Newsletter

4-Year Report

Spring 2018

Mission

The Center for Open Educational Resources & Language Learning (COERLL) is one of 16 national foreign language resource centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education (Title VI of the 1990 Higher Education Act). COERLL's mission is to produce Open Educational Resources (OER) for the Internet public. In addition, COERLL aims to reframe foreign language education in terms of bilingualism and/or multilingualism.

Scan the code to the right with a scanner (bar-code reader) application to explore COERLL.

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COERLL Newsletter

Spring 2018:
Year-End Report

This newsletter is a biannual publication of the Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL) at the University of Texas at Austin.

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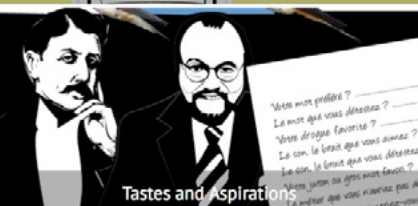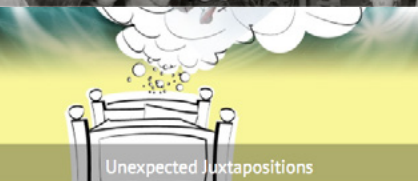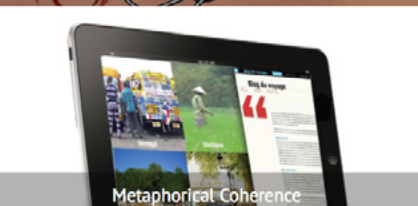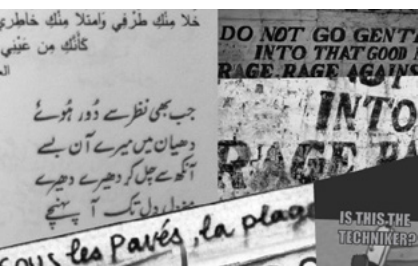158 W 21st St, Mail Stop B3500
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Project Reports

Foreign Languages and the Literary in the Everyday (FLLITE)

(Multilingual)

OER link: http://www.fllite.org/

Coordinators: Dr. Carl Blyth (UT Austin), Ms. Joanna Luks (Cornell University), Dr. Chantelle Warner (University of Arizona)

The FLLITE Project takes the creative moments found in everyday language use in authentic texts such as blogs, internet memes, YouTube videos, and slam poetry, as the basis for lessons in second language literacy. Through workshops and online resources, the project team helps instructors and graduate students to write lessons that develop students' language awareness and communicative abilities through the integration of speaking, reading, listening, and writing tasks.

The project is unique because it provides a pedagogical framework that connects awareness of convention and creativity. While the approach falls under the umbrella of Multiliteracies, it offers a unique set of pedagogical tools and practices that build on Communicative Language Teaching in empowering and creative ways.

Over the past four years, we created and edited sample lessons (shared in the form of an online resource), created professional development materials including webinars and workshops (also shared as online resources), and refined a pedagogical approach to FLLITE, which couldn't have been done without many conversations among project directors, colleagues, and collaborators.

We strongly suggest that authors who contribute lessons to FLLITE choose open texts and other open media for their lessons and ask all authors to adopt a CC BY or CC-BY-SA license. Open practices and resources provide the necessary space for innovation and communication among professionals, a space where theory and practice can come together.

The project creatively uses OER as a means of professional development, through online access to training materials and an editorial review process that includes lesson authors, editorial review board, and project directors. We even ask reviewers and lesson authors to communicate without any middle man, which leads to more discussion and the development of a social network among graduate students, teachers, and faculty.

We learned that a project takes time to reach a critical mass. It took us a while to refine our ideas and our processes. It also took a while until we had a critical mass of example lessons in different languages. Today, after four years, we have 30 lessons that come from 6 different languages (Chinese, French, German, Persian, Portuguese, Spanish) and an editorial board of 30+ faculty members.

Now that the approach has been fully realized, we can further focus on building a professional learning community through work with university language program directors and graduate students, in order to embed the FLLITE process into actual methods courses.

User-Generated Materials for Heritage Spanish

(Spanish Heritage Language)

OER link: http://heritagespanish.coerll.utexas.edu

Coordinators: Jose Esteban Hernández (UT Rio Grande Valley), Yanina Hernández (UT Rio Grande Valley)
Community moderator: Jocelly Meiners (UT Austin)

> Through an online community and yearly workshops, Spanish instructors share resources they have created or found specifically for teaching Spanish heritage learners. These resources reflect the diverse linguistic and cultural knowledge of the U.S. Spanish speaking community.

Three years ago, we had no idea that high quality, open resource materials were available to use in the language classroom, specifically in the Spanish heritage language classroom. Meetings and workshops with COERLL gave us the confidence and expertise to create new material to implement in our own classrooms. Through online communications and conferences and workshops, we've been in touch with many people who are interested in collaborating and contributing to the project, and we've grown the community and added content to the website.

Much of this content, such as our *Reflexiones* units, now incorporate a critical language awareness approach, which seeks to promote the affective and sociolinguistic needs of heritage language learners.

Our project is unique because it is a community that promotes sharing and collaborating among instructors of heritage Spanish at all levels. Since many of us heritage Spanish instructors are all working on similar projects across the country, it makes a lot of sense for us to share our work as OER so others can benefit from it.

The openness of this project has offered tremendous gains. For example, we used excerpts from the SpinTX corpus to create original exercises that used Spanish spoken in Texas, which is the language familiar to our students. In addition, we learned about other similar open source projects in universities across the United States and incorporated available material and ideas from those projects in our own project.

At the 5th National symposium on Spanish as a Heritage Language in the University of Iowa, the highlight for us was to learn that people in other universities are creating their own versions of our *Reflexiones*, and our project was cited at least in one presentation.

The future of the project is establishing the Texas Coalition for Heritage Spanish (TeCHS) and having a productive first round table where we will decide our goals and objectives. We hope to grow the coalition and use it to benefit heritage Spanish programs across the state. As for our own work, it is certain that we will not be going back to the traditional book-oriented classroom style in our Spanish heritage courses. There is so much out there to use and share that it would be hard to do so.

eComma: An Upgraded L2 Social Reading Tool

(Multilingual)

Coordinator: Carl Blyth (UT Austin)

COERLL's tool eComma allows a group of users to annotate the same text together and to share their annotations with each other, a process often referred to as "social reading". This type of collaborative online annotation offers a new kind of reading experience: instead of making notes in the margin of a book, readers can share their reactions instantaneously and build a body of commentary about a text together. COERLL's eComma website provides case studies and other materials to inspire social reading lesson plans that use eComma or any other social reading tool.

eComma was first developed in Drupal by the English Department at the University of Texas, and licensed under an open GNU General Public License, which allowed COERLL to continue developing it.

The most important work over the last four years consisted of our development of eComma into an LTI – an app that allows eComma to be installed in any Learning Management System (LMS). We've subsequently tested eComma in Canvas, Blackboard, and Moodle. Now that eComma is available in LMS, teachers no longer have to rely on COERLL staff to set a lesson up every time they want to use the tool, which has made it accessible to many more teachers. The growing number of users has allowed us to collect case studies from language teachers describing how they have used social reading in their classes, making

eComma an even more collaborative and sharing-based open project. We've also made other tweaks to enhance the tool's usefulness for language teachers, such as enabling right-to-left text display.

Social reading is still a relatively new practice in classrooms, and there aren't many public examples of teachers using it in foreign languages. We hope we can provide teachers a way to experiment with different social reading techniques in their classes. To spur this experimentation, we've published a lesson planning guide with ideas on the many different implementations of social reading.

We intend to keep registering people to use eComma. As long as this happens, we will still need to maintain the technology. However, our main focus will move away from adding functionality to the tool, and towards gathering knowledge about all the ways teachers can read socially with their students, no matter what annotation tool they are using. To that end, we will continue to collect case studies, and may add new ideas to the lesson planning guide.

Língua da Gente: Mobile Language Learning for Portuguese

(Portuguese)

OER link: https://linguadagente.coerll.utexas.edu/

Coordinator: Orlando Kelm (UT Austin)

This podcast series provides practical lessons that demonstrate how Brazilians really speak, through brief, slice-of-life dialogs, which focus on some daily situation, scenario, or task. Each podcast lesson includes the presentation of a brief dialog, English translation, and more in-depth analysis of the pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and cultural content in the lesson. Discussion blogs also accompany each lesson, providing community interaction for comments and questions.

The complete Língua da Gente podcast series has 75 beginning lessons, 75 elementary lessons, and about 35 intermediate lessons. These lessons are also searchable and sorted by topic, grammar, function, and textbook chapters. The library gives a solid foundation for learners of Portuguese, be they independent learners or students in an organized class.

The lesson topics, dialogs, podcast commentary and analysis all point to language as it is really spoken in everyday situations. This practical approach provides learners with a resource that is almost never found in textbooks and for which it would be difficult to parse out in authentic texts.

Because Portuguese language materials are hard to come by, it was important to make this project open. The flexibility of the Língua da Gente podcast lessons allow them to be used in so many different ways, which is a hallmark of open educational resources. The lessons, which are independent from one another, can be integrated into any course of study or used for individualized learning, in any number or order.

We've learned that when it comes to podcasting, get to your point quickly. There is no need for a two minute intro. Jump right in and get to the content. The situation-based dialogs in each episode of Língua da Gente provide for a rich mix of grammar and vocabulary. It was liberating to write these dialogs and focus on phrases that people use without worrying about the associated grammar, or whether a specific grammar principle is too advanced.

Our future plan is to provide "can do" lesson plans that reference and incorporate the various podcast lessons, to help users know what to do with the materials and sort through the large number of lessons. That way both students and teachers can draw from the lesson plans and immediately incorporate the podcasts. It seems that users benefit from an out-of-the-box presentation where they do not need to make any kind of modification when using the materials.

Elementary Level — I Don't Like Açaí

Beginning Level — WhatsApp Or Facebook?

Elementary Level — Making Brigadeiros

Beginning Level — These Tangerines Are Awesome

Beginning Level — How Do You Spell That?

Beginning Level — First Time In Brazil?

Elementary Level — What Sports Did You Play?

Chqe'tamaj le qach'ab'al! (Let's Learn K'iche')

(K'iche')

OER link: http://tzij.coerll.utexas.edu/

Coordinator: Sergio Romero (UT Austin)
Graduate Research Assistant: Ignacio Carvajal (UT Austin)
Pedagogical consultant: Juan Manuel Tahay Tzaj

K'iche' is a Mayan language spoken by more than one million people in the highlands and piedmont of Guatemala. Among the Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala, K'iche' has the largest number of speakers and is one of the most diverse dialectally. Dialectal differences play a crucial cultural role as local ethnic and stylistic markers. These online lessons provide a detailed introduction to the sounds, grammar and practice of speaking K'iche', based on the variety spoken in the township of Nahualá in the department of Sololá.

Over the past 4 years we have gathered lessons, audio-visual materials, vocabulary, and exercises. This has included the revision and reformulation of lessons, the recording and editing of video to use as examples of K'iche' speech, and the recording and editing of audio to accompany the lessons. The course has been used to teach K'iche' classes at the University of Texas, where the lessons continue to be analyzed and modified. There are 42 lessons, 30 YouTube videos with over 85,000 views, and hours of audio that are accessible to students and the general public.

As a less commonly taught language, there is very little pedagogical material for K'iche' language instruction. This project is innovative because it seeks to provide the first open online K'iche' course of its kind and can serve as a starting point for an archive of materials to be used by instructors in the United States and Guatemala.

While an important component is classroom instruction, the project has also generated interest with members of the community. Its nature as an open resource allows people around the world to access videos on YouTube for a variety of reasons, ranging from educational use to cultural engagement.

As we set out to gather the lessons, we never imagined they would go through so many modifications. While gathering audiovisual material was a very exciting aspect of the project, editing and preparing it required a lot of time and energy. Finally, this project would be impossible without the help of authors and editors working on-site in Nahualá. Coordinating the creation, transfer, and revision of materials at an international level has proved challenging but rewarding.

K'iche' texts and cultural traditions (for example, gastronomy, local natural medicine, local legends, significance of clothing, Mayan spirituality) are a fruitful field of study, and we would like to expand the project so that there are relevant materials available to students and K'iche' speakers in Guatemala. We also hope that this project could be a model for other indigenous language learning projects, in Guatemala or elsewhere.

1 Jas kab'an che ub'ixik le K'iche' ch'ab'al?

2 Jas ub'anik jun k'otoj chi'aj pa tijob'al?

3 Rutzil wachaj

4 Are wa' nuwuj!

5 K'o jun qat'u'y pa ja!

6 In aj Nawalja', in awajtij chuqe'!

Reality Czech

(Czech)

OER link: http://www.realityczech.org/

Coordinators: Christian Hilchey (UT Austin), Mary Neuburger (UT Austin)

Reality Czech is a set of beginning Czech language learning materials, comprised of cultural units, grammar explanations, interactive self-correcting exercises, audio recordings and listening tasks, video interviews with native speakers and students of Czech, and cultural videos.

We created the Reality Czech curriculum which consists of online lessons in grammar, vocabulary, and culture; Canvas exercises; an in-class activity book; and a homework workbook. We also created 245 Reality Czech interview videos on topics related to each of the units. For every question there are two videos (one at the novice/intermediate level, one at intermediate/advanced) for a total of 6 hours and 24 minutes. Finally, we have integrated significant amounts of openly licensed pictures, video, and other media into the curriculum.

While all of the components are substantial and a major contribution to Czech teaching, our work with open materials, especially open videos, has been the most innovative and offers the most to the community at large as a potential source for creating richer language curricula.

OERs are of monumental importance when we consider the rapidly increasing prices of textbooks as well as the need to use materials that are current. OERs give us the freedom to copy and adapt these materials without copyright concerns. It has been a goal to provide a valuable resource to Czech language instructors and students everywhere at little to no cost.

We've encountered a vast amount of openly licensed content already available to incorporate into the curriculum, including photos, drawings, videos, and written texts. It really is possible to create a quality course by adapting open content already available on the internet. We have widely used and adapted open images from sources such as Pixabay, Flickr and Wikimedia, openly licensed videos on YouTube, and texts from Wikipedia.

It is our hope that the course materials will be adopted by other universities teaching Czech. We have already been promoting it at conferences and will continue to do this. Now that we will be releasing materials, there is great potential for this to become a major textbook for universities as well as individual students and private instructors.

Open Digital Badges for K-12 Professional Development

(Multilingual)

OER link: https://www.aisdwlbadges.org/, https://goo.gl/MJLfsG

Coordinator: Thymai Dong (Austin Independent School District)

A digital badge is an online representation of earned knowledge or skills, which can be used in formal or informal learning settings. For this project, Thymai Dong, the former World Languages Coordinator in Austin Independent School District (AISD), created a professional development badge system based on the TELL Framework (Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning), which provides resources for language teachers to self-assess, reflect, and improve their teaching in seven domains of expertise. AISD language teachers participated in professional development sessions related to these domains, and afterwards had the option to apply their learning by completing certain tasks in order to earn badges.

Despite the usefulness of badges in demonstrating growth and learning, it is not always easy to motivate people, in this case teachers, to take the time to apply their learning and submit evidence of it in order to earn a badge. For this reason, in the summer of 2016, Ms. Dong chose three "COERLL Collaborators": teachers from AISD to mentor in earning badges. Rachel Preston, Tania Shebaro, and Janeth Medrano committed to attending workshops, meeting with Ms. Dong regularly, and earning badges for a year, all while documenting their experience. The intent was to begin developing a community of teachers interested in earning badges and in supporting each other in their professional growth.

In the original project plan, Ms. Dong would have mentored the COERLL Collaborators throughout the whole year but couldn't complete this part of the project because she was hired for another position at AISD. Even so, the teachers continued to grow professionally and reflect on their progress, and they each wrote a report about their experiences, reflecting on the period between the summer of 2016 and the summer of 2017.

The reflections these COERLL Collaborators submitted revealed the extent to which teachers can take what they learn in professional learning sessions and implement it in their own classrooms. Setting goals, getting individual mentorship, workshops where teachers actually get to practice the strategies they're learning about, time to plan, and self-assessing all seemed to help the COERLL Collaborators try new things and advance their teaching skills.

We at COERLL would be thrilled if someone could take these insights from teachers, combined with Thymai's badge system and the TELL Framework, and try again to use badges for professional learning. We still believe this system can work but like all things, it will take some more experimentation.

OER/OEP survey

Coordinator: Joshua Thoms (Utah State University)

This project involves the creation and distribution of an OER/OEP survey to FL educators working in all levels of education—K–12, community colleges, and 4–year colleges. The survey targets FL educators at many types of institutions (e.g., private vs. public, urban vs. rural) to answer questions about their knowledge and perceptions of OER.

This research sought to fill a void in the literature regarding how the open movement is affecting foreign language (FL) educators in the United States (US). The resulting scholarly outputs shed light on how FL teachers perceive and make use of open educational resources (OER) in their classes and how and why they engage in open educational practices (OEP). This project has resulted in three conference presentations, one multi-country webinar among researchers working in the US and the European Union in 2015, and two manuscripts that are currently under review.

The most innovative aspects of this project include (a) investigating OER and OEP issues among a wide range of FL educators working in a variety of teaching contexts in the US, and (b) gaining a better understanding of what inhibits or motivates FL educators to create, adopt, or re-mix materials for their teaching context.

I have learned that there are a variety of factors that affect whether or not FL educators are aware of OER and what motivates them to engage in OEP. Some factors include the specific FL being taught, the format of instruction (i.e., face-to-face vs. blended and online FL courses), and educators' teaching context (i.e., K-12 schools vs. community colleges vs. universities). I have also gained an understanding as to what motivates and deters FL educators from using OER in their courses. FL educators indicate that they primarily look to OER to address issues not sufficiently covered in traditional textbooks, and state that OER are more current than most publisher-produced materials. Survey respondents indicated some main deterrents to using OER: many OER are not comprehensive in nature, and FL educators often have difficulty knowing how to locate high-quality OER. In sum, FL educators in the US are increasingly becoming more aware of OER and are engaging in OEP for reasons that go beyond the two benefits of access and cost typically associated with open education. That said, more research in this area is still needed.

Three related projects have begun as a direct result of this project: a co-edited book with Carl Blyth that will explore a number of issues related to the open education movement and FL teaching and learning in various contexts throughout the world; a study that takes a closer look at FL educators working in K-12 contexts and how the open education movement has affected their creation and/or use of OER as well as their teaching practices; as well as a project that investigates whether or not administrators working at US colleges and universities take into consideration open education efforts of faculty members who are under consideration for promotion and tenure.

TELL Collab

Coordinator: Thomas Sauer

The TELL Collab brought together world language educators to explore, model, and share effective language teaching practices identified by the TELL Framework. The two and a half day professional learning experience included a mixture of collaborative sessions, presentations and resource sharing to help teachers identify their own professional learning goals and strategies for meeting those goals.

Thomas Sauer of the TELL Project planned TELL Collab events nationwide, while COERLL gave input and organized the logistics for the yearly summer TELL Collab in Austin, Texas, which hosted 228 teachers and administrators over three years. Participants left the TELL Collab motivated by what they had learned, inspired by the colleagues they had met, and eager to get back to the classroom to test new techniques.

The TELL Collab was innovative because it gave autonomy to participants to choose session topics and teach each other, putting faith in them that "whoever comes are the right people".

Many aspects of the TELL Collab reflect the ethos of open education. The TELL Framework carries a Creative Commons license, making it available to any teacher interested in self-assessing their abilities and tracking their professional growth. More generally, the TELL Collab thrives on sharing and flexibility, which are key elements of the open education movement.

The flexible aspects of the TELL Collab were also part of its challenge. We learned that it's necessary to maintain a balance between ceding full control to participants and structuring sessions and schedules. Consequently, we tested different approaches that balanced decisions more equally between participants and organizers.

We also learned a lot about digital badges. During the first two years, participants could earn peer-to-peer badges, which they awarded to each other for small acts during the workshop such as sharing experiences, questioning the status quo, or providing encouragement. They could also earn "Official" badges related to three main areas of learning. Both years, participants earned many more peer badges than official ones (in year one, a ratio of 2:1 and in year two, 10:1). We attribute this to several factors: whereas the peer badges awarded something participants had already done, the official badges required extra time and work; the peer badges were given on the spot, but the official badges required follow-up; and the peer badges were awarded by peers, but the official badges required self-reflection. In year three, we combined the two systems into a new system, and almost all participants earned a badge.

If we were to do the TELL Collab again, we'd like to find a way for participants to maintain their professional learning all year, so that the Collab in the summer would only be one piece of a broader plan. However, this would require more extensive organization and communication.

Other COERLL work

Recorridos (Spanish)

OER link:

http://espanolabierto.org/recorridos/

Rose Potter and Betsy Arnold are the authors of Recorridos-Don Quijote, a pair of openly-licensed books for the study of Cervantes' Don Quijote in upper level Spanish courses, including AP. The student workbook deepens students' understanding of the text through reading, pre-reading, and post-reading activities and glosses. The teacher support offers student-centered strategies and activities, historical and cultural information, quizzes, exams and more. COERLL is proud to offer books authored by these master teachers!

Español abierto
(Spanish)

OER link: http://www.espanolabierto.org

This is a listing of openly licensed Spanish videos, textbooks, grammar references, corpora, training tools, and other supplementary materials created by COERLL and other colleagues from the University of Texas and beyond. We are excited to continue adding materials to this site as we learn about new instructor-authored materials.

Language OER Network – LOERN (Multilingual)

OER link:

http://community.coerll.utexas.edu/

LOERN showcases the work of open educators in the field of language learning and teaching. If you are a language educator who uses, creates, or promotes open educational resources (OER) and open educational practices (OEP), COERLL would like to recognize your

innovations by listing your name on the LOERN page and by assigning to you a COERLL digital badge. Or you are welcome to browse the array of people and projects already listed!

Tadriis: An Arabic Teaching Methods Website (Arabic)

OER link: http://www.tadriis.org

The Tadriis site, developed by Dr. Mahmoud Al-Batal in collaboration with COERLL, is a multimedia Arabic-language online Arabic teacher training that covers the latest in K-16 Arabic language pedagogy. Users can access video samples of teacher-student interactions in actual Arabic language classrooms, pedagogical demonstrations and teaching tips, samples of L2 language production, a glossary of key teaching terms, and suggestions for further reading.

Gateway to Chinese
(Chinese)

OER link:

http://sites.la.utexas.edu/chinese/

Over the past four years, Dr. Wen-Hua Teng added many new grammar videos to the existing content on the Gateway to Chinese website, which also includes: Pitch Perfect Pinyin for learning pronunciation, flashcard exercises for reviewing vocabulary terms, word-order exercises, Chinese Take-In for listening practice with immediate feedback, and dialogue podcasts. We receive regular feedback that students and teachers appreciate the ability to use these tools from anywhere, in any combination based on their own personal needs and at their own pace.
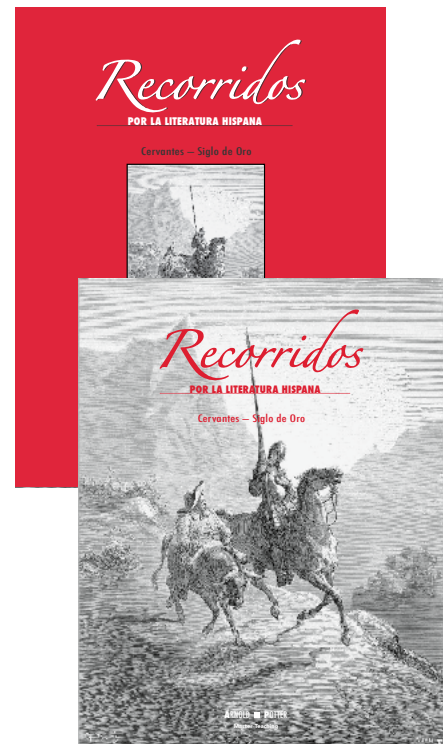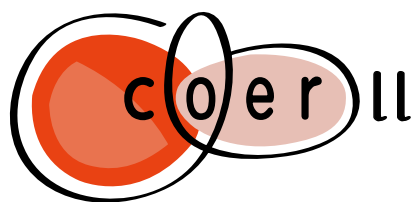
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