Deliverable 38 e
International workshop on policy for OER and less used languages
25 April 2014, Ljubljana, Slovenia
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<tr>
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| **Status** | Final |
| **Nature of the deliverable** | E – Event |
| **Dissemination level** | PU = Public |
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1. Summary of the event

To have input for WP3 “Nurture the international policy making process by stimulating the debate on challenges that face less used languages”, ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with the Open CourseWare Consortium, OCWC, (later Open Education Consortium, OEC) organized a workshop as an open session 13:30 – 15:00 on Friday, 25 April 2014, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, as a part of the OCWC Global Conference.

The workshop was coordinated and a presentation made by Gard Titlestad, Secretary General ICDE, and the outcome was summarised by Mary Lou Forward, Executive Director OCWC.

2. Target audience and impact

Participants at the OCWC conferences are often international experts in Open Education and Open Education Resources. Approximately 15 participants from most regions of the world took part in the workshop which gave input to ICDE’s work on the policy paper (policy brief) on OER in Less used Languages.

The workshop participants delivered input to the policy-making process in two buzz-sessions, 5 smaller group discussing the questions posted by Gard Titlestad in his intervention. In the end, the outcome was summarised by Mary Lou Forward.

3. Outcomes

The summary of the outcome is:

1. Observations with OER and less used languages

Paradox: If you want to produce widely used materials, it makes sense to use English, but if you want to express cultural identity and social issues, produce in local language but it will be used less often.

Imposition of an external/dominant language is both an opportunity to learn another language because it provides more connection to the rest of the world and allows the
possibility of migration, but at the same time there’s a loss of identity and erosion of culture.

Small language OERs are usually of lower quality. (for example Slovenian OER are less good than others). What are the consequences? If someone can’t find good resources in their language they will seek others. Local lang resources may not get enough critical mass to be sustainable.

Importance of open, allows translation and localization of materials.

Less common lang materials can help bridge the diaspora.

MOOCs are being produced in English even if the teacher speaks another common or uncommon language. There’s a need to justify the cost of production through a high number of student users, and the audience is largest in English, which is also the language of the biggest platforms.

2. What does this mean for policy?

Look at the role of translation in preserving language. Should policies encourage translation from other languages, like English, into the less commonly used lang? Should materials produces in less common languages be translated into English? Must address the usability of materials that are produced in less common languages or there may not be incentive to continue producing these materials. Translation is more than just changing words from one lang to another. Cultural translation is also important, adding relevant examples, using relevant frameworks.

Some think it’s desirable for OER projects to be designed with cultural neutrality in mind. Try to make them devoid of cultural bias. Others think the cultural elements is one of the things that makes OER attractive – the opportunity to learn about culture as well as content through shared materials. Translation of language is not translation of context. It’s not that OER should be not culturally bound, but rather that cultural context needs to explained.

If you produce in a less commonly used lang, you may be excluded from the promise of international conversations unless you explicitly provide that channel. The goal of collaboration with OER is important.

If less common lang OERs are lower quality, it will be hard to improve because materials are not widely accessed for critique. Need to think about some kind of review/approval process.

Incentives for faculty to produce OER in less commonly used languages is important, needed.

Educational impact of OER in general is very small. OER in less common languages may have better uptake if seen as OER for lifelong learning and for the language diaspora.

Design guidelines for making widely adaptable OER will make it much easier to make the adaptations and encouraging to those who want to produce materials in less used languages. Design of OER for easier translation from a technological perspective will help with translation.
How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?

Workshop
The OCW Consortium global conference, Ljubljana 25 April 2014
Gard Titlestad
Secretary General
International Council for Open and Distance Education, ICDE

ICDE and OER

- Partnership on OER with UNESCO
- ICDE Chairs on OER – global network
  - Fred Mulder, Rory McGreal, Wayne MacIntosh
  - + 2 more soon
- Partnership on open education with OCWC (ex. Open Praxis at this conference), European Commission and others
- Prepares global monitoring together with partners
- BERTA: Bringing Educational Resources to Teachers in Africa (OER as OCW - online)
- Participate in concrete projects

Tentative title: “Challenges and opportunities for less used languages. A global and European perspective. Recommendations for governments and educational institutions”
Participants next WS 28 April in Oslo:

- Tomas Juliard, President, Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO, Member of Research and Higher Education, Norway
- Vehid Ali Akbari, Chancellor, Qazvin Azad University, Iran
- Mohammad Shojaei, Dean of Teacher Education, Knowledge University, Iran
- Lee Uk Choi, Director, General Secretariat, Asia Society, South Korea

- Åse W. Busk, Senior Manager Learning, The Norwegian School, Student R member of the Executive Board, Norway
- Karl Colen, Programme Specialist for Open Educational Resources, UNESCO
- Marianne Garbelt, Secretary General, The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions, Sweden
- Tomas West, Senior Advisor, External Relations and Communication, University of Lapland, Finland, Coordinator, Nordic OER network
- Christian Korsnes, Norwegian High-Learning Institute, Trondheim, Norway
- Vision Jean Ives, President, Chief Executive Officer, CommonSense - City University Shanghai Institute & Training Networks, Canada

- Tian Mansoor Al Anwar, Tora Aasland, President, Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO
- Maxim Jean-Louis, President, Nyenrode Business School, Netherlands
- Tore Hoel, Senior Advisor, Oslo and Akershus University College
- Chris$an+Hjort+Lund,
- Marianne Abel+Caine,
- June M.+Breivik,
- Development Manager
- William+Tait,

Vision for OER

“For the first time in human history we have the tools to enable everyone to attain all the education they desire.”

(Wiley, Green, & Soares, 2012)

Dramatically bringing down the cost of education with OER: How open education resources unlock the door to free learning.

Expectations to OER

“OERs have the potential to solve the global education crisis and contribute to sustainable economic growth”

Sir John Daniel, former CEO for Commonwealth of Learning and David Killion, US ambassador to UNESCO said in Guardian in July 2012

And…….reality

- “Concerning OER open for adaptation and innovation regarding less use languages, the emerging landscape seems rather static and OER are scarce.”

— Sylvi Vigmo, Director of Studies, Department of Education, Communication and Learning, University of Gothenburg – findings to be presented 28 April 2014.
Definition

- Less used languages are languages such as Norwegian, Swedish, Slovenian, Xhosa and Zulu which find themselves needing to contend with a fast evolving educational landscape currently dominated by English. Less used languages also include regional and minority languages.

Internet and languages

- "Of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken today, some 2,500 are generally considered endangered. Here we argue that this consensus figure vastly underestimates the danger of digital language death, in that less than 5% of all languages can still ascend to the digital realm. We present evidence of a massive die-off caused by the digital divide."

Size does not (necessarily) matter!

- The example of some 2–3 m 
  
- And Faroese, with less than 50 k speakers, but with a high quality Wikipedia

Content languages for websites

as of 12 March 2014

Ref: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_used_on_the_Internet
The same picture is provided by the OER Policy Registry, which shows an overwhelming over-representation in policies from the US and UK.

http://wiki.creativecommons.org/OER_Policy_Registry
What are the consequences?

- What are the consequences for education if the OER base in less used languages is relative weak?
- And consequences for languages?
- Other consequences? (E.g. for innovation etc.)

Preliminary:

Main findings

1. Lacking common ground – interpretation to open
2. Creative Commons (CC) and Open Licensing (OL) – less explicit
3. OER linked to “open” and “accessible”
4. Engagement from grass-root level to Ministries and Agencies of Education – but few national incentives
5. Restricted innovative scope of OER and language use

Ref: Sylvi Vigmo, Gothenburg University, WP2 leader

Questions

- What are your observations regarding OER and less used languages?
- Which issues would you suggest arise from those observations?
- Any suggestions for future policy recommendations?
5. Other material (Invitation, background and news article)

Invitation

Invitation:

International workshop on policy for OER and less used languages

ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with the OCWC are organizing a workshop to be held as an open session 13:30 – 15:00 on Friday, 25 April:

How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?

The event will deliver input to the assessment of the situation for open educational resource around the globe with particular reference to less used languages.

Definitions

Less used languages are languages such as Norwegian, Swedish, Slovenian, Xhosa and Zulu which find themselves needing to contend with a fast evolving educational landscape currently dominated by English. Less used languages also include regional and minority languages.

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are defined by UNESCO as any type of educational materials in the public domain or with an open licence. The nature of these open materials means that anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share them.

Scope

Focus on:

• What is the situation when it comes to OER and less used languages?
• What issues arise from that situation - and how could they be met?
Also with reference to:

- How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?
- What policies are favourable to the uptake of quality OER and quality open educational practices in less used language communities?

The workshop will provide input to a working policy paper on OER and challenges and opportunities for less used languages in a global, European, Nordic and national perspective.

**Participants**

Participants invited to give a short intervention in the workshop should be prepared for a 2 – 5 minutes presentation describing the situation for OER in less used languages in his/her country or region, and suggest which issues that arises from that situation.

**Practical information**

- 13:30 -15:00, Friday, 25 April 2014
- The workshop will consist of a series of prepared interventions of 2-5 minutes each, followed by discussions
- The language of the workshop is English

**Organizers**

The workshop is organized by ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with the OCWC.

More information on LangOER, supported by the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme, OER and less used languages:

More information on LangOER: [http://langoer.eun.org/about](http://langoer.eun.org/about)


Workshop coordinator: Gard Titlestad, ICDE and LangOER, Titlestad@icde.org

The LangOER project is funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Gard Titlestad
Secretary General
International Council for Open and Distance Education

Mary Lou Forward
Executive Director
OpenCourseWare Consortium
Background

Background note:

International workshop on policy for OER and less used languages

*We are in the beginning of a process to survey, analyse, define and suggest what should be done regarding Open Educational Resources – OER, and less used languages.*

Why?

There are great expectations to OER, for example:

“OERs have the potential to solve the global education crisis and contribute to sustainable economic growth”

Sir John Daniel, former CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning and David Killion, US ambassador to UNESCO, The Guardian newspaper, July 2012:


This statement came just a few weeks after the UNESCO led Open Educational Resources Congress had passed its historic declaration on OER, that calls on governments worldwide to openly license publicly funded educational materials for public use.

UNESCO believes that universal access to high quality education is key to the building of peace, sustainable social and economic development, and intercultural dialogue. Open Educational Resources provide a strategic opportunity to improve the quality of education as well as facilitate policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

The European Commission launched the initiative Opening up Education in September last year. The main goal is to stimulate ways of learning and teaching through ICT and digital content, mainly through the development and availability of OER.

One seeks solutions for open technologies that grant access to education for everyone and allow:

- students to build knowledge from open and free sources other than their teachers and institutions, and with different methods;
- everyone to engage in learning/study groups, thus creating learning communities beyond their classrooms;
- make personalisation and customisation of education a much easier task;
- teachers to create communities of practice to exchange teaching materials and best practices;
- provide access to a wider range of educational resources across borders and languages.

The recent developments in MOOCs, Massive Open Online Courses, issued as free quality online education from prestigious American universities such as Harvard, MIT and Stanford, have put focus on the great opportunities inherent in Open Education.
The reality is different, at least for less used languages:

“Concerning OER open for adaptation and innovation regarding less used languages, the emerging landscape seems rather static and OER are scarce.”

Sylvi Vigmo, Director of Studies, Department of Education, Communication and Learning, University of Gothenburg – findings to be presented 28 April 2014.

To shed light on this, to map the situation, consequences and analyse possible future perspectives ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with the Nordic OER network are arranging this workshop to discuss:

- What is the situation when it comes to OER and less used languages?
- What issues arise from that situation - and how could they be met?
- How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?

The event will deliver input to the assessment of the situation for open educational resource around the globe, in Europe and the Nordic countries with particular reference to less used languages.

Definitions

Less used languages are languages such as Norwegian, Swedish, Slovenian, Xhosa and Zulu which find themselves needing to contend with a fast evolving educational landscape currently dominated by English. Less used languages also include regional and minority languages.

http://icde.org/b7C_wRnGxt.jps

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are defined by UNESCO as any type of educational materials in the public domain or with an open licence. The nature of these open materials means that anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share them. OERs range from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video and animation.

http://unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/open-educational-resources/what-are-open-educational-resources-oers

The OER phenomenon also embodies the underlying open, creative, cooperative process itself, one that enables continuous rapid improvement in the quality of both learning and teaching


Languages and the Internet – the threat from a digital disease leading to mass mortality? Or an opportunity? Policies as a force for breaking the cycle?

“Of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken today, some 2,500 are generally considered endangered. Here we argue that this consensus figure vastly underestimates the danger of digital language death, in that less than 5% of all languages can still ascend to the digital realm. We present evidence of a massive die-off caused by the digital divide.”
“A typical example is Piedmontese, still spoken by some 2–3 m people in the Torino region, and even recognized as having official status by the regional administration of Piedmont, but without any significant digital presence. More closed communities perhaps have a better chance: Faroese, with less than 50 k speakers, but with a high quality Wikipedia, could be an example. There are glimmers of hope, for example 40,000 downloads for a smartphone app to learn West Flemish dialect words and expressions, but on the whole, the chances of digital survival for those languages that participate in widespread bilingualism with a thriving alternative, in particular the chances of any minority language of the British Isles, are rather slim.”


However, in a 2009 UNESCO publication on measuring linguistic diversity on the Internet, it is stated that:

“Given the current situation of the planet, the lack of policy for protection against a reduction in biological diversity could harm the collective future. The same question could be asked for cultural diversity, and warrants the team attention. The table (see table at the end of this note) explicates the implications of exposure to and presence on the Internet for each language category. “

Furthermore:

“The main message arising from this table is the need for language policies to be established”.

The latest (2011) statistics of Internet users per language is shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages and education</th>
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<tr>
<td>The importance of offering education in a nation’s mother tongue language/s cannot be overestimated in our time. This is why for example the Nordic countries have agreed on a declaration promoting “parallelspråklighet” in higher education. “Parallelspråk policy” basically means to treat for example English and Danish as equal languages without one of them dominating the other.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**OER**

We have no statistics or clear overview of the production and uptake of OER and Open Educational Practices (OEP).

However, we have some indications, for example illustrated by the map below, which illustrate the impact of OER. It is maintained by the OER Research Hub project. The purpose is to help people understand the impact of OER.

The map indicates an overwhelming over-representation of OER produced in English.

All project collaborations address two key hypotheses:

- Use of OER leads to improvement in student performance and satisfaction.
- The open aspect of OER creates different usage and adoption patterns than other online resources.
Yellow indicates verification of the hypotheses.

Source: http://oerresearchhub.org/evidence/oer-impact

The same picture is provided by the OER Policy Registry, which shows an overwhelming over-representation in policies from the US and UK: http://wiki.creativecommons.org/OER_Policy_Registry

**The situation for OER and less used languages in Europe - LangOER**

LangOER has surveyed the situation and finds that less used languages face the risk of being linguistically and culturally marginalized. For learning languages and culture, there are few OER available. On the other hand some languages spoken by a great number of people, being quite widespread, still have few OERs.

The overall picture emerging of national approaches to OER is characterized by diversity; incentives for initiatives and explicit connections to ministries and national educational agencies seem uncommon. Some national approaches are connected to online spaces such as blogs and thus signal engagement in OER for less used languages as driven by communities. An OECD Working Paper from 2012 indicates that the emergence of OER is evenly distributed across educational levels. There are few examples of national strategies or policies comprising OER.

Source: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/open-educational-resources_5k990rjhvtlv-en
Strictly following UNESCO’s definition of OER, reveals that what is referred to as OER, is to a great extent characterised by typical language learning resources such as dictionaries, online books in digital libraries, repositories, course material on-line, audio and video material, publications about OER, and resources targeting practice of specific linguistic items in exercises.

The framing of OER is generally contextualised together with open education, open learning, access and creative commons licensing. Concerning OER open for adaptation and innovation regarding less used languages, the emerging landscape seems rather static and OER are scarce.

Main findings indicate we lack common ground, the licensing issue is not always made explicit, which restricts uptake. Moreover, OER are connected to open learning, and accessibility as an implicit subcategory. Few national incentives paired with communities’ engagement point to the challenge of a shared enterprise focusing on less used languages. In particular, the scope for less used languages indicates a restricted approach regarding the innovative potential of OER.

Future challenges point to language as contextual and cultural, and for explicit national incentives to have an impact. In particular, sustainability and quality for OER for less used languages need be extensively addressed to enable uptake and development. For innovation and for targeting pedagogical challenges, educators’ involvement is indicated as integral.

The LangOER network, consisting of 9 partners, is a three-year long project (2014-2016) funded by the European Commission (LifeLong Learning Programme). The partners represent linguistic expertise in the following languages: Frisian, Dutch, Greek, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, and French. Additional European languages are: Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, Estonian, Welsh, Italian, Swedish, English, German and Finnish are being mapped to increase our understanding of the OER landscape.

Organizers

The workshop is organized by ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with OCW Consortium.

More information on LangOER, supported by the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme: http://langoer.eun.org/about

More information on ICDE: http://www.icde.org/en/about/

More information on the OCW Consortium: http://www.openedconsortium.org/

The LangOER project is funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
For reflection:

Table 1: Categorization of languages for cyberspace policies requirements

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<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DOES THE INTERNET HERALD AN OPPORTUNITY?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Main spoken languages(^1)</td>
<td>The Internet could increase the online presence of these languages, especially during a transition period when the repatriation of Internet users by language is not even due to the digital divide. Note: the thesis here is that this transitory period has been over for the English language as of a few years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official languages covering more than one developed country (like Italian or Dutch)</td>
<td>There is an opportunity to be seized in the virtual world. The “international” status of these languages shall facilitate trust between speakers to create easy cross-border relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official languages spoken in only one developed country (like Norwegian, Greek, Danish or Japanese)</td>
<td>There is a need for a vigorous virtual linguistic policy to support a presence in the virtual world comparable or stronger than that in the real world. Despite having a sense of longevity in relation to the place of such a language in the world, its speakers may feel a barrier for international relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local languages of developed countries (like Sardinian, Galician, Welsh, or Frisian)</td>
<td>These languages are threatened by pressure from both English and their respective national languages. The diagnostic is uncertain without a virtual linguistic policy. Each case varies and depends on specificities, although the case of Catalan is to be followed as a success story, both at virtual and non-virtual level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingua franca of speakers of some developing countries (like Hausa, Quichua, Pulaar or Swahili)</td>
<td>A positive future shall be possible where the digital divide is really overcome and virtual linguistic policies are defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages of a developing country, that actually cover more than one country, but are only used by native speakers (like Aymara, Guarani or creoles)</td>
<td>Theoretically, a positive future should be possible where the digital divide is really overcome. However, there is a presently a correlation between lack of access to computers and the issue of belonging to indigenous communities, which does not give any sign of changing any time soon. The case of Paraguay where Guarani is given resources following its declared status as an official language is to be followed with interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official languages of a unique developing country (like Slovenian or Albanian)</td>
<td>They are under strong pressure from both English and respective powerful regional languages, which could trigger negative prospects in the absence of a virtual policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local languages of developing countries (like Chibacano, Maya or Mapuche)</td>
<td>If the language is provided with the appropriate linguistic tools (and first a normalized and stable system for writing and grammar), a linguistic policy focusing the production of local content could help. However there are not many examples today of this kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages at risk of disappearing (like Ainu)</td>
<td>The Internet could, at worst, become a formidable tool for conservation of the written or oral patrimony; or at best, accelerator of policies for language adaptation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages very seriously at risk of disappearing (like Yagan)</td>
<td>The Internet could at least allow preservation of the patrimony of that language, if digitalization is undertaken soon enough.</td>
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News article

Open Education for a Multicultural World

The Open Courseware Consortium launched its new name, The Open Education Consortium, at its recent Global Conference held in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

ICDE, together with the Consortium arranged a workshop at the conference on the theme "How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?".

ICDE's open access scientific journal, Open Praxis, has also published key papers from the event in its latest issue.

Rory McGreal, ICDE Chair in OER; Mary Lou Forward, Executive Director OCWC, Inés Gil Jaurena, Editor Open Praxis with Gard Titlestad in Slovenia

ICDE workshop

Approximately 15 participants from most regions of the world took part in the workshop which gave input to ICDE’s involved in the LangOER partnership. See related article and links to background documents. The workshop participants delivered input to the policy-making process in two buzz-sessions and the outcome was summarized by Mary Lou Forward, Executive Director OCWC. The workshop gives, together with the wider workshop organized in Oslo 28 April, input to the drafting of a policy paper on OER and less used languages.