

State-of-the-art report for teachers

A review of tools for speaking

Project Deliverable no. 3

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1 Introduction

Books and book chapters, journal articles, blog posts, discussion forums, projects outputs dealing with the teaching and learning of spoken skills abound, as do tools enabling quality online spoken production and interaction. From a business model and technological point of view, and although they don't always offer an integrated technological solution, most of these technologies can be seen as SpeakApps competitors¹. From a pedagogical perspective, they illustrate the possibilities that are now open to language teachers and learners for engineering educational affordances² for the extensive and creative practice of a wide range of spoken skills.

Contrary to tools being developed by SpeakApps, most of the technologies and tools that are presented here were never designed with language teachers and learners in mind. Yet, they have unleashed creative approaches to the teaching of spoken skills by innovative language teachers, learning technologists, and teacher trainers. They allow for the (re-)creation of communication situations that mirror those social, educational, and professional situations that our language learners will need to handle outside the classroom (Council of Europe, 2001). They also provide the medium for the deployment of action-oriented approaches to language learning as strongly encouraged by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001).

In the last decade, action-oriented approaches to language have indeed attracted a lot of interest among language professionals in general and CALL researchers and practitioners in particular (see for example Guichon, 2006; Guichon & Nicolaev, 2009; Nissen, 2011). Action-oriented approaches “[view] users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents’, i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action” (Council of Europe, 2001: 9). In the context of technology mediated language learning, the theoretical underpinnings of such approaches increasingly draw on sociocultural and cultural historical activity theoretical approaches to language teaching and learning (see for example Blin, 2010; Blin & Appel, 2011; Blin & Thorne, 2011) and place both teacher and learner agency at the centre of curriculum and task design (Davydov, Slobodchikov & Tsukerman, 2003; Engeström, 2005; van Lier, 2007; Rickard, Blin & Appel, 2006; Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011).

The notion of task is central to action-oriented approaches to language learning and can take many different meanings depending on the Second/Foreign Language Learning paradigm espoused by researchers, developers or teachers. A detailed exploration of the notion of task is thus beyond the scope of this document and will be addressed in more depth in the context of Workpackages 3 and 4. For the time being, we will retain the Council of Europe's (2001) definition:

Tasks are a feature of everyday life in the personal, public, educational or occupational domains. Task accomplishment by an individual involves the strategic activation of specific competences in order to carry out a set of purposeful actions in a particular domain with a clearly defined goal and a specific outcome [...]. Tasks can be extremely varied in nature, and may involve language activities to a greater or lesser extent, for example: creative (painting, story writing), skills based (repairing or assembling something), problem solving (jigsaw, crossword), routine transactions, interpreting a role in a play, taking part in a discussion, giving a presentation, planning a course of action, reading and replying to (an e-mail) message, etc. A task may be quite simple or

¹ See *Towards a sustainable business and exploitation plan - Interim Report*. Project Deliverables 12/13, December 2011.

² For a discussion of affordances for language learning, see van Lier (2004).



extremely complex (e.g. studying a number of related diagrams and instructions and assembling an unfamiliar and intricate apparatus). A particular task may involve a greater or lesser number of steps or embedded sub-tasks and consequently the boundaries of any one task may be difficult to define. (Council of Europe, 2001: 157)

The next section proposes a brief review of the most commonly used tools for speaking. It is followed by a short section offering further information, ideas and tips. This last section is dynamic and will be augmented throughout the lifecycle of the project, and later by the SpeakApps community. With this definition of task in mind, we invite readers of this *Review of tools for speaking* to keep an open mind and to unleash their own creativity in order to create new horizons of possibilities for the practice of spoken skills within and beyond the boundaries of their classrooms.

2 Selected tools for oral production and interaction

This section provides an overview of available tools and applications commonly used by language professionals. Technologies used for the practice of spoken skills can be divided into three broad categories according to the type of practice they can promote:

- **Production:** technologies in this category can be used for the recording and editing of audio or video files, that can then be used, shared, and “mashed up” (i.e. re-used to create new media) by other users, within and beyond the boundaries of the physical or virtual classroom via resources sharing and presentation applications.
- **Asynchronous interaction:** technologies in this category are Web 2.0 applications that can be used for the sharing of individually or collectively produced media files (audio and/or video) and that also offer extensive social networks functionalities such as ranking, liking, commenting, linking, etc. Interaction is thus multimodal and asynchronous, although text chat may also be available on social network sites such as Facebook, Ning sites, etc.
- **Synchronous interaction:** this category includes technologies that facilitate synchronous interaction via a webcam or an avatar, such as videoconferencing applications and 3D virtual worlds (e.g. Second Life, Open Sim, etc.). Most technologies in this category offer opportunities for multimodal synchronous interactions as well as tools for recording the interactions.

2.1 Production

Voice recording software (such as *Windows Voice Recorder*) and **video recording software** can be found or easily installed on any device, such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops or desktops, as well as mp3 or mp4 players/recorders and ipods. Sound files can then be uploaded to a variety of platforms, such as a website, a blog, a social network, a resource sharing site (e.g. *MyPodcast*, *Podomatic*, *YouTube*, etc.) or the institutional LMS (e.g. *Moodle*, *Blackboard*, etc.). Sound files can also be integrated into a presentation (e.g. *PowerPoint*, *Prezi*, etc.), a video clip or movie, or simply edited using recording and editing software such as *Audacity* or *Garageband*. Video editing software (*MovieMaker* or *iMovie*, *Camtasia Studio*, *Adobe Premiere Pro* or *Adobe Premiere Elements*, *Pinnacle Studio*, etc.) can be used to edit video recordings, which have been directly recorded with a webcam or camera, or video/screen captures (*Camtasia Studio* or *Camtasia for Mac*, *Fraps*).

While sound or video recording tools can easily be used by individual learners working on a small individual task or project, video editing and animation software are particularly suited for



more challenging and collaborative tasks, as in the context of Project-Oriented CALL (ProCALL) as defined by Debski (2000). Artefacts created by students can be fully multimodal (i.e. they can include text, image, and sound), integrated in individual or collective blogs, wikis, websites, etc.), or simply distributed as standalone artefacts via **resource sharing sites**, such as *Wikimedia Commons*, *YouTube*, *Vimeo*, and *Dailymotion*, or burnt to DVDs. However, **online presentation applications** are getting increasingly popular with language teachers and learners. Some of these applications, such as *Showbeyond* and *VoiceThread*, allow users to upload images and texts, as well as record an audio commentary. With *Present.me* users can also record themselves presenting PowerPoint slides, without the technical skills and time that are normally required to produce and convert such recordings. Moreover, resource sharing sites and online presentations applications often offer community building tools that allows users with similar interests or passions to come together and share their artefacts and experience.

Animation software such as *Go Animate* or *Xtranormal* allows teachers and learners to create animated videos on a topic of their choice, which can then be posted on a variety of Web 2.0 applications. Users can direct characters, type (and use the text-to-speech engine) or record a dialogue, add sound, and much more. A simpler application is *Voki*, which allows users to create a single character. As in the case of *Go Animate* or *Xtranormal*, sound can be added via the text-to-speech engine or via the microphone. All offer an education plan, which provides a secure environment where teachers and students can produce and share their artefacts within the private confine of their virtual group. A little more complicated, but likely to be more powerful and of great interest to those interested in Virtual Worlds, language teachers and learners can create **machinima** in *Second Life* or other worlds. The AVALON project defines machinima as “filmmaking within a 3-D virtual environment, often using 3D video-game technologies or real-time graphics rendering engines” and adds that “the term also refers to works that incorporate this animation technique”³. Sound and screen-capture tools and video editing applications, such as those mentioned above, are needed to record and edit machinima.

2.2 Asynchronous interaction

Voiceboards are oral versions of emails and discussion forums. Instead of posting a written message, users record and post a voice message to an individual or groups. *Wimba Voice*, a commercial product now part of the Blackboard Collaborate 11, fully integrates with LMS such as Blackboard. It is a voice authoring system offering a suite of applications allowing users to post and listen to voice messages, to create or upload podcasts, and to record and listen to voice on a web page. *Gong 5* is a free system that offers similar functionalities and easily integrates with Moodle. It can also be used as a standalone system. One interesting feature of the *Gong* technology is the possibility for users to change the speed of the message they are listening to. Based in Australia, *Voxopop* is a free voiceboard system that allows the creation of discussion groups called “talkgroups”, which can be public, restricted or private. Using a simple and intuitive interface, registered users can easily listen to and record messages, thus making *Voxopop* an attractive system for language teachers and learners.

Intervue is a simple system that allows anybody to create interview questions and gather video responses from anyone. The video responses can be public or private. They can also be downloaded. A more complex system, *VYou* allows people to record video responses to messages entered by “friends” or other users. Messages and responses are organised into

³ AVALON: *WP2 Scenario Design: Machinima - Recording in Second Life*. Last retrieved on 13/12/2011 from <https://avalonlearning.pbworks.com/w/page/33047585/Machinima%20-%20Recording%20in%20Second%20Life>



conversations. Having joined the *VYou* community, users can follow other members, start their own video conversations, or simply embed the *VYou* player anywhere on the web.

Blogs and wikis enable language learners to post multimedia artefacts that have been produced off-line or on-line with the tools briefly described in the previous sections. While any blog platform (e.g. *Wordpress*, *Blogger*, *Edublogs*, etc.) or wiki (e.g. *Wikispaces*, *PBworks*, etc.) offers facilities to upload sound or video files, other platforms offer recording tools. In addition, users can share their artefacts with “friends” or a wider audience, attract comments from others, and post comments on artefacts posted by others. **Audioblogs and videoblogs** offer the added facility to record a podcast, videocast, and in some cases, screencasts, directly from the browser. *Podomatic* is said to be one of the easiest way to get language learners create and share podcasts. Sites such as *Soundcloud* and *Keek* also allow you to use your mobile phone, iPad or Android tablet to capture and share audio or video files without leaving the platform or application. Most of the above platforms offer the possibility to share artefacts via the social network component of the native platform while allowing you to embed them in another application, such as an external blog, website, or social network.

2.3 Synchronous interaction

Audio chat and videoconferencing tools allow users to engage in a wide range of activities requiring synchronous communication. Real-time dialogues, conversations, role-plays, presentations, workshops, problem-solving tasks, debates, and negotiations to mention but a few, can take place via audio chat and desktop or web-based video conferencing. Most of these environments include text chat and screen sharing tools. *Visu* (see Bétrancourt, Guichon & Prié, 2011, a videoconferencing platform specifically designed for language teaching and learning in the context of the ITHACA project⁴, features among the most promising synchronous platform for the practice of spoken skills to date. The platform functionalities it offers include the possibility to upload teaching materials in advance of a synchronous session and to make them visible to participants as needed, a communication space that enables multimodal interactions (i.e. using text, visual and oral channels), and a tracking and feedback zone. Unfortunately, the *Visu* platform is not yet available to the wider language teaching and learning community.

However, many audio chat and videoconferencing tools are available to the general public and the educational community. Free tools include *Skype*, which has been extensively used by language teachers and learner in the context of formal and informal audio and/or video exchanges. *Google Talk*, and more recently *Google + Hangout* are likely to become significant competitors to *Skype* and other free platforms, such as *Flashmeeting* and *Gong*, or commercial ones currently favoured by Higher Education Institutions such as *Adobe Connect*, *Elluminate*, and *Webex*.

3 For more information, ideas, or tips...

The list below aims to provide a snapshot of the wealth of materials available to researchers, developers, and practitioners. Throughout the project, it will be augmented with readings and further references provided by the SpeakApps team and community.

⁴ Project carried out by the universities of Lyon 1 and Lyon 2 (France) and TECFA-Université de Genève (Switzerland) <https://liris.cnrs.fr/~ithaca/index.php?>. See also Nicolas Guichon’s personal website: <http://nicolas.guichon.pagesperso-orange.fr/topic1/index.html>



- See Lornsen (2010) for a review of free Web 2.0 tools for language classes (especially German), including GoAnimate, Voki and other animation tools.
- Alameen (2007) describes how to use *Audacity*, with specific references to speaking and listening tasks, including pronunciation practice.
- On her blog, *Tip of the iceberg*⁵, Beasley (2009) gives interesting ideas on how to use audacity in the language classroom, such as making radio advertisements, podcasts (e.g. books reviews, poetry readings, etc.), soundtracks, and much more (see *10 Great ways to use Audacity with your students*, 8 April 2009)
- Using audio tools (Audacity) in the World language classroom: http://novastartalk.nvcc.edu/full_audacity
- Check the iLearn Technology Edublog for tips and ideas on how to use Go! Animate 4 schools: <http://ilearntechnology.com/?tag=go-animate>
- Check the research findings on the use of audioblogs and voice emails in language learning (Sun, 2009; Volle, 2005; Ducate & Lomicka, 2009).
- For a review of *PodOmatic* for language learning, see Akcaoglu (2006) and Fareed (2010).
- Check the research findings on the use of desktop/web videoconferencing in language learning (Wang, 2004, 2006; Lamy & Hampel, 2007; Develotte et al., 2010; Guichon, 2010).
- Examine the impact of synchronous tools on teacher training, tutoring, and the provision of feedback (Guichon, 2010; Bétrancourt, Guichon & Prié, 2011) and check the demo of the Visu system: <http://visu-tutorat.org/video-shot/Video-Shot-Salon-Synchrone-Pour-le-08-11-2011-View-Etudiant-YP-CV-SS-Recording-CV-version-FULL-SCREEN.mp4>

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⁵Tip of the iceberg: <http://kerileebeasley.com/>



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4.2 Tools and applications

4.2.1 Production

4.2.1.1 Sound capture and editing



Audacity

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

To see list of features:

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/about/features>



GarageBand '11

Garageband

<http://www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/what-is.html>

4.2.1.2 Video capture and editing



Camtasia Studio

<http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html?gclid=CN6Ti4HjtqwCFRRc4Qod03hcFg>



Fraps

<http://www.fraps.com/>



Windows Live MovieMaker

<http://explore.live.com/windows-live-movie-maker>



iMovie

<http://www.apple.com/ilife/imovie/>



Adobe Premiere

<http://www.adobe.com/products/premiere.html>



Pinnacle Studio

<http://www.pinnaclesys.com/PublicSite/us/Home/>

4.2.1.3 Resource/Presentation sharing














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	Youtube http://www.youtube.com/t/about_youtube
	Vimeo http://vimeo.com/
	Dailymotion http://www.dailymotion.com
	Screenr http://www.screenr.com/
	Present.me http://present.me/
	Showbeyond http://showbeyond.com
	Voice thread http://voicethread.com/about/features/
4.2.1.4 Animation	
	Voki http://www.voki.com/
	Go Animate and Go Animate 4 Schools http://goanimate.com/ http://goanimate4schools.com/public_index
	Xtranormal http://www.xtranormal.com/
4.2.2 Asynchronous interaction	
4.2.2.1 Blogs and wikis	
	PBworks http://pbworks.com/

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	<p>Wikispaces http://www.wikispaces.com/</p>
	<p>Blogger http://www.blogger.com</p>
	<p>Wordpress http://wordpress.com/</p>
	<p>Edublogs http://edublogs.org/</p>
<p>4.2.2.2 Audio/video blogs</p>	
	<p>PodOmatic http://www.podomatic.com/login</p>
	<p>Soundcloud http://soundcloud.com/</p>
	<p>Keek http://www.keek.com/</p>
<p>4.2.2.3 Voiceboards</p>	
<p>I N T E R V U E</p>	<p>Intervue http://intervue.me/</p>
	<p>VYou http://vyou.com/</p>
	<p>Wimba voice http://www.wimba.com/products/wimba_voice</p>
	<p>Voxopop http://www.voxopop.com/</p>
	<p>Gong 5 http://gong.ust.hk/</p>

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4.2.3 Synchronous interaction

4.2.3.1 Audio chat and videoconferencing



Skype

<http://www.skype.com>



Google Talk

<http://www.google.com/talk/about.html>



Google + Hangout

<http://www.google.com/support/plus/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1215273&topic=1257349>



Flashmeeting

<http://fm.ea-tel.eu/about.html>



Gong 5

<http://gong.ust.hk/>



Adobe connect

<http://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html>



Elluminate

http://www.elluminate.com/Services/Training/Elluminate_Live!/?id=418



Webex

<http://www.webex.com/>

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