

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

**Will they do it if there's no money involved? Reflections on
participation in two UK-based OER projects.**

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ABSTRACT

In the last 3 years, the School of Languages & Social Sciences at Aston University has participated in two JISC- funded OER projects: HumBox and FAVOR.

The Humbox project (www.humbox.ac.uk) was part of a wider Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative to showcase UK Higher Education by encouraging teachers within HE institutions to publish teaching and learning resources openly on the web. It focused on the Humanities and involved the collaboration of a number of different institutions across the UK. It ran from April 2009 to April 2010.

Aston's participation in this was to recruit tutors who would share materials (OERs) through the Humbox website. Their specialty was Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and they all created a professional profile on Humbox that allowed others to contact them about their materials. They were videoed about the project and were enthusiastic about the possibilities that this kind of sharing presents. Presentations and a conference paper resulted.

The FAVOR project (www.llas.ac.uk/FAVOR) aims to showcase the often unrecognised work of part-time, hourly-paid language teachers in UK higher education. The aim is for these teachers to publish existing resources and create new ones designed to help "transition" from school to higher education. That is, the materials are to help prospective students understand what it is like to study languages at University level.

Again, Aston's participation is the recruitment and support of local teachers in completing these tasks. The materials to be shared include not only transitional materials but also 'language tasters' aimed at young people beginning a new language. This project also sees an attempt to involve students in preparing materials.

These projects brought a small amount of funding to Aston, which served to engage teaching staff and persuade them to share resources. Within Aston, the projects were coordinated by the authors of this paper who have held regular discussions reflecting on progress and the likely impact on future activities of the teaching staff involved. This paper will present some of those reflections relating to the conference themes, and invite SIG participants to ponder the interrogative in its title.
