

**LEARNING THROUGH SHARING :
OPEN RESOURCES, OPEN PRACTICES, OPEN COMMUNICATION**

**Opening Up to CMC with Young Language Learners:
Challenges and Opportunities**

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ABSTRACT

There has been considerable demand for new pedagogical practices that accommodate language teaching and learning processes to the affordances provided by Internet (affordances such as easy access to knowledge and possibilities of shared knowledge building, and opportunities for computer-mediated communication). At the same time, however, there are challenges that must be faced when language teachers, especially primary education teachers, choose to integrate the use of open resources, apply open practices to their teaching and to bring open communication into their language classrooms.

Caveats which are frequently mentioned when discussing open environments and open CMC resources are the threat of ‘cyber predators’ and the easy access and potential exposure to mature, adult-only virtual content as well as concerns about pupil interaction – bullying, verbal abuse and inappropriate behaviour, facilitated through the very technologies being used to bring open communication into the learning process (e.g. audio or text chats). Other impediments are the costs in time, effort and money. However, perhaps one of the biggest impediments to the use of open resources for CMC in primary education is the limitations stemming from the specificities of the young language learner: specific interests and topics, minimal technological skills, and minimal or no written input (depending on the age and level). Further complications lie in the need for somewhat sophisticated language use if the pedagogical design aims for telecollaboration.

Starting from a case study of a telecollaborative language learning project that involved six and seven year old beginning language learners (English as a foreign language), this paper will first outline the activities implemented and the way in which various open resource communication tools were used to facilitate the online collaboration.

Following this, the paper will discuss problems encountered in both implementation and in research of the project, thus opening up space for further dialogue in this emerging area of study in CMC and Teacher Education.

