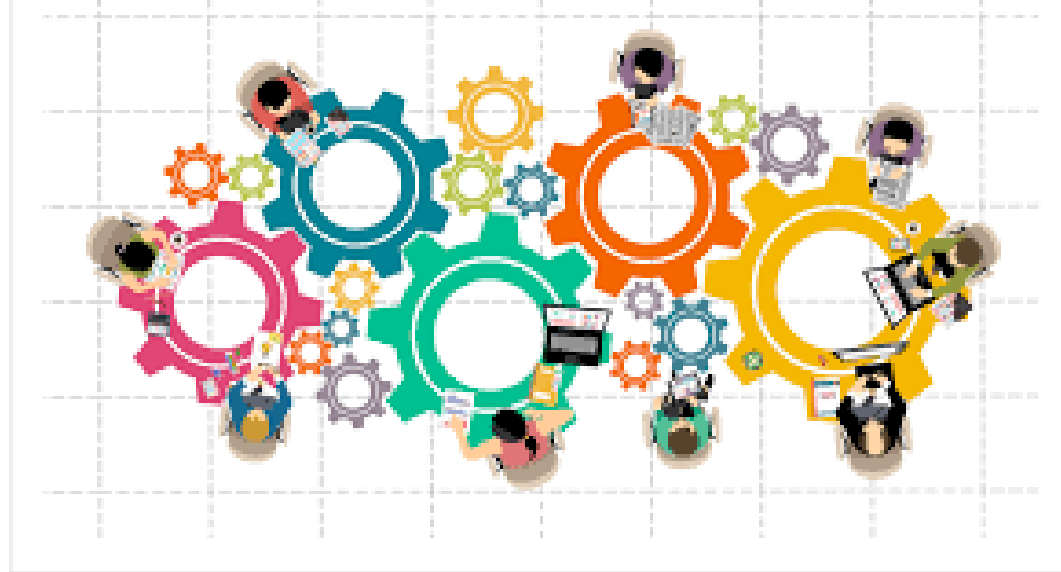# How Collaborative is Concurrent Translation?

Insights From a Survey of 804 Translators

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➢ Collaborative Translation – Types & Features

➢ Concurrent Translation (CT)

➢ Collaboration and 3C Model (Fuks et al. 2008)

➢ Contra Survey (n=804)

  • Findings on CT (3C Model)

  • Suggestions (by respondents) to improve CT (3C model)

➢ Conclusions

Types of Collaborative Translation - Features

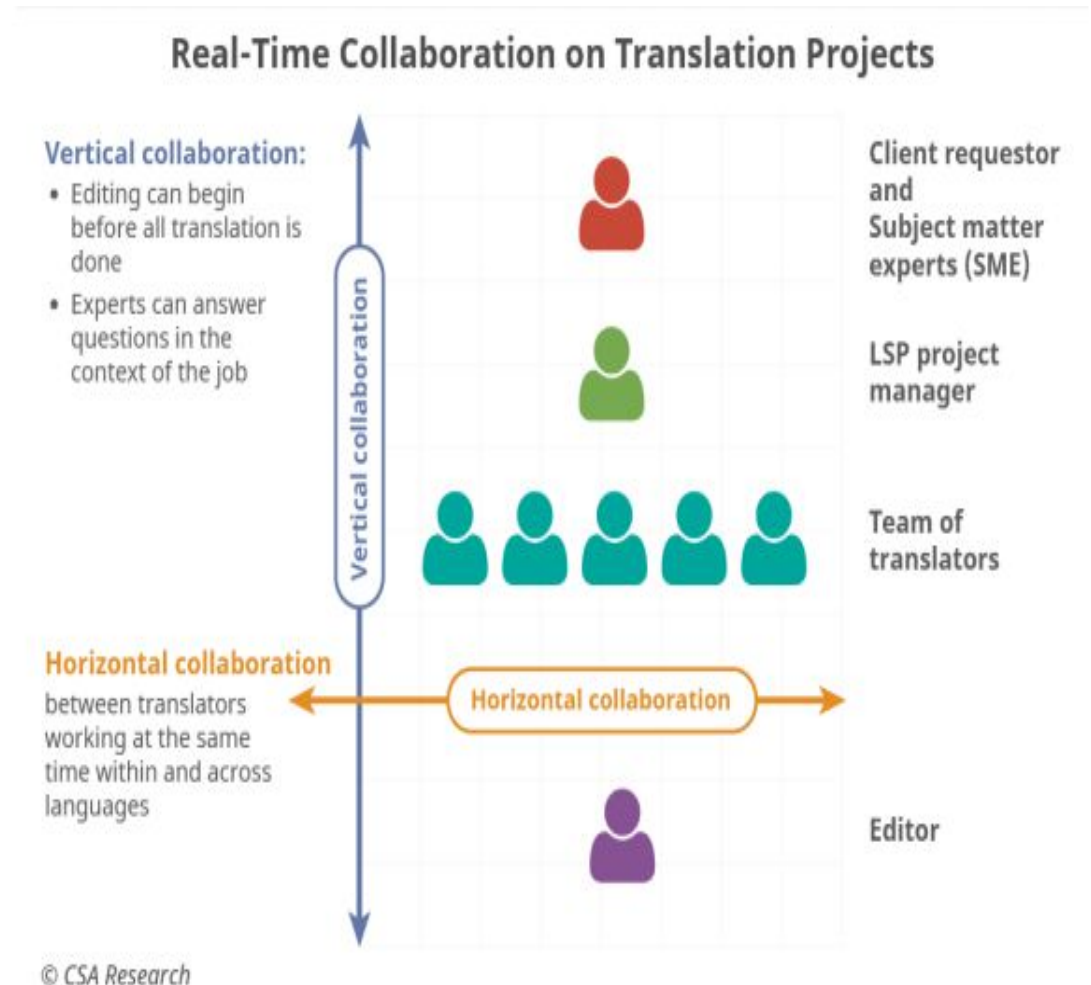| Features	Types of Collaborative Translation							
	Online Collaborative Translation; Community/Fan/Volunteer Translation		Unpaid Crowdsourcing		Paid Crowdsourcing		Concurrent Translation	
Commissioning Agent	Self-instigated	Externally commissioned	Self-instigated	Externally commissioned	Self-instigated	Externally commissioned	Self-instigated	Externally commissioned
Sector	Commercial	Non-commercial	Commercial	Non-commercial	Commercial	Non-commercial	Commercial	Non-commercial
Motivation	Monetary	Non-monetary	Monetary	Non-monetary	Monetary	Non-monetary	Monetary	Non-monetary
Type of Worker	Professional	Non-professional	Professional	Non-professional	Professional	Non-professional	Professional	Non-professional
Process – Collaboration Configurations	Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical
Process – Time Configurations	Synchronous	Asynchronous	Synchronous	Asynchronous	Synchronous	Asynchronous	Synchronous	Asynchronous

*The patterned cells refer to contexts where the inclusion of that particular feature is blurry (i.e., In CT, mainly 'professionals' are involved; however, depending on the workflow, 'non-professionals' might also be involved).

Concurrent translation - using collaborative translation tools

- Externally commissioned
- Commercial collaborative translation
- Monetary motivation
- Largely by professional/trained translators
- Horizontal and vertical collaboration
- Only synchronous

Features	Concurrent Translation	
Commissioning Agent	Self-instigated	Externally commissioned
Sector	Commercial	Non-commercial
Motivation	Monetary	Non-monetary
Type of Worker	Professional	Non-professional
Process – Collaboration Configurations	Horizontal	Vertical
Process – Time Configurations	Synchronous	Asynchronous

Real-Time Collaboration on Translation Projects

Vertical collaboration:
- Editing can begin before all translation is done
- Experts can answer questions in the context of the job

Client requestor and Subject matter experts (SME)

LSP project manager

Team of translators

Horizontal collaboration
between translators working at the same time within and across languages

Horizontal collaboration
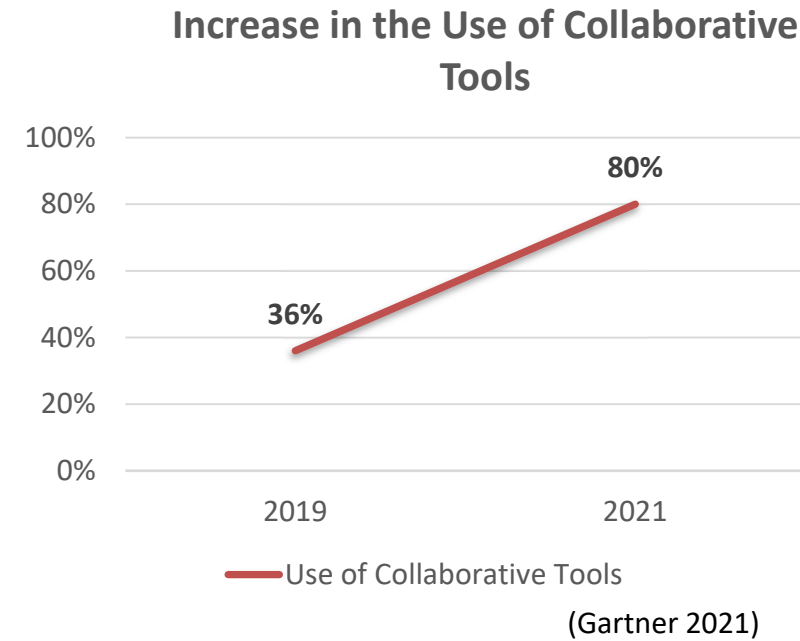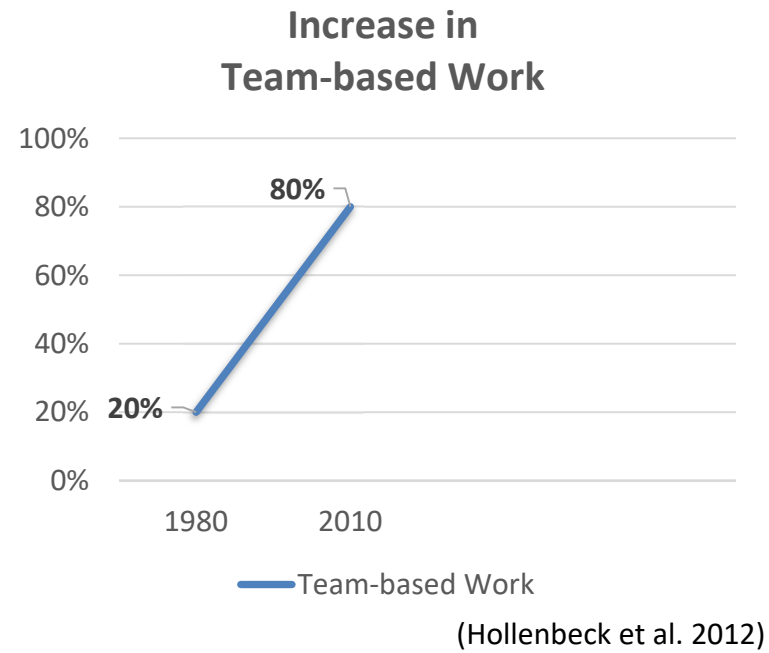
Editor

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The term **'collaborative'** is used to describe the new workflows & tools that enable horizontal and vertical collaboration.

BUT how well these tools **actually support collaboration**
in terms of
fundamental **building blocks** of a **collaborative** environment?

Some definitions of collaborative work

- **Collaborative work** is the collective work of two or more individuals where the work is undertaken with a sense of shared purpose and direction, that is attentive and responsive to the environment (Beyerlein et al. 2003)

- **Collaborative work** refers to situations where two or more people act together to achieve a common goal, but the actual extent of 'togetherness' can vary substantially (Andriessen 2003)

Successful execution of a collaborative task (online)
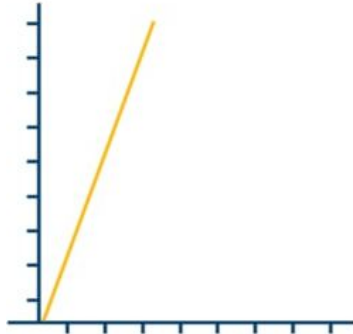
- technological solution

- robust design

3C Collaboration Model (Fuks et al. 2008):

- Communication
  - exchange of messages and information amongst people

- Coordination
  - management of people, their activities and resources

- Cooperation
  - the production taking place in a shared workspace

New Tools in Language Industry - Steep learning curve for translators
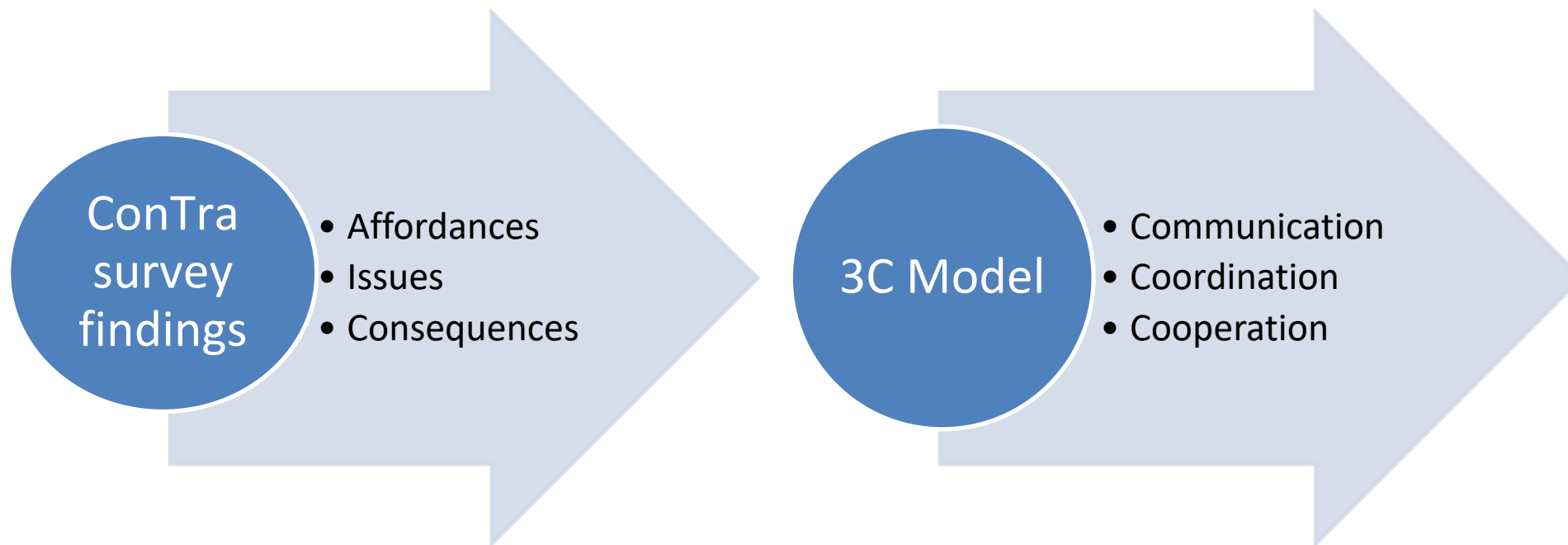
- **Nimdzi 2022**
  - 20% annual growth in the number of language technologies
  - Over 800 language technologies in 2022
    - 20% enables collaborative translation
- **CSA 2020**
  - average of five platforms
- **CSA 2021**
  - 43% translators use collaborative platforms

- Translators have right to demand:
  - the tools to be fit for purpose, user-friendly, efficient, and enjoyable to use (LeBlanc 2017)
  - the 'collaborative' tools they use are truly collaborative

ConTra – Concurrent Translation on Collaborative Platforms Methodology

- Survey questionnaire (Qualtrics) - 25 questions

- Sample n=804

- Quantitative & Qualitative analysis

Thematic analysis

ConTra survey findings
- Affordances
- Issues
- Consequences

3C Model
- Communication
- Coordination
- Cooperation

Contra – Concurrent Translation on Collaborative Platforms
General Findings

- **CT not a mainstream workflow**, but not to be ignored:
  - 70% spend ≤20% time in CT
  - 23% spend 21-60% of their time in CT

- **Two types of workflows**
  - **Split and assign** (PM involved)
    - splitting a text and assigning segments to a limited number of individual translators
  - **First come first served** (no/limited PM involved, more automated)
    - Allowing unlimited number of translators to select segments from a text

- 48% do not prefer CT over one-translator job (35% neutral, 17% prefer CT)
- Insufficient remuneration (free text comments)
- Overall, despite some visible benefits of working in CT, translators largely experience its drawbacks.

Findings – Translators' Experiences with CT

Communication

Affordances:

- Peer support
- Possibility of asking questions/resolving issues in real time

Issues:

- CT not well supported by built-in communication tools
- Ineffective use of available communication features
- Lack of training in the use of tools/features

Consequences:

- External tools are used for communication
- Users not aware of features/functionality
- Conflict between individuals
- Tasks may take longer

Findings – Translators' Experiences with CT

Coordination

Affordances:

- Flexibility of the volume of work and working time
  - have choice of when and how much to work
- Reduced responsibility for the text as a whole
- Reduced stress (related to the above)
- Surveillance:
  - 52% do not feel uncomfortable being 'watched' by others in CT (24% neutral, 25% uncomfortable)

Issues:

- Management of people
  - Disparity across translators' competency and translation styles
  - Lack of training/briefing on the features
- Management of workflows
  - Time pressure (the most prominent problem, root cause of other issues in CT)
  - Random, non-linear segment-level translation
- Management of resources
  - No resources available or very poorly populated resources
  - Reluctance to add terms for time reasons

Coordination

Consequences:

- Extra mental stress due to pressure to work faster
  - "horse race", "shark tank", "Hunger Games", "grab the cake and don't look back"
- Less revision, less research (59% think that translation process is different in CT)
  - self-revision skipped & replaced by superficial revision in drafting phase
  - reduced time & effort on research while translating
- Failure to consider context
- Lack of control over the workflow or the final quality
- Lack of satisfaction and ownership of the translation task as a whole
- Devaluation of translation

Compromised quality

Cooperation

Affordances:

- Peer learning (62% think CT contributes to their peer learning process)
- Feeling of community (by some translators)
- Positive competition
- Speed (perceived)

Issues:

- Negative competition, not conducive to cooperation and collaborative spirit
  - 63% - CT increases the sense of competition between the translators working on the same project; 18% disagreed, 19% neutral.
  - not feeling less isolated (only 27% feels less isolated in CT)
  - not feeling of working towards a common goal
  - negative competition more prominent in the "first come first served" workflow (75%) vs "split and assign" (45%)

Consequences:

- Positive competition leading to higher quality product (44% agreed, 29% disagreed)
- Speed (motivating to work faster)
- Negative competition leading to increased mental pressure, stress, dislike of the workflow, quality issues

Suggestions by Translators to Improve CT

Improvements

- If you had a role in designing the workflow, what would it look like?
  - 65% of the sample provided response
  - 17% of those who replied
    - don't know
    - haven't thought about it
    - don't understand well enough to comment
  - 6% - would design something similar to TEP
  - 5% - would not change anything

28% - no suggestion

Suggestions by translators → remaining 72% → **3C Model**
- Communication
- Coordination
- Cooperation
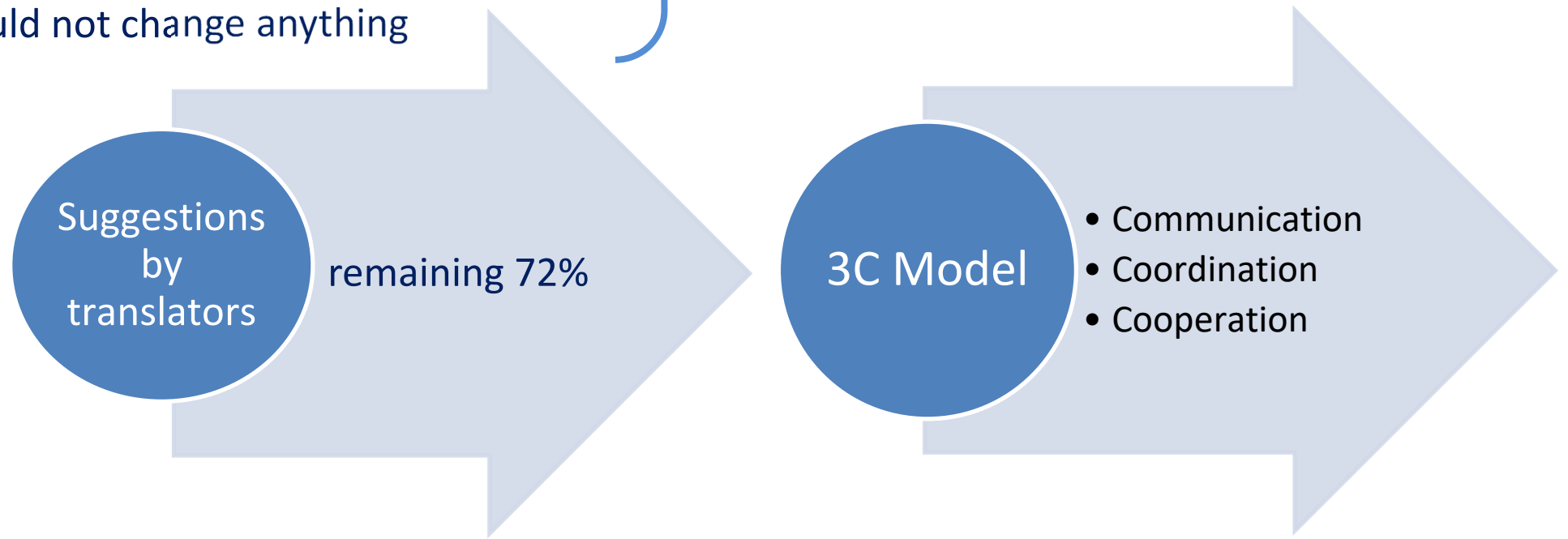
Suggestions by Translators to Improve CT

Communication

- Better communication management
  - provide robust, flexible, integrated instant communication system
  - alerts for translators to get familiar with the project
  - introduction of team members/access to profiles, etc.
  - opportunity for terminological discussion
    - communication tools

Suggestions by Translators to Improve CT

Coordination

- Better workflow design management

  - more flexibility in self-revision
  - no access to segments until confirmed by translators
  - additional editing step
  - more time for translators
  - alerts for translators to get familiar with the project
  - allow to 'reserve' segments for a period of time
  - better feedback loops/access to the client feedback

- Better management of resources

  - more collaborative in terms of terminology, feedback, QA
  - provision of quality-, shared-resources (TM, style guides, terminology)

Suggestions by Translators to Improve CT

Coordination

- Better people management
  - limit the number of translators per project
  - have a lead translator with more responsibility
  - manage translators/editors according to skills/experience
  - introduce team members to each other
  - rotate roles for a better understanding of the process
  - introduce credit/rating/ranking of translators/editors
  - provide pre-assigned segments

- Better quality management
  - ST quality management (segmentation, grammar etc.)
  - enable to see context
  - improve feedback quality (provide guidelines to editors and translators)
  - manage consistency across segments revised by different editors

Suggestions by Translators to Improve CT

Cooperation → towards shared goal

- introduce team members to each other

- rotate roles for a better understanding of the process

- more transparent profiles (visibility of their rating/ranking)

- focus on cooperation, not just 'collaboration'

- mitigate the competition factor

- incentivise more collaboration and communication

- incentivise translators to perform well, not just chase segments

Conclusions: How collaborative is Concurrent Translation?

➢ **Concurrent Translation**
- Based on collaborative technologies, but currently not very collaborative in nature (3C Model)
- More akin to Digital Taylorism (Moorkens 2020)
  - time pressure, micro-tasking, not working towards a shared goal, but without the link between performance and pay

➢ **What could be improved?**
- **Coordination**
  - Most suggestions for improvement regard coordination.
  - Regulator of communication and cooperation
    - improvements in coordination key to improving the overall collaborative environment
- **Communication**
  - Mostly a matter of providing tools and training/encouragement
- **Cooperation**
  - Most difficult to achieve (requires implementing new ideas?)

Conclusions: How collaborative is Concurrent Translation?

- ➢ Concurrent Translation currently semi-collaborative
- ➢ What could be improved?
    - • Most suggestions for improvement regard coordination
    - • Coordination key regulator of communication and cooperation
    - • Cooperation most difficult to achieve (requires implementing new ideas?)
    - • Improvements: draw on what translators like, limit what they don't like.

Communication:
- • Provide real-time communication tools for horizontal and vertical communication
- • Manage access to existing communication tools better
- • Train translators in using communication tools
- • Incentivise translators to use communication tools

Coordination:
- • Manage the use of existing technology and resources better
- • Understand the needs of translators as individuals and as team members and tailor the workflow to these needs as much as possible
- • Consider small compromises on workflow settings to allow for a more comfortable process and trust building

Cooperation:
- • Manage people and teams so that they can identify the benefits of working together (e.g. peer learning, community building, having fun)
- • Consideration of what makes them work towards a shared goal and provide a suitable environment (e.g. pre or post-task group chat, a reward system, learning resources etc.)

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Thank you!
Questions & Comments
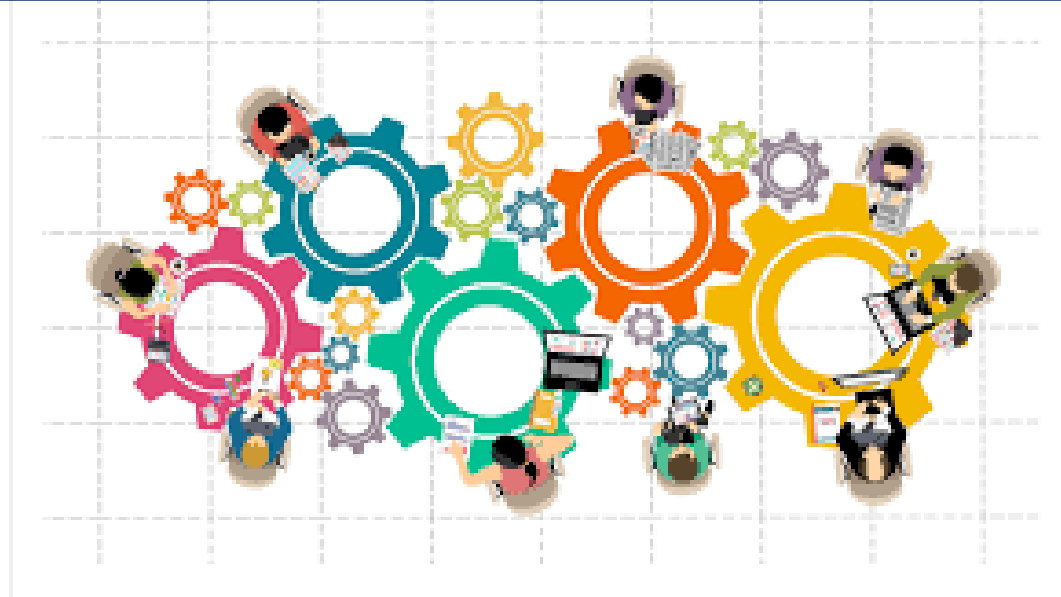
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