

## Chapter 18

# Open Educational Resources and Open Language Learning for Taiwanese Adult Learners

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### ABSTRACT

*The Internet offers easy access to open resources, especially for educational use. However, the quality of open resources has been constantly criticized (Wiley & Gurrell, 2009). The purpose of this study was to examine English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) open educational resources (OERs) and to make recommendations for designing ESL OER websites that supported open language learning. Both the ESL learning (i.e. motivation, learning styles, and learning beliefs) and technical (i.e., the usability of websites in consideration of the three essential components: information, interaction, and interface) aspects were investigated in this study. The study findings showed that the following elements were important in both ESL learning and technical aspects: prior experience, ESL learning characteristics, and ESL learning beliefs. Based on these findings, recommendations for ESL OER web design and implications for open language learning are elaborated.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Internet offers easy access to open resources such as Wikipedia and YouTube. Open educational resources (OERs) are enabled by information and communication technologies and adapted for noncommercial purposes (UNESCO, 2002). OERs broadly include, but are not limited to, learning management systems (e.g., Moodle), content management systems (e.g., Drupal), open courseware (e.g., MIT-OCW) and other online tools or software (e.g., Google Drive). The ultimate goal for OERs is to share and exchange information without violating copyright law (Wiley & Gurrell, 2009). Taking social media as an example, Delicious and Flickr include resource-sharing and tag functions (Dabbagh & Kitsantas,

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2012). OERs have been applied in a variety of contexts. First to sixth graders in China, for example, took courses on Moodle as a supplement to the traditional mentorship learning of table tennis (Zou, Liu, & Yang, 2012). English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) learning students used a free video blog (Vlog) tool to record their self-introduction and course learning activities (Hung, 2011).

In Taiwan, English proficiency has become a requirement for job acquisition and promotion. Most Taiwanese companies consider English skills a vital part of career development (Hsieh, 2010). However, tight work schedules often do not allow workers to take face-to-face English classes. Due to recent high unemployment rates, many Taiwanese cannot afford the extra expenses for English classes. Learning through free ESL learning websites has been an option for those who need to improve their English skills (Pringprom, 2011). Most ESL learning websites have open resources such as a pronunciation accuracy checker. A variety of learning resources and high flexibility that users can reproduce them are the significant factors that attract learners to use OERs (Morgan & Carey, 2009; Susser & Robb, 2004). These factors can also help to resolve the accessibility barrier in resources for ESL learners in rural areas (Khendum & Heriberto, 2011).

However, the quality of OERs has been constantly criticized (Wiley & Gurrell, 2009). The purpose of this study was to examine ESL OERs and to make recommendations for an appropriate web design that supported effective language learning in an open learning environment and fosters the OER development. We investigated not only the learning aspect which identified learner motivation, learning styles, and beliefs in relation to ESL, but also the technical aspect related to the usability of websites concerning the following three essential components: *information*, *interaction*, and *interface* (i<sup>3</sup>). Usability is identified as measurable characteristics of one product that users find applicable to themselves (Mayhew, 1999). In order to discover the ways that websites enable or impede users, a usability test includes task completion and observation of participants' website usage in a controlled setting (Nielsen, Molich, Snyder, & Farrell, 2000).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Adults' ESL Learning**

*Motivation:* Motivation plays an important role in characterizing whether a person has the impetus to act toward a goal (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Generally speaking, there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation refers to one's desire toward something stemming from an inherent interest or enjoyment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The possible cause of intrinsic motivation varies such as having an interest in tasks and the satisfaction of psychological or basic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When students are motivated by their interests, they are more likely to persist (Sansone, Smith, Thoman, & MacNamara, 2012). Extrinsic motivation refers to the tendency that learners are apt to complete tasks in order to achieve another desirable outcome. The concept of extrinsic motivation has also influenced how ESL teachers implement effective strategies to help learners develop English language skills (Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani, 2011; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007).

Similar to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, integrative and instrumental motivation in second language learning was proposed by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Integrative motivation refers to second language learning for personal growth, cultural pursuit, and enrichment. Instrumental motivation indicates that second language acquisition is pursued for immediate or practical goals. For example, needs for job

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