‘An interest in translation and a great addition to the CV!’ An evaluation of learners’ experiences of an online volunteering task

Conference or Workshop Item

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An interest in translation and a great addition to the CV!
An evaluation of learners’ experiences of an online volunteering task

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Lou McGill
Introduction

Contents of the presentation

- Project description
- Theoretical background
- Online volunteer translation
- Open pedagogy
- Evaluation
- Limitations
- Final remarks
The project

Aims & objectives

To engage with real life and current issues

To use existing open resources, tools and communities

To get students to find and generate content instead of providing them with everything

To strengthen information and digital literacy skills
# The project

## Participants, calendar, evaluation

### Participants
- 41 recent languages graduates from the Open University
- 2 academics from the Open University
- 2 facilitators (Associate Lecturers from the Open University)
- 92% define themselves as confident online learners

### Calendar
- Course run for 6 weeks (31 May-10 July 2016)
- The majority of participants (61%) spent between 1 and 4 hours per week, 40% between 4 and 5 hours

### Evaluation
- Experienced external evaluator
- Expectations and experiences of students, facilitators and academics were measured
- Instruments: pre- and post-course questionnaires, forum posts, emails, webinars
Theoretical background

- Open pedagogy
- Student-centered
- Practice-based (Billet, 2015)

- Personalised
- Experiential and situated
- Authentic
“These are assignments that students complain about doing and faculty complain about grading. They’re assignments that add no value to the world – after a student spends three hours creating it, a teacher spends 30 minutes grading it, and then the student throws it away. Not only do these assignments add no value to the world, they actually suck value out of the world. Talk about an incredible waste of time and brain power (an a potentially huge source of cognitive surplus)!” (Wiley, 2013)
Online volunteer translation

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Would you like to practise your French / German / Spanish while subtitling videos as part of an online community of volunteer translators? If you want to have a go at completing the subtitling of a TEDx video from or into your target language, ready to be published for others to enjoy, just click on the link below.

Online volunteer translation

http://loro.open.ac.uk/4802/ TED OTP activity
Language Coordinators

We’re creating a more extensive mentorship program to help language coordinators (LCs) advise new volunteers.

One-year term
LCs serve for one year, and may choose to stay on for a second year as Senior LCs. All LCs (past and present) are distinguished with a badge on TED.com.

Monthly reports
LCs may submit a report covering what’s happening in their communities. Regular communication helps us better support communities’ goals.

Tutorials

- How to sign up
- User roles and workflow
- Subtitle length and reading speed
- How to transcribe
- How to review

Stats

- 108 languages
- 20,010 translators
- 71,689 translations
Advantages of open pedagogy

● Develop professional skills in translating, reviewing, proofreading… in the real world.
● Develop digital skills, collaboration and sharing.
● Network and benefit from feedback from more experienced translators.
● Assemble a visible portfolio of work.
● Choose to work on topics and activities of their interest.
● Increased motivation through choice and making a real contribution.
● Externally sourced resources remain current, up-to-date and relevant (new content, open subtitling platform, guidelines and training videos, etc.)
Subtitled in English

I am my conversations | Manel Muntada | TEDxPlaçadelForum
Translator: Anna Comas-Quinn
Reviewer: Denise R Quivu

Subtitled in Catalan

Com tocar un instrument millora el cervell - Anita Collins
Translator: Marc Isbert
Reviewer: Anna Comas-Quinn

Què son els drets humans universals? - Benedetta Berti
Translator: Elisenda Figuerola
Reviewer: Anna Comas-Quinn

Subtitled in Catalan

El regal del silenci | Nick Seaver | TEDxBeaconStreet
Translator: Anna Comas-Quinn
Reviewer: Marc Isbert

Subtitled in Catalan

Partícules i ones: El misteri central de la mecànica quàntica - Chad Orzel
Translator: Marc Isbert
Reviewer: Anna Comas-Quinn

Subtitled in Catalan

Com treballen els ronyons? - Emma Bryce
Translator: Marc Isbert
Reviewer: Anna Comas-Quinn
The project

Description

Introduction to TED Translation Project

Set-up

Choose a talk & translate it

Reflect on cultural, linguistic and task-related challenges

Refine and submit to TED reviewer

Share with peers and tutors and discuss it
Motivations, expectations, concerns

**Motivations**
- Linguistic practice
- Interest in pedagogy
- Improve skills / knowledge
- Enjoyment

**Expectations**
- Language skills development
- Sounds hard / challenging
- Enjoyment
- Establish connections with other students

**Concerns**
- Language proficiency
- Time management
- Technical proficiency
- Starting something new / unknown
Evaluation: results and discussion

Open content

● The majority of students replied positively, although one of them thought “there were not many videos available for translation from French/Spanish to English.”

● All students replied positively to having choices about which content to use

● 80% had never shared any work online… and 20% only short postings
  ➢ Confidence in what they are sharing (English translation, not translation into the TL)
  ➢ Peer review: welcomed, really useful, although challenging to find time to help others whilst doing your own assignment
  ➢ Sharing work publicly is welcomed as long as the distribution is controlled within a group.
  ➢ It was really useful. My two OU reviewers really made me look at my work again in a different light.
  ➢ Found it exciting.
  ➢ I enjoyed it but there was more pressure to get it right.

→ 22% experienced difficulties accessing content, mainly due to the complexity of TED/Amara registration process, etc.
Evaluation: results and discussion

Learning experience: language and content

Language learning
• 33% very much, 47% quite a bit
• 7% not at all

Translation and subtitling
• Clarify ideas about both disciplines
• Hidden meanings
• Importance of researching cultural significances
• New skills

Others
• Learned about the topic of the talk
• Learned about the Project
Evaluation: results and discussion

Skills development

Autonomy

- All participants responded that “development of my autonomy as a learner” was an important element of this activity
- 14 out of 15 declared “confident in directing their own work”, although some students declared feeling overwhelmed, nervous, etc. at the beginning of the activity
- 40% discussed ideas with tutors “very little” and 20, “not at all”; 53% found their support “very helpful”

Collaboration

- Work with others is not considered as important as “developing my autonomy”
- 67% selected positive responses to the question on the extent to which the activity had improved “learning with others rather than individually”

Research and ICT

- 93% of participants considered they had improved their research and ICT skills by doing this activity
- Laptop and desktop computers were the most used digital devices
- Some students found the activity more difficult than modules at L3 in terms of I.T.
- Only one student experienced very much difficulty with technology or software
- All participants said that “having choices about which online services and technologies to use” was an important element of this activity
Evaluation: results and discussion

Motivation and enjoyment (1)

93% of students indicate that they enjoyed during learning (60% chose “very much”). Only one student (7%) selected “very little”

I think the fact that it is a real piece of work, in the real world, makes it more satisfying and it motivates you to do a really good job. I hoped that it would be a good experience because it combines my language studying with my English writing/editing experience, and it was. It has encouraged me to want to do more translation in future.

This was a great experience. I knew very little about subtitling and had no idea the opportunity existed for me to take part in this. The talks I've listened to have been really interesting. I hope to carry on with this as a hobby.

I didn't know what to expect and I was a little hesitant in fact because I wasn't sure if I was up to the task ....i'm so pleased I chose it and I loved this task! It was brilliant and has ignited an interest in translation!

It's a wonderful linguistic activity with multi-dimensions
## Evaluation: results and discussion

### Motivation and enjoyment (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What students enjoyed the most</th>
<th>Learning new skills: translation, subtitling, problem-solving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making sure the quality of the end result was good enough for public viewing</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What could have improved their experience…</th>
<th>A simplification of the technical aspects (TED/AMARA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The peer-review process (both the internal and the external)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation: results and discussion

Educators’ feedback

- Clarity of their role: from tutors to facilitators
- Concerns about students not being equipped for independent study
- Pedagogically a success and a model of online collaboration
- Exceeded expectations on students’ collaboration, participation and engagement
Evaluation: results and discussion

Summary

Gains

✓ Language skills development (both in mother tongue and target language)
✓ Applied language skills development (translation, subtitling); intercultural communication skills
✓ Know about the TED Open Translation Project
✓ Personal

Drawbacks and constraints

✗ Complexity of TED / Amara platforms
✗ Find suitable content to translate and subtitle
✗ Timescales

Mixed reviews

➢ Peer review
➢ Tutor involvement
Limitations

Participants might not represent the whole student population

Respondents represent only 36.6% of students who signed up for the activity

Pre-course survey was shared with other activities
Final remarks

- Students enjoy tackling “real world” tasks
- Personalization: choice of topic
- Issues with working with external systems
- Tension between providing support and allowing problem-solving skills to be developed
Many thanks!

Any questions or comments?

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