right to left instead of left to right.

- Most translated content also undergoes a client review. This can introduce an element of uncertainty over change requests which may risk global benchmarking across languages. A good translation supplier will support you through that process, ensuring that feedback is promptly and appropriately reviewed and actioned, and that any changes are aligned across languages to retain the research's uniformity.

Questions to Ask

- Have you agreed on a standard workflow with your translation supplier, and are you aware of what tasks that includes?

- How does your translation supplier manage cultural and technical adaptation needs that arise during the translation and checking processes?

- Have you informed your translation supplier of an independent client review, and have you agreed how that will be managed?

- Does your translation supplier have a formal complaints handling process?

Translation of Unstructured Data (post-field)

Verbatim responses are captured as unstructured data during post-field work in written or video format, or as audio only.

Unlike structured data, translation of unstructured data does not have the same sensitivities around quality. Instead, linguistic handling of verbatim and open-end responses may lean more towards gisting and the recognition and tracking of trends, which may benefit from AI and machine translation solutions.

Key Points
- Handling audio-visual content is different from the translation of written data. Consider what usage scenarios the data is intended for. For example:

  - Transcription is a monolingual writing-out of the data, which may require further translation depending on its intended use.

  - Translated AV content may further require adding time stamps, indicating speaker turns, or subtitling of videos.

- Intelligent application of AI-enabled solutions and machine translation may considerably speed up the translation process and reduce cost. However, it is important to recognise when AI solutions are appropriate and when they are not. For example:

  - Machine translation (MT) will not pick up nuances in sensitive healthcare data.

  - AI and MT solutions will struggle identifying and handling typos, shorthand, emojis, slang and colloquial expressions.

Questions to Ask

- Have you identified the right solution for handling unstructured data in the current project? Your translation supplier should be able to discuss the options with you, and propose a suitable solution.

- Do you require something else than straightforward translation of the whole content? For example, identifying and marking up responses around trending topics, or creating word clouds.

- Have you considered going direct to code if the project is suited to in-language coding? Your translation supplier should be able to propose a solution that mixes in-country human recognition with AI-enabled capturing.

Competences and Qualifications of Linguists

One of the key elements of successful insight translation is the right choice of linguists.

Key Points

- With research translation, linguists must be familiar with the different ways structured and unstructured data is handled, and the specific language used within the insight industry. They must also have a flair for creative translation, and be able to deal with terminology from a vast number of different sectors.

- Clause 4.5.3.4. of ISO 20252:2019 requires the following, even when automated translation is used:

    - Translator(s): mother-tongue language competence or equivalent skills in the source and target languages

    - At least one of the translators: prior experience in the type of document at hand

    - Checking and revision by appropriately competent people other than the translator, or where secondary verification is not possible, a policy to ensure the translators' competences

    - Recording of checking and revision activities

    - An opportunity for the client to review the translation

- Certification to the specialist translation services standard ISO 17100: 2015 can be used to gauge the translation supplier's approach to match the above ISO 20252 requirements. ISO 17100 provides requirements for the core processes and resources required for the delivery of a quality translation service that meets applicable specifications, and includes requirements for translator and reviser qualifications and competences, as well as translation, revision, and review processes.

Questions to Ask

- How does your translation supplier validate their linguists' competences and qualifications?

- Are the linguists based in-country or in the UK?

- What research and insights sector specific training does the translation supplier provide to their linguists?

- Is the translation supplier certified to ISO 17100?