Guidelines:

English-into-Auslan Video Production
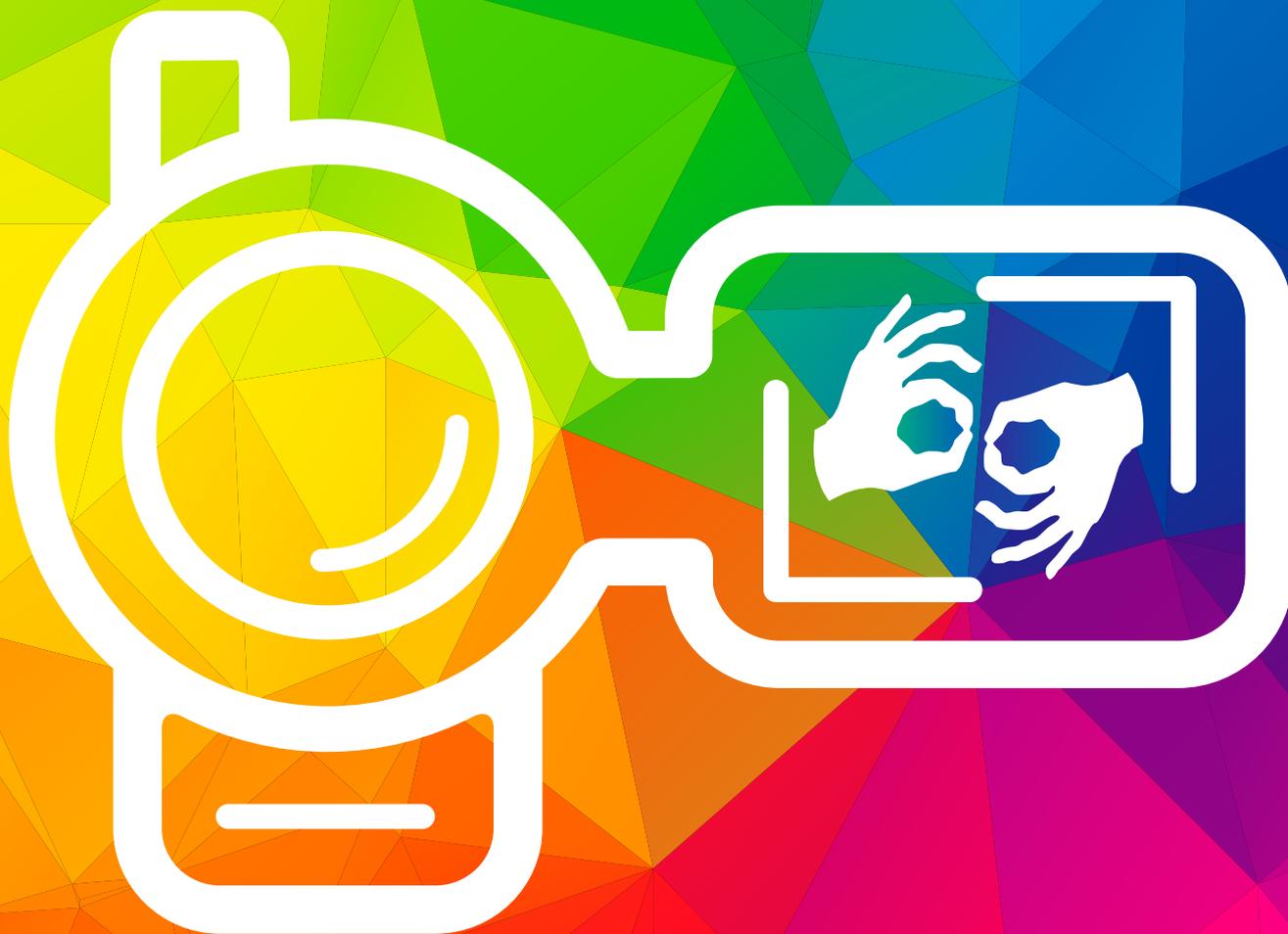
The companion document to What Standards?

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Guidelines: English-into-Auslan Video Production

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Published in June 2015

The Auslan Translation Project

Auslan (Australian sign language) is the preferred language of many deaf Australians, especially those who are not sufficiently bilingual to access information in written English. The Auslan translation industry is growing quickly to fulfil demand for online information accessible to deaf Australians who use Auslan. For example, several state Deaf Societies are increasingly building English-into-Auslan translation services into their business model. To date, these translation services have collaborated with a wide range of clients from varied industry sectors (particularly the Government and Corporate sectors). This process has enabled the Deaf Societies to both engage with other industry and to establish Auslan translations as a viable source of access to information for the communities they represent.

However, Auslan translation practice is at a nascent stage (Leneham, 2005; Bridge, 2009). As an emerging industry with limited experience and very little established practice, it is not surprising that the quality of translations currently available online varies widely. Anecdotally, there is increasing community concern regarding the efficacy of English-into-Auslan translations distributed via the Internet, yet there has been no assessment or discussion of standards for this work. Consequently, there was a need to investigate whether online Auslan translations provide adequate access to information for deaf signers, especially signers who are strongly monolingual and cannot rely on English literacy to understand the information via captioning.

The Auslan Translation Project was set up to address this need in 2013. Ten focus group discussions with consumers and translation practitioners were conducted in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. The research team also liaised with many industry stakeholders via the project steering committee and through individual contacts. Findings from these discussions and the focus group data analysis lead to the development of the following evidence-based guidelines for technical production based on current best practice and consumer and practitioner feedback.

English-into-Auslan Online Translations

There are two types of requests for Auslan videos commonly received by translation services:

1. Videos that are translations of an English source text into a stand-alone Auslan target text (current majority).

2. Videos that are additions of an Auslan target text fixed to a pre-existing English source text (current minority).

Videos that are translations of an English source text into a stand-alone Auslan target text are strongly preferred by the Deaf community. Videos that are additions of an Auslan translation fixed to a pre-existing English source text are less preferred because they tend to result in a compromised Auslan target message – skewed by English syntax and structure. However, it is recognised these videos may be a necessary compromise in some cases. The guidelines outlined here suggest best practices for creating both types of videos.

Key Terms

The key terms used in these Guidelines are:

Source text

The original written or spoken language message (document, live speech, video clip, etc) to be translated. For English-into-Auslan translations, all source texts are in English.

Target text

The result of translating/interpreting the source message into another language (written, spoken, signed, on video, etc). For English-into-Auslan translations, all target texts are in Auslan.

Free translation

A free translation results when the target text conveys the meaning and intent of the source text, but less emphasis on adhering to the form of the source text (Newmark, 1991).

Literal translation

A literal translation results when the form and content of the target text matches the form and content of the source text (Newmark, 1991).

English-into-Auslan translation

An English-into-Auslan translation is typically a filmed delivery of an Auslan target text that has been translated from a written or spoken English source text (Leneham, 2005).

Audience

Audience Needs

The needs of a deaf and hard of hearing audience vary widely. A 'one-size-fits-all' translation is rarely possible or appropriate. The translation approach should prioritise the needs of the consumers most reliant on the translation, e.g. deaf monolingual signers generally, older deaf people, deaf children.

A clear and specific target audience must be defined by the client and translation team during pre-production.

Preferred Translation Approach

'Free' English-into-Auslan translations are strongly preferred by deaf consumers and translation practitioners, compared to more literal English-based translations of the source text.

Recommended steps for creation of a more 'free' translation are:

1. Analysing the English source text message;
2. Researching the topic of the English source text message;
3. Drafting an Auslan target message that conveys the meaning and intent of the source text message, but does not have unnatural English-based syntax and structure;
4. Filming the draft Auslan target text and quality assurance checking; and
5. Filming the final Auslan target text in the studio and quality assurance checking.

Translations should provide adequate context for the specific target audience by:

1. Explaining the background and reason for the translation;
2. Unpacking the assumed knowledge within the source text message; and
3. Using examples that relate to target audience experience wherever possible.

Technical Quality

Background Colour and Content

1. Avoid white or overly-bright backgrounds. Darker or soft background colours are preferred.
2. Background colour should be consistent throughout video. If the background colour does change, colour transitions should be graded.
3. Screen background should contrast clearly with the skin tone and clothing of the person who signs on camera.
4. Addition of still or moving images in the background can enrich the Auslan delivery, but avoid the movement of signing and any background images at the same time.

Style, Size and Location of the Presenter

1. Presenter should wear long-sleeved, contrasting-coloured clothing (e.g. dark shirt on light skin) that covers skin on neck and arms. Their clothing should contrast clearly with their skin tone and the screen background.
2. Avoid inappropriate clothing or jewellery, e.g. fashion tops with asymmetrical or plunging necklines.
3. Lighting on the presenter should be consistent, with no reflection or back shadows, especially on face.
4. The presenter should be the main focus on screen when signing, filmed in a comfortable mid-close range camera shot. Avoid placing the presenter in a bubble (picture-in-picture) in a corner of the screen or too close to the camera.
5. Keep the presenter in one place on the screen. Avoid having the presenter image switch sides on the screen.
6. Avoid presenter's signing being cut off by framing or other visual elements on screen, e.g. English captions and images.
7. Avoid competition between Auslan signing movement and moving background images, i.e. elements that force viewers to stop looking at the signing. The video should guide viewers to look at one moving or foregrounded item at a time.

Signing Quality of the Presenter

1. Overall, onscreen Auslan delivery should be natural and clearly articulated.
2. Gaze and facial expression to camera should be 'conversational' rather than a fixed stare or stony-faced.
3. Ensure signing and fingerspelling are in a comfortable location in front of the torso, not obscuring the face, or forced by camera location or angle.
4. Signing and fingerspelling pace should be easy to read and have a natural flow, not rushed because of information density or source text constraints (e.g. pre-existing voiceover, audio prompts or autocue speed).
5. Check signing for natural pauses between ideas.
6. Use fingerspelling to match written English words shown in the background, or to identify specific English terminology, and then explain these concepts in Auslan where appropriate. Generally avoid using ambiguous Auslan signs on their own and avoid relying on English mouth patterns to establish the word-sign match.
7. Avoid unnecessary unfamiliar fingerspelling in general. Consider alternative strategies such as still or moving images on the background screen that could be pointed to and explained in Auslan.

English Captions

The function and format of captioning needs further discussion within translation teams and the industry generally. At this stage there are conflicting views about its value and purpose alongside Auslan signing.

Decisions about representing the original English source text, or adapting to align more closely to the Auslan target text, need to be made on a case-by-case basis. In the meantime –

1. Viewing of any English captions should be optional, i.e. closed captions are strongly preferred.
2. Do not force the Auslan target message to align with pre-existing English captions if it loses coherence and meaning. A translation with English-based signing and captions is redundant.
3. Captions should contrast with the background. Present captions on a block background (not transparent) in white type using common editing and formatting standards.
4. Ensure captions do not cut off the presenter's signing.

Pre-existing Voice-over

1. When clients ask for an Auslan translation as an add-on to an English video with pre-existing English voice-over, captions and/or animation, discuss the limitations of the translation product for an Auslan-reliant deaf audience. Recommend that a separate English-into-Auslan translation be produced where necessary.
2. Rather than automatically trying to align the Auslan target message to pre-existing English voice-over, adjust video timing to create space/pauses for the Auslan target message components to be completed clearly.
3. Where the pre-existing voice-over (speed, structure, density, etc) makes it impossible to create a coherent and natural Auslan target text, consider removing the voice-over and providing closed captions instead.

Post-production Voice-over

Post-production voice-over is not necessary for English-into-Auslan translations. If it is included for some reason, the English voice-over text should be:

1. Based on translation of the Auslan delivery rather than the English source text; and
2. Aligned with the Auslan delivery after translating, filming and captioning.

Introduction and Production Credits

To ensure the message is contextualized from the start, the presenter or early on-screen titles need to ensure the topic is clearly introduced.

Production credits should identify –

- The client and the translation service.
- All members of the translation team.

Editing

1. Frame transitions need to be smooth, contingent and not too slow. Awkward transitions detract from important content.
2. Filming with a green background facilitates clear editing and increases post-production flexibility. Consider including chapter and scene options for longer videos.
3. Consider the end-user interface and how people will watch the video, e.g. smartphone app, tablet, computer (YouTube, etc).

Translation Process

Translation Team

An English-into-Auslan translation is done by a team of practitioners, not just one person; translation is a collaborative process, not a job role. Collaboration is necessary for researching and analysing the English source text, drafting and filming Auslan target texts and creating the final Auslan target text that is distributed to the community.

> The minimum core translation staffing suggested is one presenter working with one language consultant.

The most common criticism of translation quality was too much influence from the English source text. This can be due to lack of a suitable translation team, lack of preparation and rehearsal time, and/or lack of feedback for the presenter throughout the process.

A number of tasks need to be performed to create a successful translation (see below, and also the Checklist for Technical Production). A person's role in the translation team will depend on the specific client brief and the skills of each team as a whole.

Team members (especially the presenter and their consultant) need to be able to connect well and trust each other. Communication channels between all members of the team (including editing and other post-production roles) need to be established early.

The broad translation team skills mix includes:

1. Proficiency in both Auslan and English;
2. Deaf signers;
3. Hearing signers;
4. Ability to comprehend and analyse the English source text message and express it accurately in Auslan;
5. Presentation skills; and
6. Ability to review all draft Auslan target texts and the final Auslan target text for quality assurance.

Translation Service Provider

The translation service provider representative is responsible for liaising between the client and the rest of the translation team.

1. In their initial communication with the client, they may need to provide education on Auslan usage and Deaf community needs to ensure expectations are realistic.
2. It is useful to set up a direct and clear line of communication between the translation team and the client to facilitate prompt clarifications and corrections, and to approve required modification decisions.
3. The translation service is responsible for recruiting/selecting the translation team, and overseeing the production. Further suggested roles are to promote the final Auslan target text and seek feedback from the Deaf community.
4. The translation service is legally responsible for the translations it produces. However, a collaborative approach to signing off on a completed translation is suggested. Deaf presenters in particular are frequently seen as the authority on the content of a video by Deaf community viewers, so it is important to ensure that presenters are satisfied with the final translation product before it is distributed.

Source Text Analysis and Translation Drafting

1. After reading and researching the English source text message, the translation team (at least presenter and language consultant) need to analyse the source text message and identify key concepts. Some teams use mind maps for this process.
2. Depending on the source text format, the team then starts drafting Auslan translations for each chunk of the source text, keeping in mind the overall message and aims. Whether these drafts are done in English or an Auslan gloss, the end product of this stage is a prompt script for the presenter, so the presenter needs to be involved in its development.
3. Prompt scripts can be English feeds or filmed Auslan feeds. Auslan feeds are seen as providing the least English/source text interference, so it is suggested that presenters trial this method if they are not currently using it.
4. Since all translation decisions should be made in the drafting process, rather than during final filming, this stage is an important opportunity for quality assurance checking. Basic videoing of final Auslan drafts/sections can be reviewed early for errors and improvements, before the final (still rough) version is compiled as the filming prompt. No translation decisions should need to be made when filming the final Auslan target text.
5. Once the final translation is agreed, the presenter needs time to rehearse the script so that they are confident and fluent in their on-screen delivery.
6. If the presenter is working from an Auslan video feed, it is suggested that more than one monitor be set up in the presenter's eyelines so that they can scan naturally and avoid a fixed stare into camera. At this stage, the presenter should only need to focus on signing clearly and engaging with the audience, i.e. not still making translation choices.
7. Having a deaf person to sign to in the studio is recommended to ensure that the presenter can deliver the message more naturally and authentically.

Autocue

If a presenter is using Autocue instead of Auslan video prompting, the feed text is usually a plain English or Auslan gloss version of the source text message.

1. Autocue is best positioned either directly under the camera or reflected above the camera. However, the use of autocue can constrain the signer's eye gaze, signing speed and signing location.
2. Use of autocue can result in an Auslan target text that looks like the signer is reading from the autocue, so unless a presenter is able to sign natural and coherent text using the autocue, an Auslan feed of the final translation is recommended.

Audio Prompts for Hearing Presenters

Some hearing presenters use spoken English audio prompting as the feed for their delivery, so that they are not reliant on a visual feed and their gaze towards the camera is more natural.

If an audio feed is used, it is recommended that the original source text is not the prompt. This locks the translation into being a filmed interpretation, with all the constraints of English structure and pace, and wastes the opportunity to analyse and reconfigure the target text form that the translation process allows. A spoken gloss of the prepared Auslan translation is an alternate suggestion

Presenter

Deaf people were preferred as presenters wherever possible. However, not every deaf person can work from a script and present well to camera.

Presenters need to be selected to match the specific target audience and content for each translation assignment. A panel of pre-auditioned presenters is suggested.

The presenter is the 'face' of the translation/video. They need to be:

1. A proficient Auslan signer;
2. Ideally culturally deaf;
3. Able to work with the language consultant on the translation drafting;
4. Aware of and able to adapt to sign variation in Auslan (regional, age and education);
5. Aware of and willing to adjust their own signing habits and idiosyncrasies;
6. Willing to question the script and their own signing in terms of matching source text message versus target audience comprehension;
7. Skilled at signing to camera as if signing to a real person; and
8. Known in the Deaf community generally and/or to the target audience and willing to be identified with the message content.

Language Consultant

The presenter needs to be supported by a person who can provide feedback on their use of Auslan, signing manner, pace, coherence, etc. The consultant can be deaf or hearing, as long as they have the skills needed to analyse and research the source text message, and develop the drafts of the prompt script with the presenter. They also need to be able to give feedback on the presenter's delivery in the rough Auslan video draft and final filming stages.

The consultant needs to be:

1. A proficient Auslan signer;
2. Able to work with the presenter on the translation drafting;
3. Aware of sign variation in Auslan (regional, age and education);
4. Aware of the presenter's signing habits and idiosyncrasies;
5. Aware of their own signing habits and idiosyncrasies;
6. Willing to question the script and their own translations in terms of matching source text message versus target audience comprehension; and
7. Able to offer constructive and supportive feedback to the presenter.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance needs to be more than a final check on the filmed translation product, when all translation and technical decisions have been locked in and it is expensive and time consuming to make changes. If quality assurance is regarded as an ongoing process throughout (and even after) the production stages, there is more chance to identify areas for improvement efficiently.

It is suggested that quality assurance is shared by people outside the immediate translation team (i.e. not the presenter or language consultant) who can assess the following aspects:

1. The translation process is consistent from start to finish;
2. The Auslan target text message is consistent with the English source text message;
3. Assumed knowledge gaps are identified and filled in the Auslan target text;
4. The meaningful elements of the Auslan target text are consistent, e.g. choice of signs, location of people and ideas in the signing space.

Quality assurance assessment skills include:

- Proficiency in Auslan;
- Proficiency in English;
- Knowledge of English and Auslan linguistic elements, e.g. depicting signs, enactment and role shift, lexical variation etc;
- Aware of the language and information needs of the target audience;
- Strong analytical and critical skills and an understanding of the translation process.

Regional Variation

Where translations are produced for a statewide target audience, Auslan translations should preference the local dialect. For example, a translation for a Victorian target audience could use either of the signs for the noun 'car' shown in the online Auslan 'signbank' –

DO   http://www.auslan.org.au/dictionary/words/car-1.html
DO   http://www.auslan.org.au/dictionary/words/car-2.html

In the case of translations produced for a nationwide target audience, however, Auslan translations should preference signs that are most popular and well-known, i.e. pick the sign most people in the target audience will know –

DO   http://www.auslan.org.au/dictionary/words/car-2.html
DON'T   http://www.auslan.org.au/dictionary/words/car-1.html

Ongoing Improvement

Translation services should consider the development pathways for less experienced practitioners to have opportunities for skills development with more experienced translation practitioners.

Feedback from the Deaf community and Auslan users needs to be sought more routinely so that the effectiveness of translation products is better understood. This can include ensuring that a representative target audience member is included in the quality assurance process, and also seeking Deaf community feedback on the translations after distribution.

It is suggested that these guidelines be piloted by translation service providers for a period of twelve months to assess their application to translation production, and that the guidelines be reviewed and modified as necessary with the resulting feedback.

As this project does not provide an ongoing framework or staffing for translation production liaison and monitoring, translation service providers should be invited to join an industry-based network to take on the continuing need for assessment and improvement, and the development of the guidelines and process over time.

Best-practice Production Pathway

Suggested Best Practice Production Pathway

PRE-PRODUCTION

- Translation service recieves brief from client who is paying for video.
- Translation service talks with client to understand their vision and target audience.
- Translation service talks with potential translation team about the Auslan target text.
- Translation team decides whether to accept job.
- If job is accepted, translation service negotiates terms with clients.
- Translation service recruits appropriate available people for the job.

PRODUCTION

- Translation team analyses and checks English source text message.
- Translation team prepares draft Auslan translations.
- Translation team films late draft Auslan translation.
- Quality assurance (external) of late draft translation (with and without captions).
- Translation team finalises all translation decisions.
- Filming and rough edit of final translation version.
- Quality assurance (external) of the final version (with and without captions)

POST-PRODUCTION

- Editing and graphic compostion finalised.
- Captioning (if additional) finalised.

Technical Production Checklist

Pre-production: Responsibility of translation service/booking agent

1. Receiving the client request ✓

(a) Complete Client Checklist at intake stage (Appendix 3).

(b) Discuss client's understanding of their specified target audience.

(c) Talk with client about target audience and preferred format of English-into-Auslan translations. Recommend any changes to the job (e.g. post-production voice-over not necessary, nature of graphics, etc).

(d) Decide if job can be accepted or not.

2. Selecting translation team ✓

(a) If job is initially accepted, decide possible human resources required. Use Human Resources Checklist (Appendix 4).

(b) Decide possible technology required. Use Technical Resources Checklist (Appendix 5).

(c) Arrange pre-production meeting with initial translation team members to discuss client needs, suggested Auslan target text format and technical requirements.

3. Confirmation of translation brief with client ✓

(a) Where required, return to client with clarified brief, and seek relevant permissions on behalf of translation and production team.

(b) Confirm translation and production staff and equipment.

(c) Confirm budget with client.

(d) Ensure ongoing contact between client representative and translation team.

Production: Responsibility of translation team

4. Aiming for a free English-into-Auslan translation ✓

(a) Schedule any additional translation team meetings as required.

(b) Research source target message topic and background.

(c) Analyse English source text message for meaning (can use mind maps).

(d) Identify any errors or confusion in English source text message and notify translation service manager, so they can liaise with client.

(e) Design additional visual resources to Auslan delivery, e.g. still and/or moving images.

(f) Rehearse draft Auslan target text. Establish relevant locations in signing space, role shift directions, eye gaze, etc.

(g) Film draft Auslan target text and do rough edit.

(h) Compare draft Auslan target text with analysis of source text to identify potential errors and suggest improvements. Use the Quality Assurance Checklist in Appendix 7.

(i) Representative from target audience view draft Auslan target text (without any existing captions) to identify assumed knowledge gaps, incoherent elements, and suggest improvements.

(j) Revise Auslan target text if required, according to quality assurance feedback.

(k) Film final Auslan target text and do rough edit for next quality assurance check.

Post-production: Responsibility of translation team

5. Preparing the final English-into-Auslan translation ✓

(a) Add any required semiotic resources, captions, etc.

(b) Perform final edit.

(c) Check final version of Auslan target text using quality assurance process (first without captions, and then with captions).

Delivery and Distribution

6. Delivering final Auslan translation to client and target audience/Deaf community ✓

(a) Deliver final Auslan translation product to client and seek feedback.

(b) Promote Auslan translation product to target audience and seek feedback.

Client Booking Checklist

Client Booking Checklist: Translation Service to Complete

What is the form of the English source text?

Written English only	Spoken English only	Spoken + written English
Spoken English + audio	Spoken English + audio-visual	
Other		

What is the topic of the English source text?

Annual report	Children's book	Emergency
Government	Health	In-house
Organisational newsletter	Other	

Who are the specific target audience? (Can tick more than one)

Monolingual deaf people	Bilingual deaf people	Hard of hearing
Children	Adults	Local
Regional	National	Education level
Other		

What does the translation team need to create?

Stand-alone Auslan target text	Auslan target text fixed to English source text

What additional meaningful resources does the client want included/maintained?

Closed captions	Open captions	Floating text
Still images	Moving images	Still + moving images
Voice-over	Other	

Human Resources Checklist

Suggested Human Resources for Creating an Auslan Online Translation

	✓
Manager with experience and knowledge of best practice guidelines (leads for entire duration of project)	◯
Client representative with knowledge of source text meaning and background and power to veto any translation decisions	◯
Presenter on camera	◯
Language consultant	◯
Quality assurance person(s) outside the presenter and consultant roles, with knowledge of translation processes and representative of target audience	◯
Person(s) responsible for filming, editing and other technical production	◯

Technical Resources Checklist

Suggested Technical Resources for Creating an Auslan Online Translation

	✓
Access to sites relevant to contextualisation, e.g. client premises or other location	◯
Green screen or other set design	◯
Autocue	◯
Audio prompter *(not a recommended component)*	◯
Lighting	◯
Camera	◯
Additional screen monitors for feeding draft and final Auslan target texts	◯
Editing hardware and software	◯
Captioning software	◯
Voice-over software *(not a recommended component)*	◯

Translation Production Checklist

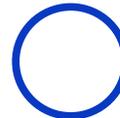## Suggested Tasks for Successful Translation Production

1. Analysis of source text ✓

Research English source text background and message ○

Analyse English source text message and identify key concepts/chunks (e.g. using mind maps) ○

2. Create drafts of Auslan target text ✓

Develop draft Auslan target text versions ○

Check back with source text message and transfer ○

Rehearse draft translation ○

Film takes for draft Auslan translation ○

3. Quality assurance ✓

Quality assurance of draft Auslan target text ○

All translation decisions finalised before filming final Auslan target text ○

4. Final Auslan target text

Lighting and set design in the studio

Camera set up in the studio

Film takes for final Auslan target text

Edit chosen takes together into one video to create final Auslan target text

5. English captions

Develop English caption or transcript text based on translation of final Auslan target text

Revise and check caption or transcript text

Add captions to final Auslan target text

6. Editing

Background and Auslan integration

7. Quality assurance

Quality assurance of final Auslan translation product both with and without captions

Quality Assurance Checklist

Suggested Quality Assurance Assessment Checks for Translation Production

- Is the Auslan properly introduced and contextualised? **YES / NO**

- Is the Auslan faithful to the English source text message? **YES / NO**

- Are there any elements of the Auslan signing you do not understand or think that the target audience will not understand? **YES / NO**

- Are there any assumed knowledge gaps in the translation as a whole? **YES / NO**

- Can you identify any inappropriate syntax and structural influences from the English source text? **YES / NO**

- Is the presenter consistently located in the same place on the screen or do they switch sides during the video? **YES / NO**

- Does the presenter look confident, relaxed and connected to the target audience? **YES / NO**

- Is the presenter consistently well-lit? **YES / NO**

- Does the presenter use a natural signing pace with pausing between ideas? **YES / NO**

- Is the signing location natural and appropriate, e.g. not in front of face? **YES / NO**

- Does the presenter use natural gaze without interference from autocue or audio prompt? **YES / NO**

- Is the presenter consistent with their use of specific signs? **YES / NO**

- Is the presenter consistent with their use of signing space, e.g. location of signs and use of role shift and enactment? **YES / NO**

- Is the presenter consistent with their use of fingerspelling? **YES / NO**

- Are there any issues with regional sign variation? **YES / NO**

- Are there any signing idiosyncrasies? **YES / NO**

- Are there any issues with the background colour, screen transitions or presentation? **YES / NO**

- Are there times when two or more things are moving or foregrounded on the screen at the same time? **YES / NO**

Answer this question while viewing the DRAFT Auslan target text WITH captions

Are there any issues with the English captions and/or floating text? **YES / NO**

Answer this question while viewing the FINAL Auslan target text WITHOUT captions

Are there any issues with the final Auslan target text? **YES / NO**

Answer this question while viewing the FINAL Auslan target text WITH captions

Are there any issues with the English captions and/or floating text in the final Auslan target text? **YES / NO**

Production notes: