

MELT Checklist – Planning stage

Issues faced in planning stage	Item	Applicability (Yes/ No/ Not applicable (NA))
Ethnicity issues	Understand the criteria to be identified as an ethnicity both legally and traditionally (Example: documented definition of the Malay ethnicity)	
	Is there a link between the interested ethnicity and a specific language (or dialect)?	
	Are you planning to recruit translators from the same ethnicity?	
	Do you anticipate gender-related concerns between the participants and the translators? If yes, are you planning to recruit translators from different genders from each ethnicity?	
	The interviewers/translators should adapt to the culturally acceptable attire/ dress code during the face-to-face interviews or video recorded virtual interviews. In case of interviewing different ethnic groups, are you considering this aspect? (Example: Hide tattoos, avoid revealing dress, such translators not taken seriously)	
	Would you include/exclude participants with mixed ethnicities? If you include them, how would you categorize them and how would you analyse the data? (Example: add option of 'others' in the interested groups/ ethnicities)	

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	Does the ethnic group have gender or sex-specific rules that affects who is in the room or who is involved in the consent process that is acceptable to their culture and beliefs?	
	Is the ethnic group 'individualistic' or 'collectivistic' in nature? * Do this influence the research method? ** Does this nature influence the research? If yes, how do you plan to address this?	
	Have you prepared a list of festivals/ religious events celebrated by the ethnic groups so that you can avoid or appropriately react to it to build a working relation?	
	Reticent conduct of participants might be a customary behaviour with new acquaintances. Can the translator interviewer/ meet such participants for more than once?	
	Timekeeping can vary regionally. It can be based on the ethnic values and beliefs. Are you accommodative in such cases? (Example: setting a particular time might not be followed or waiting may be considered normal)	
	Historical issues influence the trust between the interviewer and participant's cultural identity (example: post-colonial mistrust on western researchers in Commonwealth countries; older Chinese people might mistrust Japanese interviewer or research team) Have you considered this aspect?	
	Curbside health consultations can be acceptable in some ethnic groups. Anticipate such issues and have an action plan (Example: carry your visiting card and inform the participants to visit the clinic for consultation or explain the professional ethics that stops you from giving professional advice during such interviews) To balance between professionalism and societal norm – prior sensitisation	

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	to keep consultation related questions post interview.	
	Member checking the transcript may be overlooked by certain ethnic groups as it might make them look 'suspicious' which needs to be explained by research team. Researcher should explain this concern prior to the interview. <i>Footnote: *In an individualistic society, people are motivated by their own preference and viewpoints and is prevalent in countries such as United States of America. Korea is an example for collectivistic culture where the extended family is extremely important; ** Example: interviewing in a group</i>	
	Contemplate the possibility of an invitation visit participant's house or have refreshments at their house or conduct the interview inside the house. Have an action plan in such situations based on the acceptable local social norm or culture (Example: it is okay to accept a cup of tea/ coffee. If not, it might be considered as an unacceptable socially). If you agree for such invitations, utilize the opportunity to discuss the ethnic or language issues which can help to build researcher understanding.	
Ethical issues	Signing on a consent form may be viewed suspiciously or might lead to apprehension (Example: legal concerns, need permission from a male in the family). In such cases, are you ready for obtaining a verbal consent and/or audio recorded?	
	Is video recording of the interview acceptable to the participants? If not, have you opted for audio recording as an alternative in your ethics application?	
	During face-to-face interviews, be ready to witness an accompanying person with the participant. In	

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	such case, clarify the confidentiality of the interview to the participant. Seek the permission of the participant to start the interview in presence of the accompanying person.	
	Have you anticipated accompanying person or confidentiality issues and mentioned the same in the participant information sheet?	
	Do you have an action plan for research team safety if they are conducting face-to-face interviews?	
	Addressing the participant by name (real name) affects the confidentiality and thus needs to be emphasised during translator training. However, if this is culturally not acceptable, such names should be anonymised in the transcript. Has this issue been discussed with the research team and ethics committee?	
	Tensions between ethnic groups and religious groups might spur up during the interviews which needs to be handled carefully in the transcripts. Do you plan to discuss this with the research team and ethics committee?	
	Prior decision on using manual transcriptions or automated transcriptions should be taken and ethical approval should be done accordingly.	
	Check with the local data protection policy and the data protection statements of the automated transcription software before finalizing which software to be used.	
	In case of culturally sensitive information is expected from the interviews, are you planning to mask the identification of the ethnicity? Have you discussed such issues with your research team and	

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	ethics committee?	
Regulatory issues	Hesitation to comment on governmental policies or organisational issues might be restricted in certain ethnicities. Do you have an action plan in such case? (Example: Assure participants regarding confidentiality requirement as per the ethics approval)	
	In face-to-face interviews, consider the opening/closing time of the local public place where the interview is planned and travel restrictions (e.g., as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic).	
	Health and safety concerns such as use of face mask in public places need to be followed.	
	Have you considered the timing/day of interview, working day/weekend issues?	
Recruitment of participants	Check for the available databases for participant recruitment (Example: list of dental practitioners from government or alumni database; membership organizations such as Royal colleges, charity groups, service user groups)	
	Are there any groups in social media (Facebook, Instagram) which can be contacted for recruitment?	
	Have you considered snow-ball method or seeking help through personal contacts?	
	Is there a possibility of getting help from the same ethnic group person who can help to recruit participants from the respective ethnicity (Example: community leader and religious leader)?	
	Have you prepared a comprehensive flyer that can aid in better recruitment and have a plan to	

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	distribute such flyers?	
	Do you offer any incentives to participants (Example: gift coupons or cash)? If so, add these details in the flyer	
Recruitment and training of translators	Recruiting a professional translator might be expensive. Have you allocated budget for translations? If not, can you consider socio-linguistic translators in your research project?	
	Have you considered the recruitment of multiple translators for the same language, if various dialects are spoken?	
	It is better to have younger and older translators to understand the differences in the language (Example: traditional terminologies or words might not be commonly used by younger generation). Can you accommodate translators from different age groups?	
	Translator training on qualitative research, data collection methods, good clinical practice, transcription, use of virtual platforms and reflexivity will be of great help to the research project. Do you plan any such training sessions?	
	Have you equipped the translators with audio/ video recorders, high speed internet connection (example: pay for mobile data), stationary for making notes and reflexive statements?	
	It is not uncommon to witness that some of the participants deviate from the interview question and finally would have not answered the relevant query. Is the translator trained to handle participants who deviate from the topic? The researcher should facilitate such interviews.	

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	Translator might get carried away with the participant responses and might influence the responses. This needs to be cautioned and observed regularly. Always plan a post-hoc discussion between the researcher and translator to address such issues.	
	Are the translators trained to note their reflective statements during the entire research project?	
Face-to-face interview	If the interviews are planned in any public place, do you have a list of culturally acceptable places to interview (example: restaurant which serve <i>halal</i> food for Muslim participants)?	
	Restaurants may not be the best option to interview during religious fasting as practiced by Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. Have you considered such fasting periods before choosing a venue?	
	Is the public place suitable for audio/ video recording (Example: noisy restaurant or a place near to religious event would result in a low quality audio)?	
	Some of the ethnic groups might believe in collectivist living and some might believe in individualistic society. If you are interviewing participants from collectivist society, you can anticipate bystanders during the interviews. Have you considered a briefing to such bystanders regarding the interview etiquettes (Example: do not prompt or answer the questions on behalf of the participant)?	
	Similarly, ‘helicoptering’ bystanders can be prompting or helping the participants during the virtual interviews. Do you have a plan to deal with such incidents? If you suspect such an issue during virtual interviews where cameras are not switched on, you	

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	should be prepared to write down your thoughts in the reflexivity journal.	
Virtual interview	Are you open to use the virtual platform which is comfortable to participants (Example: Google meet or WebEx)?	
	Video mode may not be acceptable to all participants; are you ready for audio-based interviews?	
	Be ready for hybrid methods or innovative methods (Example: Participant uses WhatsApp, translator and researcher uses virtual platform)	
	Inform the participants to remove their profile pictures (if identifiable) so that the picture does not get recorded in the in-built recording option of the virtual platform	
	There is a chance that some of the participants might switch on their cameras during the interview which might breach the confidentiality of the participant. In such cases, do you have a high-quality audio recorder to record the interview?	
	Have you considered the connectivity issues while scheduling the interview slots (example: weekends, evenings the net might be slow comparatively, slowdown of internet on rainy days)?	
	Do you have an action plan in case of low internet connectivity during which you need to close the cameras?	
	If unstable internet connection is anticipated, are you willing to opt for telephonic interviews or conference call interviews (need to check with your service provider)?	

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Focus group discussion (FGD)	Some of the ethnic groups do not encourage negating the statements made by elderly participants and might be considered as 'rude'. If such behaviour is anticipated in the interested ethnic group, you should consider FGDs with similar age groups rather than mixture of all age groups.	
	Are there any inter-participator issues that can influence the decisions? (Example: if two participants are hierarchically related in the same organisation, their decisions can be influenced by such relations)	
	Have you understood the group dynamics when dominant and minority ethnic/religious groups are in the same FGD? If so, do you have a plan to handle such situations?	
	Have you considered a focus-group-discussion with all the involved translators? This discussion can help the research team to understand the influencing factors and thus aid in data analysis.	
	It is a common practise to arrange food and beverages before/ after FGDs. Have you recorded the food preferences of different ethnic groups?	