

TELL-OP training module for language professionals

INTRODUCTION

The TELL-OP Project aims to help spread the knowledge and use of Open Educational Resources (OER) among the educational community. Within its framework, which includes a survey directed to language professionals and the development of a freely available mobile app, the TELL-OP team has designed an online course aiming at developing awareness and knowledge of the existence and utilities/benefits of different natural language processing (NLP) technologies that are freely available on the internet.

The course, set up on a Moodle platform, was structured into five main blocks, namely PRONUNCIATION, VOCABULARY ACQUISITION, READING SKILLS, INTERACTION and WRITING SKILLS. The module was designed in four languages (viz. English, Spain, German and French) and was advertised in the different partner countries through our professional and personal networks. Each block included information on a series of NLP tools whose function mainly coincided with the section they were listed in. To offer as much concise and useful information as possible, each type of tool was developed in five sections that summarized all the information needed to get familiar with the tool and use it effectively (what is it?, how can it be used?, how does it contribute to language learning?, OER examples and OER practice).

The module spread over 5 weeks, each week focusing on one particular block. The participants could actively take part in the module via forum discussions and assignments that consisted in giving some feedback on the tools that were presented throughout the week. The completion of these assignments led to a TELL-OP project certification and, in some partner countries, to other certifications from the university or professional development programmes. Our online training course originally addressed English, Spanish and German teachers from Higher Education or adult education. Any type of teacher from our partner countries could access the course, and, in fact, the module gathered participants with various profiles.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Each of the TELL-OP teams distributed the information of the course independently. The Spanish course was offered to language teachers in higher and secondary education through the University of Murcia's official distribution channels. The German, French and English courses were mainly distributed to higher education and secondary school teachers in their respective countries. While the interest in the four courses was widespread and considerable (SP= 70 people; GER= 330 people;

BEL= 143 people; UK=167 people), the number of finally registered population was significantly lower (see tables 1, 2, 3 and 4). This was mainly due to technical issues and it appeared some teachers do not have enough computer literacy to follow online training. As is customary in online training courses, the number of active participants during the course also decreased over time (see tables 1, 2, 3 and 4). In the end, the participants who completed all the assignments proposed were given a TELL-OP certification and official in-service training certification from the Universities that offered them.

Table 1. Number of participants for each assignment (SPAIN)

Assignment	1	2	3	4	5
Participants	57	38	34	32	29

Table 2. Number of participants for each assignment (BELGIUM)

Assignment	1	2	3	4	5
Participants	66	45	38	34	33

Table 3. Number of participants for each assignment (GERMANY)

Assignment	1	2	3	4	5
Participants	123	88	87	83	83

Table 4. Number of participants for each assignment (UK)

Assignment	1	2	3	4	5
Participants	68	64	36	35	24

Most of the enrolled users were teaching English in upper secondary school and university. Still, some users were German, French and Spanish teachers and some participants were teaching in adult education, in immersion, in higher education or to refugees. They registered in the TELL-OP training module with specific expectations, among others discovering OERs, new ideas and techniques, finding new tools to meet pupils' specific needs, exchanging best practices, not missing on technological advancements and making language learning easier and more attractive for the learners.

FORUM FEEDBACK

The forum discussions in our course were all initiated by the teacher of the module. Each week, one or two forum threads were opened in order to arouse the participants' interest, to generate discussions between the users and to provide some space for questions and answers. These threads included sharing best practices, giving more information on a particular tool, asking for the participants' opinion, providing the teachers with ideas of activities, etc. Even though the participation to these discussions has dropped with time, a summary of the users' comments (divided in three main sections) is given below. The sections include: the use of NLP tools by the teachers, by their learners and the general issues raised in these discussions.

Tools for teaching

Throughout the module, the users have shown a lot of interest in the teaching opportunities provided by the different NLP tools. First and foremost, they highlighted the easy, practical and free access to authentic material, be it for creating activities or exercises or for expanding their personal linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, they appreciated that some NLP tools could help them identify the level of their material and could even automatically create exercises related to their texts and adapt them to the learners. Besides, interactive tools allowed the teachers to collaborate and share information either with their learners or with their peers.

Tools for learning

NLP tools mostly enabled the learners to gain autonomy in the learning process as they could use these OERs to practise the different aspects of the language outside the classroom (viz. pronunciation, vocabulary extension, reading, interaction). Having access to all these resources allowed for personalized learning. Indeed, these tools help memorize, practise, understand and analyze the foreign language while following the learning pace and style of the users. Moreover, certain tools fostered a regular use of the target language within a community that communicates and collaborates.

Issues raised

Although language learning undeniably benefits from the use of technologies according to the course users, its implementation in schools could become an issue: since the use of smart phones is strictly forbidden in some schools; not all learners have easy access to technologies either in the classroom or at home; also, a good internet connection is not always available in school buildings. Besides, some learners and teachers simply did not wish to use technologies and some of them lacked some computer literacy skills and felt therefore that they were not able to exploit the tools presented in the module. Finally, some tools were considered non-user-friendly and sometimes linguistically too complex for beginners.

ASSIGNMENTS

Each section ended with an assignment that consisted in describing the user's experience with the OERs presented in maximum 500 words. The participant had to comment on the usefulness of the tool and its added value for language learners. However, the users' answers were quite varied. Some of them answered the questions, some others did the OER practice part, and the rest asked questions, raised issues, or expressed their feelings and opinions. General comments from these assignments for each section covered in the module are given below.

Pronunciation

Text-to-speech technologies were found to be very useful both for the teacher and the learners. With these tools, teachers could easily address pronunciation, intonation and accents in the classroom while the learners could practise these aspects in- and outside school. They were therefore considered useful because they were learner-centered, gave autonomy to the learners and allowed for differentiation. Moreover, text-to-speech synthesis tools enabled the teacher to transform reading material into listening material or to create new audio files. This looks particularly relevant for beginners. Finally, these technologies could be of great help for pupils with learning difficulties like dyslexia or dyspraxia as any written text can be synthesized into listening material.

Vocabulary acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition technologies were found to be very useful for teachers in general. Vocabulary acquisition tools provided teachers and learners with freely accessible authentic materials. They could contribute to autonomous vocabulary extension and could help teachers create new teaching materials. Collocation dictionaries were generally known and used by most respondents as tools to present and practise vocabulary in context. Teachers also highlighted the fact that learners had to be trained to use these electronic dictionaries. Visual dictionaries enabled the learners to develop various memorizing techniques, which were also motivating ways of discovering vocabulary. The tools enabled users to personalise vocabulary lists, to analyse the language structure and to observe some specific features of the language (viz. phrasal verbs). However, corpora were mostly seen as tools that should mainly be used by professionals. They were said to be too complex for beginners since the vocabulary level was too high and the tool itself was not user-friendly. Besides, these tools were evaluated as being too time-consuming and not appropriate to be included in a communicative approach to language teaching. Moreover, they could often be replaced by a simple internet search.

Interaction

The interaction tools were found to be (one of the) most useful for the group. The usability of the sites as well as the way the interaction took place among the students and staff were seen as best enabling and promoting language learning. However, some of them did not want to mix their private lives with their professional lives. Furthermore, the overuse of social networks by the younger students could create some fear amongst the professionals, who were afraid of phenomena like bullying and addiction. This was a fruitful week for discussion topics and the participants used more descriptive language on their assignments for the feedback than they had done previously. Many teachers, however, refused to try out the tasks assigned for this block in their classroom and wrote about the disadvantages of this approach instead.

Writing skills

The writing skills section was well attended in terms of usage and participation. With these tools the teacher could easily address writing practice as well as assign these tools to learners outside the classroom. However, although spell and grammar checkers were considered useful assistants for the learners when correcting their own productions at home or in class, some teachers believed that these technologies were not accurate enough yet. Word lists and frequency counts could be used by teachers to identify the level of any written text, to create vocabulary lists, to highlight salient features in a text, to raise awareness on writing assistants learners can rely on and to focus on the most frequent terms that can be found in written productions. Learners were also able to analyze their writing, find synonyms, correct their productions, and discover recurrent mistakes. Besides, the POS taggers could help them focus on particular aspects of the language in order to improve the consistency of the text. However, most teachers felt that POS taggers were not appropriate for learners, as they did not really master POS in their mother tongue. In addition, this did not really support the communicative approach to language. There were a few comments in the feedback section that the writing section was most varied and that these tools could be used as a backup or alternative source to writing in class. It was particularly relevant for learners who were new to writing in a foreign language and could practise with the tools.

Reading skills

Reading skills technologies were found to be very useful for teachers and learners alike. Although the tools presented were often described as lacking user-friendliness, they seemed to be considered as very useful by the teachers. Resource-linked text builders allowed for more autonomy and personalization with the learners accessing different types of information (viz. definitions, audio of the text, vocabulary exercises). They enabled weaker students to perform challenging tasks and could save some reading time. This technology offered hints about the types of information needed when reading for the learners but also for the teachers. Tools such as *Flair* provided some help for the teachers to identify the level of authentic texts and find a suitable text for their learners. It also gave them the possibility to create vocabulary exercises based on a specific text. Besides, readability indexes and automatic summaries were not recommended by teachers for their students. Still, they could be used to transform complex sentences into simpler ones, to adapt the level of texts and to quickly select a relevant text for the target audience. According to the teachers, students should not use automatic summaries because they were supposed to learn how to summarize a text. However, it could become useful if the summary was for example evaluated and criticised by the learner or if it was used as a reading assistant when browsing a huge amount of text. Lemmatizers were usually integrated in online dictionaries and were therefore considered as redundant. Finally, one teacher suggested creating a chart that matched readability levels with the CEFR levels. With this tool, the teacher could easily address reading in the classroom while the learner could practise these aspects in- and outside school. It was therefore useful because it gives autonomy to the learners and allows for differentiation and having the learner at the centre of the learning process. Moreover, reading applications enabled the teacher to transform material for accessibility. This looked particularly relevant for beginners and students with special education needs.

Other tools (or sharing practices)

In the forum discussions, participants were asked to post other sites they had used for each of the topic weeks. The participants responded by posting examples of other apps as well as websites and how they used them in the classroom. To promote some kind of competition among the participants, the best assignments in the German course were also posted to the forums after the course had been completed. In the French module, many participants were Dutch teachers. In the discussions, lots of tools were therefore dedicated to this language even though it struck all participants that most freely accessible tools concern English language teaching more than any other language. In the UK class, the students shared good practice by requesting and using a glossary of terms that we could all add to. These were by far the best part of the course in terms of participants/teacher adding value to the module.

TRAINING MODULE: SWOT ANALYSIS

In conclusion, all training modules showed many strengths, including the facts that they were easy to access and free. The training module was a good way to share best practices, build community and learn about OER practices. It provided opportunities to discover new types of learning with technologies, create collaboration opportunities with others in the course and possibly even lead to a follow-up module session. There were some weaknesses, too. Some learners lacked computer literacy to sign up and this proved time consuming in terms of problem solving both for the course management and for providing feedback. There were several technical issues and the expertise needed by the teacher required time and skills. Finally, some of the tools were too complex for

inclusion in such a short module. The threats to this module include the facts that some tools can quickly become out of date, as we cannot control the release of new versions.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Easy access to the module Free access to the module Sharing best practices Community Certification OER practice Feedback on the OER practice	Learners' lack of computer literacy Time-consuming (management of the course) Time-consuming (assignment feedback) Technical issues Expertise needed for the teacher More resources for English learning Complexity of some tools
Opportunities	Threats
Discovering learning with technology Future collaboration Follow-up course or 2 nd module session	Out-to-date tools No certification No adaptation to the audience No application from the teachers

TOOLS USED IN THE MODULES

Here is the list of tools used in the 4 training modules:

German module:

<http://www.naturalreaders.com/index.html>
<http://text-to-speech.imtranslator.net>
<http://www.fromtexttospeech.com>
<https://text-to-speech-demo.mybluemix.net>
<http://www.duden.de/>
<http://www.dwds.de/>
<http://dict.uni-leipzig.de/>
http://dict.leo.org/ende/index_en.htm
<http://www.linguee.com/>
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>
<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>
<http://forbetterenglish.com/index.cgi>
<http://www.dle.rae.es/?w=diccionario>
<http://www.tonitraduction.net/>
<http://www.lexicool.com/dictionnaire-ressources-francais.asp>
<http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition>
<http://dvlf.uchicago.edu/mot/sympathique>
<http://www.visuellesynonyme.com/>
<http://www.visualsynonyms.com/>
<http://corpora.uni-leipzig.de/>
<http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/>
<https://www.visualthesaurus.com/>
<https://sourceforge.net/projects/leapcorpus/>
www.dwds.de
<http://www.korpora.org/Limas>
<http://www.ids-mannheim.de/cosmas2/>
<http://www.dwds.de/resource/kerncorpus/>
<https://sourceforge.net/projects/leapcorpus/>
<https://www.linguistik.hu-berlin.de/de/institut/professuren/korpuslinguistik/forschung/falko/standardseite>
<http://wikis.fu-berlin.de/pages/viewpage.action?pagelD=554402458>
<http://www.sploc.soton.ac.uk/>
<http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html>
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collecti- ons/base/>
<http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>
<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>
<http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/research/santa- barbara-corpus>
<http://www.learnercorpusassociation.org/resources/too- ls/locness-corpus/>
Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage
International Corpus of Learner English
<https://www.messenger.com>
<https://www.whatsapp.com>
<https://www.skype.com>
<https://www.podomatic.com>
<https://soundcloud.com>
<http://mixlr.com>
<https://www.edmodo.com>
<https://classroom.google.com>
<https://www.facebook.com>

<https://www.groupme.com>
<https://www.linkedin.com>
<https://www.twitter.com>
<https://www.lang-8.com>
<https://www.learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org>
<https://www.whatsapp.com>
<https://www.pinterest.com>
<https://www.tumblr.com>
<https://www.instagram.com>
<https://www.snapchat.com>
<https://www.flickr.com>
<http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/html/wliste.html>
<http://www1.ids- mannheim.de/kl/projekte/methoden/derewo.html>
<http://www.gut1.de/grundwortschatz/haeufigkeit.html>
http://www.goethe.de/lhr/pro/daz/dfz/dtz_Wortliste.pdf
<http://www.wordfrequency.info>
http://www.writewords.org.uk/word_count.asp
<http://www.wordcounter.com>
<http://www.textfixer.com/tools/online-word- counter.php>
<http://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp>
<http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>
<https://www.jspell.com/public-spell-checker.html>
<https://www.spellchecker.net/spellcheck/>
<http://spellcheckplus.com/>
<http://www.gingersoftware.com/es/download>
<https://www.dwds.de/d/ressources#wortprofil>
<http://www.sfs.uni- tuebingen.de/GermaNet/index.shtml>
<http://www.lextutor.ca/vp/eng/>
<http://englishprofile.org/>
<http://www4.caes.hku.hk/vocabulary/profile.htm>
<http://www.sfu.ca/~msevier/WebVocabularyProfilerCS. htm>
<http://vocabkitchen.com>
<http://www.insightin.com/vocabulary/profiler.php>
<http://www.talp.upc.edu/>
<http://adimen.si.ehu.es/cgi- bin/wei/public/wei.consult.perl>
<http://www.fask.uni- mainz.de/user/rapp/papers/dishtml/main/node82.html>
<http://wortarten.info/>
<http://www.ims.uni- stuttgart.de/projekte/corplex/TreeTagger/>
MBT: <http://ilk.kub.nl/>
<http://www.ims.uni- stuttgart.de/forschung/ressourcen/lexika/TagSets/stts- table.html>
<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/trial.html>
<http://nlp.stanford.edu/software/tagger.shtml>
<http://parts-of-speech.info>
<https://gate.ac.uk/wiki/twitter-postagger.html>
<http://www.dc.fi.udc.es/lfcia/Proyectos/Galena/>

<http://textanalysisonline.com/nltk-wordnet-word-lemmatizer>
<http://textanalysisonline.com/nltk-wordnet-lemmatizer>
<http://tconspectus.pythonanywhere.com/summarization>
<http://www.splitbrain.org/services/ots>
<http://autosummarizer.com/>
<http://freesummarizer.com/>
<http://textsummarization.net/text-summarizer>
<http://www.splitbrain.org/services/ots>
<http://textcompactor.com/>
<http://tconspectus.pythonanywhere.com/summarization>
<http://tioconejo.net/>

https://prezi.com/itjb8pwieza_/sistema-resumidor-traductor-automatico/
<https://www.psychometrica.de/lix.html>
<http://leichtlesbar.ch/html/>
<http://fleschindex.de/berechnen>
<https://readability-score.com/>
<http://read-able.com/>
http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp
<http://purl.org/icall/flair>
http://lextutor.ca/ra_read/
<http://www.lexutor.ca/hyp/>
<http://sifnos.sfs.uni-tuebingen.de/VIEW/>

French module

<http://www.naturalreaders.com/index.html>
<http://text-to-speech.imtranslator.net>
<http://www.fromtexttospeech.com>
<http://text-to-speech-demo.mybluemix.net>
<http://acapela-box.com>
<http://en.pons.com/translate>
http://dict.leo.org/ende/index_en.html
<http://forbetterenglish.com/index.cgi>
<http://www.linguee.com/>
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>
<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>
<http://ozdic.com>
dle.rae.es/?w=diccionario
<http://www.dicesp.com/>
<http://www.duden.de/>
<http://www.dwds.de/>
Projekt Deutscher Wortschatz
<https://www.visualthesaurus.com/>
<http://www.visualsynonyms.com/>
<http://www.visuellesynonyme.com/>
<http://corpora.uni-leipzig.de/>
<http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/>
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/base/>
<http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>
<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>
<http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/research/santa-barbara-corpus>
<http://www.lernercorpusassociation.org/resources/tools/locness-corpus/>
Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage
International Corpus of Learner English
<https://sourceforge.net/projects/leapcorpus/>
www.dwds.de
<http://www.korpora.org/Limas/>
<http://www.ids-mannheim.de/cosmas2/>
<http://www.dwds.de/resource/kerncorpus/>
<https://sourceforge.net/projects/leapcorpus/>
<https://www.linguistik.hu-berlin.de/de/institut/professuren/korpuslinguistik/forschung/falko/standardseite>
<http://wikis.fu-berlin.de/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=554402458>

<http://www.spiloc.soton.ac.uk/>
<http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html>
<https://www.messenger.com>
<https://www.whatsapp.com>
<https://www.skype.com>
<https://www.podomatic.com>
<https://soundcloud.com>
<https://mixlr.com>
<https://hellotalk.com>
<https://gospeaky.com>
<https://www.edmodo.com>
<https://classroom.google.com>
<https://www.facebook.com>
<https://www.groupme.com>
<https://www.linkedin.com>
<https://www.twitter.com>
<https://www.lang-8.com>
<https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org>
<https://www.whatsapp.com>
<https://hellotalk.com>
<https://gospeaky.com>
<https://www.pinterest.com>
<https://www.tumblr.com>
<https://www.instagram.com>
<https://www.snapchat.com>
<https://www.flickr.com>
<http://www.wordfrequency.info>
http://www.writewords.org.uk/word_count.asp
<http://www.wordcounter.com>
<http://www.textfixer.com/tools/online-word-counter.php>
<http://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp>
<http://boek-verslag.nl/woorden-tellen.html>
<http://www.wordcounter.eu>
<http://crr.ugent.be/isubtlx/>
<http://spellcheckplus.com/>
<http://freespellcheckers.com/>
<https://www.jspell.com/public-spell-checker.html>
<http://www.gingersoftware.com/es/download>
<https://www.spellchecker.net/spellcheck/>
<https://www.languagetool.org>
<https://www.nlfacile.com/speller>
<http://www.spelcheck.nl/tekstcontrole>
<http://www.lexutor.ca/vp/eng/>
<http://www4.caes.hku.hk/vocabulary/profile.htm>

<http://www.sfu.ca/~msevier/WebVocabularyProfilerCS.htm>
<http://vocabkitchen.com>
<http://www.insightin.com/vocabulary/profiler.php>
<http://nlp.stanford.edu/software/tagger.shtml>
<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/trial.html>
<http://parts-of-speech.info>
<https://gate.ac.uk/wiki/twitter-postagger.html>
<http://textanalysisonline.com/nltk-wordnet-word-lemmatizer>
<http://textanalysisonline.com/nltk-wordnet-lemmatizer>
<http://autosummarizer.com/>
<http://freesummarizer.com/>
<http://textsummarization.net/text-summarizer>

<http://www.splitbrain.org/services/ots>
<http://textcompactor.com/>
<http://tioconejo.net/>
<http://misterfuu.com/>
<http://www.splitbrain.org/services/ots>
<https://readability-score.com/>
<http://read-able.com/>
http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp
<http://purl.org/icall/flair>
<http://readable.io>
http://lexutor.ca/ra_read/
<http://www.lexutor.ca/hyp/>
<http://sifnos.sfs.uni-tuebingen.de/VIEW/>

English and Spanish modules

<http://www.naturalreaders.com/index.html>
<http://text-to-speech.imtranslator.net>
<http://www.fromtexttospeech.com>
<https://text-to-speech-demo.mybluemix.net>
<https://www.pinterest.com>
<https://www.tumblr.com>
<https://www.instagram.com>
<https://www.snapchat.com>
<https://www.flickr.com>
Messenger
WhatsApp
Skype
Podomatic
SoundCloud
Mixlr
<https://www.edmodo.com>
<https://classroom.google.com>
<https://www.facebook.com>
<https://www.groupme.com>
<https://www.linkedin.com>
<https://www.twitter.com>
<https://www.lang-8.com>
<https://www.learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org>
<https://www.whatsapp.com>
<http://textanalysisonline.com/nltk-wordnet-word-lemmatizer>
<http://textanalysisonline.com/nltk-wordnet-lemmatizer>
http://lexutor.ca/ra_read/
<http://www.lexutor.ca/hyp/>
<http://sifnos.sfs.uni-tuebingen.de/VIEW/>
<http://autosummarizer.com/>
<http://freesummarizer.com/>
<http://textsummarization.net/text-summarizer>
<http://www.splitbrain.org/services/ots>
<http://textcompactor.com/>
<http://tioconejo.net/>
<http://misterfuu.com/>
https://prezi.com/itjb8pwieza_/sistema-resumidor-traductor-automatico/
<http://www.splitbrain.org/services/ots>
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>
<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>
<http://en.pons.com/translate>
http://dict.leo.org/ende/index_en.html
<http://forbetterenglish.com/index.cgi>

<http://www.linguee.com/dle.rae.es/?w=diccionario>
<http://www.duden.de/>
<http://www.dwds.de/>
<http://dict.uni-leipzig.de/>
<http://nlp.stanford.edu/software/tagger.shtml>
<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/trial.html>
<http://parts-of-speech.info>
<https://gate.ac.uk/wiki/twitter-postagger.html>
<http://www.lexutor.ca/vp/eng/>
<http://www4.caes.hku.hk/vocabulary/profile.htm>
<http://www.sfu.ca/~msevier/WebVocabularyProfilerCS.htm>
<http://vocabkitchen.com>
<http://www.insightin.com/vocabulary/profiler.php>
<http://www.wordfrequency.info>
http://www.writewords.org.uk/word_count.asp
<http://www.wordcounter.com>
<http://www.textfixer.com/tools/online-word-counter.php>
<http://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp>