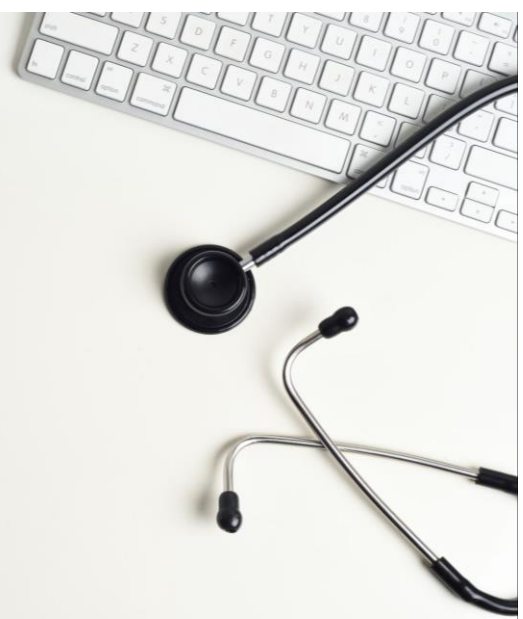


USE OF AI FOR MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATION IN PUBLIC SERVICES

DR FÉLIX DO CARMO, UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

This document summarises the findings and recommendations of an evidence review report published in May 2025 and available at the Open Research repository of the University of Surrey. The evidence review report sheds light on the current state of use of AI for multilingual communication in the NHS, and aims to provide guidance for the responsible management of AI tools in public sector organisations.



INITIAL HIGHLIGHTS

- While AI translation tools can help drive efficiencies, improve patient care and reduce administrative burdens on staff, they should not be used without appropriate staff training and management safeguards.
- Machine translation (MT), such as Google Translate, is one of the most used forms of AI, and is already being used in the NHS, in both clinical and non-clinical contexts.
- There is little evidence of strategic deployment of MT in the NHS; AI tools are being used as an ad-hoc resource.
- The risks of the use of language AI tools that generate language are potentially high, threatening patient duty of care in organisations like the NHS.
- AI is currently a research field, and implementation in real-world scenarios is marked by considerable volatility and risk.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

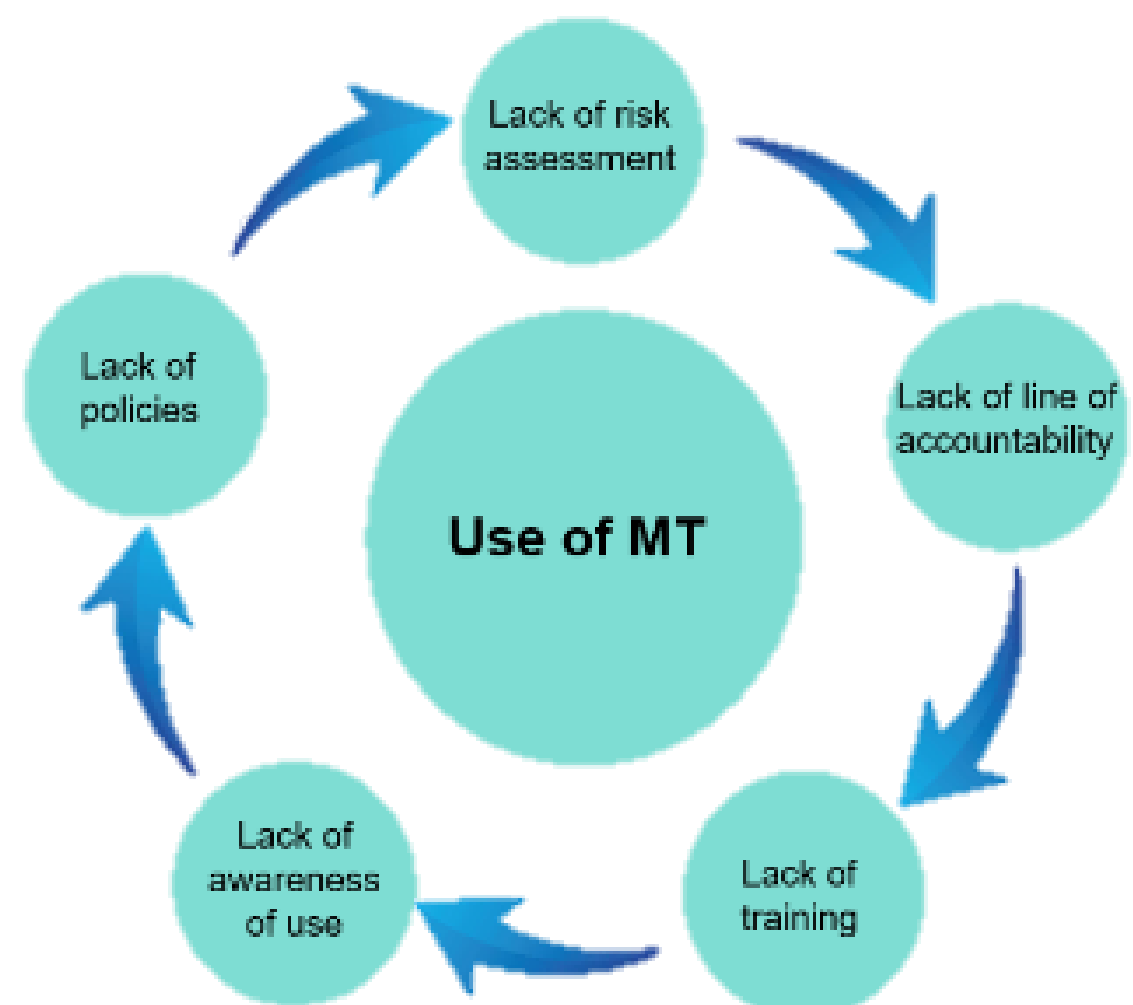
- The evidence report was written between September 2024 and April 2025.
- More than 100 sources of information were used, from academic sources to grey literature plus regulatory documents and official reports.
- Evidence of use, outputs from technical evaluations and academic studies, and recommendations for the use of AI tools were extracted from these sources.

EVIDENCE OF USE OF AI IN THE NHS

- Academic research has identified MT use in vaccination campaigns, doctor-patient consultations, written documents, and across NHS websites.
 - None of these uses is covered by clear guidance on accountability.
 - Examples of use often involve vulnerable communities and patients, driving inequality in care.
- There are reports of death, serious injuries and of surgical procedures performed without proper consent, in contexts in which communication across languages was badly supported by using MT.
 - The Awaab Ishak case and the FOI study conducted by BBC File of 4 in November 2024 are examples of this.

REASONS FOR CURRENT USE OF MT AND AI TOOLS

- Unpreparedness to deal with multilingual communication
- Limited awareness of solutions
- Financial constraints
- Difficulties in scheduling professional translation and interpreting services
- Overhyped AI discourse that suggests tools are ready for use



State of preparedness to manage the use of MT

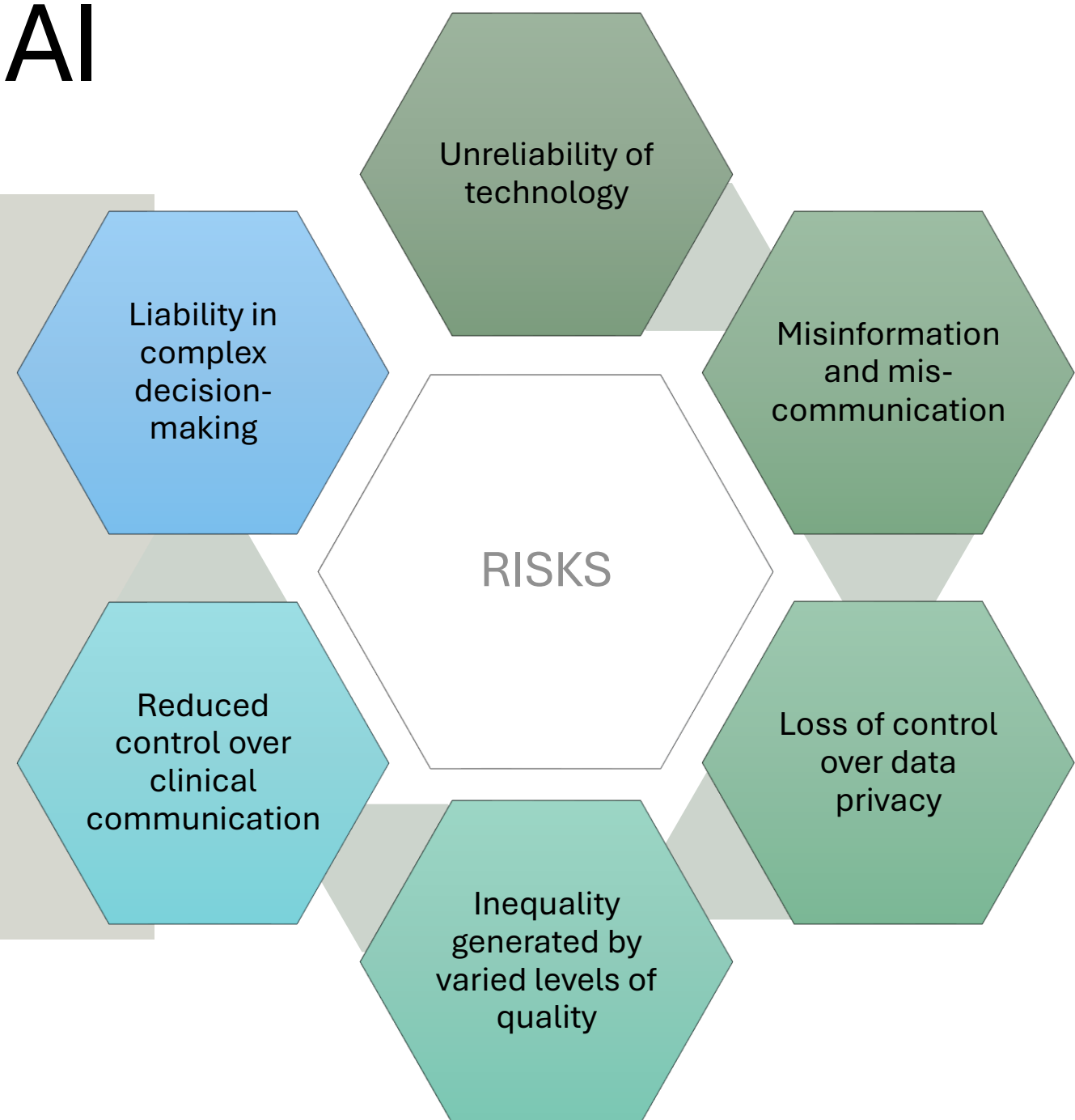
MORE INFORMATION ON EVIDENCE OF USE

The full evidence report presents more details and more evidence of use of MT and AI in the NHS. To access the full report: <https://doi.org/10.15126/901630>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF AI

Many risks arise from the use of language AI and MT in public sector settings. These are underreported and understudied, but the report highlights several risks that require preventative measures.

The report also details a number of recommendations for safe and considered implementation of technology.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Start by identifying organisational needs
- Collect and share knowledge and resources
- Carefully assess risks of miscommunication
- Evaluate both human and technological solutions
- Develop and assess effectiveness of policies
- Raise awareness and preparedness through training
- Clarify accountability in case of problems

Dr Félix do Carmo is a Senior Lecturer in Translation and Natural Language Processing at the Centre for Translation Studies (CTS), University of Surrey, a centre dedicated to cutting-edge research, scholarship and teaching in translation, interpreting and other forms of inter- and intra-lingual communication. To find out more, contact f.docarmo@surrey.ac.uk.

