



Identifying translators to
assess and extract data
from studies in different
languages for inclusion in
Cochrane reviews

Judith Deppe, Multi-language Programme Manager

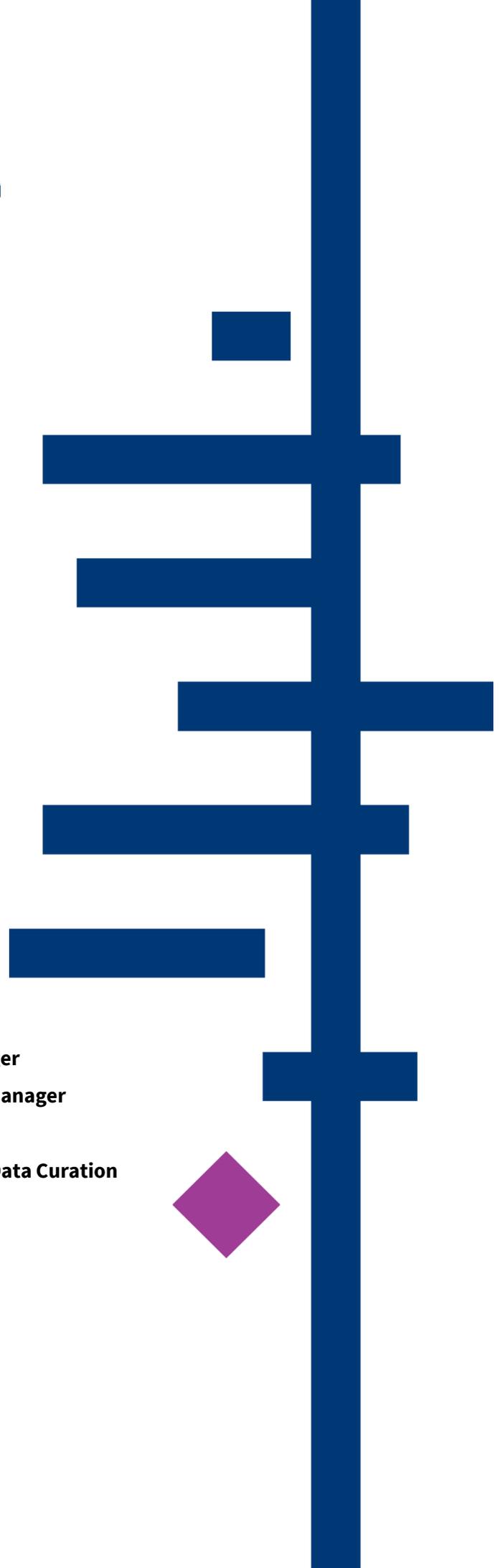
Ann Shackleton, Membership and Volunteering Manager

Rachel Richardson, Methods Support Unit Lead

Anna Noel-Storr, Head of Evidence Pipeline and Data Curation

Version 2, February 2026

Trusted evidence.
Informed decisions.
Better health.



The Cochrane Handbook states that Cochrane review authors should try to identify and assess all possibly relevant reports of studies irrespective of language, to ensure that all relevant studies are included, and that no language bias is introduced in the review (see [C19, Methodological Expectations of Cochrane Intervention Reviews, Version August 2023¹](#)).

If you identify studies in languages that you are not familiar with as part of your literature search, you will likely need help from someone who speaks those languages to assess whether the studies meet your inclusion criteria, and if yes, to extract the data. If you or your group do not have contacts who can help, you can look for contributors on Cochrane's [Cochrane Engage](#) platform.

Cochrane Engage allows you to post a task that you need help with for your review. Interested people with relevant skills can respond to your request and give details on their background and experience. Helpers are generally willing to contribute as volunteers and earn 200 points towards [Cochrane membership](#) when they complete a task. Translation tasks are the most popular!

Posting a translation task on Cochrane Engage

Log in to [Cochrane Engage](#) with your Cochrane Account and select 'Post a task'.

Include the required language, the number of studies and the review topic in the 'Title' field.

Use the 'Description' field to give details of the task. Typically, this would not be a full translation of the study, as this can be very time-consuming. Ask for volunteers to help with:

- Initial classification as a randomised controlled trial (RCT) (and/or other types of studies, depending on your inclusion criteria)
- Assessment of eligibility against your review's inclusion criteria
- Data extraction using your standard form

In 'Skills or areas of interest', choose Translation (linguistic) and then you will be able to enter the languages required.

Use the 'Describe your ideal applicant' section to indicate:

- Level of fluency (native speaker or bilingual) in the required language
- Basic understanding of RCTs and data extraction
- Subject matter knowledge (for assessment of eligibility)

If you need translators for studies in different languages, create one task per language.

Once your task is published, email alerts will go out to anyone who has signed up to hear about translation tasks, and it will be visible on the Browse Tasks page.

Selecting volunteer translators

Volunteers interested in your task will apply and you will receive notifications directly to your inbox. You can view the applications in your My Tasks page. You can select as many volunteers as

¹ Higgins JPT, Lasserson T, Thomas J, Flemyng E, Churchill R. Methodological Expectations of Cochrane Intervention Reviews. Cochrane: London, Version August 2023

you like, based on the experience and expertise noted in their Cochrane Engage profiles. In fact, it may be advisable to select more than one (see below ‘How many volunteers do you need?’)

Please provide your volunteer(s) with:

- Copy of the relevant study
- Inclusion criteria for the review (it can be helpful to format these as questions, e.g. ‘Are the participants children?’)
- Data extraction form (when required)
- You may wish to provide some guidance to the translator(s) on how to use the form, and it can be helpful to have a short call with them before they start.

How many volunteers do you need?

The Cochrane Handbook states that at least two people working independently should determine whether each study meets the eligibility criteria. Cochrane also recommends that more than one person extract data from every report, with dual data extraction considered highly desirable for study characteristics and mandatory for outcome data (see [C45-46, Methodological Expectations of Cochrane Intervention Reviews, Version August 2023](#)).²

In practice, you may be happy for only one translator to check whether a study is randomised or not. You should find two people to assess other eligibility criteria, and complete data extractions; one of whom should ideally have relevant clinical knowledge.

When you have found the volunteer(s) you need to, please:

- **Unpublish the task from Cochrane Engage**
- **Leave feedback for your volunteer(s)**

When you have selected enough translators, please unpublish your task, so it disappears from the list of available tasks and you are not sent applications that are not needed. Log in to Cochrane Engage and select ‘My Tasks’. Select the relevant task and choose to ‘Unpublish’ (the task remains on your profile and can be duplicated for the next time you need a translator).

You can communicate with your volunteers through Engage (without sharing email addresses) or you are welcome to ask them for their email address and communicate directly.

You will receive an email notification when the translator marks the task as complete. The email will contain a link to write a recommendation that will appear on the volunteer’s Cochrane Engage profile for other task posters to see. View an [example recommendation](#) (with Cochrane Account login).

Please pass on any translations you obtain to Cochrane Support (support@cochrane.org) so that the Central Study Identification Service team can store them in the Cochrane Register of Studies and they are then available to authors who may want to assess the study for another Cochrane review. The Cochrane Information Specialist can also make a note of whether the study is a randomised controlled trial.

Please also ensure the translators’ details are added to the relevant acknowledgements of the review.

² Higgins 2023 (see above footnote).

What if you can't find a translator?

Most translation tasks get responses quickly. If you do not receive any reply after 2 weeks, check your task and make sure it is clear what you are asking for. Did you indicate the language? Did you indicate whether it's an initial assessment, data extraction and/or a partial translation? Is it a big task involving a lot of studies? Maybe it can be split up and distributed to several translators?

You can also actively search for translators in Cochrane Engage:

- Click on 'Browse network'
- Select 'Translation – linguistic' under 'Skills'
- Choose the relevant language under 'Language'
- Contact volunteers directly using the 'Send message' button on their profile

If you're doing everything right, but can't find any help, is there a Cochrane [geographic group](#) in a country that speaks the language you are looking for? Try contacting them. You can also check with Cochrane's Multi-language Programme Manager (jdeppe@cochrane.org), who may sometimes be able to help.

If you still aren't able to find help to assess and include studies in different languages in your review, according to the Handbook, they should be filed in 'Studies Awaiting Classification' rather than 'Excluded Studies', to inform readers that other possibly relevant reports exist, and reflect this information in the PRISMA flow diagram as 'Studies Awaiting Classification'.

How should you reward translators?

Translators should be acknowledged in the published review, if they consent to this. Translators wouldn't qualify for authorship, unless they have contributed substantially to the "acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data" of the review, see also [criteria for authorship and acknowledgements](#) in the Editorial and Publishing Policy Resource.

If tasks are posted and marked as completed on Cochrane Engage, they will count towards the translator's Cochrane membership. If you know or find translators outside of Cochrane Engage, we can add the translators' contribution to the membership database manually. For that, please email support@cochrane.org to ensure they receive their membership points.

As noted above, you will receive an email notification when a volunteer completes your task, which contains a link to write a brief recommendation. Please do leave feedback for your volunteers to enhance their Cochrane Engage profiles.

Some Cochrane groups also offer translators certificates to acknowledge their contribution. This can be valuable, particularly to students who can add them to their portfolios. Please contact Cochrane's Multi-language Programme Manager (jdeppe@cochrane.org) for more information.

Why can't I just use machine translation or AI tools like ChatGPT?

Great question! Machine translation and AI-based language tools have advanced significantly in recent years. Services like Google Translate, DeepL, and ChatGPT can now produce fluent and often accurate translations, especially for widely spoken languages. These tools are very useful for getting a general understanding of a study's content.

However, when it comes to assessing whether a study meets your inclusion criteria for a Cochrane review or extracting data reliably, human expertise is still essential. AI tools may misinterpret technical terms, overlook subtle nuances, or fail to capture context-specific meanings, issues that can compromise the accuracy of your review.

There are also important privacy and data protection considerations. Many free AI services process and store the content you input. For example, Google and OpenAI (the developer of ChatGPT) may retain and use your data to improve their models, depending on their terms of service and your jurisdiction's data protection laws. This means you should only use these tools with content you have the right to share and reuse.

Some services, like DeepL Pro, offer paid plans that do not store or reuse your data, making them more suitable for sensitive or proprietary content.

In summary, AI tools can be helpful for initial screening or exploration, but they are not a substitute for qualified human translators when precision and context are critical.