Performing Languages: an example of integrating open practices in staff development for language teachers.

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In 2009 the Department of Languages at The Open University, UK, developed LORO (http://loro.open.ac.uk), a repository of Open Educational Resources for language teaching and learning aimed at language teaching professionals. Initially populated with over 300 hours of teaching resources for French, Spanish, German, Italian, Welsh, Chinese and English for Academic Purposes, LORO's initial function was to provide an efficient and open way of accessing and sharing resources. Additionally, the integration of LORO into language teachers' workflows is part of the department's strategy for teachers' professional development and a key enabler for increased transparency, collaboration, skills development, and pedagogical reflection and discussion, leading ultimately to the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning.

This paper explains how the vision of openness facilitated by LORO is being implemented at a practical level through the incorporation of open practices into teachers' professional development activities. We take as an example the project Performing Languages (www.performinglanguages.eu), a Grundtvig Partnership project (part of the Lifelong Learning Programme) in which language teachers in the UK work with theatre associations in Spain, France and Italy. Besides the primary objective of exploring the role of drama in the language classroom as a tool for language and culture learning and intercultural communication, this project also intends to develop and publish most project resources (workshop activities, lesson plans, texts and video recordings, for example) as Open Educational Resources. The aim is to share the project experiences as widely as possible to maximise impact and ensure others can benefit from them.

This paper will explain how the project has been designed so that collaborative writing, open sharing and peer review of the resources produced by participating language teachers are fully embedded in the project activities. We look at the strategies and tools which enable us to achieve these objectives in a distance context, and the resources that have been created and published by participants as a direct result of the project. Drawing on data from feedback questionnaires and a debriefing session with participants, we examine how teachers' increased awareness of the benefits of sharing and collaboration has resulted in changes in practice, both in relation to openness and pedagogical approach.