

Scientific Report of Short Term Scientific Mission

COST STSM Reference Number: COST-STSM-IS1305-34578

Period: 23-10-2016 to 28-10-2016

Duration: 5 working days.

COST Action: IS1305

STSM type: Regular (from Slovenia to Germany)

STSM Title: Preparing a questionnaire for a European-wide survey on dictionary use

Guest/STSM applicant: Iztok Kosem, Trojina, Institute for Applied Slovene Studies, Škofja Loka

Host: Carolin Müller-Spitzer, Institut für Deutsche Sprache, 68161 Mannheim (DE), mueller-spitzer@ids-mannheim.de

1. Purpose of the STSM

The main goal of the proposed STSM was to devise a questionnaire on dictionary use that would be used in a Europe-wide survey among different types of dictionary users (and non-users). I was aiming to obtain knowledge in devising questionnaires, especially for several countries and languages, and to get better acquainted with survey software.

The main coordinating team for the questionnaire implementation consists of myself, dr. Carolin Müller-Spitzer (host of the proposed STSM), dr. Robert Lew, and dr. Sascha Wolfer. During the STSM, the team was to prepare the general part of the questionnaire, and discuss any open issues. It is envisaged that the questionnaire should give some answers as to the ways in which the users nowadays perceive dictionaries, especially general monolingual ones, in different countries across Europe.

2. Description of the work carried out during the STSM

The work conducted over the five days of the visit was divided into the following tasks:

- a) Overview of the current status of the project (first day). I presented the current developments, including the fact that researchers from 28 countries have already replied to my invitation and confirmed participation in the survey, with 3 more countries yet to send an answer.
- b) Discussing the main aim of the questionnaire, its structure and length, and possible problems in its implementation due to different languages in which it will be conducted. This was mainly discussed on the first day of the STSM, but also on the last days when the survey tools was being selected. It was agreed that the main aim should be kept as originally envisaged, i.e. on general monolingual dictionaries, especially as this is an area under-researched in lexicography and user studies.

The questionnaire will consist of the general part, which will be the same for all the countries/languages, and the local part, which will contain questions specific to each country. The questionnaire should not take more than 25 minutes to complete (general + local parts), and the local part should not contain more than 5 questions (only one open-choice question will be allowed). The local questions will have to be sent in local language and in English, so we can examine them and confirm their suitability.

We have also discussed potential issues when translating the questionnaire, e.g. local specifics or cultural differences. I was able to provide some insight from the Slovenian perspective, while the other colleagues spoke from the German and Polish perspectives. We agreed to try to consider that when preparing the questions as much as possible, but also getting feedback from the local partners after they translate the questionnaire.

- c) Preparing the general part of the questionnaire. Majority of STSM was dedicated to preparing the questionnaire. There were several interesting discussions, during which I gained valuable knowledge on various aspects that need to be considered when preparing questionnaires related to dictionary use. For example, certain questions like "How often do you use a dictionary" are very abstract and difficult to answer, and the answers are very unreliable. This means that a different question that elicits similar information needs to be used. We decided to put more stress on obtaining the information on users' attitude towards (monolingual) dictionary, by using various situations or statements that the users can agree or disagree with, or choose the most suitable option that reflects their attitude/dictionary use. I examined a few previous dictionary use studies and used some of the questions from them (by adapting them for our purposes), especially from the survey used by Kopleing and Müller-Spitzer (2014) on the use of online dictionaries.

The final version of the general part consists of 13 questions, out of which only one is partly open choice (the option of "Other" under dictionary use situations). We wanted to avoid open-choice questions as that would mean a lot of translating and coding of the replies, and would considerably lengthen the analysis of the results.

- d) Selecting the survey tool. Two days were spent on testing the two candidate tools for the survey, Unipark, used at IDS, and 1ka, a tool already used in several ENeL-related studies. The main criteria for the selection were support for multiple language versions, the ability to easily import various translations of the questionnaire, and powerful analysis features. I was already familiar with 1ka, although not with all of its features, and acted as a liaison between 1ka support team and our group in asking any questions about the software. On the other hand, I got more information and insight into the Unipark software.

In the end and after some testing, we decided that Unipark will be used for this study. An additional advantage is that team members from Germany are already very familiar with the tool and no external support will be required.

- e) Planning the next steps. The final day of the STSM was spent preparing the plan for the following months. The questionnaire will be imported into Unipark, translated into Slovene and German, and tested on students, with the aim to confirm the suitability of questions, and to get an idea of time needed to complete the questionnaire. After that, the final version will be prepared and sent to local partners for translation. I was assigned the task of contacting all the partners after the questionnaire is finalized. The aim is to launch the survey in February 2017, and present the results, at least some of them, at the final ENeL conference in September 2017 in Leiden, and at the co-located eLex conference.

During the STSM, dr. Robert Lew gave a presentation on the use of eye-tracking in lexicography, which consisted of both a short overview on the use of eye-tracking in lexicography, and the presentation of a study with Polish students of English. Given that I have never used eye-tracking devices in user studies and knew very little of this area, the presentation was very valuable.

Overall, I must say that the STSM was a very positive experience, and I learned a lot from my hosts in Germany, at various levels: how to prepare a questionnaire, how to avoid common pitfalls, things to consider when selecting the software, and how to efficiently plan and manage such a project.

3. References

Kopleing, A. and Müller-Spitzer, C. 2014. The first two international studies on online dictionaries – background information. In C. Müller-Spitzer (ed.) Using Online Dictionaries. Walter de Gruyter.