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Summer August, 2014

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Open educational resources in the United States: Insights from university foreign language directors



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 7 May 2013

Received in revised form 28 April 2014

Accepted 16 May 2014

Available online

Keywords:

Foreign language directors

Intellectual property

Open educational resources

ABSTRACT

This study reports the results of a survey completed by 155 university foreign language (FL) directors in the United States (US) during Fall 2012. Survey respondents come from a variety of institutions and direct a range of FL programs. The objectives of the study are to (a) determine what FL directors know about open educational resources (OER), (b) understand respondents' perceived benefits and challenges of using OER, and (c) determine what resources and support are critical to establish or expand the use of OER in FL courses in the US. Results indicate that while 66% of FL directors do not recognize the term OER, many are in fact utilizing them. Those who incorporate OER in their FL courses state they do so to go beyond what is offered in traditional, print-based textbooks suggesting that OER represent more authentic and relevant content. While few (26%) respondents indicate intellectual property concerns, many note challenges such as finding OER at the appropriate level for students, time involved in creating and using OER, and training others (e.g., teaching assistants) how to use technology-oriented OER. The paper concludes by highlighting additional training and resources to more completely and successfully incorporate OER into FL curricula.

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1. Introduction

First proposed during UNESCO's *Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries* held in Paris in 2002, open educational resources (OER) are defined as “digitised materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning and research” ([Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007](#), p. 10). More than ten years later, OER are only just beginning to affect foreign language (FL) teaching and learning at the university level in the United States (US). As a result of the increasing demand for FL courses and university budgets constrained by external economic factors, there are growing numbers of hybrid, blended, and fully online courses being offered in a variety of languages in the US ([Thoms, 2013](#)). As the interest in blended language learning and teaching and computer-mediated communication continues to grow ([Blake, 2013a, 2013b](#); [Chun, 2008](#); [Nicolson, Murphy, & Southgate, 2011](#); [Rubio, 2013](#); [Thorne, Fischer, & Lu, 2012](#); among many others), educators are still determining the best way to blend

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offline and online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Blake, 2011; Blyth, 2013; Goertler, 2011), hence the increased relevance of OER. However, discussions of how OER can be best utilized in both traditional face-to-face and blended FL courses have not sufficiently addressed the issue of effectively mixing open and closed materials, tools, and practices (Blyth, 2013). These concerns, along with the complexity of accessing, evaluating, developing, and using OER (Iiyoshi & Kumar, 2008), can result in a complicated decision-making process for those in charge of FL learning and teaching contexts.

Foreign language directors in US universities are those faculty members given the responsibility of adopting FL textbooks, creating course syllabi, vetting the various technological tools used in the FL courses they supervise, among many other tasks. Foreign language directors therefore play a pivotal role in decisions related to curriculum, pedagogy, and technologies used in their programs (Levine, Melin, Crane, Chavez, & Lovik, 2008; Schulz, 2005). While adjunct professors and graduate teaching assistants (TAs) have some creative license when teaching their assigned courses, the FL director is ultimately responsible for determining what and how the content of their FL program will be uniformly taught, particularly in large, multi-section FL programs. As a result, university FL directors are at the forefront of dealing with the proliferation of OER in the US. However, attempts to understand what FL directors know about OER and how they make use of them in their programs have been very limited in scope (e.g., Henderson, 2011).

The successful incorporation—or lack thereof—of OER into post-secondary FL curricula is largely dependent on the extent to which FL directors embrace the concept and its related tools. Given the rapidly growing availability of OER on a global level, coupled with the increased number of hybrid, blended, and online FL courses being offered in the US, it is important to assess the current state of OER awareness and concerns among FL directors. Open educational resources will be part of the future of FL education, and steps should be taken to provide appropriate support and resources to ensure the field moves forward in a positive way for teachers and students. This study explores a number of issues related to the creation and implementation of OER in university FL programs, and the results shed light on how OER are conceptualized and integrated in courses by FL directors in the US context.

1.1. Affordances of OER

Given that the open movement in FL learning and teaching is still in its infancy (especially in the US), few empirical studies have been carried out that measure the effects of OER on second language learning and teaching. At the time of this study, only a handful of chapters and one edited volume have been published that specifically look at how OER might be conceptualized and used in a FL learning context (e.g., Beaven, Comas-Quinn, & Sawhill, 2013; Blyth, 2013; Rossomondo, 2013). That said, a number of overall benefits of OER use in education have been delineated.

Much of the literature on the affordances of OER to date has primarily focused on the cost savings that can benefit students, instructors, and institutions. Open educational resources are created with the intention to be freely shared with others giving students access to high quality materials and tools versus having to pay exorbitant fees to access similar content (e.g., textbooks or digital tools/applications) from traditional publisher venues. The average cost of textbooks and supplies in the US for the typical undergraduate student is now \$1200 (College Board, 2013), and there is evidence that OER can significantly reduce or eliminate textbook costs for students (Allen, 2013; Wiley & Green, 2012). While economics is an extremely compelling factor, and one that resonates particularly with students and administrators, it is not and should not be the only argument for increased use of OER.

In addition to the economic value, the increased availability of high quality learning materials via OER “can contribute to more productive students and educators” (Butcher, 2011, p. 13). A benefit for both students and instructors alike is the fact that OER are materials that are much more malleable than traditional, print-based materials produced by publishers. Specifically, the creators of OER often allow their work to be remixed and adapted by other instructors for their specific classroom context(s) via unique licensing alternatives (e.g., Creative Commons). As a result, OER do not—by their very nature—represent a cookie-cutter approach to teaching. In other words, instructors and their students can modify and improve upon existing OER and tailor the material or tool to their specific educational and contextual needs. This flexibility means that “instructors, students and self-learners who use OER can replace ‘flat’ educational experiences, where opportunity is a function of what one instructor or school can offer, with a constantly evolving multidimensional educational process” (Plotkin, 2010, Improving the quality of teaching and learning through resource sharing and collaboration section, para. 4). Preliminary data from the *Languages Open Resources Online* (LORO) project (Comas-Quinn, Beaven, Pleines, Pulker, & de los Arcos, 2012) suggests that OER positively impacts the skills and development of language teachers which we posit can, in turn, result in benefits for their students (Comas-Quinn & Fitzgerald, 2013).

Additionally, OER give instructors and students the ability to become producers rather than merely consumers of course content which can contribute to creating more effective learning environments (Butcher, 2011). Early data supports the idea that OER can provide a more student-centered experience, and these students, as a result of being more engaged and active contributors to the environment, will have a superior learning experience (Gruszczynska, 2012). While this evidence begins to demonstrate potential benefits of OER on student learning experiences, the reality is that non-traditional materials such as OER are a requirement to meet our current and future educational challenges both in the US and in many other parts of the world. The authors suggest that more research into the affordances of OER, while interesting in its own right, should not be a prerequisite for the forward progress of the movement. Open educational resources, while not published through more traditional, recognized models, have just as much (or, as some argue, more) to offer FL teachers and students in terms of getting the most out of their classroom experiences be they physical or virtual (Comas-Quinn & Fitzgerald, 2013).

1.2. OER: meeting global educational challenges

Wiley and Gurrell (2009) provide a detailed snapshot of the development and progress of OER as well as challenges for the future by indicating several hurdles on the path to universal OER acceptance in academia—concerns about intellectual property issues, quality, and sustainability being primary among them. Other topics that need to be addressed as the movement gains momentum and acceptance are compatibility, infrastructure (of particular importance to the global relevance of OER), and preservation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007). Addressing these issues is essential as global higher education strives to meet the monumental challenges it faces. The global demand for places in higher education is projected to exceed 262 million by 2025 (Brandenburg, Carr, Donauer, & Berthold, 2008), and in the US alone, the Department of Education predicts college enrollments of nearly 24 million by 2021 which represents a 15% increase (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012).

The severe and growing imbalance between educational need and educational capacity is an issue worldwide (Duderstadt, 2007). Universities in the US and around the world are confronted not only with this problem of capacity but also: economic challenges; increasing global competition; changing demographics; and rapidly changing technology (Duderstadt, 2012). None of these issues facing higher education is going to “be met by traditional face-to-face delivery alone” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 7). One piece of a reasonable approach to these challenges is increasing and improving access through the use of technology (Blake, 2011, 2013a, 2013b), such as OER. Enthusiasm for and investment in OER is evident on a global scale with notable efforts developing in the UK, Netherlands, China, and Sub-Saharan Africa (Atkins, Brown, & Hammond, 2007). Growing the body of available OER has clearly been a primary motivator, but the various stakeholders—educators, governments, and other nonprofit (as well as commercial) organizations are also recognizing and beginning to address concerns of dissemination and quality.

1.3. OER & foreign languages in the US

In no discipline more than FL is the demand for quality and capacity more relevant (Blake, 2013a). The inability of the US and its citizens to communicate with and comprehend other parts of the world has become known as the nation's language deficit (Pratt et al., 2007). As recently articulated by Altschuler and Skorton (2012), commenting about the role of FL teaching and learning in the US, “we must be resolute in designing a comprehensive approach to foreign language acquisition that will prepare the next generation of Americans for success in a highly competitive, tightly interconnected world” (¶ 7). As a discipline, FL, with its willingness to combine pedagogy and technology can be a leader, using this balanced approach to make OER a valuable part of a solution to the fundamental issues of educational access and development in the US and around the world (Richter & McPherson, 2012).

As OER technologies and tools have developed, education in general, and FL in particular, is being transformed (Harrison & Thomas, 2009). Language education has consistently demonstrated that it is one of the most dynamic interdisciplinary areas for the development of learning technologies, and language educators have been at the forefront of classroom application of technologies such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites, podcasting, among other applications and tools (Thomas, 2009). And, yet, areas such as science and technology have been on the leading edge and are currently the more prominent users of OER, with sites like Connexions, Merlot, and OER Commons showing two to three times as many entries for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics categories as compared to the arts, humanities, and social sciences. This is evidence that there remains work to be done in terms of FL directors seeing themselves as producers rather than consumers of pedagogical materials (Blyth, 2013).

Evidence of FL innovation can be found in the work being done by Foreign Language Resource Centers (FLRCs) across the US. Beginning in 1990, the US Department of Education began granting funding for the creation of FLRCs, and in the subsequent 24 years some have been instrumental in digital learning development in FL education and are working to provide a centralized online repository of indexed FL materials. For example, the Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL) at the University of Texas at Austin defines its mission as producing and disseminating OER (“About COERLL,” 2013). In addition, projects such as Acceso (Rossomondo, 2012), *Français interactif* (Blyth, 2013), and Gateway to Chinese (Teng, 2012) have been at the forefront of incorporating open resources and technology into FL learning in the US.

Blyth (2013) clearly articulates both the reasons why a critical mass of education in FL, just as in many disciplines, has been hesitant to embrace open resources as well as why student learning would benefit from increased use of the same. Quality control issues, copyright concerns, and questions about how free OER content can be sustainable over the long-term are some of the topics that make many in academia uncertain about using OER. Despite these hesitations, Brown and Adler (2008) describe a “perfect storm of opportunity” that exists in the growth of the OER movement (p. 18). As part of their description, they focus on the value of considering *how* we learn rather than focusing solely on *what* we learn. This concept of social learning has a clear bridge into the world of FL education. Few disciplines are better suited to take advantage of the many doors opened by OER advancement.

While a budding curiosity about OER exists in the US, particularly among those who work with FLs in higher education, more information is needed to fully understand to what extent FL program directors have or have not yet taken advantage of creating and/or using OER in the courses they supervise and the reasons why. This study therefore investigates the following research questions:

Table 1

Correlation matrix based on phi-coefficients for five measures (i.e., survey questions) related to the three research questions.

	Research Question/construct 1	Research Question/construct 2		Research Question/construct 3	
	A	B1	B2	C1	C2
A	1	0.165	0.448	0.132	0.064
B1	0.165	1	0.376	0.058	0.058
B2	0.448	0.376	1	0.119	0.017
C1	0.132	0.058	0.119	1	0.285
C2	0.064	0.058	0.017	0.285	1

- 1) What do FL directors know about OER and what are the benefits and challenges of using them in their courses?;
- 2) What are the implementation and intellectual property issues confronted by FL directors when developing or delivering content via OER?; and
- 3) What resources and support are critical to the use of OER in FL courses?

2. Research methods

An online survey was distributed in Fall 2012 to 250 FL directors who supervise a variety of language programs at a number of US universities and was completed by 155 people for a response rate of 62%. Attempts were made to survey FL directors from the more commonly taught languages in the US (e.g., French, German, Spanish) while also soliciting input from those who supervise less commonly taught languages (e.g., Dutch, Korean, Vietnamese). Databases from US organizations that involve FL directors (e.g., American Association of University Supervisors and Coordinators/AAUSC) were used to locate possible survey respondents. In addition, the researchers also located FL directors from language program websites and by contacting administrative assistants in FL departments to obtain the contact information of FL directors. Effort was also made to survey FL directors from every major geographical area of the US. The survey was completed anonymously, and no respondents were compensated for their participation.

Some of the survey questions required respondents to provide a written answer. To analyze those responses, an initial pass through the data was first carried out. This preliminary qualitative analysis of the survey responses resulted in the emergence of various themes and topics that, in turn, lead to the creation of response categories (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The categories reflected the focus of the research questions posed in the survey but also were determined by the responses from the respondents. The two researchers then individually coded the open-ended/free responses using the established categories while carrying out a second pass through the data. Inter-rater reliability was determined to be 97%. The few discrepancies that remained were eventually worked out between the researchers to achieve complete agreement.

For the questions in the survey that were not open-ended and were used to help answer the three research questions investigated in this study, statistical analyses were carried out to determine the construct validity for those particular items. Table 1 below shows a correlation matrix for the five survey questions/measures (A, B1, B2, C1, C2) where: one (A) is theoretically related to the construct of *Research Question 1*, two (B1 and B2) are related to the construct of *Research Question 2* and two others (C1 and C2) are related to *Research Question 3*. The five measures were treated as dichotomous variables when carrying out the statistical calculations. Thus, to determine the measure of correlation for each pair of the five measures, we used phi-coefficients (i.e., Cramer's V where the degrees of freedom = 1). The standards³ for interpreting Cramer's V (Cohen, 1988) were then used to interpret the computed phi-coefficients.

With the exception of the phi-coefficient for correlation between measures A and B2⁴, the relationship/effect between measures from different constructs is small. This provided evidence that the sets of five measures (i.e., survey questions) are each related to the various constructs (i.e., research questions). In other words, the correlations provide evidence that the three sets of measures are discriminated from each other. Table 1 also shows that the phi-coefficients for the measures for each research question (i.e., inter-correlations) indicate from a medium to large effect/relationship. This provides evidence that some of the measures converge to the same construct. That is, specific survey questions are related to the same research question. When taken together, the correlations support both convergence and discrimination that, in turn, indicates the construct validity of the items used in the study.

2.1. Operationalization of OER in survey

It is important to note here how we operationalized OER in the survey. While an early survey question asked respondents to provide their own definition of OER (see Appendix for survey), the subsequent section of the survey then defined OER for

³ The standards for interpreting Cramer's V (where the degrees of freedom = 1) as proposed by Cohen (1988) are as follows: V = between .10 and .30 (small effect); V = between .30 and .50 (medium effect); V = greater than .50 (large effect).

⁴ Statistical analyses indicated that there existed a medium effect/correlation between one of the survey questions (i.e., the question about whether respondents knew what the term 'open educational resources' was) used to answer research question 1 and another survey question (i.e., the question about whether respondents were aware of the Creative Commons licensing structure) used to answer research question 2. This effect was logical given the fact that if respondents know the term OER, they would also very likely be aware of the Creative Commons licensing structure.

respondents as “any educational resources (including curriculum maps, course materials, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia applications, podcasts, and any other materials that have been designed for use in teaching and learning) that are openly available for use by educators and students, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or license fees” (Butcher, 2011, p. 5). In other words, before moving on with more specific questions about how OER are used (or not) in the FL directors' programs, we wanted respondents to work with the same definition of OER; specifically, materials or tools intended to be created, shared, mixed, and reused by others without the need to pay a fee or request permission from others.

2.2. Participants and their FL programs

As previously mentioned, the FL directors supervised a wide range of FLs. However, some languages were more represented than others: French (24.5% of respondents); Spanish (23.9%); German (18.7%); Japanese (6.5%); Italian (5.8%); Russian (5.2%); Arabic (4.5%); Chinese (1.9%); and various other languages (collectively 9%). The majority (80.6%) of FL directors held a PhD, 16.2% held an MA, while 3.2% indicated that they held a degree other than a PhD or MA. When asked about primary responsibility for determining the amount and type of content in the course that they supervise, just over 50% of the FL directors responded that they work with a team of lecturers and/or TAs to determine content, while 43% of the FL directors indicated that they are solely in charge of determining the content in their courses. Only 7% of respondents said that their colleagues (i.e., lecturers and/or TAs) are solely in charge of determining the content in their FL courses.

When asked about the nature of the FL courses they supervise, just over 60% of respondents indicated that they currently only offer face-to-face courses. However, slightly under 40% responded that they offer their FL courses either as hybrid or fully online courses in addition to offering them face-to-face. Finally, the FL directors were asked about the nature of the content in the textbook used in their respective programs. Specifically, they were asked whether or not they or the colleagues with whom they work incorporate material or content that is not provided to them in their textbook package(s). Over 93% of respondents indicated that they do incorporate material not found in the textbook while only around 7% said that they solely use the materials that come with their textbook.

3. Results

The results of this project related to OER are organized and presented based on the three research questions investigated in this study.

3.1. Research Question 1: What do FL directors know about OER and what are the benefits and challenges of using them in their courses?

To answer the first research question, a series of questions was posed to fully understand respondents' knowledge of OER. The first question simply asked whether or not FL directors recognize the term Open Educational Resources. Just over 33% indicated that they had heard of the term while over 66% had not. Those respondents who had heard of OER were given the opportunity to briefly define them. The majority of definitions involved the following three notions: (1) FL content that is created by individuals or collaboratively with colleagues; (2) the content is then made available online; and (3) it is free for other FL teachers or learners.

The second question in the series asked those respondents who had created or used OER to indicate their motivations for doing so. Three themes were identified in their answers. The most common reason or benefit of using OER related to the idea that traditional textbooks alone are not adequate to meet the pedagogical needs of an FL course. Many respondents suggested that the printed textbooks that they use tend to become out of date quickly. As a result, many FL directors indicated that to compensate for this, they turned to OER. The second most common theme in respondents' answers to this question related to the idea that OER are somehow more enjoyable, “lively,” and engaging for students when compared to such resources as the traditional textbook. One survey respondent stated that “Some of these [OER] resources are better than most textbooks because they are more current, more engaging, etc.” Many respondents acknowledged that students have responded to the use of OER in a very positive way; especially when they involve the use of online tools: “They are of interest to a generation that is used to using technology for academic purposes.” Finally, the third theme detected in responses to this second question involved the idea of authenticity. The following response represented respondents' views regarding the authenticity issue and OER:

We use the clips and texts to bring more authentic content into the introductory courses and to encourage students to interact with that content in more intellectually challenging ways than is encouraged in our textbook.

As this quote indicates, many FL directors view OER as being more “authentic” and “more natural” versus traditional, textbook-related materials. Other responses related to the authenticity aspect of OER touched on the fact that OER often do a better job of addressing facets of and current topics related to the target language culture when compared to traditional, print-based textbooks.

The third question in this series was designed to elicit responses regarding what made creating, using, and sharing OER challenging in the FL courses they supervise. With regard to using OER, two themes in the data became apparent. The first challenge regarding the use of OER related to the idea of finding the “right” OER. Specifically, respondents indicated that actually locating level- and skill-appropriate OER for their particular FL course(s) was challenging. Related to this, over 50% of respondents also indicated that finding appropriate OER to use in their courses took a lot of time. These same FL directors

indicated that their online searches for OER materials and tools were fruitless and, in those instances, they gave up looking. In addition, 33% of respondents indicated that the quality of the OER resources made it difficult to use them in their FL courses.

The second major challenge indicated by respondents regarding the use of OER in their FL courses related to difficulties training others (e.g., lecturers, TAs, and students) how to access and make use of the OER. Twenty-nine percent of the FL directors who indicated this second challenge also noted that technology support in their institution—in general—was not suitable for providing the necessary training. This additional hurdle, as a result, forced FL directors to not use specific OER tools that required extensive technological knowledge.

It should be mentioned here that the nature of this question also resulted in respondents indicating challenges to authoring or creating OER for their own use or for sharing with others. Two main concerns were identified in their responses. An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that creating OER requires a lot of time that many FL directors suggested they do not have. Thirty-four percent of respondents said that if they had more time, they would consider creating and/or experimenting more with OER. The second issue related to the creation of OER concerned lack of funding to begin and maintain effective OER materials or tools. Forty percent of directors said without appropriate funding, they are not able to create, distribute, and make use of OER in their programs.

3.2. Research Question 2: What are the implementation and intellectual property issues confronted by FL directors when developing or delivering content via OER?

To answer research question #2, one of the survey questions specifically asked whether or not FL directors had experienced any intellectual property issues from either a developer or user perspective. Of the 126 respondents who answered the question addressing intellectual property, 74% indicated that they had not encountered intellectual property-type issues when developing or using OER while the remaining respondents (26%) stated that they had. For those respondents who indicated that they had dealt with intellectual property issues, we asked them to elaborate on the nature of any/all issues they might have experienced. Respondents indicated issues related to the ownership of the materials they created. In some cases, universities were asserting rights to materials created by faculty as a consequence of their status as employees. These same respondents also indicated that they were somewhat confused about fair use and copyright laws in general and therefore decided to not use materials and/or tools that did not clearly indicate that they were OER. While the numbers are not large, in terms of FL directors who expressed legal concerns about content, it is yet one more issue that serves to muddy the waters around incorporating OER into the FL curriculum.

A second question related to research question #2 was also posed to all respondents concerning whether or not they were familiar with the Creative Commons licensing structure. Creative Commons provides a simple, standardized licensing structure for content creators and users to freely share knowledge and tools with appropriate attribution. In all, 76% of respondents indicated that they were not familiar with Creative Commons while 24% stated that they knew what it was.

3.3. Research Question 3: What resources and support are critical to the use of OER in FL courses?

The final research question investigated in this survey study seeks to understand if there are any resources or support that FL directors currently use or would like to use in the future to support the incorporation of OER in the FL courses they supervise. Two questions on the survey specifically inquired about whether or not the university library on the various campuses of the respondents was considered to be a resource to support the development and use of OER. Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated that they had not considered the university library as a resource to support OER development and use while 27% said that they had. Similarly, when asked whether or not the university library at respondents' institutions had done any outreach by providing services related to OER, 76% of the FL directors said that the library had not offered anything related to OER while 24% indicated that the library had indeed offered training, information, or similar kinds of support. For both questions, respondents were asked to elaborate on their responses.

Two main themes developed from the open-ended responses. The first theme related to the lack of time. Sixty-eight percent of respondents indicated that for them to explore options or services provided by the university library, language resource center, or any other entity at their institutions that assists faculty members with OER resources, time was a significant factor in that process. That is, FL directors indicated that given their administrative, teaching, research, and service-related duties with their positions, they simply lacked sufficient time to thoroughly learn about and/or develop OER that might be suitable for inclusion in their FL courses. The second theme in the open-ended responses related to lack of technological support on their campuses. Approximately 25% of the 155 directors indicated that their departments lacked the necessary funds and technological resources needed to support OER development, training, and use.

4. Discussion and conclusion

It is clear by the main findings of this survey that the field of FL education in the US continues to be somewhat hesitant to fully embrace materials and tools such as OER in FL programs. The reality is that the system of tool creation and material publication on which education in most disciplines is built still relies largely on traditional textbooks and delivery methods (Atkins et al., 2007; Baraniuk, 2008; Blyth, 2013). Learning, however, is at some level a social enterprise that relies in part on the formation of a community (Duderstadt, 2009). This tension is clearly demonstrated in our survey findings as respondents

discuss their reliance on the textbook while at the same time expressing their desire to incorporate more unique and authentic materials and tools to improve the learning experience of students. In many cases, these alternative resources are key parts of the critical social, community aspect of learning.

Survey results also reinforce the concern of FL researchers about the level of knowledge and integration of OER. One significant factor that appears to impede the widespread creation and use of OER in FL courses in the US is related to basic education about what OER are and how they can be used in the FL classroom. Given that many survey respondents who took part in this study were not familiar with the term open educational resources *per se* indicates that work remains to be done in terms of education about and promotion of OER materials and their uses in the FL classroom. Again, the work of national resource centers like COERLL is important to help educate FL teachers and students alike as to the benefits of OER materials and tools. However, it is clear that more effort is needed to make FL directors aware of the plethora of OER-based materials and tools that are available to be used, remixed, and incorporated in their FL courses.

We have also seen that support from entities outside of the FL department can play a role in whether or not faculty such as FL directors create and use OER in their courses. This is where libraries and librarians could prove an invaluable partner in the process. Their knowledge and experience with resource location and evaluation, copyright law and its application, as well as their positioning at the front of the open access movement make them ideal partners for educators in all disciplines wanting to move forward with OER. They would also have much to offer in terms of concerns about quality (i.e., evaluation), preservation, risk management, and best practices (Belliston, 2009). Evidence from the survey results suggests that with the availability of appropriate support and resources, FL directors would explore the creation and adoption of OER to a greater degree.

The results of this survey have also indicated some practical obstacles for the creation and/or use of OER by FL directors in their programs. Many FL directors indicated that they lacked time to create or revise existing OER to make them suitable for their particular course needs. A possible solution to the time factor would be to involve more adjunct and TAs in the exploration and vetting process of OER tools and materials. Graduate student TAs in particular could be encouraged to help investigate possible OER to be used in their assigned courses throughout the year or during specific periods during the academic year (e.g., during the commonly required foreign language methods course or possibly during a computer assisted language learning course). Given that TAs are often immersed in and make use of a variety of technological tools in their social lives (Thoms, 2011), it is likely that they would be open to experimenting with a specific OER that could be used in the FL course(s) that they are assigned to teach. In soliciting the help of TAs with vetting the quality and appropriateness of OER for a particular FL course, FL directors would be more efficient in locating level-appropriate OER materials and tools for their courses. Such adjustments in workflows and structures are just one of the many ways OER represent “opportunities to innovate in the teaching and learning context” (Wiley & Green, 2012, p. 85).

While it is outside the purview of this study, it is possible that outdated pedagogical techniques in the US may be inhibiting (or at least presenting a hurdle) for FL directors, their instructors and/or TAs to fully embrace OER in their courses. Given that technology and pedagogy jointly “need to adapt and change in the interests of language learning and use” (Evans, 2009, p. 28), perhaps once the field of FL teaching in the US moves beyond a purely communicative language teaching approach and opts for one that focuses on framing second language (L2) learning and teaching in terms of developing L2 literacy (Kern, 2000) and/or digital literacies (e.g., Reinhardt & Thorne, 2011), then it is possible that we might see FL teachers incorporate more resources such as OER-based tools in their teaching. In addition, the growing number of massive open online courses (MOOCs) being offered by US universities may also very well change the way(s) in which FL learning and teaching are conceptualized, which could lead to a significant increase in the use of OER in these new environments.

Open education is a global movement evidenced by the fact that Creative Commons licenses are recognized worldwide and exported to more than 47 countries (Bissell, 2009). As Blyth (2013) articulates, FL program directors need to be willing to re-conceptualize the traditional roles and boundaries of consumers and producers in education, and higher education as a whole would do well to take this advice as it pushes forward in our rapidly changing global education economy. While the proliferation of OER in FL education at the post-secondary level is still confronting several obstacles (as signaled by the FL directors in this study), this project has also indicated that OER provide more access to current, authentic materials related to the target language and culture and are incorporated by FL directors to engage students more in the language learning process versus solely relying on traditional, print-based textbooks; digital resources give rise to innovation which in fact has no corollary in the print world (Maron & Smith, 2009).

The survey findings presented here as well as a growing body of research make a strong case for the value-added role of OER in FL education. However, the development of a body of resources and support are essential to provide FL directors with the infrastructure, at both the institutional and disciplinary level, required to thoroughly integrate OER into the curriculum. All of the above points to a call for future research addressing the quality of OER as well as ways to effectively mix them with more traditional FL materials. Similarly, future research in this area should also focus on how students perceive and make use of OER materials and tools alongside their traditional FL textbook. Additional research into this relatively new area of FL education has the potential to improve L2 teaching practices, and these practices could, in turn, enhance the L2 acquisition process for students. This paper has contributed to that endeavor.

5. Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, a higher number of survey respondents could have presented a more complete picture of how FL directors view and make use of OER in their programs. Similarly, follow-up interviews with some of the

survey respondents might have provided more details about the ways in which OER are or are not utilized in specific FL programs. Second, question 8 in the survey was phrased in such a way in that it characterizes all other materials above and beyond an instructor's textbook as OER. This particular question may have resulted in some instructors misinterpreting this question. Finally, no distinction was made in the survey between 'big OER' (i.e., large-scale, institutional projects) and 'little OER' (i.e., small-scale projects such as those produced using Web 2.0 tools/resources) as outlined by Weller (2009). This distinction might have changed some of the FL directors' responses in the survey (e.g., whether or not they invest time in creating OER). Future survey-based studies regarding OER creation should take this distinction into consideration.

Acknowledgments

We would like to sincerely thank the three anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback and comments.

Appendix

Survey Questions

1. What region is your institution located in the United States?
2. What Foreign Language (FL) program do you direct/supervise/coordinate?
3. What is the highest degree that you possess?
4. Which of the following choices below describes your role in determining the type and amount of content to be covered in the FL course(s) that you direct/supervise/coordinate: I am solely in charge of determining the content; I work with a team (e.g., Lecturers and/or TAs) to determine the content; Colleagues (e.g., Lecturers and/or TAs) solely determine the content; Other (please specify).
5. Please check the types of courses that are offered in your FL program at your college or university: Face-to-face; Hybrid/blended; Fully online; Other (please specify).
6. Have you heard of the term 'Open Educational Resources' (OERs)? (if yes, please briefly define what OERs are in your own words).

NOTE: After respondents provided their answers for question #6, the survey then provided them with the following definition of OERs that we intended they use for the remainder of the survey: "Open Educational Resources (OERs) have been defined as "any educational resources (including curriculum maps, course materials, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia applications, podcasts, and any other materials that have been designed for use in teaching and learning) that are openly available for use by educators and students, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or license fees" (Butcher, 2011, p. 5).

7. When determining the content to be delivered in the FL course(s) that you supervise, do you or any of your colleagues incorporate material not provided to you by the textbook publisher?
8. If you answered "Yes" to question 7, please briefly list the types of OERs/OER-based materials or technological tools that you or your colleagues incorporate in the FL course(s) that you supervise. If you answered "No" to the previous question, simply type in 'n/a' in the space provided below.
9. What motivated you to consider, research, or utilize OERs in the FL course(s) that you supervise? [Again, if you have never used OERs in the course(s) that you supervise, simply type 'n/a' in the space below.]
10. Have you ever created OERs (print-based materials or a technological tool) with the intention of freely sharing them with colleagues?
11. What challenges have you encountered in your efforts to utilize, create, and/or share OERs? [Again, if you have never used OERs in the course(s) that you supervise, simply type 'n/a' in the space below.]
12. Do you wish you knew more about OERs so that you can incorporate them more in the FL course(s) that you supervise?
13. Have you ever considered the library as a resource in developing/utilizing OERs?
14. Has the library or its staff at your institution done any outreach in terms of offering services related to OERs?
15. Speaking from your experience with OERs as a developer or user, have you encountered issues related to intellectual property (i.e., copyright)?
16. Are you aware of the Creative Commons (CC) licensing structure?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding OERs and the FL course(s) that you supervise?

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