

August 2018 – Volume 22, Number 2

## **Open Educational Resources and ESL Education: Insights from US Educators**

**Joshua J. Thoms**

Utah State University, USA  
<joshua.thoms@usu.edu>

**Ekaterina Arshavskaya**

Utah State University, USA  
<ekaterina.a@usu.edu>

**Frederick J. Poole**

Utah State University, USA  
<frederick.poole@aggiemail.usu.edu>

### **Abstract**

The open education movement has resulted in the proliferation of content that is freely produced, shared, remixed, and reused by instructors in various disciplines throughout the world. However, little is known about whether or not English as a second language (ESL) instructors in the United States (US) are taking part. This study reports on the survey responses of 310 ESL instructors working in various US educational contexts. Results indicate that 59% of respondents were either aware or very aware of open educational resources (OER). Instructors with less teaching experience were two times as likely of being aware of OER than more experienced instructors. Instructors working in K-12 settings were more likely to use OER than those teaching in community colleges and universities. Respondents' main reasons for using OER include the ease of adapting/incorporating OER in their courses and that OER address aspects of their course not found elsewhere. Primary reasons for not using OER include difficulty in locating OER and the quality of the materials. Respondents indicated that OER have made their teaching more interesting/dynamic, provided for the inclusion of more authentic materials, and helped to better address the needs of their students and the goals of their ESL program.

**Keywords:** ESL education; open education; open educational resources; open pedagogy

## Introduction

Over the past 15 years, open education has become a global movement affecting all levels of education. Early efforts focused on the creation and sharing of open educational resources (OER), defined as resources “that are openly available for use by educators and students, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or license fees” (Butcher, 2011, p. 5). OER are often shared via a Creative Commons license, which allows fellow educators to revise, remix, reuse, and/or redistribute the material without dealing with restrictive copyright. More recent efforts have focused on research and development of open educational practices (OEP), which encompass “all activities that open up access to educational opportunity, in a context where freely available online content and services . . . are taken as the norm” (Beetham, Falconer, McGill, & Littlejohn, 2012, p. 1). When taken together, both OER and OEP often draw upon “open technologies that facilitate collaborative, flexible learning and the open sharing of teaching practices” (Cape Town Open Education Declaration, 2008, p. 1).

The open education movement is beginning to give rise to new knowledge ecologies that involve English as a second language (ESL) and foreign language (FL) students, instructors, and researchers due, in part, to the overall increasing cost of textbooks (Weller, de los Arcos, Pitt, & McAndrew, 2017; “Open Education,” 2017) coupled with a lack of adequate funding for education in many states in the United States (US) (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016). However, when compared to the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, the ESL/FL education and second language acquisition fields have only marginally embraced open education efforts. One reason why language educators have been hesitant to participate in the open education movement relates to the dearth of research investigating the benefits and challenges of language learning and teaching in open environments, the effectiveness of OER when compared to traditional, publisher-produced materials, and the reasons why (and how) language educators engage in OEP at their institutions (e.g., Thoms & Thoms, 2014). Although researchers have recently begun to explore some aspects of OER and OEP in FL education contexts (e.g., Blyth & Dalola, 2016; Wyte, 2016; Zourou, 2016), this paper seeks to focus on a subset of language educators (i.e., ESL instructors) working in the US to (a) determine ESL instructors’ awareness of open education/OER, (b) understand motivations to engage (or not) in OEP, and (c) fill the research void by exploring aspects of open education and ESL learning and teaching across a range of educational environments (i.e., primary, secondary, and higher education contexts).

## Open Education & Second Language Learning and Teaching

The bulk of research related to open education and second language (L2) learning and teaching has primarily focused on the creation, adaptation, and/or (re)use of OER content in FL contexts, with particular attention given to open textbook initiatives that target specific languages. For example, Blyth (2013) describes *Français interactif* (<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/fi/>), an open French language textbook created by a team of professors, graduate students, and undergraduates at the University of Texas at Austin that is widely used by a number of French language programs and independent language learners in the US and in other parts of the world. Similarly, Rossomondo (2012) highlights an open, intermediate Spanish language textbook called *Acceso* (<http://acceso.ku.edu/>); a text whose content is considered to be “hybrid with respect to its collaborative development and maintenance” (p. 219). Regarding OER for ESL courses, few full-length textbooks exist, with the exception of recent publications such as the OER textbook *In the Community: An Intermediate Integrated Skills Textbook* (<https://centre.bowvalleycollege.edu/>).

[ca/tools/community-intermediate-integrated-skills-textbook](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/pdxopen/18/)), a collaborative project created by faculty at Bow Valley College and NorQuest College which was funded by both institutions along with support from the Alberta Open Educational Resources Initiative. A more recent example includes Abrahams's (2017) OER textbook that targets listening and speaking issues for English language learners (<http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/pdxopen/18/>). Abrahams's book was created, in part, via a collaboration between the author (a university ESL instructor) and an applied linguist colleague and her graduate students. Finally, Beaven, Comas-Quinn, and Sawhill's (2013) co-edited volume provides a number of different 'case studies in openness' that describe the creation and use of a variety of OER materials and technological tools used in various language learning environments. Many of the case studies involve students becoming co-participants in the creation and curation of open content with their instructors and/or their fellow learners.

What these early efforts have in common is that they (a) illustrate how to create and maintain open materials and tools, (b) highlight OER for language learning and teaching purposes, and (c) underscore the collaborative nature in which many OER materials are created, shared, and maintained. That is, one of the defining features of open education is that it involves an abundance of open content via a diverse, digital ecosystem which, in turn, encourages a participatory, remix culture. This new model of content creation and student-instructor engagement allows learners to develop "the skills, knowledge, ethical frameworks, and self-confidence needed to be full participants in contemporary culture" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 7). This participatory ethos also affects the ways in which language educators not only create content for their own courses, but also encourages them to share their work with colleagues so that they can remix or reuse the OER for their specific teaching needs. However, there is a scant amount of research that looks at how and why (or why not) language educators are embracing OER and OEP.

As a result, current research related to the open education movement and L2 learning and teaching includes a focus on better understanding language educators' perceptions about the creation and/or use of open content in contrast to closed (i.e., copyrighted), publisher-produced materials. The only survey-based study of US language educators' attitudes about OER to date was carried out by Thoms and Thoms (2014). The researchers surveyed 155 FL program directors working in various universities throughout the US. Foreign language program directors are in charge of a number of decisions regarding their specific FL; from determining which textbook is used by the teachers in their program to creating syllabi and assessments to be used uniformly across various sections of the FL courses, among various other administrative tasks. As such, FL program directors in the US are gatekeepers in that they ultimately decide the kinds of materials used in their programs.

The study revealed that while 66% of the FL program directors did not recognize the term OER, many were in fact utilizing open materials in the courses they oversaw. Respondents indicated that they primarily use OER to go beyond what is offered in traditional, print-based textbooks as they viewed OER as being more authentic and relevant (i.e., readings or videos related to more current news events or unique L2 cultural content not typically found in publisher-produced textbooks). The FL program directors noted that the primary challenges of incorporating OER in their program's courses included finding OER at the appropriate level for their students, the amount of time involved in either creating, using, and/or locating OER, as well as providing the necessary training for adjuncts and graduate student teaching assistants to use digitally based OER. This lone survey study revealed how some college-level language educators in the US perceive and make use of OER, but more work is necessary to better understand how the open education movement might be changing the ways in which other language educators (e.g., ESL instructors) working in a variety

of educational contexts (i.e., K-16 educational environments) create, adopt, or adapt OER and/or engage in OEP at their institutions. Given the digital nature of the majority of OER, coupled with the omnipresence and use of technology by many ESL instructors and their students in the US, we now briefly visit literature related to technology-mediated teaching and learning issues in ESL contexts.

## **Teaching ESL in the digital age**

The emergence of the Internet and advances in technology more generally promise innovative methods to support language teaching and learning. Responding to the current needs of students, teachers, and administrators regarding the use of new technologies within and beyond L2 classrooms, the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Technology Standards explain how technology can be applied in the various contexts of language teaching with an emphasis on integrating solid pedagogical principles and technological developments to improve the teaching of English and other languages (Healey, Hanson-Smith, Hubbard, Iannou-Georgiou, Kessler, & Ware, 2011). As described by Kessler (2013), computers and other technological advances support many of the innovative yet widely accepted pedagogical principles of language teaching, such as creating a collaborative learning environment (e.g., Lee, 2013; Sun & Chang, 2012), facilitating L2 students' exposure to authentic language (e.g., Abunowara, 2014; Bahrani, Tam Shu, & Nekoueizadeh, 2014; Brinton, 2001), providing opportunities for autonomous student learning (Tomlinson, 2011), and increasing learners' motivation in regard to using English (Aljamah, 2012; Kitchakarn, 2012).

Many of the aforementioned pedagogical principles outlined by Kessler (2013) mirror ideas inherent in open pedagogy, which can be defined as “an access-oriented commitment to learner-driven education AND as a process of designing architectures and using tools for learning that enable students to shape the public knowledge commons of which they are a part” (Jhangiani & DeRosa, 2017, p. 14, emphasis in original). That is, L2 learning and teaching that relies on digital, open content (e.g., OER) can lead to the creation of a collaborative learning environment where learners are regularly exposed to and interact with authentic L2 resources and are afforded opportunities to co-create and/or co-curate L2 content, which may lead to increasing motivation to learn and make use of the L2 in meaningful ways.

A wide range of empirical studies has shown how technological advances have been applied in the ESL classroom to support learning in various ways. Ybarra and Green (2003) provide an overview of empirical studies on utilizing technology to assist language learning in ESL educational contexts. The authors conclude that the use of computers and other technologies can support the development of core academic abilities, such as writing and reading. Related work has also included the investigation of the use of blogs to facilitate EFL students' writing skills and L2 vocabulary acquisition (e.g., Ching, 2012; Kitchakarn, 2012), software to teach grammar (e.g., Al-Jarf, 2005; Sadeghi & Dousti, 2013), digital books to provide for meaningful reading activities and improve interactions among students (Chou, 2015; Liaw, 1997), video-based blogs to improve students' public speaking skills in English (Shih, 2010), web-enhanced environments to assist L2 learners in developing intercultural competency (Furstenberg & Levet, 2010; Lázár, 2015; Xing & Wang, 2008), among other topics.

In summary, there is considerable research on how new technologies in ESL classrooms are being used to facilitate L2 learning and teaching. Many, if not most of the aforementioned technological

tools are open source (Su, 2005), while several are available free of charge. Many of these technologies, and the open digital learning and teaching environments they afford language instructors and their learners, are capable of addressing—to some extent—the rising cost of textbooks and supplementary content, which might otherwise be excluded from ESL classrooms. In addition, compared to other digital educational resources, OER offer more options for customization, which enables both educators and students to use and modify OER in innovative ways.

Nonetheless, the implementation of new technologies in L2 classrooms is not without challenges. Among those hurdles, researchers have generally reported on practitioners' anxiety regarding technology use in the classroom, limited funding available to language programs and educators to upgrade their technological infrastructure, and issues related to Internet safety and censorship to protect children online (Machado de Almeida Mattos, 2003; Singhal, 1997). Despite these constraints and obstacles, digital OER can enable language educators to employ a wide array of additional resources to facilitate the creation of effective teaching and learning environments (Godwin-Jones, 2012). In other words, OER have the potential to expand and enhance the repertoire of teaching tools and practices embraced by language educators worldwide today.

While the open education movement continues to grow in the US (Jhangiani & Biswas-Diener, 2017), particularly among those who work with foreign languages in higher education (Thoms & Thoms, 2014), more information is needed to understand if, how, and why ESL instructors teaching in K-16 contexts make use of OER. In addition, this study also explores whether or not the proliferation of a variety of OER in the aforementioned educational contexts results in ESL instructors becoming more engaged in the open education movement via OEP. We, therefore, investigate the following research questions:

- (1) What demographic variables affect ESL instructors' awareness of OER and the ways in which OER are used in their classes?;
- (2a) What are the main reasons why ESL instructors use OER in their courses?;
- (2b) What are the main reasons why ESL instructors do not use OER in their courses?; and,
- (3) How have OER changed ESL instructors' teaching practices?

## **Research methods**

### **Data collection procedures and definition of OER used in survey**

The data analyzed for this study is a subset taken from a larger research initiative that originally surveyed 1673 language educators teaching in K-12, community college, and four-year university and college contexts in the United States [1]. The large-scale survey used to collect data was modeled after a survey study carried out by Allen and Seaman (2014) that investigated a number of OER-related issues among instructors from various disciplines teaching in higher education (i.e., four-year universities and colleges) in the US. The survey for the project being reported on here was distributed during the summer of 2015 (see [Appendix A](#) for the survey).

To seek out possible survey respondents for the larger project, one of the researchers carried out an extensive online search for ESL and foreign language instructors teaching in K-12, community college, and four-year university and college contexts. Upon establishing a database of names based on information found on institutions'/school districts' websites, it was discovered that compiling

instructors' names who taught in higher education was more readily available online when compared to locating instructors teaching in K-12 contexts. As such, the majority of survey respondents for both the large-scale project and the subset of ESL instructors being reported on here came from educators primarily teaching in community colleges and four-year universities and colleges in the US; a smaller number of respondents reported that they were affiliated with K-12 ESL programs or with independent adult education/English language learning centers.

Once a sizeable database of names was established, another researcher sent out emails to all of the instructors that explained the research project and an invitation to take the anonymous survey. Completing the survey was done on a volunteer basis. However, some respondents did opt to enter a drawing that awarded a \$50 Amazon gift certificate to ten randomly selected survey respondents in appreciation for their time to complete the survey.

Given that one of the primary purposes of the survey was to determine how aware instructors were of OER and whether or not they made use of OER in their ESL classes, the following definition of OER was provided in the survey:

*"...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).*

Immediately following this definition, the survey also underscored the idea that in contrast to traditional copyrighted materials/tools, OER are open and can typically be shared, edited, modified, or remixed depending on one's specific educational context and/or needs. By providing the aforementioned information about OER early on in the survey, ESL instructors were working with the same definition while responding to the various OER-related questions in the latter half of the survey.

## **Participants and their ESL teaching contexts**

The subset of data reported on in this paper includes the analysis of the survey responses of 310 ESL educators teaching in all parts of the US. While all geographic locations are represented in the data, the majority of respondents came from the Midwestern (30.7%), Southeastern (22.3%), and Mid-Atlantic (15.7%) regions. Approximately 25% of the ESL educators were male while 75% of them were female. Respondents' ages were distributed as follows: under 25 (1.4%); 25–34 (21.9%); 35–44 (25.4%); 45–54 (21.6%); and 55 or older (29.7%). A majority of respondents (i.e., 80.7%) indicated that they possessed a Master's degree, 8.8% held a PhD, 7.9% had a Bachelor's degree, and 2.6% reported that they possessed some other kind of certificate/licensure. Regarding the number of years teaching ESL, 24.5% of respondents had 0–5 years of experience, 35.5% had taught between 6 and 15 years, and 40.3% had taught for 16 or more years.

Table 1 indicates the contexts in which the ESL instructors worked. As can be seen, an overwhelming majority taught in face-to-face environments. In addition, close to 75% of respondents worked in a community college or a four-year university or college. Again, this disproportion in the data stemmed from the difficulty of locating reliable contact information for ESL educators working in K-12 environments.

**Table 1.** *Educational contexts of ESL educators*

Format of ESL Class	
Face-to-face	91.60%
Blended/hybrid	8.10%
Fully online	0.30%
Educational Context(s)	
Primary school	0.60%
Middle school	1.20%
High school	19.00%
Community College	17.30%
4-year university or college	57.30%
Other (e.g., English Center)	4.60%

## **Data analysis procedures**

This study incorporated a mixed-methods approach when analyzing the survey data. Quantitative data analysis procedures were used to answer our first research question concerning how demographic variables affect how aware ESL instructors are of OER and how often they use OER as either a primary or supplementary source. To answer this research question, we conducted a binomial logistic regression in which the following dichotomous items were used as our dependent variables: awareness, use of OER as primary source, and use of OER as a supplementary source. Gender, age, highest degree obtained, language teaching experience, teaching context, and use of a traditional textbook were all used as the demographic variables. Once data were collected, they were examined using cross tabulations and then collapsed into larger subgroups (see [Appendix B](#) for the final descriptions for each variable used in the statistical analyses).

Although 310 ESL teachers responded to parts of the survey, not all of the participants completed the survey in its entirety. Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the samples used for the binomial regression analyses carried out for this paper.

**Table 2.** *Descriptive statistics for demographic variables*

Descriptive statistics					
Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Gender	299	0.759	0.428	0	1
Age	299	1.515	0.501	1	2
Degree	299	2.037	0.451	1	3
Experience	299	1.585	0.493	1	2
Context	299	2.385	0.817	1	3
Textbook	299	0.856	0.351	0	1
Awareness	297	0.586	0.493	0	1
Primary Source	268	0.325	0.469	0	1
Supplementary Source	292	0.675	0.469	0	1

To answer research question 2, descriptive statistics were used to determine the main reasons why (or why not) ESL instructors used OER. For our third research question, qualitative analyses of ESL instructors' free responses to a survey question was carried out based on the principles of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). This approach entails researchers making multiple passes through the data to determine if any possible patterns emerge. For this study, one researcher initially read through all of the responses for the following survey question: *If you have incorporated OER in your ESL course(s), briefly explain how it has changed your teaching.*

That initial pass through respondents' answers resulted in the creation of categories for the responses and a description of each category was determined. One of the researchers discussed the categories with another researcher and agreed on how each one was defined based on the first pass of the data. The other researcher then read through and coded all comments for the survey question based on the categories established by the first researcher. Upon comparing the results of each coding pass, the interrater reliability of the raters for the responses was found to be Kappa = 0.906. More detailed information about the various categories is provided in the Results section.

## Results

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

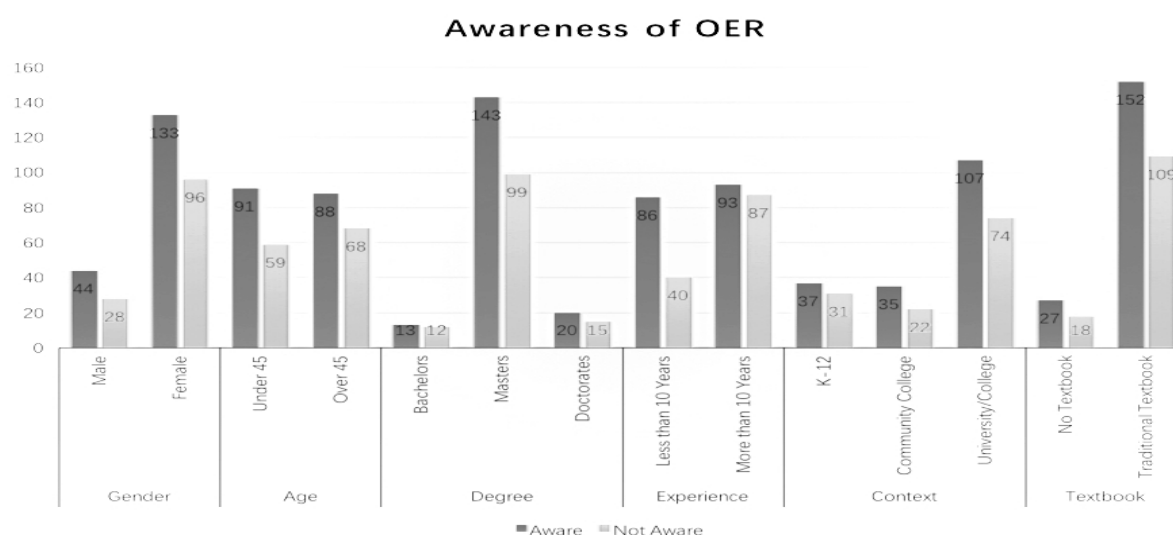
*Research Question 1: What demographic variables affect how aware ESL instructors are of OER and the ways in which OER are used in their classes?*

Respondents were provided with a definition of OER in the survey, and then asked to indicate their level of awareness regarding OER (Figure 1). Descriptive statistical analysis of this question indicated that only 17.5% of ESL instructors were not aware of OER while 23.7% of respondents had said that they had heard of OER but did not know much about them. When taken together, roughly 41% of respondents were not very aware of OER. The rest of the respondents either indicated that they were aware of OER and knew about some of their uses (33.4%) or were very aware of OER and were confident in knowing how they can be used in their ESL classroom (25.4%). While this descriptive statistical account provides a general idea about ESL instructors'



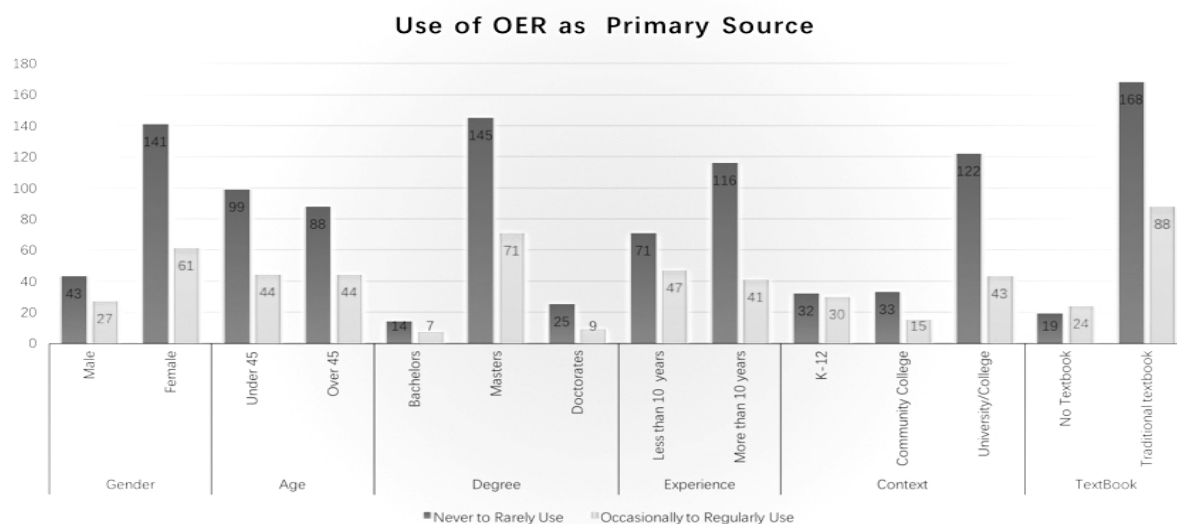
knowledge of OER, we wanted to better understand how demographic variables might or might not predict OER awareness among ESL instructors in the US.

A chi-square test of independence was therefore performed to examine the relationship between awareness and the individual demographic variables found in Table 2. Only the relationship between experience and awareness was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 306) = 8.4, p < .01$ . Teachers with less than 10 years of experience were more likely to report being aware of OER than teachers with more than 10 years of experience.



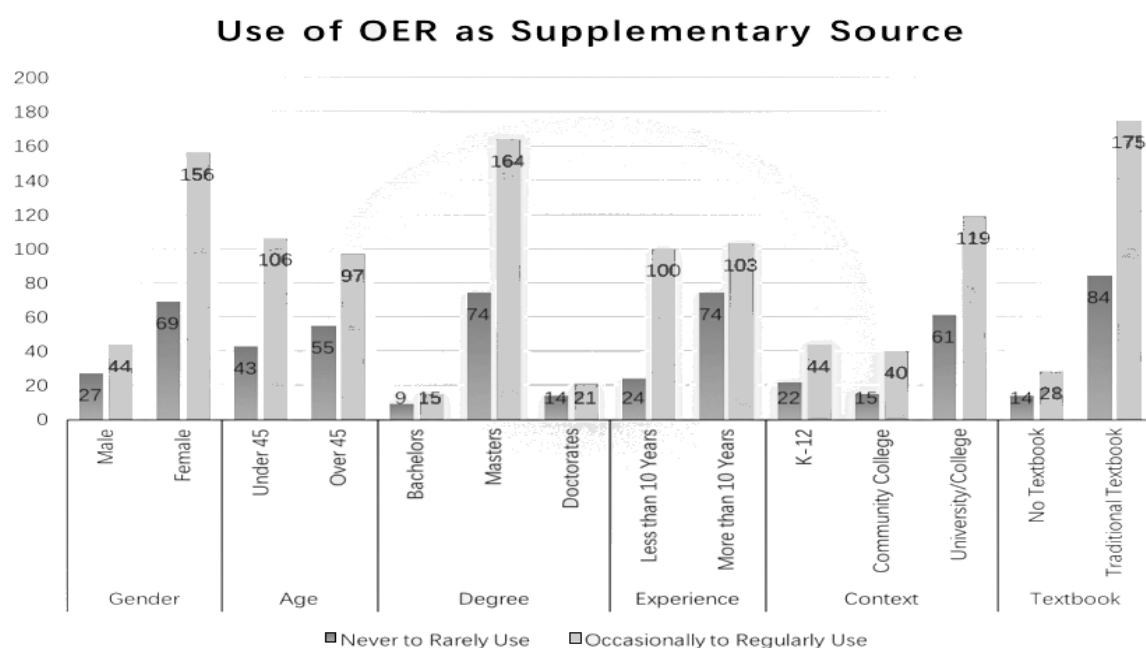
**Figure 1.** *Awareness of OER*

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between teachers who reported using OER as a primary resource and the individual demographic variables (Figure 2). Experience, teaching context, and use of a traditional textbook all had significant differences associated with the use of OER as a primary source. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience were more likely to use OER than teachers with more than 10 years of experience,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 275) = 5.824, p = .016$ . Teachers in a K-12 setting were more likely to use OER than teachers in either a community college or a university setting,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 275) = 10.339, p < .01$ . Finally, teachers who reported not using a traditional textbook were more likely to use OER than those who reported using a traditional textbook  $\chi^2 (1, N = 275) = 13.284, p < .01$ .



**Figure 2.** *Use of OER as a primary source*

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between teachers who reported using OER as a supplementary resource and the demographic variables (Figure 3). Only the relationship between experience and awareness was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 301) = 16.741, p < .01$ . Teachers with less than 10 years of experience were more likely to report being aware of OER than teachers with more than 10 years of experience.



**Figure 3.** *Use of OER as a supplementary source*

A binomial logistic regression was completed to determine the relationship between ESL teachers' demographic variables (gender, age, degree, experience, context, and textbook) and their awareness and use of OER. A stepwise method was used to build the models found in Table 3, by comparing the Log Likelihood scores. In terms of predicting awareness, the unadjusted model, with only

experience as a predictor, is used since the addition of other predictors failed to produce a significant decrease in the Log Likelihood score,  $\chi^2(3) = 1.0193$ ,  $p = .7966$ . For the primary source variable, the adjusted model is used as the addition of context and gender significantly decreased the Log Likelihood score of the model,  $\chi^2(3) = 15.062$ ,  $p < .01$ , while the addition of other variables did not result in a significant change. Finally, the unadjusted model, with only experience as a predictor, was also used to predict the use of OER as a supplementary source, as the addition of other predictors failed to produce a significant change in the model,  $\chi^2(3) = 1.8504$ ,  $p = .604$ . The results presented in Table 3 display the odds ratio for each variable. In terms of predicting the likelihood that someone is aware of OER, only experience was significant. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience are approximately two times as likely as teachers with more than 10 years of experience to report being aware of OER ( $p < .01$ ). As for predicting which teachers report using OER as a primary source, experience and teaching context are significant while gender is approaching significance. Again teachers who have less than ten years of experience are approximately two times as likely to use OER as a primary source than teachers with more than 10 years of experience ( $p < .01$ ). Community college teachers and university teachers are about 40% ( $p < .05$ ) and 30% ( $p < .01$ ), respectively, less likely to use OER as a primary source than K-12 teachers. Finally, female teachers are about 56% less likely to use OER as a primary source when compared to male teachers; however, this finding is only approaching significance ( $p < .1$ ).

In terms of predicting the use of OER as a supplementary source, only experience was significant. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience were four times more likely to report using OER as a supplementary source than teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience ( $p < .01$ ).

**Table 3. Regression models**

	Results					
	Dependent Variables					
	Awareness		Primary Source Use		Supplementary Source Use	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Less than 10 years vs More than 10 Years	0.528*** (0.325, 0.851)	0.522*** (0.320, 0.843)	0.549** (0.326, 0.919)	0.486*** (0.282, 0.831)	0.348*** (0.200, 0.592)	0.345*** (0.197, 0.588)
K-12 vs Community College		1.347 (0.642, 2.852)		0.419** (0.181, 0.942)		1.227 (0.541, 2.820)
K-12 vs University		1.120 (0.620, 2.015)		0.304*** (0.158, 0.579)		0.891 (0.463, 1.674)
Male vs Female		0.845 (0.482, 1.465)		0.567* (0.311, 1.035)		1.311 (0.729, 2.330)
Intercept	2.075*** (1.433, 3.055)	2.100* (0.987, 4.577)	0.667** (0.456, 0.965)	2.512** (1.115, 5.808)	4.042*** (2.632, 6.461)	3.441*** (1.525, 8.120)
Observations	297	297	268	268	292	292
Log Likelihood	-198.003	-197.494	-166.325	-158.794	-176.328	-175.402
Akaike Inf. Crit.	400.007	404.987	336.650	327.588	356.655	360.805

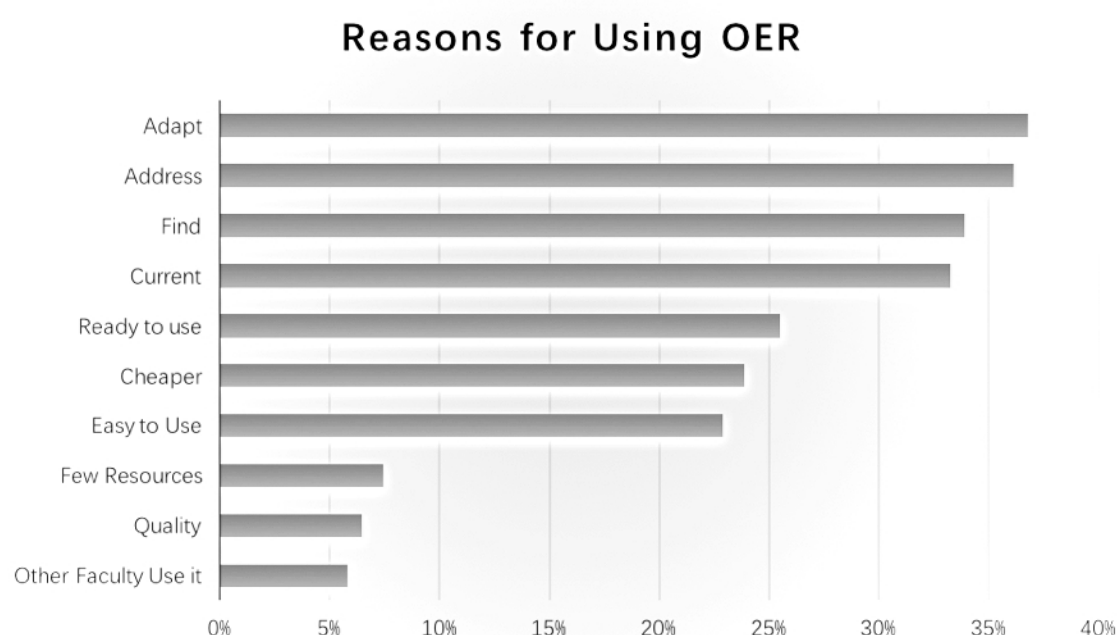
Note:

\*  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$   
Odds Ratios are reported in this table

The significance of the results for research question 1 will be explored in the Discussion and Conclusion section below. We now turn to results for research questions 2a and 2b.

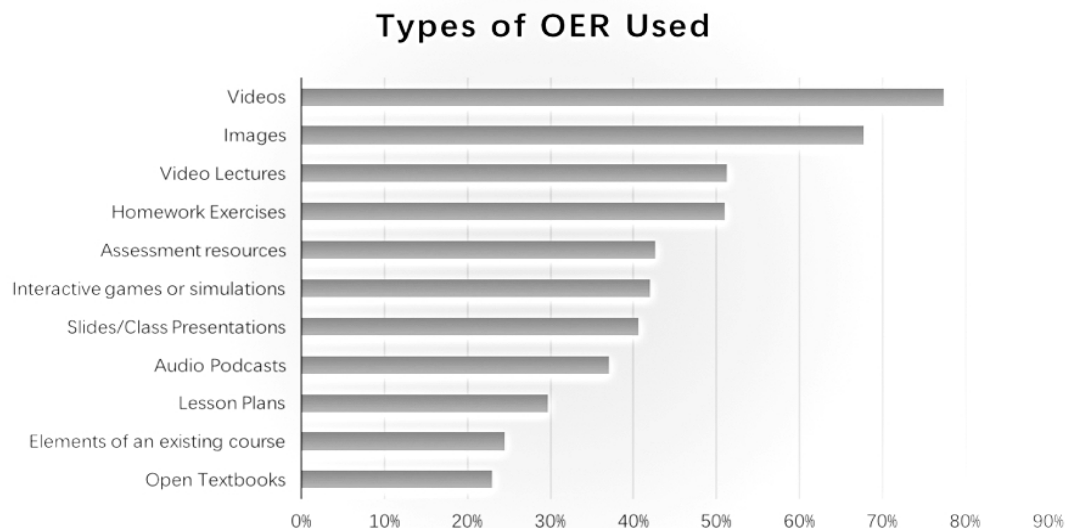
*Research Question 2a: What are the main reasons why ESL instructors use OER in their courses?*  
*Research Question 2b: What are the main reasons why ESL instructors do not use OER in their courses?*

When the ESL instructors were asked to choose the top three reasons why they use OER in their classes, 37% of survey respondents indicated that OER are easier to adapt and incorporate in their courses when compared to other teaching materials. The second most indicated reason (36%) related to the idea that OER address aspects of their courses not found elsewhere (e.g., when compared to traditional, publisher-produced textbooks they use/have used). Finally, 34% of respondents indicated that they use OER because they are easy to find/locate. Figure 4 indicates the other reasons why ESL instructors use OER in their classes.



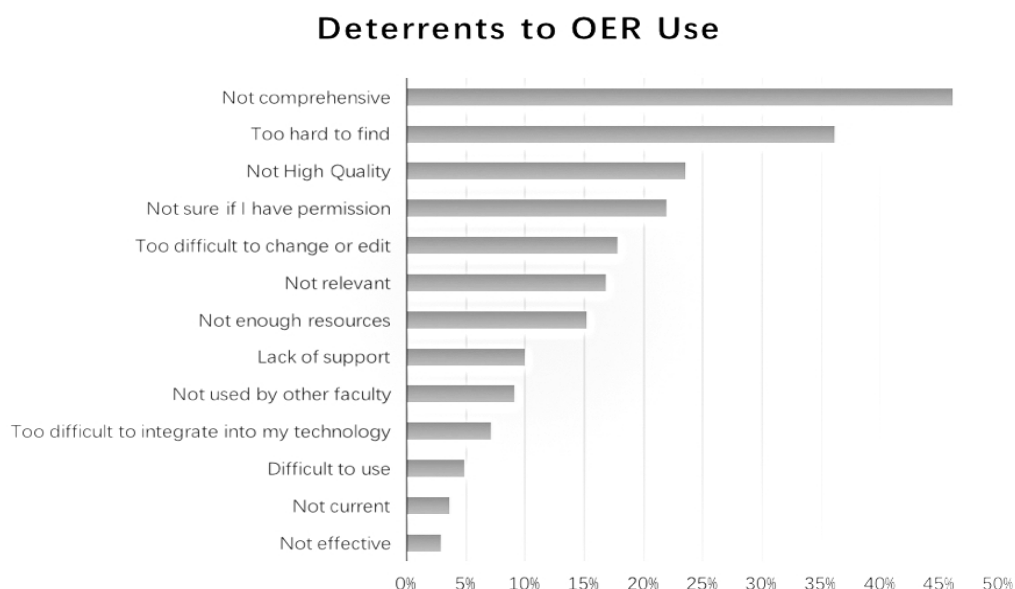
**Figure 4.** *Reasons for using OER in ESL courses*

To gain a better understanding about the nature of how and why ESL instructors are making use of OER in their courses, we posed a related question in the survey that asked about the kinds of OER used by ESL instructors. Figure 5 shows that 77% of respondents indicate that they make use of videos. As will be seen in the section reporting on research question 3 below, many respondents indicated that they incorporate YouTube videos in their courses to provide more culturally relevant content as well as more current news events. Sixty-eight percent of the ESL instructors indicated that they use images in their teaching, which represented the second most common type of OER used. The third most common type of OER used by our respondents related to the use of video lectures. However, it is unclear from our data if ‘video lectures’ are those created by the ESL instructors themselves and then distributed to students via a course management system or if they find video lectures online (e.g., from educational websites that house TEDx-inspired videos and lesson plans such as those found via the ‘ESL Brains’ website (<http://eslbrains.com/>) and incorporate those in their classes. Other kinds of OER used by our survey respondents include homework exercises, assessment resources, interactive games or simulations, class presentations/PowerPoint slides, among other materials.



**Figure 5.** *Types of OER used by ESL instructors*

We also wanted to learn about what prevented ESL instructors from using OER in their courses. Figure 6 provides an overview of how ESL instructors responded to this particular survey question. As one can see, the main deterrent to using OER (46%) related to the idea that OER are not comprehensive enough when compared to other ESL teaching materials. One respondent provided an additional comment for this question that reflected the comprehensive issue by stating that OER are “Too shallow or narrow in scope.” The second most common reason (36%) as to why ESL instructors do not use OER is that they are too hard to find. This finding conflicts with the results of research question 2a, where respondents indicated that they use OER because they are easy to find. We discuss this conflicting point in our data in the Discussion and Conclusion section below. Finally, the third most common reason (24%) why ESL instructors do not use OER is that OER are not considered by some to be high-quality materials.



**Figure 6.** *Reasons for not using OER in ESL courses*

### *Research Question 3: How has OER changed ESL instructors' teaching practices?*

To answer research question 3, we asked those survey respondents who had incorporated OER in their courses whether or not OER had changed their teaching practices in any way. Of the 192 ESL instructors who responded to this question, 131 (68%) indicated that OER had changed their teaching practices in some way, 32 (17%) indicated that the incorporation of OER had not changed their teaching, while 28 (15%) respondents did not answer the question directly or provided an unrelated comment. Of the 68% who indicated that OER had changed their teaching practices, the most common type of change mentioned related to the idea that OER make teaching more interesting, interactive, and/or dynamic for themselves and their students. Several respondents also echoed the idea of OER being more interactive and current when compared to traditional textbooks. One respondent stated that "I think OER makes for a much more dynamic teaching and learning experience. It often provides relevance and/or the opportunity to develop creative approaches to learning and processing material. Generally, more engaging than traditional textbooks." Another common thread in the responses included the idea of authenticity/the use of authentic materials. One respondent said "I've tried to incorporate OER into my advanced communication course as a way of including more authentic materials in the course. It seems to motivate students more and help them engage with more authentic uses of the language." The idea of OER being more authentic when compared to content presented in traditional, publisher-produced materials was also a prominent response by FL directors in Thoms and Thoms (2014).

Another common theme in respondents' comments focused on how OER allow instructors to better address the needs of their students and/or the learning outcomes of their specific ESL program. The following response reflects this perspective expressed by several instructors:

*It's allowed me to focus more clearly on the student learning outcomes in my curriculum. Textbooks, by their nature, are not written with my specific program, course, curriculum, or context in mind. They often include tasks that have nothing to do with the target of instruction. I often don't want to make students write particular templates of essays or particular note-taking schematics. Using OER has basically made it where, to the extent that time permits, I am the designer of my course materials and course progression.*

This particular aspect of OER, with the inherent ability to be adopted, adapted, and reused to meet one's local learning and teaching objectives, is one of the main reasons why instructors in many disciplines choose to use OER in their courses (Allen & Seaman, 2016).

Respondents also mentioned that much of the OER that they use is digital in nature, whose content is not only more engaging or dynamic for ESL learners, but is easier to share with students without dealing with restrictive copyright. Comments regarding this technological aspect of OER include one respondent stating that "I feel more confident activating schema and scaffolding content-based materials when I can easily bring in a youtube video, pull up an image from Google images, or draw upon some other audiovisual multimedia that most traditional text materials lack." Similarly, another respondent indicated that s/he "... use technology more in the classroom. It's easier to share OER materials with students."

Regarding those respondents who indicated that OER had not changed their teaching, an overwhelming majority indicated that they use OER to simply supplement the other materials/resources that they use in their courses. One respondent stated that "It has not changed

my teaching much at all—it is simply one more resource I can go to when my own materials are missing a topic or when I need to augment what I already have.” Another instructor provided a similar response, but also highlighted some of the benefits of OER when s/he stated that “I primarily use them as supplements to the course textbook and curriculum. I don’t like to rely on them alone, but I think they add some variety and adaptability to the course.”

In sum, those ESL instructors who indicated that they use OER in their courses stated that OER have changed their teaching practices in that they have (a) made the teaching and learning experiences more interesting and dynamic for them and their students, (b) given instructors more flexibility when targeting specific learning outcomes and goals for their ESL students and/or programs, (c) allowed for the inclusion of more authentic materials and learning experiences for students, and (d) increased the use of technology in their classrooms. For those ESL instructors who indicated that OER have not changed their teaching practices, the most common response indicated that OER are viewed as supplementary in nature and therefore have not drastically impacted the kinds of materials that they use nor the ways in which they go about teaching their students. We now turn to a discussion of the significance of our findings.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The primary goal of this study is to provide a snapshot of how ESL instructors in the US are engaged (or not) with the open education movement. Given that only 59% of survey respondents are aware or very aware of OER, one of the main findings of this survey suggests that the TESOL field in the US is still somewhat hesitant to fully embrace open materials and tools. This hesitancy reflects, in part, the reality that language teaching materials and the development of related technological tools and software still largely rely on traditional textbooks and delivery methods (Atkins et al., 2007; Baraniuk, 2008; Blyth, 2013). Although the ESL instructors’ level of awareness regarding OER is slightly more when compared to previous survey-based studies of language educators in the US (Thoms & Thoms, 2014), more work is still needed to educate ESL instructors about the benefits of open education.

That said, our study’s results do indicate that some ESL educators, such as those with less than 10 years of teaching experience, are twice as likely to be aware of OER than their colleagues who have more experience. As such, less experienced ESL instructors are looking to/using more non-traditional materials (e.g., OER), regardless of whether they are in search of primary or supplementary resources. One possible explanation for this finding could relate to the fact that ESL educators with less than 10 years of experience are typically younger and have more recently graduated from their TESOL teacher education programs that are increasingly addressing issues related to the incorporation of technology in ESL learning and teaching contexts (DelliCarpini, 2012). It’s also possible that TESOL teacher education programs are addressing issues related to digital open materials and practices. Nevertheless, more research is needed to fully understand why ESL educators who are newer to the profession are more aware of OER than their more experienced counterparts.

Our study also suggests that the context of where ESL instructors work affects their level of awareness and use of OER. ESL educators teaching at the K-12 level are more likely to use OER in their courses when compared to those teaching in either a community college or university setting. This finding sheds light on the effects of a number of funding issues currently affecting the US educational system, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels. Given the rising costs

of publisher-produced textbooks in the US (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), coupled with a lack of adequate funding in many US states for K-12 education (Allen & Seaman, 2017; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016), it is not surprising that K-12 ESL instructors are not only more aware of OER when compared to their colleagues in higher education, but are also using OER more in their courses. Another possible explanation for this finding might suggest that recent outreach efforts from the US Dept. of Education such as the *Go Open* Initiative (South, Stevens, & Peters, 2016), a program that provides guidance and resources for school districts to fund and train administrators and teachers about the benefits of open education, assist in the development of technology infrastructure needed to support digital learning, etc., are successfully educating K-12 instructors about OER and OEP. However, the nature of our data does not allow us to confirm the aforementioned possible reasons as to why ESL instructors in K-12 contexts are more aware and make use of OER when compared to ESL instructors in community colleges and four-year universities.

We have also seen that of those ESL instructors using OER in their courses, they perceive OER as being more interesting, dynamic, authentic, and current when compared to publisher-produced content. This perception may be closely tied to the fact that the most commonly used type of OER by respondents involves videos and images. The fact that an overwhelming majority of ESL publisher-produced textbooks are unable to provide (and maintain) updated video- or image-based materials without having to create new content in new editions of their textbooks every three to four years means that future development of OER for ESL learning and teaching contexts should focus on the creation of authentic and current materials (e.g., videos or images) that can be easily adopted, adapted, and used by ESL instructors. To that end, ESL instructors may want to enlist the help of their students when creating this kind of content. Engaging learners in the process of creating and curating OER such as videos and images would not only help to contribute to existing OER dedicated to ESL education, but would also provide for a more learner-centered or learner-directed experience (Jhangiani & DeRosa, 2017) for ESL students. That is, adopting this kind of open pedagogical approach that demands that students be active in critiquing and contributing to the content that they are learning means that “knowledge is less a product that has distinct beginning and end points and is instead a process in which students can engage, ideally beyond the bounds of the course” (DeRosa & Robison, 2017, p. 117). In other words, the open education movement has the ability to not only disrupt traditional systems/producers that create content (e.g., publishers), but it also has the potential to introduce new pedagogical perspectives and activities that are more engaging for both instructors and students alike.

Regarding reasons why ESL instructors don’t use OER in their courses, one of the top reasons was the belief that OER are too hard to find. This result seemingly conflicts with the fact that respondents indicated that one of the main reasons *for* using OER was the fact that OER are easy to find. While these contrasting views were unexpected, it’s possible that these findings reflect the wide range of OER. That is, some ESL instructors might feel that looking for an image for their course is quite easy to do (e.g., via the Creative Commons search tool) while other ESL instructors looking for more complex types of OER (e.g., full-length ESL textbooks, complete lesson plans to teach a particular aspect of English grammar or vocabulary, a unique feature of specific English-speaking culture(s), or audio podcasts that are relevant to their learners’ needs/interests) may find that searching for more comprehensive OER is a difficult task. Yet another possible explanation relates to the fact that in light of the sheer amount of information now available online, some digitally literate instructors may find it easy to quickly sift through a number of OER via various online repositories while others may not be inclined or simply don’t have the time or patience



needed to locate high-quality OER for their teaching needs. The aforementioned OER discoverability issue echoes findings from previous work (e.g., Belikov & Bodily, 2016; see also Blyth, 2017). This aspect of locating appropriate OER is yet another area where more qualitatively oriented research would not only help to better understand how language instructors find appropriate OER for their teaching purposes, but would also aid current and future OER repositories regarding how content is discovered.

In conclusion, the primary aim of this study was to begin to understand how open education is affecting the ways in which ESL instructors in the US make use of OER and engage in OEP in the educational environments where they teach. One of the reasons why many language educators in the US are not fully engaged in the open education movement relates to the fact that there are so few studies that investigate this issue in the US context. While much more work is needed to fully assess how the open education movement in the US—and in various other parts of the world—continues to change traditional notions of L2 materials development, approaches to L2 teaching, and ultimately the learning experience(s) of L2 students, this study represents an attempt to begin to fill the research void in this area.

## Limitations

This study has a number of limitations. First, a higher number of ESL instructors, especially more respondents coming from K-12 contexts, would have presented a more complete picture of how this specific subset of language educators are engaged in the open education movement in the US. Similarly, carrying out follow-up interviews with some of the survey respondents would have provided a more in-depth understanding of how and why ESL instructors make use of OER in their courses. Second, there was no distinction made in the survey between what Weller (2009) indicates constituting ‘big OER’ (i.e., large-scale, institutional projects) and ‘little OER’ (i.e., small-scale projects typically produced via Web 2.0 tools). This distinction may have changed some of the ESL instructors’ responses in the survey. Finally, the inclusion of more questions that get at issues related to open pedagogy and open educational practices (e.g., whether or not ESL instructors are aware of and/or make use of Creative Commons licensing, how often, with whom, and how they share teaching materials they have created) would have provided more insight as to how engaged ESL instructors in the US are with the open education movement. These kinds of questions and this general area of research (i.e., open educational practice/open pedagogy) represents a fruitful area for future research.

## Note

[1] The larger survey-based project from which the subset of data analyzed and reported on here was carried out with support from the Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning, a national foreign language resource center housed at The University of Texas at Austin.

## About the Authors

**Joshua J. Thoms** is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics and Spanish in the Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies at Utah State University. His research interests include issues related to open education, technology-enhanced language learning, and classroom discourse in L2 literature classes.

**Ekaterina Arshavskaya** is an Assistant Professor of EAP in the Intensive English Language Institute at Utah State University. Her teaching and research interests include CALL, teacher professional development, and critical pedagogy.

**Frederick J. Poole** is a doctoral student in the Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences department at Utah State University specializing in second language teaching and learning. His research interests include digital game-based language learning, technology-based collaboration, and dual language immersion.

## References

Abrahams, D. (2017). *Communication beginnings: An introductory listening and speaking text for English language learners*. Portland, OR: Portland State University Library.

Abunowara, A. (2014). Using technology in the EFL/ESL classroom. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 1(2), 1–18.

Aljamah, H. (2012). Saudi learner perceptions and attitudes toward the use of blogs in teaching an English writing course for EFL majors at Qassim University. *English Language Teaching*, 5(1), 100–116.

Al-Jarf, R. (2005). The effects of online grammar instruction on low proficiency EFL college students' achievement. *Asian EFL Journal*, 7(4), 166–190.

Allen, E., & Seaman, J. (2014). Opening the curriculum: Open educational resources in U.S. higher education. Babson Park, MA: Babson Survey Research Group. Retrieved from <http://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/openingthecurriculum2014.pdf>

Allen, E., & Seaman, J. (2016). Opening the textbook: Educational resources in U.S. higher education, 2015-16. Babson Survey Research Group. Retrieved from <http://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/openingthetextbook2016.pdf>

Allen, E., & Seaman, J. (2017). What we teach: K-12 school district curriculum adoption process, 2017. Babson Survey Research Group. Retrieved from [http://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/k12oer2017/whatweteach\\_2017.pdf](http://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/k12oer2017/whatweteach_2017.pdf)

Atkins, D., Brown, J., & Hammond, A. (2007). A review of the open educational resources (OER) movement: Achievements, challenges, and new opportunities. Report to the William and Flora Newlett Foundation.

Bahrani, T., Tam Shu, S., & Nekoueizadeh, M. (2014). Second language acquisition in an informal setting. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(8), 1714–1723.

Baraniuk, R. (2008). Challenges and opportunities for the open education movement: A Connexions case study. In T. Iiyoshi, and M.S.V. Kumar (Eds.), *Opening up education: The collective advancement of education through open technology, open content, and open knowledge*(pp. 229–246). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Beaven, A., Comas-Quinn, A., & Sawhill, B. (Eds.). (2013). *Case studies of openness in the language classroom*. Research-Publishing.net.
- Beetham, H., Falconer, I., McGill, L., & Littlejohn, A. (2012). Open practices: Briefing paper. JISC. Retrieved from <https://oersynth.pbworks.com/w/page/51668352/OpenPracticesBriefing>
- Belikov, O., & Bodily, R. (2016). Incentives and barriers to OER adoption: A qualitative analysis of faculty perceptions. *Open Praxis*, 8(3), 235–246.
- Blyth, C. (2013). Opening up foreign language education with OER: The case of Français interactif. In F. Rubio & J. Thoms (Eds.), *Hybrid language teaching and learning: Exploring theoretical, pedagogical and curricular issues* (pp. 196–218). Boston: Heinle Cengage.
- Blyth, C. (2017). Open educational resources (OER) for language learning. In S. May & S. Thorne (Eds.), *Language, education, and technology. Encyclopedia of language and education* (3rd Ed.) (pp. 169–179). New York: Springer.
- Blyth, C., & Dalola, A. (2016). Translingualism as an open educational practice: Raising critical language awareness on Facebook. *ALSIC Revue*, 19(1). Retrieved from <https://alsic.revues.org/2962>
- Brinton, D. (2001). The use of media in language teaching. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or a foreign language* (pp. 459–475). Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle.
- Butcher, N. (2011). *A basic guide to open educational resources (OER)*. Vancouver: Commonwealth of Learning.
- Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.capetowndeclaration.org/read-the-declaration>
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2016, January). Most states have cut school funding, and some continue cutting. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/most-states-have-cut-school-funding-and-some-continue-cutting>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Ching, G. (2012). Blog assisted learning: Experiences in learning business English vocabularies. *International Journal of Research Studies in Educational Technology*, 1(1), 3–12.
- Chou, I-C. (2015). Engaging EFL students in e-books using reader-response theory. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 15(2), 167–181. Retrieved from <http://www.readingmatrix.com/current>
- DelliCarpini, M. (2012). Building computer technology skills in TESOL teacher education. *Language Learning & Technology*, 16(2), 14–23.

DeRosa, R., & Robison, S. (2017). From OER to open pedagogy: Harnessing the power of open. In R. Jhangiani & R. Biswas-Diener (Eds.) *Open: The philosophy and practices that are revolutionizing education and science* (pp. 115–124). London: Ubiquity Press.

Furstenberg, G., & Levet, S. (2010). Integrating telecollaboration into the language classroom: Some insights. In M. Dooly & R. O'Dowd (Eds.) *Telecollaboration 2.0 for language and intercultural learning* (pp. 305–336). New York: Peter Lang Publishing Group.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2012). Emerging technologies challenging hegemonies in online learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 16(2), 4–13.

Healey, D., Hanson-Smith, E., Hubbard, P., Iannou-Georgiou, S., Kessler, G., & Ware, P. (2011). *TESOL technology standards: Description, implementation, integration*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Publications.

Jenkins, H. (2009). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st Century*. MacArthur Report on Digital Media and Learning. Retrieved from <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/confronting-challenges-participatory-culture>

Jhangiani, R., & Biswas-Diener, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Open: The philosophy and practices that are revolutionizing education and science*. London: Ubiquity Press.

Jhangiani, R., & DeRosa, R. (2017). Open pedagogy. In E. Mays (Ed.) *A guide to making open textbooks with students* (pp. 6–21). Montreal: The Rebus Community for Open Textbook Creation.

Kessler, G. (2013). Teaching ESL/EFL in a world of social media, mash-ups, and hyper-collaboration. *TESOL Journal*, 4(4), 615–632.

Kitchakarn, O. (2012). Using blogs to improve students' summary writing abilities. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education (TOJDE)*, 13(4), 209–219.

Lázár, I. (2015). EFL learners' intercultural competence development in an international web collaboration project. *The Language Learning Journal*, 43(2), 208–221.

Lee, H. (2013). The reading response e-journal: An alternative way to engage low-achieving EFL students. *Language Teaching Research*, 17(1), 111–131.

Liaw, M. (1997). An analysis of ESL children's verbal interaction during computer book reading. *Computers in the Schools*, 13(3/4), 55–73.

Machado de Almeida Mattos, A. (2003). Virtual classrooms in Brazil: Teachers' difficulties and anxieties towards technology in language learning. *Rev. Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada*, 3(2), 115–132.

Open Education. (2017, October 13). Retrieved from <https://sparcopen.org/open-education/>

- Rossomondo, A. (2012). The Acceso project and foreign language graduate student development. In H. Allen & H. Maxim (Eds.). *Educating the future foreign language professoriate for the 21st century* (pp. 128–148). Boston: Heinle Cengage.
- Sadeghi, K., & Dousti, M. (2013). The effect of length of exposure to CALL technology on young Iranian EFL learners' grammar gain. *English Language Teaching*, 6(2), 14–26.
- Shih, R. (2010). Blended learning using video-based blogs: Public speaking for English as a second language students. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 26(6), 883–897.
- Singhal, M. (1997). The Internet and foreign language education: Benefits and challenges. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 3(6). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Singhal-Internet.html>
- South, J., Stevens, K., & Peters, K. (2016). *#GoOpen district launch packet*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology.
- Su, C. (2005). An open source portal for educators. *TESL-EJ*, 9(1), 1–11.
- Sun, Y., & Chang, Y. (2012). Blogging to learn: Becoming EFL academic writers through collaborative dialogues. *Language Learning & Technology*, 16(1), 43–61.
- Thoms, J., & Thoms, B. (2014). Open educational resources in the United States: Insights from university foreign language directors. *System*, 45, 138–146.
- Tomlinson, B. (2011). *Materials development in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016, September 12). *Consumer price index – all urban consumers: College textbooks*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/college-tuition-and-fees-increase-63-percent-since-january-2006.htm>
- Weller, D. (2009). Big and little OER. In Open Ed 2010 Proceedings. Barcelona: UOC, OU, BYU. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10609/4851>
- Weller, M., de los Arcos, B., Farrow, R., Pitt, R., & McAndrew, P. (2017). What can OER do for me? Evaluating the claims for OER. In R. Jhangiani & R. Biswas-Diener (Eds.) *Open: The philosophy and practices that are revolutionizing education and science* (pp. 67–77). London: Ubiquity Press.
- Wyte, S. (2016). From “solitary thinkers” to “social actors”: OER in multilingual CALL teacher education. *ALSIC Revue*, 19(1). Retrieved from <https://alsic.revues.org/2906>
- Xing, M., & Wang, J. (2008). Raising students' awareness of cross-cultural contrastive rhetoric via an e-learning course. *Language Learning and Technology*, 12(2), 71–93.
- Ybarra, R., & Green, T. (2003). Using technology to help ESL/EFL students develop language

skills. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 9(3). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Ybarra-Technology.html>

Zourou, K. (2016). Social networking affordances for open educational practice. *ALSIC Revue*, 19(1). Retrieved from <https://alsic.revues.org/2903>

## Appendix A: Survey questions

### Background Information

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. In what state is your primary academic institution located? NOTE: If you work for a multi-state or virtual/online institution, please select the state from which you most often work.
4. What language(s) do you currently teach?
5. What is the highest degree that you possess?
6. How many years have you been teaching ESL?
7. Considering the three different teaching environments described below (i.e., face-to-face, blended/hybrid, and online), which one best describes the context in which you have taught ESL during the most recent academic year?
8. From the options below, choose the one that best describes the educational context where you teach ESL. If you teach in more than one context (e.g., in a high school AND at a local community college or university), choose the one where you teach most often.
9. Do you/your students use a traditional, publisher-produced text in the ESL course(s) that you teach at your institution?

### Open Educational Resources (OER)

The following questions focus on Open Educational Resources (OER). Open educational resources 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). Compared to traditional copyrighted materials/tools, OER are open in that they typically can be shared, edited, modified, or remixed depending on one’s specific educational context/needs.

10. How aware are you of OER?
11. In thinking about the ESL course(s) you teach, indicate how often you have used OER as (a) primary course material, and (b) supplementary material?
12. What are the top three reasons why you use OER resources in your class(es)?
13. Indicate whether or not you have used any of the following types of OER resources in your ESL class(es): videos; audio podcasts; images; interactive games or simulations; video lectures/tutorials; assessment resources (e.g., texts or quizzes); open textbooks or chapters from textbooks; homework exercises; slides and class presentations; elements of an existing course (e.g., a module/unit); lesson plans; any other type.
14. How would you compare the quality of open resources to that of traditional (i.e., publisher-produced/copyrighted) resources on the following dimensions: cost; proven to improve student performance; includes all the materials I need; high-quality and factually correct; covers my FL sufficiently; mapped to learning outcomes; current and up-to-date; easy to use; materials are rated/reviewed by faculty or editors; adaptable/editable.
15. How would you rate the ease of searching for educational resources for your ESL class(es)?
16. What are the three most important deterrents to using OER in your classes?
17. If you have incorporated OER in your ESL course(s), briefly explain how it has changed your

teaching.

18. Do you think you will use/rely on OER more than traditional, publisher-produced content/texts in the next three years in the course(s) that you teach? Why or why not? [[back](#)]

## Appendix B: Variable definitions used for statistical analyses

Variable	Description
Gender	Female = 1, Male = 0
Age	Under 45 years old = 1, Over 45 years old = 2
Degree	Bachelors = 1, Masters = 2, Doctorates = 3
Experience	Less than 10 years = 1, More than 10 years = 2
Context	K-12 = 1, Community College = 2, University = 3
Textbook	No Traditional Textbook = 0, Use a Traditional Textbook = 1
Awareness	<p>Response to the question: How aware are you of OER? Possible responses include: A) I am not aware of OER, B) I have heard of OER, but don't know much about them, C) I am aware of OER and some of their uses, D) I am very aware of OER and know how they can be used in the classroom. Answers A and B were coded as Not Aware (0) Answers C and D were coded as Aware (1)</p>
Primary Source	<p>Response to the question: In thinking about the FL or ESL course(s) you teach, indicate how often you have used OER as a primary source? Possible responses include: A) Regularly, B) Occasionally, C) Rarely, or D) Never/NA. Never/NA and Rarely = 0 Occasionally and Regularly = 1</p>
Supplementary Source	<p>Response to the question: In thinking about the FL or ESL course(s) you teach, indicate how often you have used OER as a supplementary source? Possible responses include: A) Regularly, B) Occasionally, C) Rarely, or D) Never/NA. Never/NA and Rarely = 0 Occasionally and Regularly = 1</p>

© Copyright rests with authors. Please cite *TESL-EJ* appropriately.