

# What to Look for in a Translation Solution: A Buyer's Guide

Nine features to seek out (and the questions to ask) to achieve high-performing translation outcomes



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**It is challenging to execute a successful translation and localization strategy — and to do so on time, within budget and at scale — especially as translation needs multiply. Still, many companies make it harder on themselves than they need to.**

**For many, the standard translation workflow involves the following:**

**Manually copying and pasting content into spreadsheets.**

**Sending those spreadsheets to their language service provider (LSP),** who sends those files to translators to work on sans context.

**Waiting for the translated files to be delivered.**

**Manually importing the translations into their content management system,** hoping they do so correctly and without breaking anything.

**This slow, tedious process causes businesses to waste time and resources. Worse yet, it is error-prone.**

**Fortunately, advances in technology have made it so that companies can automate steps in the translation process (and avoid spreadsheets altogether) while simultaneously improving the accuracy and fluency of translated passages.**

It is time that companies leverage this technology for their translation solution — specifically by investing in the right Translation Management System (TMS).

For companies that haven't automated their translation process yet, here's a bit of a primer: A TMS is a means of automating content collection, managing workflow, and ensuring quality and delivery of

translated content. It's also an ecosystem that provides translators with the tools they need to translate content with the highest quality possible quality.

Finally, it helps streamline communications between team members and linguists around the globe.



## Introduction

Still, having a feature-rich TMS doesn't mean that humans are out of the equation. For companies that wish to maximize their return on investment, relying on the expertise of professional linguists is essential, especially where high-quality outputs are paramount. Fortunately, some vendors offer all-in-one localization solutions that combine expert linguists and a technology platform.

In essence, to have a complete end-to-end translation solution, you need the right tools and the right people. Before going into more detail about the key features to look for when evaluating translation solutions, here are some insights into what gives companies doing translations their biggest headaches.

**"In essence, to have a complete end-to-end translation solution, you need the right tools and the right people."**

# What are the main problems companies face when creating translations?



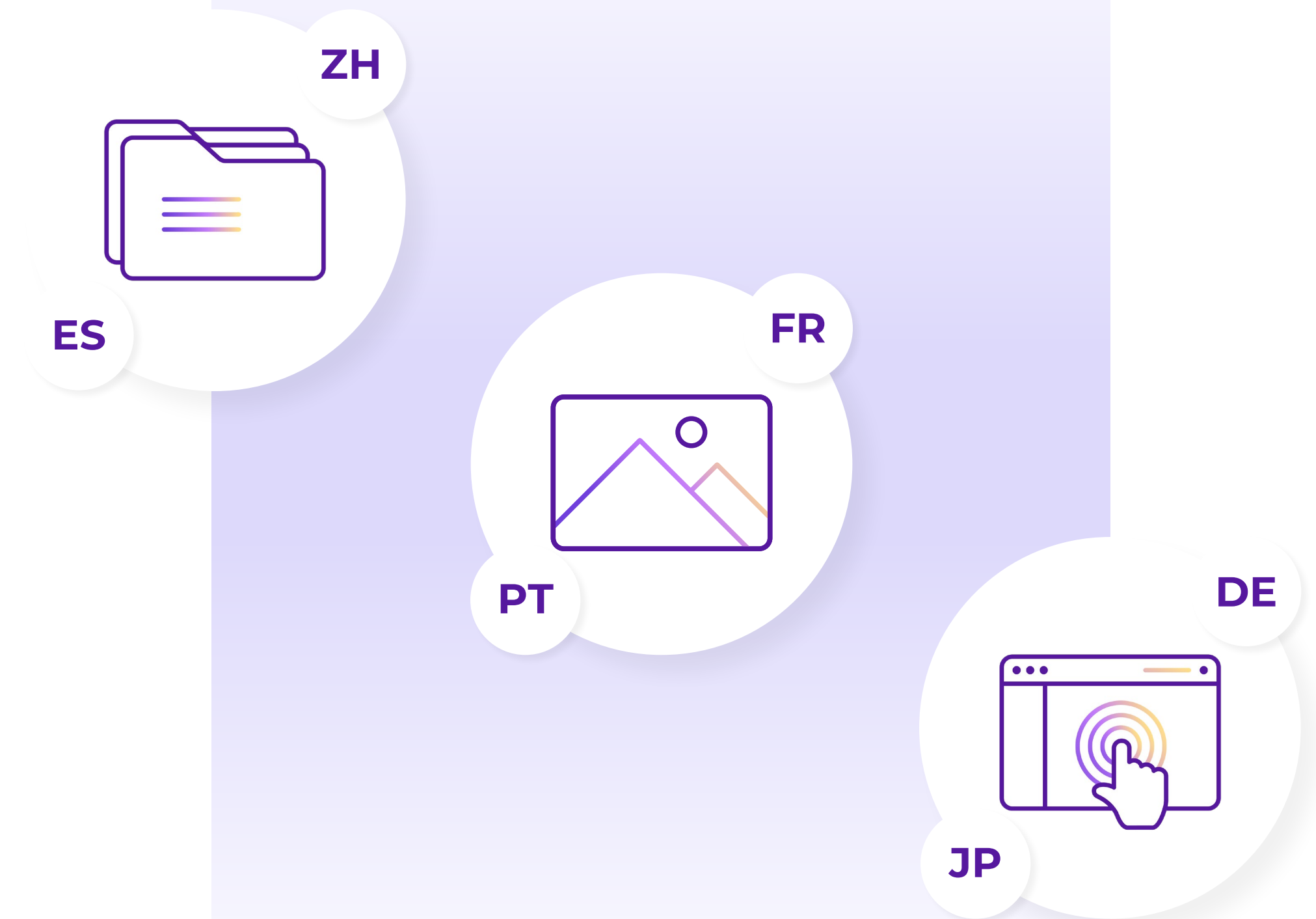


## Problem #1

One of the main difficulties companies face with translation relates to the sheer volume of content they need to translate. While translation needs may seem manageable at first, rapid growth in international markets typically comes with a sharp increase in translation volumes — and often across multiple languages.

Where the content appears matters, too, such as on marketing websites, email communications or in their products and applications. For example, a company may need the emails in their marketing automation platform translated. They may also need related landing pages translated within their content management system to handle prospect conversions or customer transactions.

The issue then becomes, how to make a translation available for use across the tech stack and potentially more as the company scales.

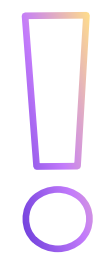


## Problem #2

A second problem involves making sure that translations are completed efficiently. For example, companies shouldn't have to pay for the same content to be translated a second (or third) time. When a translation from English to Spanish is completed for one part of a company's website, the same translation process shouldn't happen again when the phrase is needed for another part of the website.

It sounds obvious that redundant work should be avoided. But it happens all too often and leads to quality issues — especially when multiple teams are responsible for translation and rush to get to market fast with translated material — if there aren't processes in place that encourage automation and streamlined workflows.

**The Great Outdoors**



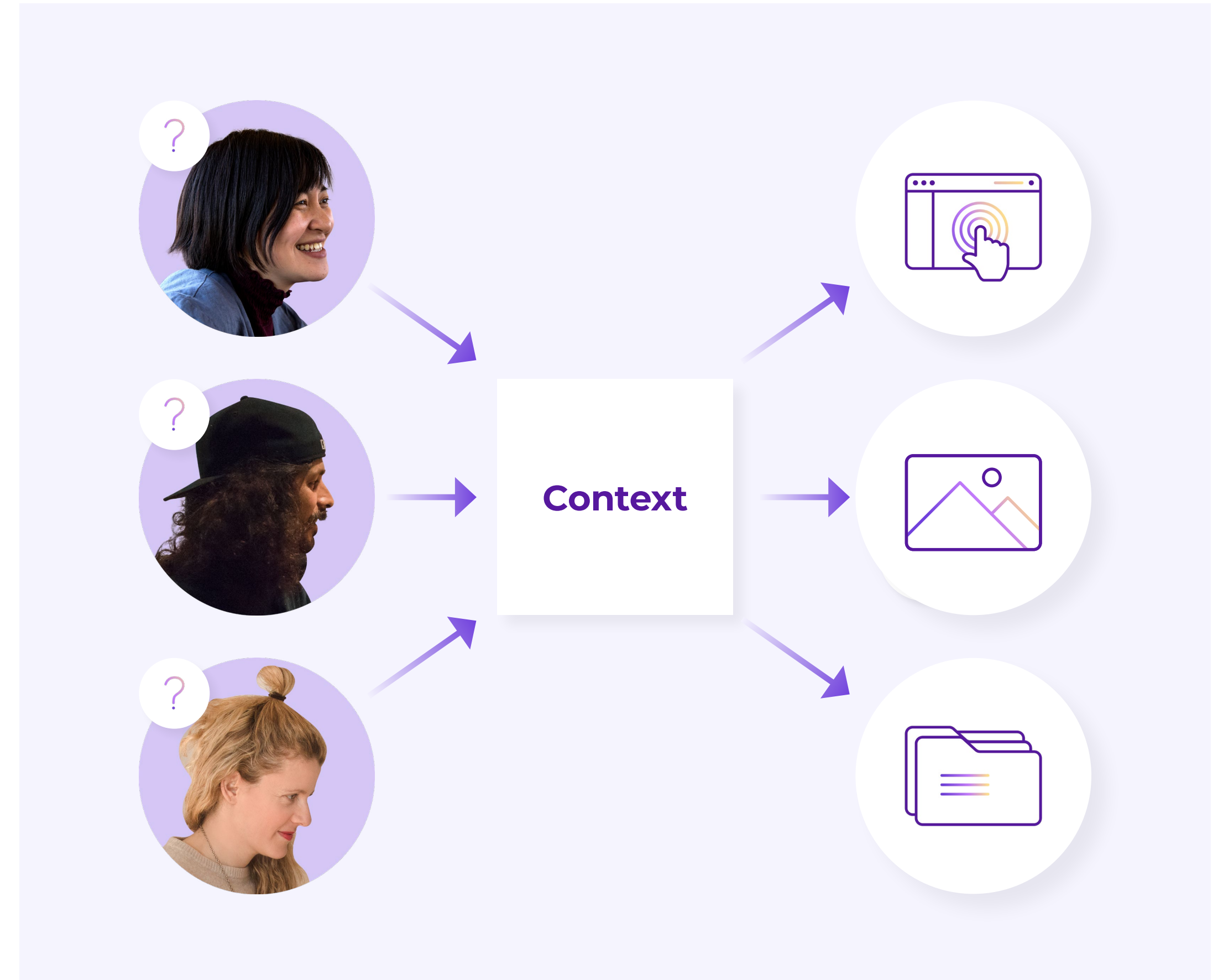
**Les Grands Espaces**

**Los Grandes Espacios**

## Problem #3

Third, once a company has material in the hands of the right translators, problems often arise around ensuring that those translators can consistently produce high-quality translations across content types. Providing context and information regarding where a translation will live is a significant factor here.

If a translator only receives a sentence or body of text in a spreadsheet, they may have no idea that it is part of a website, chart, or graph. For example, if a translator is translating a single word on a website, he or she may need to translate it a particular way if that word lives in the top navigation of the website, compared to in the body text.



## All of this is costly.

Tangible cost drivers include prolonged back and forth, redundant work, and manual tasks, which make completing localization projects on time and within budget extremely challenging. But just as crucial to consider are the intangible costs — namely quality. These challenges increase the possibility of low quality or errors.

If a company faces any or all of these problems, it is time to consider investing in a full-scale translation solution. Automating aspects of the translation process and working with experienced linguists will result in cost savings and an accelerated time to market. Still, cost-effectiveness shouldn't come at the expense of quality. The right translation solution will help a company build brand consistency across business units or geographies, define which unit or work group owns a process, improve transparency, and ultimately lead to higher-quality translations.

“**The right translation solution will help a company build brand consistency across business units or geographies, define which unit or work group owns a process, improve transparency, and ultimately lead to higher-quality translations.**”



## The solution: Next-generation translation management solution

Before any outreach to potential partners begins, it's important to understand which elements of a translation solution are essential and which will be desirable in the coming years. Buyers should consider their business goals, how their localization strategy will achieve those, and how they envision a translation solution fitting into their established workflows.

### The questions that should always be top of mind are:

- Will it work in my company?
- Will it help accomplish our goals?
- Can we afford it at scale?

**Will it work in my company?**

**Will it help accomplish our goals?**

**Can we afford it at scale?**

# Nine key features to look for in a translation solution.

All are essential.

**1** Workflow management  
and automation

**2** Integration to your  
existing tech stack

**3** Communication and  
work tools for translators

**4** Linguistic asset support

**5** Quality control and  
consistency

**6** Centralized  
reporting and visibility

**7** Scalability

**8** Translation or  
language services

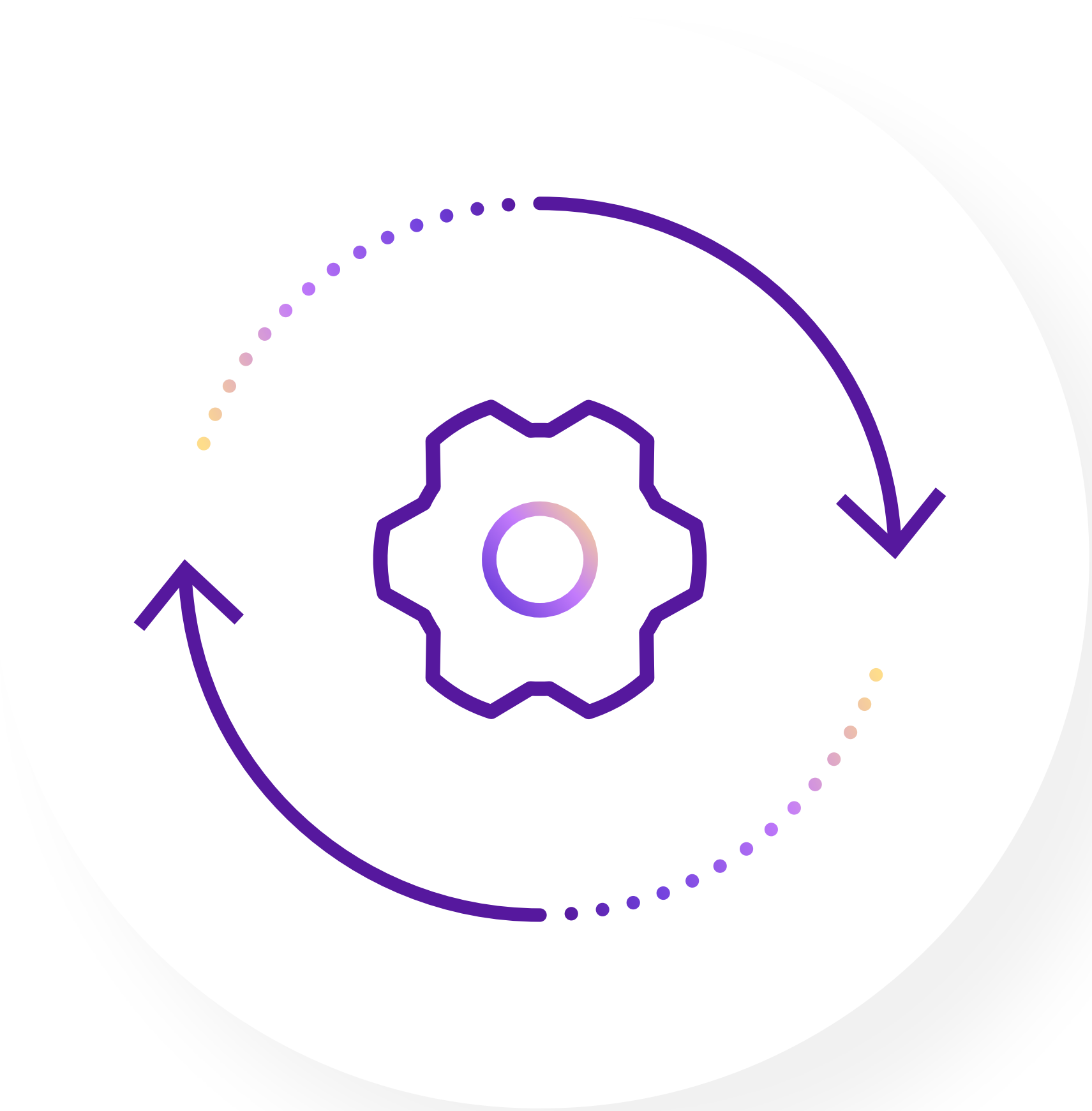
**9** LanguageAI, including  
AI-powered translation

## Feature #1

# Workflow management and automation

The best translation solutions offer powerful workflow configuration. You should be able to use any mix of vendors and internal resources you wish, and assigning (or unassigning) users to each workflow step should be simple and eliminate manual processes.

Your translation solution should also provide analytics to determine the best workflow for each content type. At Smartling, we refer to this as optimizing your translation mix: Customers can choose to have certain content go through the traditional human-only workflow and have other content go through a machine translation (or AI translation) workflow, optimizing cost and quality.



### Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

Finally, as buyers map out the stages of their translation process and where each vendor fits in, they need to move translation projects from one step (and sometimes vendor) to the next. Automation is a critical feature to look for here, as having a human play the role of conductor invites delays unnecessarily. Once authorized for translation, content should instead flow smoothly through the workflow, with the translation management system analyzing and routing your content based on a set of parameters you choose.



### Questions to ask:

- **Describe your multi-vendor capabilities.**
- **Can internal and external translators and reviewers be incorporated into the process?**
- **Describe your system's workflow capabilities.**

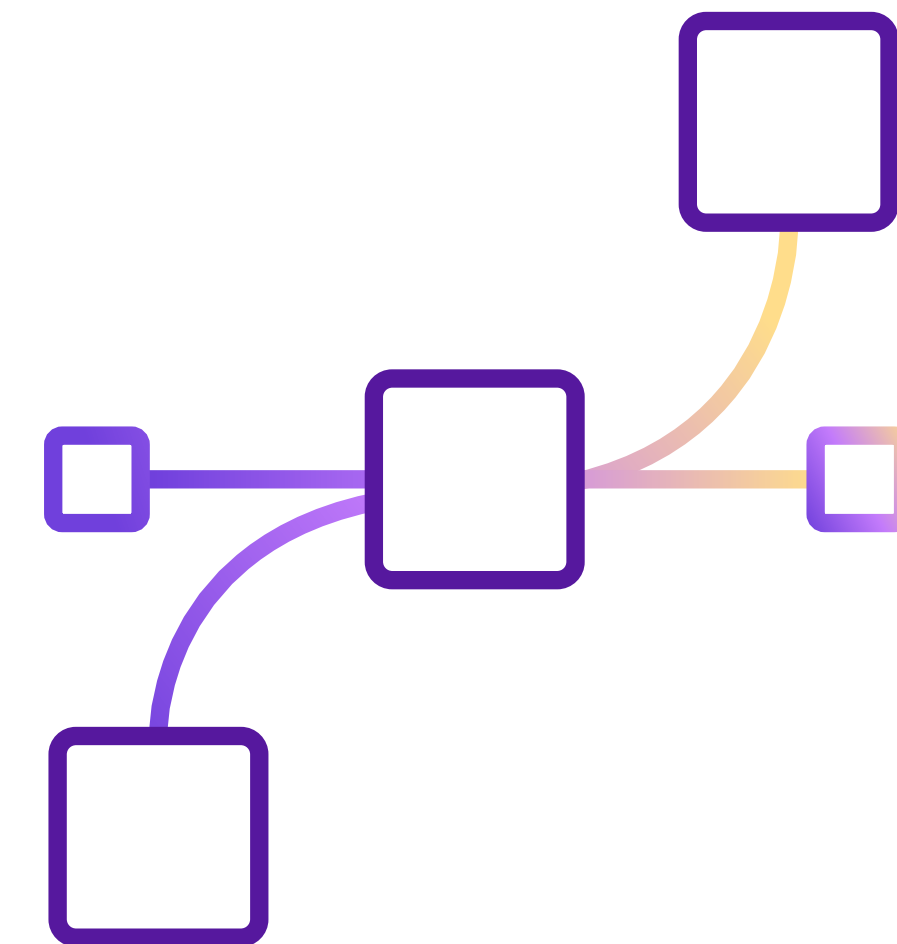


## Feature #2

# Integration to your existing tech stack

Many businesses start by localizing their website. With the right translation provider, this step should be straightforward. For example, Smartling customers can leverage our powerful web proxy to quickly and efficiently deploy multilingual websites with almost minimal to no IT involvement.

But translation needs don't usually stop there. So, when choosing a translation solution, you'll want to consider whether the solution's software will work with your entire tech stack. That will make it easy to send content for translation without leaving the applications you use daily. For example, the right translation management system will integrate seamlessly with your Content Management System, Marketing Automation, Help Centers, Creative Tools, eCommerce



### Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

and Product Information Management (PIM) and offer a robust API Suite for localizing your application software.

Start by asking about existing connectors. Some vendors have out-of-the-box connectors for popular programs. However, to ensure a seamless translation experience no matter which programs you use — including homegrown technologies — you'll also want to ensure your chosen translation provider has a powerful, versatile API that supports custom integrations.

Finally, consider what support there is for specific file formats your company uses. For example, can your marketing and design teams send their Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, or Photoshop files for translation? Will you have proper support for HTML files, including landing pages and email templates? What about SRT files if you're interested in subtitling?



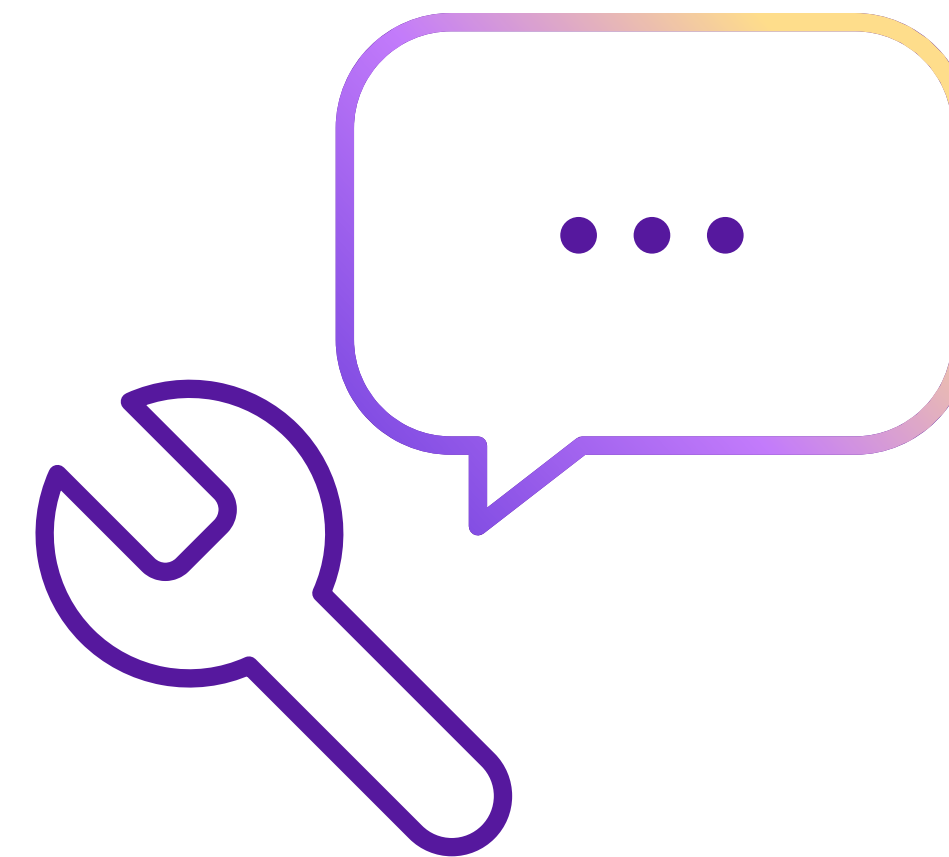
## Questions to ask:

- **What integration options does your solution offer?**
- **Does your solution provide APIs?**
- **How long does a platform connector implementation typically take?**

### Feature #3

## Communication and work tools for translators

Anyone who works with your content needs to know its context, which includes the original format and layout as well as where the translated text will appear. It is also invaluable to have an open line of communication with you or other key stakeholders to ask questions that arise as they work and to get timely answers. Otherwise, a translator may need to make assumptions, which could lead to lower accuracy and output that may not align with your goals.



## Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

Make sure your chosen translation solution sets your translators up for success. At Smartling, for example, translators work with a feature-rich CAT (Computer Assisted Translation) tool directly in the Smartling platform, eliminating the need to download files and work offline in order to see full visual context. They can easily refer to your linguistic assets when translating — more on that next — and ask for clarification or flag issues to you without leaving the platform.



### Questions to ask:

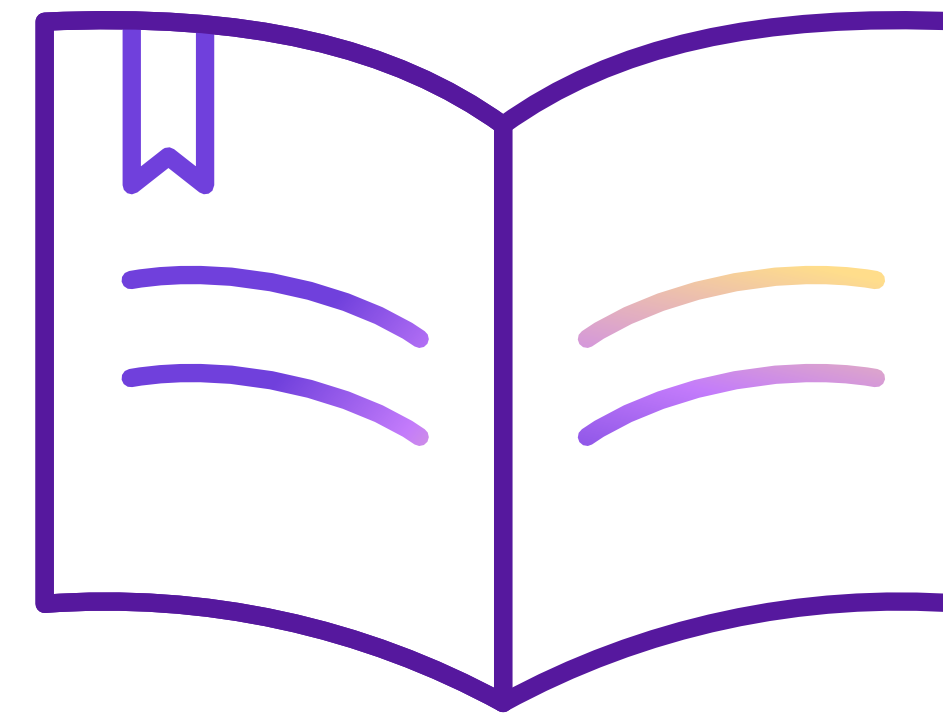
- **Is direct communication between customers and translators possible, and if so, how does it work?**
- **Do you provide visual context for the translators, and if so, how?**
- **Provide an overview of the translator tools in your system. How do those support translation quality?**

#### Feature #4

## Linguistic asset support

Translation memory is a database containing your previous translations. Other linguistic assets include your glossary, which dictates how preferred terms should be translated, and your style guide, which answers broad questions about how a translation should sound or the impression it should leave with readers. It can also include rules to follow in specific situations and answer questions about formal, informal, or casual registers needed for different content types.

At the bare minimum, your translation solution should make storing and updating your linguistic assets a breeze, ensuring that the most up-to-date versions are easily accessible in real time to all.



### Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

Savvy translation buyers, however, look to partner with a translation provider that takes a proactive approach to linguistic asset management and can help them optimize those assets for higher-quality translations. The savviest among them look for a solution that incorporates the latest in AI technology to apply linguistic assets automatically, reducing manual work.



### Questions to ask:

- **Can linguists access real-time changes to the translation memory from other collaborators, and if so, how does this function?**
- **Describe your solution's glossary and terminology management capabilities.**
- **Can instructions and reference materials be added to the translatable content?**

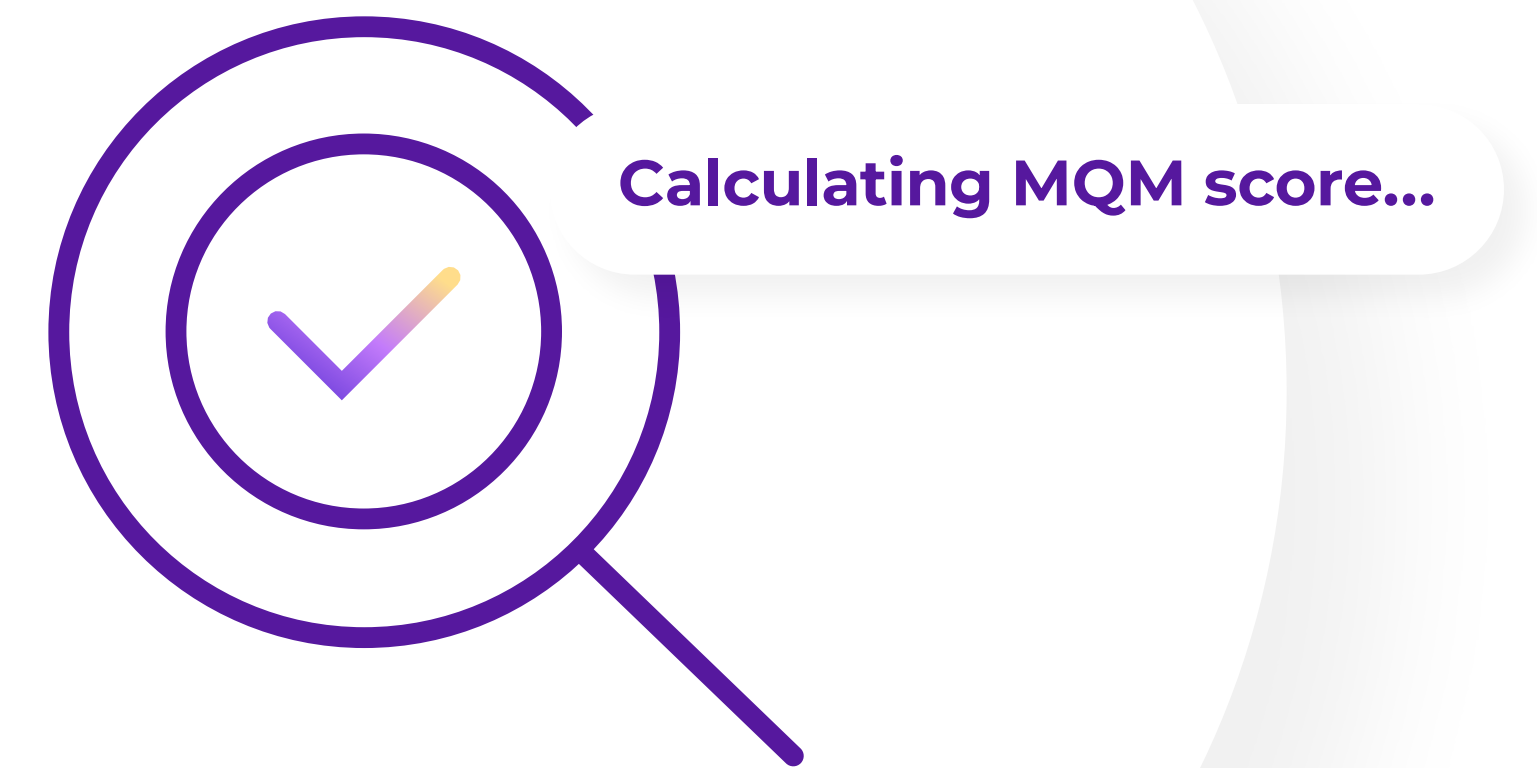


## Feature #5

# Quality control and consistency

Companies need a TMS that ensures high-quality, consistent translations across various languages and content types. This includes managing the balance between machine translation and human editing to maintain quality, especially for specialized content.

Measuring translation quality, much less guaranteeing satisfaction with high-quality work, has been a longstanding challenge in localization. Therefore, an essential element to look for is a solution that can help you measure and control the quality of your translations.



### Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

Best-in-class vendors have built a repeatable process for measuring translation quality and perform regular audits across their workflows. These processes should be built on industry-standard frameworks such as Multidimensional Quality Metrics (MQM) and will be performed monthly, or even more frequently, to track quality over time and make adjustments as needed.

In addition, it is advisable to choose a vendor that offers both technology and services that make it easy to assess quality for your program. This includes quality evaluation tools that fit easily into existing workflows and reduce manual work, such as taking translations out of the platform for assessment. Quality evaluation services should include independent auditors to mitigate bias and the flexibility to scale evaluations across multiple locales. Finally, quality reporting should be transparent and easily accessible — we'll talk more about that in the following section.



### Questions to ask:

- **How do you define and measure quality?**
- **What quality evaluation services are available?**
- **Do you offer a quality satisfaction guarantee?**



## Feature #6

# Centralized reporting and visibility

Most businesses want to make decisions impacting their bottom line based on hard facts and accurate data. A good translation partner will provide access to data via a combination of real-time and on-demand reports.

Businesses should look for a vendor that makes it easy to glean actionable insights about all aspects of the translation process, such as pre-translation cost estimates, platform usage, resource productivity, content quality, and total translation spend.



### Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

If you're a business that needs to be actively involved in monitoring translation quality, look to partner with a vendor that is comfortable with incorporating a quality evaluation process into existing workflows and can surface data on translation quality effortlessly.

The best translation providers provide drill-down reports on each translation project and locale and aggregate data across all the business's content and languages. Key stakeholders should be able to download the reports or view the results in a digestible format via an in-app dashboard in near real-time to make evaluating ROI a straightforward endeavor.



### Questions to ask:

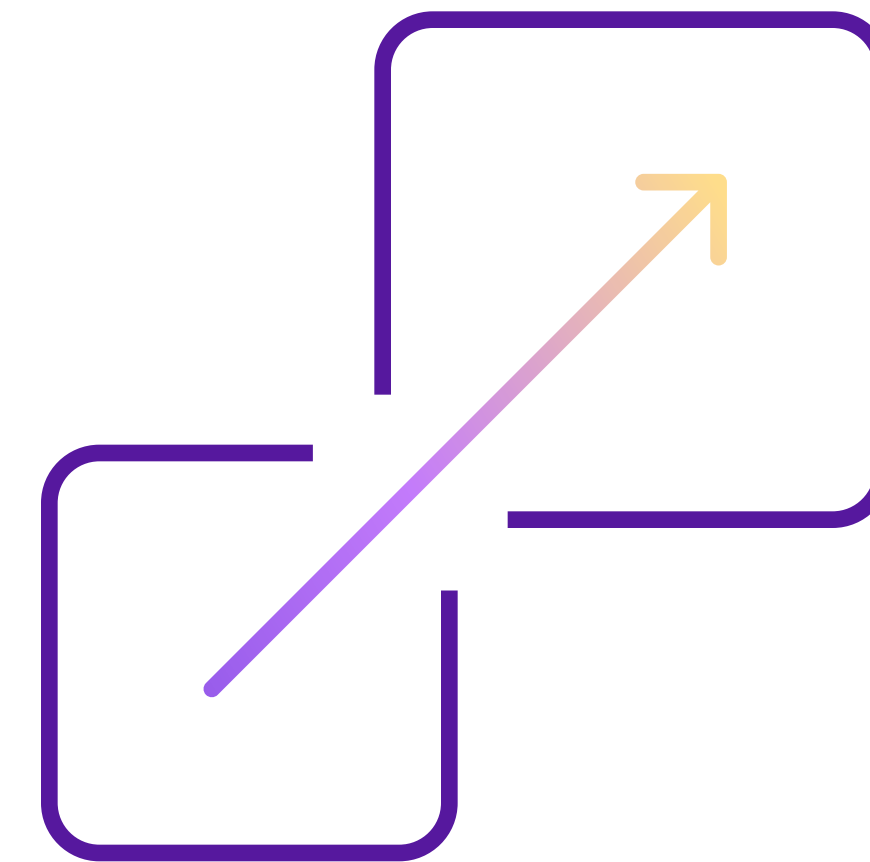
- **Do you provide automatic and immediate cost estimates for projects?**
- **What reporting capabilities are available?**
- **What review capabilities does your system have?**

## Feature #7

### **Scalability:** Enterprise-grade software for the whole business

Businesses must place a lot of trust in their translation solution. Cybersecurity threats abound, and while compliance with the latest security standards is something translation buyers should generally expect from their vendor, the details matter.

Security standards and certifications should include the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), SSAE 16 SOC2, PCI DSS L1, and HIPAA. When inquiring about language services, also ask about compliance with ISO 17100 standards.



### Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

Uptime is another critical factor, and one where small differences can mean a lot. For example, Smartling's web proxy guarantees a 99.99% - or less than one hour of downtime per year. Compare that to a vendor that boasts 99% uptime, which allows for a little over 3.5 days of downtime per year.

The solution should also be a multi-tenant Software as a Service offering, ensuring rapid and frequent updates, bug fixes, security patches and enhancements. For example, Smartling's world class engineering deploys over 3,000 releases per year on a continuous basis, this is world class.



## Questions to ask:

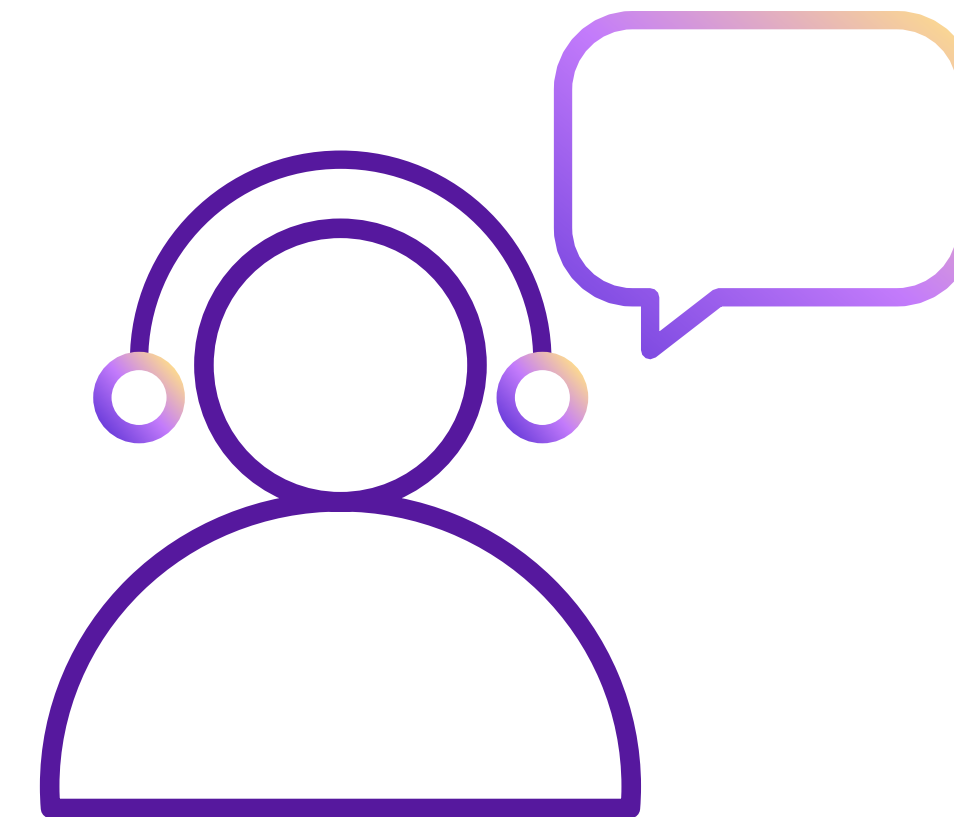
- **What are your security and data protection standards?**
- **What is your business continuity plan?**
- **Share performance statistics regarding your solution including uptime guarantee.**
- **How frequently do you release product updates?**

## Feature #8

# Translation or language services

With so many options, shopping for a translation solution can be daunting. Businesses may feel like they must split their focus: identify a robust TMS and, separately, find a competent LSP to support all their translation needs. Then, once they decide which TMS and LSP to use, their days often fill up with the minutiae of managing individual translation projects instead of focusing on their overarching localization strategy.

It sounds exhausting! But it doesn't have to be.



### Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

Businesses should look for a company that can support every element of their translation process — from providing them with a feature-rich TMS to offering high-quality language services, complete with expert translation project managers and a fully vetted pool of seasoned translators.

Businesses should also inquire whether they can offload some or all of their internal, day-to-day localization tasks, such as account administration, resource management, and training, to their prospective translation provider before deciding to buy.



## Questions to ask:

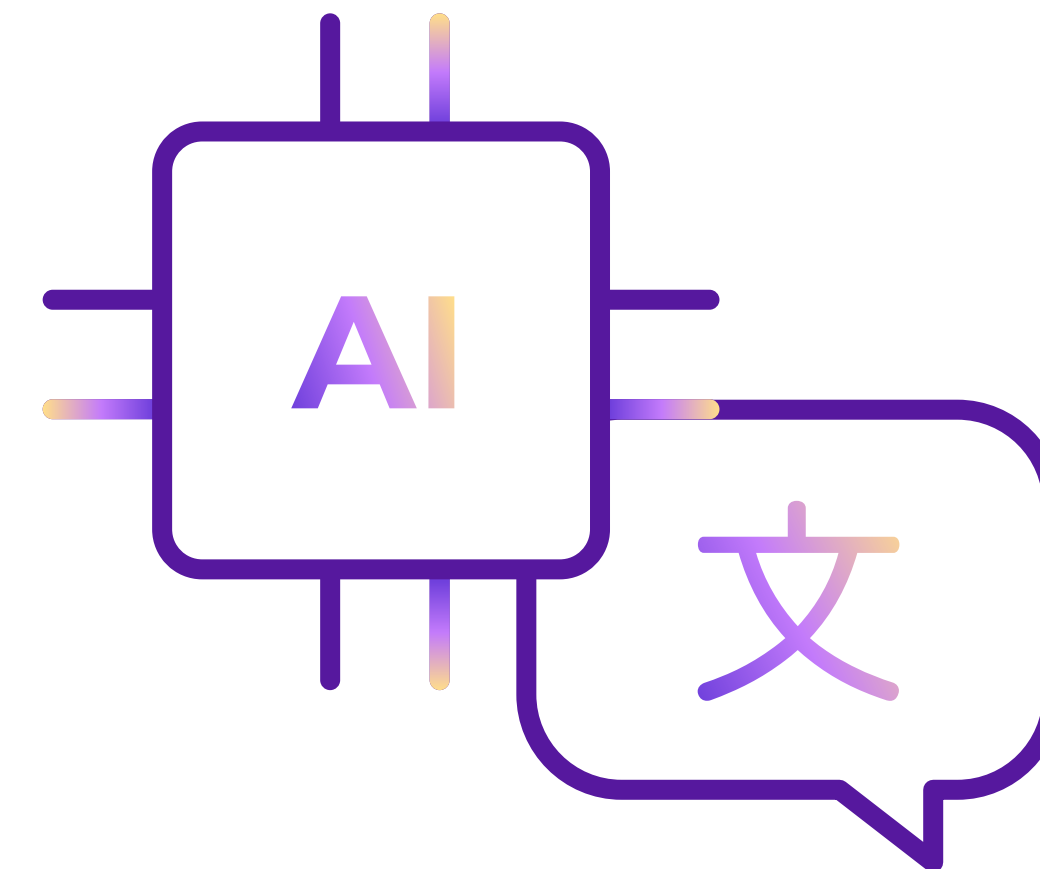
- **What are the benefits of combining your language services and your software?**
- **Will customers work with a dedicated project manager?**
- **What support options do you offer?**

## Feature #9

# LanguageAI

(Including AI-powered translation)

There is a lot of excitement around artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) — and for good reason. There is a strong potential for these technologies to transform entire industries. Many of the most promising applications in the localization space are still relatively new. However, we're already seeing how they can help deliver high-quality results at scale, all while saving businesses time and money.





## Nine key features to look for in a translation solution

Examples of current applications include workflows combining AI and machine translation with the expertise of human translators to produce human-quality translations for less and the automatic application of linguistic assets.

However, such technologies are also being used to make quick work of adjusting the level of formality of a text, identifying and removing gender bias in translations, and even proactively evaluating the quality of every translation delivered.

There is much to be gained by investing in this approach. Companies are achieving the same quality as human translation from LSPs, but with a significant reduction in cost and turnaround time. Buyers who want to reap the benefits of these cutting-edge technologies should look for a company that is actively exploring ways to incorporate them throughout the translation process as a means to do more with less.



## Questions to ask:

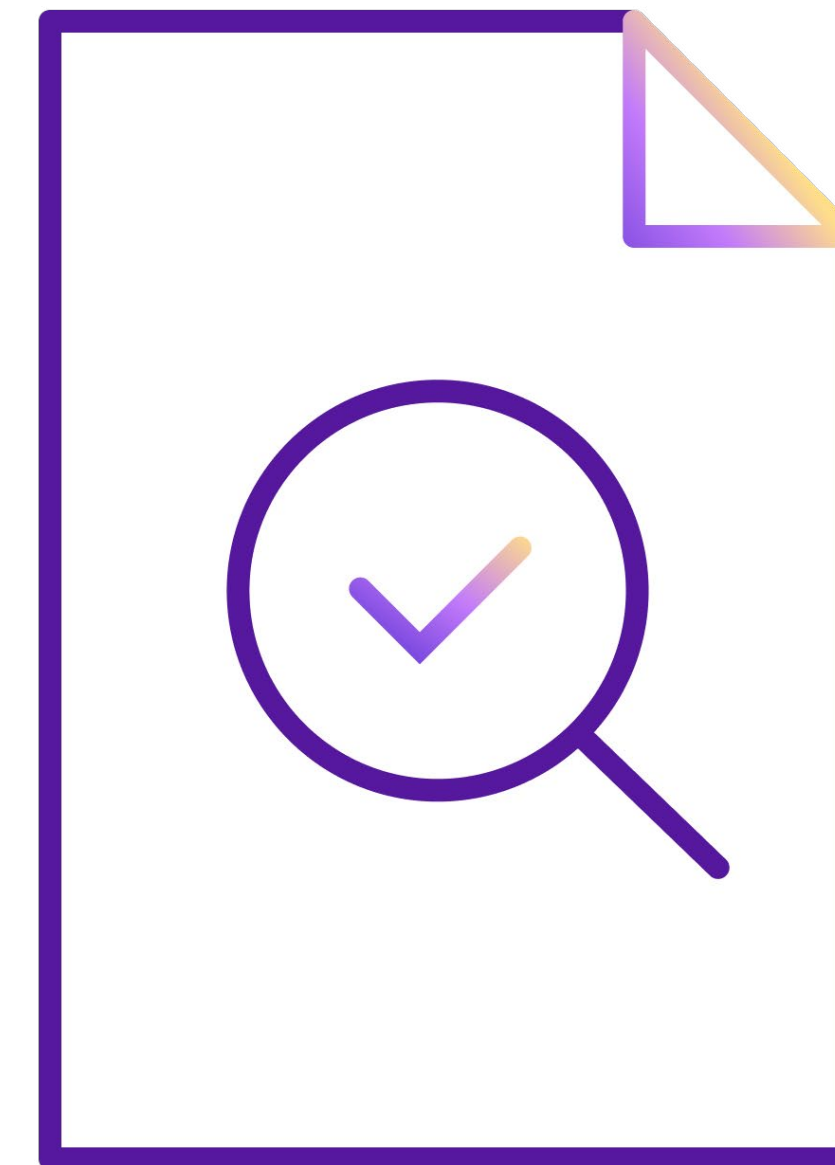
- **How does your workflow incorporate AI to improve quality, increase efficiency, and reduce costs?**
- **Does your MT offering support the use of translation memory and glossaries?**
- **How do you use, or recommend using, large language models (LLMs) in the translation process?**



# Conclusion

**To summarize, all nine of these key features are what companies should expect from a next-generation translation solution.**

Today's translation solutions are customizable, configurable, and adaptable. They allow access to content in real-time, anywhere on the globe, empowering a dispersed workforce. An effective, modern translation solution automates collection of content, workflow, and delivery of translated content.



## Conclusion

An effective translation solution should create a totally new approach to translation. It should effortlessly connect companies with the right resources and innovative tools that make it easy to manage the localization process from end to end. Yet, it should also enable companies to be as hands-off or hands-on as they wish by offering a number of different features and services that do the heavy lifting for them. This way, a global brand can focus on its core business, offering quick updates, improvements, and new products and services without worrying how long it will take to translate and share those updates everywhere.

**Are you already translating  
or thinking about translation  
to expand your multilingual  
footprint?**

**Learn more about Smartling's  
end-to-end translation solution at  
[smartling.com](https://smartling.com)**



# About Smartling

Smartling's LanguageAI™ platform is revolutionizing the translation and localization of the world's digital content. Named as the top translation management system by CSA Research and by users on G2, Smartling harnesses AI and machine learning to enable the automation of workflows, integrates seamlessly with existing tech stacks and measures and improves translation quality at enterprise scale for a fraction of the cost of traditional translation.

Smartling is the platform of choice for hundreds of B2B and B2C brands, including IHG Hotels & Resorts, State Farm, British Airways, and Lyft. Smartling is headquartered in New York with an office in Dublin.



hi@smartling.com

1 (866) 707-6278

smartling.com