

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

University teachers' use of their students' Online Informal Learning of English (OILE)

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Abstract

Since 2008 we have been developing a multi-faceted study into Online Informal Learning of English (OILE). In practice, OILE consists of social networking, streaming and/or downloading television series or films, listening to music on demand and web browsing. Taking Downes' (2011) definition of Open Educational Resources (OER) as the frame of reference, OILE is perhaps a epitomised example of OER, to the extent that it concerns any and potentially all internet content in English that learners come into contact with as a learning resource.

Anchoring our research within the theoretical framework of complex dynamic systems theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), our aim is to understand the mechanisms at work in the (parts of the) systems outside instructed learning, even where this latter involves computer mediation, distance, or other recent developments in instruction. Our investigations began with a survey of non-English majors students' practices with informal learning of English. We then performed some discourse analyses to discover more about the specific language these learners were most exposed to in one of their preferred activities: watching American series. We also delved deeper into the specific practices of a few learners with log and blog studies, especially with a view to investigating the learning potential of these activities. This paper will recap our research to date and focus on a new survey examining these phenomena from the other side of the educational relationship: teachers' perceptions of and beliefs about these practices, both as "practices" and as influences on the language learnt by the students.

This survey explores 50 French university English professors' knowledge and use of student practices with OILE. It attempts to identify any correlations with gender, age or national origin of the teachers and gain insight into their awareness of the OILE phenomenon amongst students, the perceived or imagined effects of these practices on their students' English and the ways they do or do not integrate this knowledge into their own teaching. Initial results indicate that many professors are aware of the types of student input that their learners may be exposed to, but that they know little of the specifics and very few indeed make any use of this knowledge in their English courses.

The discussion resulting from the presentation of the paper might focus on determining directions teachers could take in order to capitalise on these very real student practices.