

**Let's Inter-Act!**  
**Innovative Teaching Practices in English Studies**

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IL&C Institute for Language  
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# **Keynote presentation**

# Revisiting mobile learning: Seizing new opportunities for language learning and cultural exploration

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The field of MALL, or Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, has developed based on the premise that mobile devices offer the potential to enhance language learning and literacy learning, as well as cultural exploration. But this potential can be realised in different ways and to different degrees: simply using mobile devices, in and of itself, is not sufficient. This presentation will examine a number of successful mobile language and literacy learning projects, seeking to determine the key factors that underpin their success.

It will be shown that with the emergence of a new generation of mobile context-aware technologies, we can build on the personalised and collaborative learning facilitated by web 2.0 and social media, but we can go much further. There are greater opportunities than ever before to foreground authentic learning in everyday contexts, while simultaneously heightening student engagement through gamified approaches. To capitalise on this potential, it is essential for educators to develop appropriate mobile learning designs.

Drawing on Pegrum's (2014) 3 Mobilities Framework, Burden & Kearney's (2017) Mobile Pedagogical Framework, and Clandfield & Hadfield's (2017) Weak & Strong Interaction Model, this presentation suggests that the optimal mobile learning designs should involve activities where the devices, the learners, and the learning experience are all mobile; where the three constructs of personalisation, collaboration, and authenticity are foregrounded; and where strong interaction complements weak interaction.

The presentation goes on to illustrate the potential of mobile augmented reality (AR) language and literacy learning projects – in the form of games or gamified learning trails – most of which also incorporate elements of cultural exploration. After mentioning well-known North American and European examples, the presentation focuses on recent developments in gamified learning trails in the Asian region. It will include examples of projects from a range of countries such as Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Vietnam, where students learn English and other languages collaboratively in real-world settings, while developing digital literacies and 21st century skills, and exploring culture.

In summary, the paper will demonstrate that with appropriate mobile learning designs, mobile devices can effectively become lenses on learning which open up a range of possibilities for personal, collaborative and authentic learning in everyday settings.

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## **Standard and short presentations**

## **The Podcast Project – An integrated approach to language learning**

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In this presentation we report on an educational project in development, carried out with first-year English majors (level B2) enrolled in the Applied Linguistics programme at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (N=73). The project as a whole took a task-based learning approach: functional, fluent, and accurate language use was practised and enhanced through the creation and development of podcasts, which the students worked on in teams both during and outside class hours. We will delineate the sequence of tasks involved in the project, and share ideas for improving it in the future on the basis of student feedback collected at the end of term as well as our own experience.

## **Giving students’ writing skills a boost: Towards a self-learning platform for an optimized use of online resources**

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This presentation will introduce an ongoing project aimed at improving the writing skills of French-speaking university students majoring in English. It starts from a two-fold observation: (i) writing in English is still problematic for this population of students, who therefore need more training; (ii) individual feedback for large groups of students is time-consuming and may not be particularly rewarding as it “[d]oes not encourage cognitive processing of errors by students” (Gilmore 2009: 364; see also Cobb 1997). Taking these two elements into account, our project seeks to help students improve their writing skills in an *active* and *autonomous* manner, by encouraging and teaching them to make optimal use of online writing tools, whose positive impact on the development of learners’ writing skills has been demonstrated (e.g. Gaskell & Cobb 2004, Todd 2001), especially at an advanced level (Granath 2009).

The project involves two phases. The first one consists in identifying the problems that students encounter during the writing process and in their use (or not) of online writing tools such as dictionaries or corpus interfaces. This will be done by capturing the writing process of the target group during an in-class writing task via keylogging and screen recording, and examining the data thus collected to answer questions such as: when do students make use of online writing tools? how do they use these tools? does the use of these tools help them improve their texts? These findings will help us in the second phase of the project, which consists in developing a self-learning Moodle platform which will provide students with the necessary training to use these tools (see, e.g., Bitchener & Ferris 2012: 159 or O’Sullivan & Chambers 2006 on the importance of appropriate training). The platform will offer demo videos of a range of tools, and an incremental learning course through weekly exercises for students to learn to master the tools and develop habits of use. It will be tailored to the students’ needs since it will focus on the areas that have been identified as problematic for them (linguistic difficulties, but also inadequate use of specific tools).

In the presentation, we will describe the outcome of the first phase of the project, and outline the planned development of the Moodle platform. We will also show how, combined with

regular practice and more traditional teaching methods, the use of this platform should optimize the available resources (including human resources) and empower students to acquire strong and long-lasting skills in writing.

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## **Teaming up in translator education: Simulated translation bureaus as a means of increasing professionalism and employability**

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Quality in translator training has received much attention since the launch of the European Master's in Translation (EMT) network in 2009. The EMT set out their quality requirements for translator training programmes at universities and placed emphasis on professionalisation and employability. The launch of the network has prompted many initiatives to increase professionalism and improve employability rates (e.g. OPTIMALE (2010-2013), OTCT (2014-2016)). This paper aims to present a didactic approach in translator education based on the concept of simulated translation bureaus. This approach, adopted by members of the International Network of Simulated Translation Bureaus (INSTB), aims to integrate authenticity in education by means of professionally-oriented practices in a translation classroom context.

The different members of the network (Ghent University, UC Leuven-Limburg, Swansea University, Antwerp University, Université de Lille-SHS, Turku University, Université de Mons, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, and University of Exeter) have all developed their simulated translation bureaus (or skills labs) to help improve both professionalization and employability by placing students in an authentic experiential learning environment and making them work together as a team to deliver translation projects (Vandepitte 2009, Thelen 2016a, 2016b). Simulated translation bureau experiments thus provide students with practice-oriented tasks, e.g. client contact, project preparation and management, translation and revision, and delivery of the final product.

The paper also aims to describe the different kinds of simulated bureaus/skills labs within the INSTB network. The review of current practices within INSTB member institutions will show that such translation simulation exercises can actually come in different forms, which suggests that the notion of a simulated translation bureau might be considered a cluster concept. The review will further illustrate that, in its many forms, the STB allows budding students to become familiar with professional translation practices, meet relevant stakeholders and acquire natural skills for working with relevant leading edge technological applications.

All formulas have been found to positively affect student motivation and empowerment, and there is a firm belief that they contribute to graduate employability, as skills labs help raise awareness of team processes, get students acquainted with the full spectrum of tasks/activities that can be associated with translation service provision, as well as allowing students to hone essential soft skills.

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## **The flipped classroom: An innovative teaching modality for the acquisition of writing and editing skills**

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In September 2016, the Dean of our faculty at the University of Antwerp urged the teaching staff to introduce innovative alternative teaching modalities in order to meet the needs and practices of the new generation of tech-savvy students. At that stage, the conversion of a blended-learning course for English Master's students, "Aspects of Writing", into a flipped classroom teaching modality was already in process. The course was attended during the period March–May, 2017. Over ten weeks, a group of 23 English L2 students learnt how to improve the quality of writing through a series of awareness-raising editing exercises that sensitised them to the range of possible errors in texts. This presentation will describe the teaching–learning modality and present some findings on its implementation, strengths and weaknesses. What will be shown is that, first, contact sessions were intentionally minimised and, second, the remaining "classes" and related coursework were all conducted virtually. The intention was to encourage learner autonomy and self-directed learning (Knowles 1975) and the formation of an online community of practice among the students (Fuchs & Snyder 2013). A range of strategies was implemented that put experiential learning squarely in the hands of the participants during the flipped experience. Through a combination of media, week by week the students experienced structured learning with the objective of acquiring editing skills and improving writing, including downloadable video/audio clips, an online library of resources

and a suite of online exercises and assignments. It was also possible for the students to communicate with their teacher by email. The core process required the students to critically analyse and evaluate the quality of three prescribed texts in MS Word. One of only three contact sessions was devoted to a teacher-led workshop to illustrate the rubric the students were required to apply systematically when critically analysing the quality of the texts (Renkema & Kloet 2000). Furthermore, the students uploaded to the university's web-based teaching-learning platform their assignments, reflections and a take-home message on each of the course's ten weekly topics. Despite some teething problems, the course met with the overall approval of the participants, who indicated that the content learned and insights gained had helped them to improve the quality of their written work. Finally, this presentation will also share some of the lessons learned from the course, and the opportunities for future renditions, as perceived by the teachers and the students.

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## **Online training module for language professionals: Promoting the uptake of open educational NLP resources in language learning and teaching**

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The presentation reports on the creation (and first year experience) of a 5-week online course aimed at developing awareness of open educational natural language processing (NLP) resources which can be used in (foreign) language teaching and learning.

The course, designed in the framework of the Erasmus+ TELL-OP<sup>1</sup> project, was set up on a Moodle platform and structured into five main blocks, viz. pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, reading, interaction and writing skills. The module was offered in four languages (English, Spanish, German and French) and mainly targeted teachers from Higher Education or adult education. Each block included information on a series of NLP tools presented using key sections containing all the necessary information to get familiar with the tool and be able to use it effectively. The first three sections' headings were, respectively: What is it?, How can it be used?, How does it contribute to language learning?. Those initial sections were followed by concrete examples of open educational resources (OER) using the NLP technology presented and by suggestions for practical use in various teaching/learning contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> TELL-OP is a Strategic Partnership that seeks to promote the take-up of innovative practices in European language learning by supporting personalized learning approaches that rely on the use of ICT & OER. See <http://www.tellop.eu/> for more details.



Participants in the module were encouraged to collaborate using forum discussions. They also received weekly assignments that mainly consisted in giving some feedback on the tools presented. Whilst the module was delivered online, one teacher trainer was in charge of moderating the module<sup>2</sup>. S/he initiated and monitored the forum discussions. The role of the teacher trainer/moderator turned out to be of paramount importance and s/he arose the participants' interest, generated discussions between the users, and provided space and guidance for questions and answers (sharing best practices, giving more information on a particular tool, asking for the participants' opinion, providing teachers with additional ideas/activities, etc.).

The various sections of the module will be illustrated concretely throughout the talk. Now that the module has been taken by a first cohort of about 150 teachers, a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of this type of online teacher training module will also be presented.

## **The TELL-OP app: When data-driven learning meets mobile learning**

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Learning is increasingly turning into a learner-centered process often relying on the use of ICT, where learning can happen anywhere, anytime. The teacher, if any, acts as a facilitator while students become proactive subjects. The app that we will be presenting has been designed in the framework of the Erasmus+ TELL-OP<sup>3</sup> project. It gives learners the possibility to better understand how language works and how richer expression can be achieved. Starting from the learner's written input, the app provides feedback on the text using NLP techniques. The talk will consist in a presentation of the tool, followed by comments on its implementation in higher education.

## **Applying the networking power of Web 2.0 to the classroom: An analysis of online peer interaction**

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Engaging foreign language learners to be active and productive participants in the learning process has become one of the main aims of present-day language learning classrooms. Consequently, educators and tutors have been looking for new ways to facilitate learner engagement and student participation, with varying degrees of success. One of the ways which has gained prominence over the years is the integration of Web 2.0 platforms into the curriculum (Greenhow & Askari 2017). These online spaces have been found to give students

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<sup>2</sup> one teacher trainer per language covered, hence 4 in total.

<sup>3</sup> TELL-OP is a Strategic Partnership that seeks to promote the take-up of innovative practices in European language learning by supporting personalized learning approaches that rely on the use of ICT & OER. See <http://www.tellop.eu/> for more details.

the opportunity to socially and collaboratively interact with fellow learners online, increase motivation and, as a result, bolster peer interaction and peer collaboration (Akbari et al. 2016).

While it has been established that the integration of Web 2.0 in teaching and learning practices requires responsible design principles –catering for the different wants and needs of both students and teachers– there is a need for quantitative analyses on how learners interact in these social networking contexts (Sato & Ballinger 2016). Presenting a research project carried out at the University of Antwerp (Belgium) in which two groups of more than 200 first-year foreign language learning students were introduced to collaborative writing through Facebook, this study explores the communicative functions and thematic nature of the peer interaction process. Participants in the project were given instructions and writing assignments in class, after which they were invited to interact with their peers, review each other’s written work and exchange ideas and opinions on the assignments and the process of writing on a closed Facebook group. As a final step, students were asked to report back to the writing tutor on the insights gained from the peer interaction by including the most helpful comment or answer they received in their writing assignment.

Using the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1978), combined with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2010), the communicative functions and thematic nature of the peer interaction process were determined. The analysis revealed that all learners participated in the peer interaction process and that learners take up different roles over time. These roles revolve around four functional components of language: cognition, metacognition, organisation and social functioning.

This study demonstrates that both learner participation and learner roles are dynamic in such social networking spaces online, and that, by giving learners specific instructions and language tasks to perform through Web 2.0, learners’ overall engagement with a foreign language can be improved.

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# Using self-regulated learning to support learner autonomy in academic writing development

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Students entering university aspire to become part of an academic community. To this end, they are required to develop their academic literacy, the development of which requires them to be autonomous to a certain extent (cf. Van de Poel 2008). This means that they should have the awareness, knowledge and skills to take responsibility for the development of their own academic literacy. It is often argued that students need support in developing their autonomy (cf. Machaal 2015, Nakata 2014). For this reason, it is essential that approaches to teaching academic literacy are re-examined and rethought to include guiding students in their development towards autonomy. Self-regulated learning is one such approach.

In the academic year 2016-2017, training in the use of self-regulation strategies was integrated into an academic literacy course, ACADwrite, at the University of Antwerp to support students towards becoming co-owners of their learning process. A group of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bachelor English majors participated in the course, which pursues a skill-based approach with an emphasis on raising language awareness (Van de Poel 2008).

This presentation details how training in metacognitive (identifying learning needs, setting goals, planning, monitoring and evaluating) and social (seeking social assistance, peer review in particular) strategies was integrated into the course design. It then reports on the strengths and weaknesses of the approach as applied in practice. Finally, the effects of the training on the students' use of these self-regulation strategies and their academic writing proficiency are discussed.

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## **Rethinking pronunciation teaching practices – A case study**

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The following presentation is based on the observation that pronunciation is often the “**neglected party**” in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching (Gilakjani 2012, Szpyra-Kołowska 2015). When it is taught, it is often via repetition drills at the discrete word or phrase level rather than within a broader communicative approach. The aim of this presentation is twofold: (1) it takes stock of the place given to pronunciation in multi-skill EFL textbooks; (2)

it subsequently proposes a **blended learning method** in teaching pronunciation based, among others, on interactive transcripts of real-life presentation videos and learner self-recording. The method was tried at the University of Antwerp (UA) to assist first-year intermediate to advanced Dutch-speaking EFL learners in the development of their pronunciation skills, including self-assessment and awareness raising.

The presentation starts off with an overview of the **frequency and type of pronunciation activities** currently found in several representative EFL textbooks, including *Inside Out* (Macmillan) and *English Unlimited* (Cambridge). We then present the innovative **blended learning method** (face-to-face sessions and online work) implemented at the UA. The face-to-face sessions zoomed in on the teaching of segmentals proper (viz. vowels, consonants, etc). The online work aimed to complement the face-to-face sessions by approaching pronunciation from a communicative “accuracy-fluency” perspective (Celce-Murcia et al. 2010). The UA students were required to go through a **pronunciation file** which included a selection of oral texts from the British Council (<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/listen-and-watch>) and from the TED-talks website (<https://www.ted.com/>). All texts came hand-in-hand with a pronunciation model and an (interactive) transcript marked at the suprasegmental level. The students were required to listen to the selected texts, record themselves using the Audacity<sup>4</sup> programme or their mobile phone recorders, and upload their productions onto the course platform on Blackboard<sup>5</sup>. One of the main objectives of asking the learners to consciously monitor their output was to help empower them by developing self-assessment and awareness raising skills.

We further argue that pronunciation feedback should be provided by using an **objective assessment grid** which targets segmentals and suprasegmentals together with communicative characteristics (rhythm, fluency, understandability) and that the feedback should not only include **teacher assessment** but also **self-assessment** and **peer evaluation**. Another strength of the pronunciation method implemented at the UA is that it was successfully used in a large group of learners (over 150 students) and simultaneously enabled the collection of a **pronunciation database of intermediate to advanced Dutch-speaking EFL learners** which will help identify the pronunciation profile of this learner population.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.audacityteam.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.blackboard.com/learning-management-system/blackboard-learn.aspx>

# **Workshop presentations**

## **Audience Response Systems (“clickers”), or how to enhance interaction with and between students**

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In recent years, the use of clickers (also called Audience Response Systems, Classroom Communication Systems, Electronic Voting Systems or zappers) as pedagogical tools to enhance interaction has been expanding in higher education. Such systems allow students to instantly interact with their teachers and peers by answering questions or posting comments via specialised individual keypads or, more commonly, the students’ own laptops, tablets, or mobile phones. After a brief research-based overview of the main forms and advantages of clicker-integrated instruction, this hands-on workshop will focus on three commonly used software-based systems: Kahoot, Socrative and Wooclap. Participants will learn how to build and present effective clicker questions and experiment using the systems.

## **Literary terminology online and in the classroom**

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The ALL (*Algemeen Letterkundig Lexicon*) is an online open-access reference work offering definitions and examples relating to literary terminology in Dutch. Having a strong (albeit not exclusive) pedagogical focus, the project has been designed with the needs of teachers and students in mind. One of its strengths is that it is fully embedded with the DBNL (Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren, now hosted by the [Dutch] Royal Library at The Hague), with many hundreds of links to the wealth of primary and secondary texts contained in this massive digital library. Putting into practice a very comprehensive understanding of “literature” and its study, the ALL covers literary genres, narratology, literary and critical concepts, prosody and so on, but also stylistics, rhetoric, theatre studies, codicology, text edition, book history, and several more fields.

The ALL was launched in 2012. There have been five updates since, each of which coming with new terms, entries and references added to the database, but also with new functional features, such as audio fragments and visual illustrations. Two new features were made operational in the recent 2017 release. One of them is a thematically organized index, intended to help users deal with any onomasiological problems they may experience (meaning  $\Rightarrow$  term: *what is the term that designates such or such a literary phenomenon?*) – in addition to the semasiological ones (term  $\Rightarrow$  meaning: *what does such or such a term mean?*), for which the traditional alphabetical format suffices. The other new feature is the possibility for users to download pdfs with thematic selections of terms; they may thus generate separate partial dictionaries such as a dictionary of poetry, a dictionary of rhetoric, a dictionary of literary genres, a dictionary of literary theory, and so forth.

The objectives of the workshop will be to very briefly sketch the origin and development of the project from a modest book project in the 1970s to an ambitious digital tool covering 4500+ terms; to illustrate the ALL’s terminological range and comment on the multiple ambiguities

besetting the notion “literary term”; to briefly demonstrate the ALL’s structure, search options and other functional features, and compare it with similar online resources (Wikipedia included); to explore how a work like this could be used in didactic settings; and to invite critical discussion about possible further developments and applications of the project.

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## ***Let the inmates run the asylum*** **Thiagi’s framegames in an educational context**

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Sivasailam Thiagarajan has worked as a Resident Mad Scientist at the Thiagi Group (as he calls himself) where he has developed a plethora of interactive strategies to improve human performance. Through this workshop, I would like to draw upon Thiagi’s famous motto “Let the inmates run the asylum”.

Based on Earl Stevick’s conception of “what goes inside and between” the students during a learning process, I would like to share a workshop with the colleagues of the BAAHE using the famous game “Group scoop”. This brainstorming game will deal with one central question that is paramount for all the participants of this conference: “How to adopt innovative teaching practices in English studies?”

The session will be highly experiential for the participants, as they will have the opportunity to engage in a gamified brainstorming. This experience will enable us to reflect on some pedagogical issues related to motivation and engagement in a gamification context. The presentation will also include theoretical inputs on Thiagi’s so-called framegames in the light of instructional design.

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