

Hello, my name is Karina von Lindeiner Strasky and I'm a senior lecturer in German at the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics at the OU.

So, we started a project about machine translation in language learning and teaching assessment and studying languages. The project, we thought that the project was quite timely because over the last few years, machine translation tools on the internet have become freely available and they're very good now. So, a lot of our students and our ALs, our lecturers, use machine translation, privately, but also for their studies and for their teaching. And this has caused a bit of concern, because teachers were worried that students use machine translation and we needed to look in detail at what students use them for, and if and how we could include them in our teaching, because also at the OU we think we should be at the forefront of technological developments. We should also think about teaching methodologies. So, our project looked at investigating and implementing machine translation tools in language teaching.

For our project it was very important to have a group that spread as widely as possible across all languages we teach. Because you also wanted to find out whether in some languages or at some levels of studying or teaching, machine translation tools work better or worse. So, we had a fantastic team of ALs and central academics from Spanish and German, and among the participants, we also had people who did French, Italian, English as a foreign language, and so on, and I think that was really a core important factor in providing interesting results for us.

When we started our project, it was very important for us to include people who teach different languages and students who study different languages because we wanted to investigate whether the kind of language, you're dealing with makes a difference. Being German myself, so coming from a language that's very grammatical and very organised, I thought that it might be possible that machine translation tools work better with them language like German, but in fact we found out that that's not at all true. So, we had in our team, students, teachers and ALs from French, Spanish and German. And we also had an excellent data analyst who helped us to deal with all this amount of data that we collected, for example, in service and interviews and so on, and we had a specialist on Artificial intelligence, and he helped us to understand how machine translation actually works.

Our project had a lot of really practical implications, so what we did was, we came up with exercises that would incorporate machine translation into teaching and into assessment, and we ran these exercises in a number of workshops via our student participants and our teaching participants, and first of all, the workshops themselves were a very important source because they made students that were interested, aware of what they can do and how they can use machine translation to further the studies, and it also helped our ALs and central academics who produce modules, and they're thinking about teaching strategies. It helped them to understand how they could incorporate machine translation. So, these exercises now, we are teaching in workshops, but we're also trying to put together additional training resource on open learn create, and we are presenting very soon to the Board of studies, the results, and we are hoping to change actually the teaching and assessment strategy in language at the OU.

I think one of the things that makes our project both very fascinating and slightly frustrating, is that considering the development of artificial intelligence, we will probably have to do it in five years all over again because already since we started the project two years ago and now we can see a huge

amount of development in that area, and we basically have to stay in touch and keep up with recent developments to never lose sight of being at the forefront of teaching strategies, I tell you.

I really enjoyed doing this project because firstly it was a hugely interesting experience to work with people from so many different areas, to get to know better ALS, for example, in Spanish to work with the proper data analyst and find out about things like statistics and how to best analyse data. And as someone who's been in academia for more than two decades, it's been absolutely fascinating that this research project is so timely, and it's spread all over the world. I've given, given workshops in Saudi Arabia. We get questions, we've been invited to edit special editions of journals. We are invited to a number of workshops. Universities have been calling us and ask 'Can you help our teachers to learn about this'? And it's immensely gratifying as someone who's coming from kind of classical arts and humanity background to do something that's so relevant.