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## ESSAY

Brief description of the most relevant reflections and conclusions drawn from the proposed readings, videos and practices.

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## OPEN LANGUAGE LEARNING



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## *e-portfolio essay*

### 0. WHY IS THE LEARNING PROCESS DIFFERENT TODAY?

The characteristics of current education are very different from those we could point out 10 years ago.

Many are the benefits, but we also find some disadvantages, the use of computers and the extension of the Internet access and use in the world has changed everything completely. Due to the new concept of ‘communication’, new needs have arisen.

One of these needs is the speed at which we must adapt ourselves and our teaching to the changes which allows us to favor the teaching process of whatever is the subject.

In schools we can still meet teachers who are not up to date in technological matters and sometimes that's due to ignorance, other times it's because of fear, and other times it's because they have not found a way to learn. We must not forget that sending an email is still quite an achievement for some and on the other side, other teachers no longer use any

book. From my point of view, the balance is always the answer and especially we must focus on the most efficient solutions for the needs of our students.

Our efficiency not only depends on our knowledge, but also on how we transmit it. Immersed in the teaching process today we find the use of ICT and in the case of language teaching the change has been radical and revolutionary.

Be careful! Not all the information you are given is good quality one. Quality must always be questioned as well as the time invested in the searching, the source and all the agents involved in the appearance of that information in front of us. Computers have allowed us to present the information organized to our liking, without the paper and also have allowed us to transmit it free of charge to a wide audience that can also give us their opinion about it. The current production of information and the expansion of knowledge is tremendous. Now we can make slideshows, blogs, micro-blogging, interactive images, forums, videoconferences, etc. Why not take advantage of it? Just...Be careful!

If we look at the reality of our schools, we can immediately realize about the disadvantages that the new technology that we use in the classroom bring. Many times the computer equipment does not have proper maintenance, some students are not so used to its use, others can only use it in public facilities and other ones simply do not like them. Part of our job is about teaching them that ICT is not an extra resource besides textbooks but it is a resource itself that does not need other peripherals. It is very important to teach them a critical use of ICT so that they do not waste time nor their integrity and get the most out of it.

## 1. OER IN OUR DAILY LESSONS; SOME GOOD REASONS.

‘Open educational resources’...maybe you have never heard of it, maybe it’s a new concept, well, you’d better not forget it.

Open and Free resources! Such a nice concept for us and so threatening for the textbooks publishers that they felt the need of moving from selling content TO leasing access to different services.

Far from the textbook market’s wishes, the importance of ownership is still alive but it has radically change.

Nowadays we find the student as a creator, the teacher as a facilitator and the institution as a certifier. Thanks to the tools given in the course, here is an infographic:



People don't just create and share. Thanks to the 5 Rs concept and to the open licenses there is a body of laws for the good use of the content we are interested in.

In "The Access Compromise and the 5<sup>th</sup> R" by David Wiley's; recommended open content blog, we can perfectly understand the evolution and the importance that we must give to the 4Rs + the 5thR when talking about 'OER'.

Read full article here <https://opencontent.org/blog/archives/3221>

In it, he clearly explains the possibilities that allow us the redistribution, the remix, the revision and reuse as well as the possession (retainment). Wiley and the 4Rs framework&5<sup>th</sup>; he talks a lot about the following that I quote '*shaped my own thinking*'. Reading the post, for me, has been personally very enriching and has reminded me of our capacity as shapers of thought and what I am referring to is that as we owe our thinking we also have to teach our students how to mold their own by contributing all those values that we consider that will help them in their academic as well as in their personal training.

What all this about the OER means is an openness of knowledge as well as a sensitivity to it even though people interested in it had hardly any economic resources. The openness also gives us revisions and other people's point of view that can be included depending on the purpose we want to give the content we are dealing with. We can use it and adapt it to provide exactly what we need to because of our students' particularities. It is not more convenient having our hands tied to our desk or to a book that we have bought with the money we and their parents have earned and what's more; now we can invest the time to think about reading and reflecting but also on sharing and exchanging and preserving. All these with attention to our needs or our students'. We are now able to modify the

content by combining it to teach our lessons the best possible way according to our intentions.

What's next? Good question. What's next; I pose the same question every day to myself. To me, next is to say goodbye to the limits because there are no limits for knowledge nor for education. I created this gift to illustrate what I mean that the course inspired me:

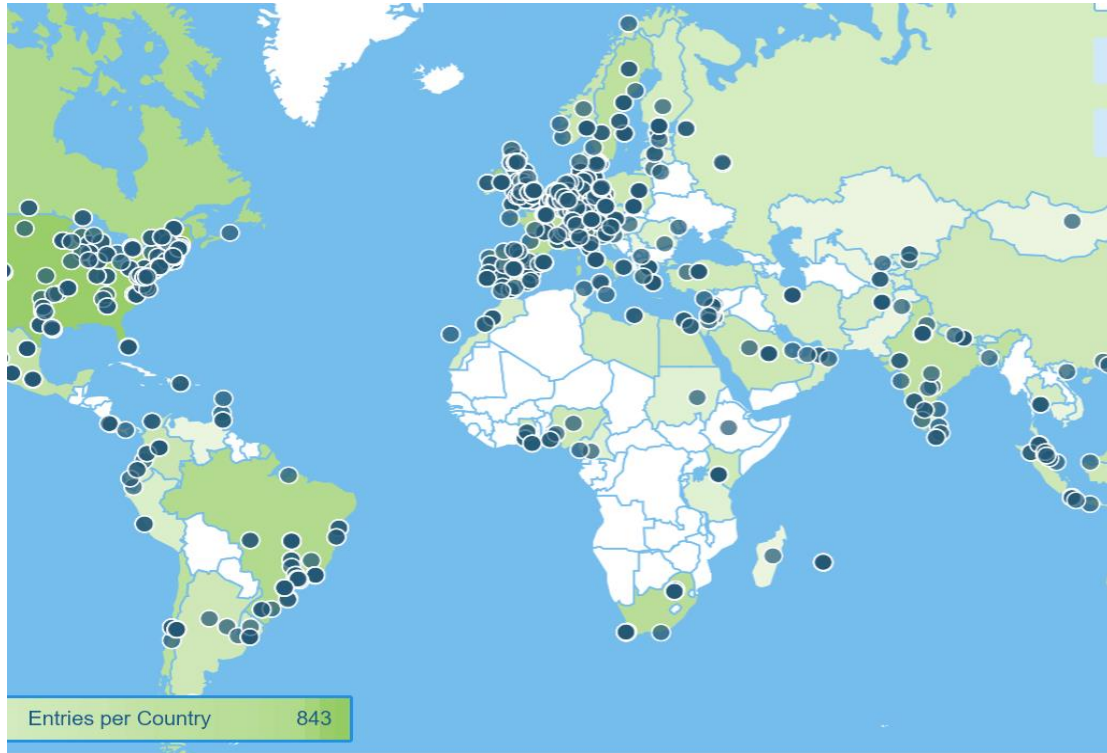
<https://media.giphy.com/media/2UqXh2ZkJeBLIghqY2/giphy.gif>

What we must appreciate the most is that we have the capability to attend courses on issues of our own interest and indeed, we can also be the creators of those courses and share learning experiences with other students who are interested in the same subjects. Platforms like Open CourseWare of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, OpenLearn (The Open University) which is one I knew before as well as UNED Open are changing.

We no longer have to physically go to the educational center where we can be instructed in a certain subject. Currently, as we can see in the examples given of the mentioned educational platforms, there are new ways of evaluation, new teaching methods and different options to convey the content besides the accreditation of having assumed it. In fact, due to the spread of knowledge that is happening worldwide, new needs have arisen as for example the language learning and so this need has found its solution in open source online platforms that allow the student access to the content and the practice of it, that otherwise, the student might not be able to afford it for many different reasons.

As illustrated by the University of Texas in its infographic, these open educational resources attract informal students and encourage educators to be involved in a reflection on their own educational resources, in addition to helping everyone save money. They are an open door to formal educational programs. Personally what I consider most

important is that they help the student recognize what he or she has truly learned through materials that are provided equally to students who have more resources and others who don't.



Source: <https://oerworldmap.org> August 2018

I wanted to introduce the map to highlight the importance of these open contents in Europe and especially in Germany, a key place for the promotion of this new style of both teaching and learning because of the importance and relevance that it is given there. We can appreciate an overwhelming amount of use compared to other countries. Anyway, the OER is quite widespread nowadays; without previously knowing much of this matter, I was already aware of the project developed in UK by The Open University; the Olnet Project .



Yes, there is a thin line we shouldn't trespass. We must bear in mind that although we are talking about open resources we can not always do what

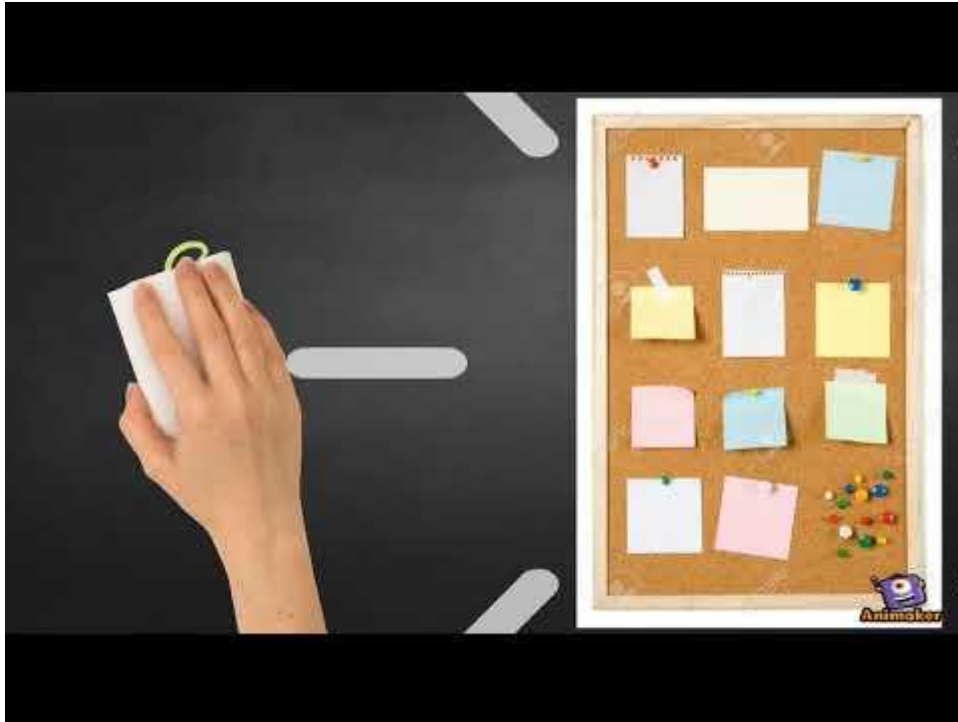
we want with them. There are a number of licenses for this type of content, we will agree with them and respect what the authors of those resources in which we are interested let us do with their creations, for example Creative Commons do not allow the commercial use, but there are other open licenses that allow us to do with the resources they are attached what we please.

In the following book; *Giving Knowledge for Free: The Emergence of Open Educational Resources* by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (Paris), we can study the double check of some purposes. Although we have already explained how to get rid of the copyright monopoly that often frustrated the attempts of professors and other professionals who tried to solve the problems they had, not only in the license we find some “dark” intentions. Many times this open content we are referring to is not as free as it may seem at first sight. There really exist many institutions whose purpose is not to spread the knowledge or to get a feedback to a study but there is a reason by which they develop certain open source programs. It is all about the popularity in most of the cases what is sought in the end since this brings an underlying economic benefit. I would like to let everybody know that the mentioned book deals with many issues and it’s a fairly comprehensive study of the Open educational resources and its global explanation.

As teachers every day we are surely doing practices that could be placed within the practices related to those considered Open Educational Resources but don’t realise about it. Every time we share our knowledge through a microblog such as Twitter, we make bibliographic comments on Mendeley or we participate in ResearchGate; we are doing it , but also when we try to perform translation tasks for TED or when we share a video on Youtube as the one I have attached below. In this case, I created it from scratch for my



first year students and after that, I published it openly. You can click on it to watch it or go to the link: <https://youtu.be/dHJw32SJZWA>



I do not want to stand up for or say my opinion on all those Open practices platforms we are provided in the course but I would like to say that the concept developed by The Open University; LORO <http://loro.open.ac.uk/> has been a great discovery as well as Open Spires <http://openspires.it.ox.ac.uk/> which I deeply admire because it provides first hand sources for our investigations. The effort made by all those who made up School of Open <http://schoolofopen.p2pu.org/> make us think that the change is possible.

## 2. DOES IT WORTH IT? CURATION!

We can not throw ourselves, much less can our students be thrown to that ocean of information that flows freely on the web without any protection, without a float to survive, without anything to protect us, and without a capacity to filter, group, and select the most relevant information for us in a way that is fast enough to not to assume that we have been wasting our time. All this has to do with the term ‘content curation’. Select, organize, and take care of that information that can be very useful right now or in a near future.

How have I managed so far all the valuable information considered? Mendeley for bibliographical references, papers, webs, etc. and Symbaloo among other ones for the urls grouped according to my personal classification. I post here some of my webmixes related to the OER.

Symbaloo OER DIY:

<https://www.symbaloo.com/mix/oerdiy>

Symbaloo Open Educational Resources:

<https://www.symbaloo.com/mix/openeducationalresources>

Whereas in the past we created a lot, lately we are more searchers; maybe so much information has overwhelmed us and we can not be so productive because we are too busy learning,...maybe that's wrong.

What we must assume is that we will never be able to read or learn by heart all the information on the subject that interests us because for us it is unattainable and

nevertheless, we should dedicate more time to make and create since true learning occurs through transformation of observation, assumption, reflection and transformation thanks to those basics previously acquired.

Thank God! We are not the only ones worried about it; repositories were invented long time ago and specifically OER repositories will be really useful for us. It is possible that not everything meets our expectations but it is worth knowing them. Regarding the languages teaching maybe Khan Academy does not fit in our expectations but OER Commons <https://www.oercommons.org/> or Jorum <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/> do. What I do love and I encourage other teachers to use is Hay Levels <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuwH35qrtKQFH-NoQNkEB1g> since is another primary source but maybe too complicated for our secondary school students. Which one is my best mate? OER Commons because of its versatility, ease of use, accuracy of the content and I guess it fits with my personal teaching style which I consider quite relevant.

Once we have the contents and materials that we want, we shouldn't introduce them immediately in the class since each content is created for specific needs and each class is different so we should adapt for our convenience and for the convenience of our students those contents that we have extracted and transform that contribution of others in our own material , as long as the license allows us to do what we want.

I found *Embrace the remix / TED Talk* by Kirby Ferguson [https://www.ted.com/talks/kirby\\_ferguson\\_embrace\\_the\\_remix?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/kirby_ferguson_embrace_the_remix?language=en) very enlightening since we all are usually scared of it, we are afraid of mashups because we don't feel confident when taking "other's" content and we use it for our own purposes but, why not? Is it CC licensed? There you have the answer. We can create tons of resources of many different types taking advantage of all material that other ones have

provided the world. Just for fun I share here the meme I created:



### 3. SOS PLES

Our 21st C. and the evolution of Web 2.0. Our environment; in a society where every day we are a little more independent and we have a little less time and collaboration at work is a requirement. The digital world offers you company even though you are all alone by means of interactive work in which two or more people can connect at the same time in real time or not, depending on the needs of each other, to achieve the same goal together.

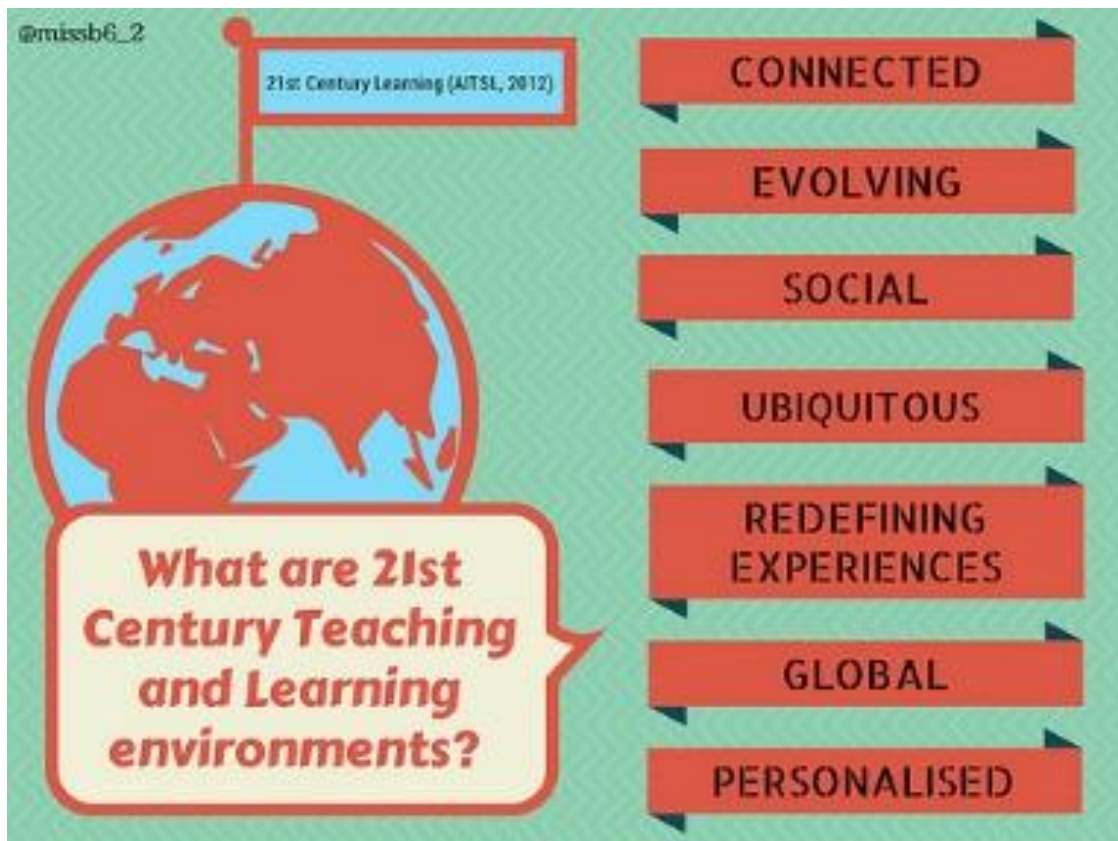


Image: *creative commons licensed flickr photo*

I've posted the previous image because it clearly illustrates what I meant in the first paragraph. Clearly, Personal Learning Environments give us freedom, but also informal tuition and some kind of human relationships joint by interests.



Many of our students don't feel involved and don't get engaged with our lessons because they are kind of out of them; by creating for them an environment where they can put aside their problems and insecurities and we could cure their fears and lack of interest.

If we dare to take the big step of creating and immerse into our teaching method one of the many options of personal learning environment we will not regret it since we will realize that it really does not take so much time nor work and that its versatility satisfies us greatly by far the work done. We can adapt our teaching to all those learning styles that our students require individually. They will feel much more free to ask questions and it is said, they will value our answers. Their learning and assessment will become more transparent and considered as one. The critical thinking and their study and learning habits will change and they will be modelled so that they get at an autonomous learning that facilitates their transition to adult life favouring a much more active personality.

We must remember that there are plenty of open options but there are also plenty of licensing initiatives to protect that openness and also those funds that support them. There is a great series of norms that control the interoperability in the computer system and like any norm, they have to be regulated.



The integration of all these open resources in the digital environment and in all the system varieties that we find, is what makes this virtual environment feel real and it can become

this way as part of our ordinary course in the classroom since it is something real, that works and that our students trust.

As a secondary school teacher, I find very motivating the at the beginning VLEs; virtual learning environments, then we would move on to some much more personal PLEs. As we can see in *Conceptions of Personal Learning Environments Among EFL Teachers at Upper Secondary Level in Sweden* by Christopher Allen, VLEs have been hardly criticized but it also lies in Vygotsky's work and his sociocultural learning point of view which I follow. I teach a language and I can see how important is the social importance in the interaction to get the maximum or the minimum of each lesson, learning from one another in a collaborative environment. Students need the feeling of community and the feeling of achievement which we can provide them through micro-tasks given involving one of the PLE available, once they have the needed skills to 'survive' and success.

#### 4. CMOOCS OR XMOOCS, HOW DO YOU FEEL LIKE LEARNING?

We are talking about two large branches of similar systems that have the same purpose. Open online courses that allow the entry to an unlimited number of participants (massive) that can perform their tasks thanks to the organized content that has been provided on a specific subject.

These organized spaces give our students independence in their work, flexibility and especially in one of the branches, the creation of an authentic network.; when I've posted the videos and images I've always added tags so they can be quickly accessible and related to their key issues by the rest of the people interested in the same subjects. Connectivity and collaboration are the strengths of MOOCs.

LMOOCs are MOOCs focused on the learning of languages and something that started the UNED in Spain 6 years ago, now it is something that is on everyone's lips because they allow to avoid certain barriers and learn how to jump others.

C or X? It depends on whether what is encouraged. Is it a cooperative-collaborative environment and the progress of the student is valued more than an objective test to check the knowledge? CMOOCs.

What is intended is to evaluate in a more closed and the relationship fostered is basically the student-teacher? XMOOCs.

I think that in the end, we all aim at the same goal; who wants bystanders in our classes?



## 5. PRACTICE SHOWROOM

At this point I understand that I can show some of the elaborated resources whose labels and purpose refer to the contents of the course itself.

I've already shown some infographics made for the course and instead of repeating the same exercises that can be easily adapted to the teaching of any point of grammar, for instance, I found more interesting the creation of an interactive image that I'm about to use in the 'back to school' introduction. The creation with Thinglink

<https://www.thinglink.com> of a virtual classroom led me to the creation of a video with Animaker <https://www.animaker.com> to help my students with the pronunciation recording my own voice which I shared via Youtube and included with the tags in Thinglink .

I also posted both, the video and the interactive image on Twitter and tagged it as OER, school, supplies, etc. In addition, I gave anyone permission to edit the Thinglink image and the tags on it. I posted it to my new 1<sup>st</sup> ESO channel.

Interactive Image Link:

<https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1094304401696227329>

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHJw32SJZWA>

The creation of a logo for the blog and the practice creating so many images are not casual. I created the blog as an OER for the course is about to begin so I hope you don't mind that I have used my own email account and personal nick names.

Thank you very much for your attention and I hope you contact me for any further information or any broken link.

Sincerely,

Vero.