

University of St Andrews

Enhancing Online Volunteer Translation: Lessons from Arabic Wikipedia

The 19th edition of Wikimania Poland 7–10 August

Dr Abd Alsattar Ardati

WIKIMANIA KATOWICE



Introduction

Wikipedia Arabic plays a crucial role in disseminating knowledge across Arabic-speaking communities. However, maintaining translation quality and expanding content diversity remain significant challenges due to resource constraints and volunteer engagement levels.



Facts: What?

- 78% of Arabic Wikipedia articles are stubs (incomplete or too short), compared with less than 40% of English Wikipedia.
- The Content Translation Tool does not support collaborative editing.
- Over 85,709 articles have been translated into Arabic using the Content Translation Tool, more than double the number translated into English.
- 84% of geotagged Wikipedia articles focus on North America and Europe.

Objective: Why?

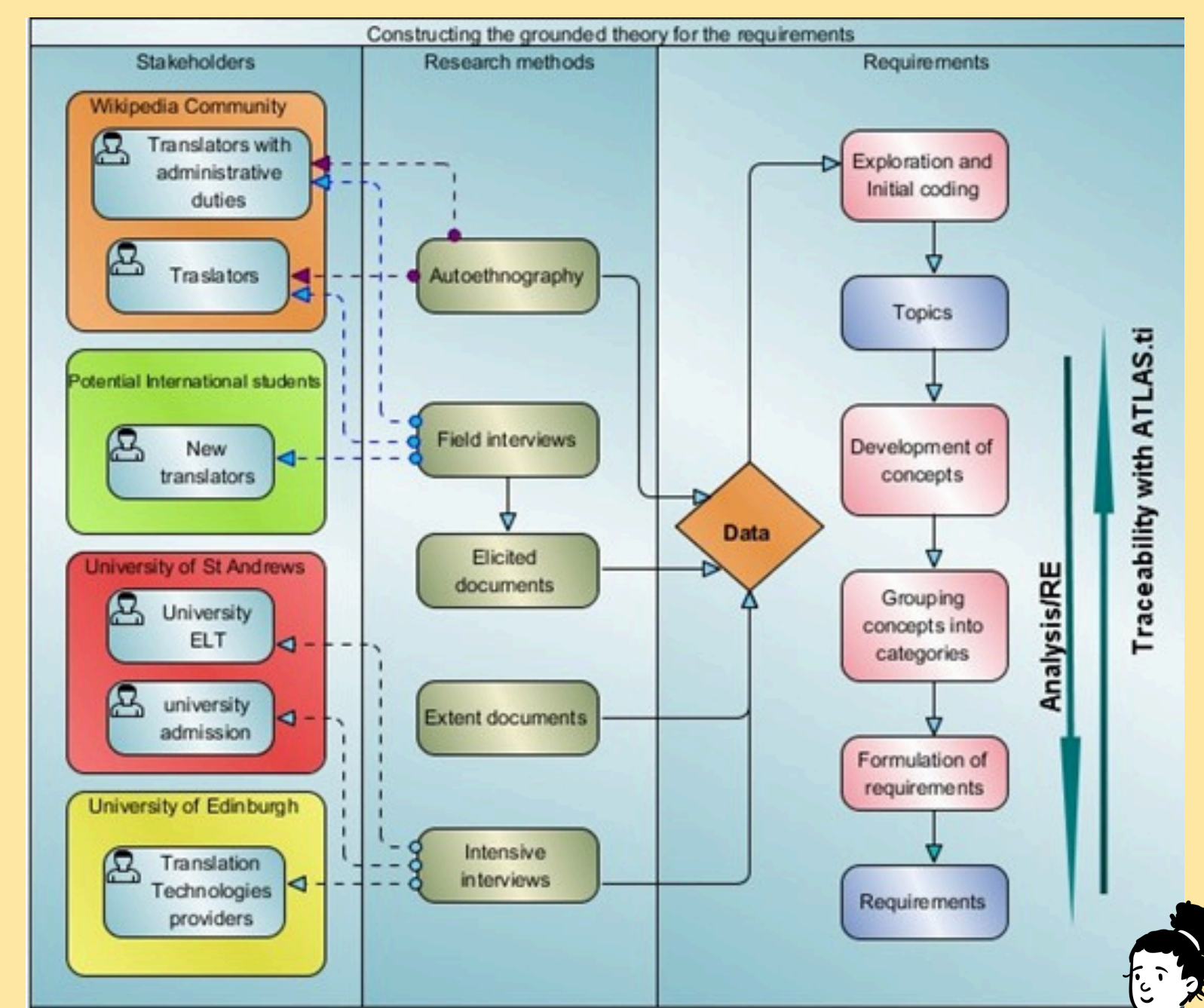
This project addresses these challenges by exploring ways to enhance collaborative translation efforts on Wikipedia Arabic. By looking into ways to improve translation quality and increase volunteer engagement, we aim to enrich the platform's content and accessibility for Arabic-speaking users globally.

Methodology: How?

- Conducted 22 interviews in total. 21 in different Arabic dialects with volunteer translators.
- Transcribed and translated over 30,000 words.
- Applied the Essence Framework, Autoethnography and Grounded Theory methodology with open coding to identify key concepts.
- Utilised Atlas.ti for detailed qualitative data analysis.
- Developed a comprehensive understanding of requirements to inform the design of a support system for volunteer translators.

Findings:

- **Need for Structured Training:** Volunteers require comprehensive training before contributing effectively to Wikipedia Arabic. This training should cover translation techniques and Wikipedia editing guidelines. An educational module that provides ongoing learning opportunities is critical for maintaining high-quality translations and continuous volunteer development.
- **User-Friendly Translation Workbench:** An intuitive translation workbench is essential for enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of translations.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** A system that facilitates better collaboration among volunteers, including communication tools and shared workspaces, is important for improving the quality and efficiency of translations.
- **Integration of Scanning Tools:** Incorporating tools that scan for articles needing translation helps streamline the workflow, allowing volunteers to identify and select translation projects more efficiently.
- **Importance of Motivational Tools:** Recognition through certificates and the visualisation of page view data significantly boosts volunteer motivation and engagement.



Sources

- Graham, M., Hogan, B., Straumann, R. K., & Medhat, A. (2014). Uneven Geographies of User-Generated Information: Patterns of Increasing Informational Poverty. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 104(4), 746–764.
- https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Active_editor
- <https://w.wiki/tXS> (Arabic stub articles number)
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:ContentTranslationStats>
- The sketches illustrations from Open Peeps CCO License.
- Logo, The Arms of the University of St Andrews, CCO License.

