

# Shaken and stirred: maximising the benefits of open practice through 'blended' OER communities of language teachers

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# The FAVOR project

- Finding A Voice through Open Resources (JISC)
- Part-time, hourly-paid language tutors
- Sharing existing resources
- Creating new transition resources for prospective university applicants: ‘taste of’ new languages; language study at HE
- Collaboration: Southampton, SOAS, UCL SSEES, Aston, Newcastle

# Issues for hourly-paid tutors

- Often unrecognised and undervalued
- Employed in ‘Language Centres’ separate from academic depts
- Teaching-only contracts (Coleman, J, 2004)
- “...*could be forgiven for feeling like second-class citizens,*” Klapper, J. (2006)
- Intensive teaching schedules
- Lack of opportunity to engage with academic life and professional development opportunities

# Benefits of open practice

- Can demonstrate impact to institution as well as beyond
- Colleagues who work cross-sector, cross-institution can bring work together under one online profile
- Facilitates networking locally and beyond
- Creating new, high quality OERs raises profiles of creators
- Increases the pool of relevant, adaptable resources available
- Enhances digital literacy and professional practice

OER Infokit: <http://bit.ly/oerinfokit>

# FAVOR: findings

- Enhanced practice
  - new skills acquired

*“I’ve learnt a lot. I say thank you very much for the project because for me it was great...now I’m so motivated to learn more.”*

- enhanced confidence

*“I know that now, I am more confident in creating my own resources, so I know...I can go and do it faster and more efficiently”*

- improved practice through self-reflection
- improved digital literacy (OER-creation, copyright, use of technology for teaching)

- Increased feeling of ‘belonging’ via public profile and association to institution

# FAVOR: findings

- Change of practice
  - New approaches and skills adopted
  - motivation to try out new methods

*“open practice is a way to work as a teacher, sharing not only resources but ideas, opinions with other teachers and learn from each other.”*

- Sustainability
  - use with students
  - long-lasting impact on teaching

# Blended approach

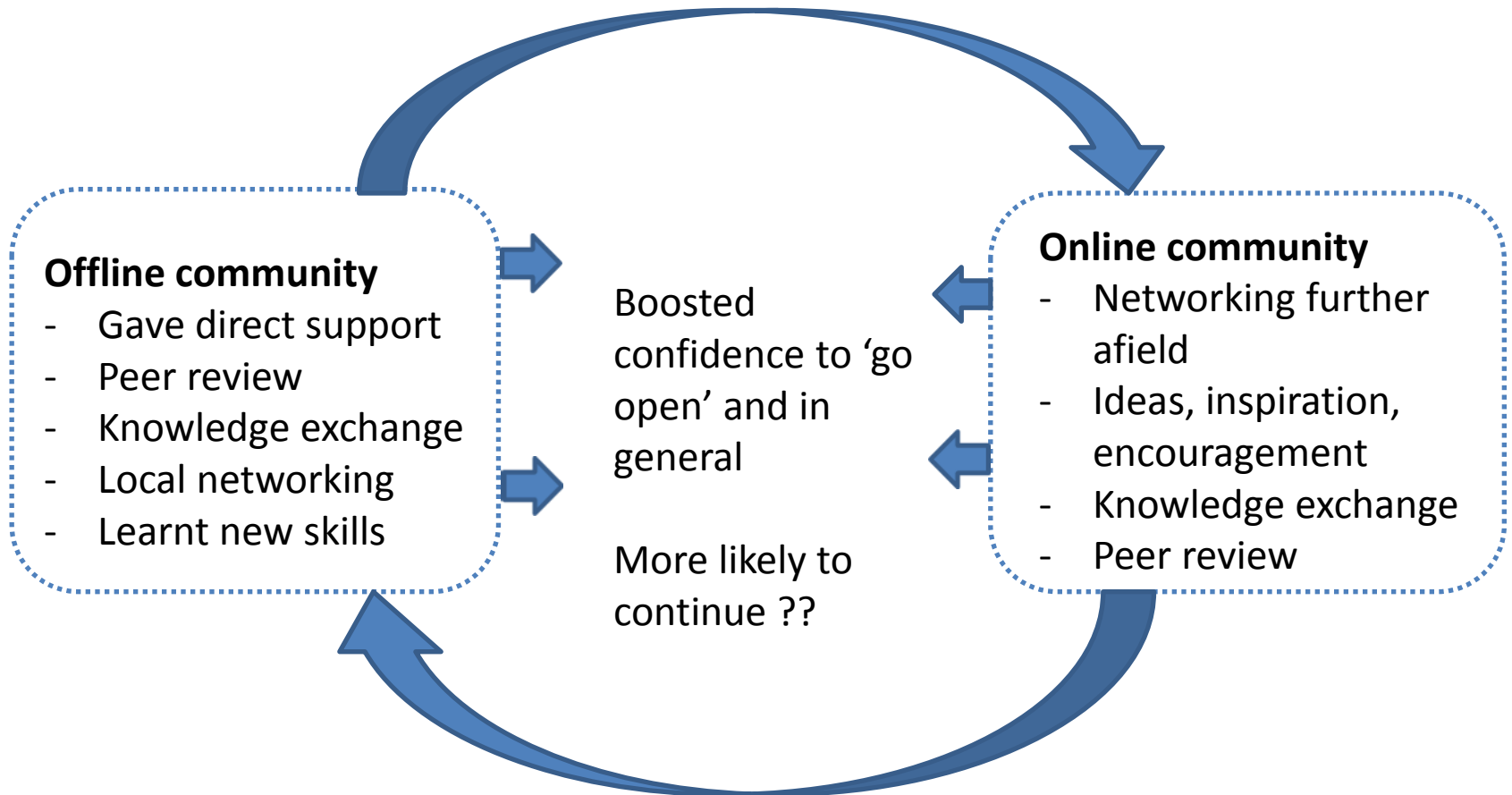
## Offline:

- Coordinator at each partner institution who recruited and managed at least 5 language tutors
- Each group met locally offline to share ideas, discuss what to publish, challenges of 'going open', peer review work
- Groups responsible for managing their own engagement with the project, times/places to meet etc
- Coordinators met offline and online with management team

## Online:

- Wider project team sharing resources via LanguageBox
- Training sessions and online support from management team

# Cycle of support





# Model

## Getting started:

- Devise a materials-creation project to work on (digital) which has an inherent use, interest and value to the group
- Recruit volunteers to work on it
- Decide where/when offline meetings might take place
- Discuss and develop individual materials, but with support and review from the group
- Publish work openly in a chosen location (use OER Infokit for advice if necessary)
- Publicise via local networks and social media

# Useful links for info and advice (OERs)

- OER Infokit: <http://bit.ly/oerinfokit>
- The JISC (info about OER projects): [www.jisc.ac.uk](http://www.jisc.ac.uk)
- OER Synthesis and evaluation report  
<http://bit.ly/UKOER3SynthesisReport>
- Copyright advice: <http://www.web2rights.org.uk/>

## Some repositories:

- Jorum: [www.jorum.ac.uk](http://www.jorum.ac.uk)
- HumBox: [www.humbox.ac.uk](http://www.humbox.ac.uk)
- LanguageBox: <http://languagebox.ac.uk>
- LORO (Language Open Resources Online):  
<http://loro.open.ac.uk/>

# References

- Coleman, J. 2004, Modern Languages in British universities: past and present, *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 3(2), 147–162.
- Klapper, J. 2006, *Understanding and Developing Good Practice: Language Teaching in Higher Education*. London: CILT.
- Howarth, P. 2011, *Language Centres and Academic Departments*. Available online: <http://www.ucml.ac.uk/shapingthefuture/identity>
- Review of Modern Foreign Languages provision in higher education in England, HEFCE, by M. Worton: [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09\\_41/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_41/)