A Case Study Exploring Freelance English Language Teachers’ Engagement With And Informal Learning Through Open Educational Practices In Switzerland

Thesis

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A case study exploring freelance English language teachers’ engagement with and informal learning through open educational practices in Switzerland

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MA ODE, BA (Hons)

Thesis submitted for the award of Doctorate in Education (EdD)
Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology

29 October 2020

Redacted version: Personal information has been removed from the Appendices.
Abstract

Freelance English language teachers in Switzerland teach mainly outside of mainstream education where precarious working conditions can impact on opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD). Research has shown that engagement with open educational practices (OEP) can lead to skills and knowledge development. In this enquiry, OEP include open educational resource (OER) based practices and the use of open technologies. Research to date has prioritised language teachers in higher education who have received training and support.

This qualitative case study, framed within an interpretive paradigm, addresses a research gap by exploring freelancers’ engagement with and informal learning through OEP in their teaching contexts. Informal learning and CPD are used as lenses to theoretically frame this enquiry which is underpinned by a sociocultural perspective. An online survey and semi-structured interviews were used for data generation, and explored freelancers’ engagement with OEP, their underlying motivations, and how and what they learn and develop through OEP. Fifteen survey respondents were recruited for semi-structured interviews via criterion-based purposive sampling. Data were analysed via reflexive thematic analysis.

Findings show that freelancers’ engagement with OEP is influenced by various contextual issues, both structural and agential. Reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking were identified as ways in which freelancers learn informally through OEP. The evidence suggests that engagement with OEP improved freelancers’ pedagogical and content knowledge and digital literacy skills, raised their critical awareness of aspects of OER, and led to changes in their teaching practices. Freelancers reported that these transformations impacted positively on student motivation and learning. Findings and recommendations from this enquiry have a broad applicability and can aid diverse stakeholders develop a deeper understanding of factors that shape freelancers’ learning, and what support and infrastructure they need to engage in OEP.
Acknowledgements

A thesis is never a solitary project.

I thank my supervisors Dr Beck Pitt and Dr Tita Beaven for their generous support and guidance throughout my research.

I thank all the freelance English language teachers who participated in this study. I have learned so much from you.

A heartfelt thanks to fellow language teachers and friends Ben and Markus, who supported me in different ways.

Finally, thank you, John, for your encouragement and motivating words which kept me going.
Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................. i

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... iii

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................. v

List of figures ..................................................................................................................................... ix

List of tables ...................................................................................................................................... xi

Acronyms .......................................................................................................................................... xii

Chapter 1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 13

1.1 Personal motivations .................................................................................................................. 13

1.2 Language teaching in Switzerland ............................................................................................. 15

1.2.1 Role of the Swiss Language Teaching Association ............................................................. 18

1.3 Research rationale ...................................................................................................................... 22

1.3.1 Research questions and aims ............................................................................................... 23

1.4 Structure of Thesis ..................................................................................................................... 24

Chapter 2 Literature Review ........................................................................................................... 26

2.1 Literature review process .......................................................................................................... 26

2.2 Conceptualising OER and OEP .................................................................................................. 28

2.2.1 OER ....................................................................................................................................... 28

2.2.2 A shift to OEP .......................................................................................................................... 35

2.2.3 Benefits of OEP ...................................................................................................................... 41

2.2.4 Learning through OEP .......................................................................................................... 43

2.2.5 Barriers to OEP ...................................................................................................................... 46

2.3 CPD ............................................................................................................................................. 52

2.3.1 CPD defined ............................................................................................................................ 53

2.3.2 Characteristics of effective CPD ........................................................................................... 55
2.3.3 Limitations of formal CPD ................................................................. 57

2.4 Types of learning ...................................................................................... 61
  2.4.1 Informal learning ................................................................. 62
  2.4.2 Informal and incidental learning theory ........................................ 64
  2.4.3 Sociocultural theory ................................................................... 67
  2.4.4 Learning strategies ................................................................. 68

2.5 Summary ................................................................................................... 71

Chapter 3 Methodology .................................................................................. 73

  3.1 Theoretical perspectives ........................................................................ 74
    3.1.1 Interpretivist paradigm .............................................................. 75

  3.2 Research design .................................................................................... 77

  3.3 Evaluating research methods ............................................................... 80

  3.4 Phase 1 of data generation: online survey ............................................. 82
    3.4.1 Phase 2 of data generation: semi-structured interviews ............... 92

  3.5 Data analysis method ........................................................................... 103
    3.5.1 Generation of themes ................................................................ 105

  3.6 Ethical principles ................................................................................... 111
    3.6.1 Informed consent ..................................................................... 111
    3.6.2 Detriment to participants .......................................................... 112
    3.6.3 Researcher role ........................................................................ 113

  3.7 Pilot study ............................................................................................... 115

  3.8 Summary ................................................................................................ 116

Chapter 4 Findings ......................................................................................... 117

  4.1 Themes and sub-themes: RQ 1a and RQ 1b .......................................... 117
    4.1.1 Assumptions, values and beliefs ............................................... 118
    4.1.2 Digital content practices: what and why? .................................. 119
Chapter 6 Conclusion and recommendations ................................................................. 202

6.1 Research summary .................................................................................................. 202

6.2 Limitations of the study .......................................................................................... 205

6.3 Contribution to knowledge ...................................................................................... 207

6.4 Implications for professional practice and policy .................................................... 209

6.4.1 Recommendations for professional practice and policy ....................................... 210

6.5 Further research ...................................................................................................... 214

6.6 Personal reflections .................................................................................................. 215

References ..................................................................................................................... 217

Appendices ..................................................................................................................... 234

Appendix A – Online Survey/JISC Tool ....................................................................... 234

Appendix B – Information leaflet/Survey ....................................................................... 251

Appendix C – eNews notification: survey participation .................................................. 253

Appendix D – Interview invitation .................................................................................. 254

Appendix E – Interview schedule 2018-2019 ............................................................... 256

Appendix F – Consent form ............................................................................................ 257

Appendix G – Interview guide ....................................................................................... 259

Appendix H – Summary of interview ........................................................................... 264

Appendix I – Thematic map examples .......................................................................... 267

Appendix J – HREC Approval ....................................................................................... 269

Appendix K – Websites accessed ................................................................................... 273

Appendix L – Interview transcript excerpts ................................................................... 276
List of figures

Figure 1: Adapted from OER Adoption Pyramid (Trotter and Cox, 2016), CC BY. ................................................................. 33

Figure 2: OER Engagement Ladder (Wild, 2012, p. 4), CC BY. .................. 47

Figure 3: Stages of survey design and delivery ........................................... 83

Figure 4: SQ 21 Familiarity with CC licences. .............................................. 85

Figure 5: Phases of reflexive thematic analysis (based on Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006) ...................................................... 104

Figure 6: Example of data familiarisation. .................................................... 105

Figure 7: Initial round of complete coding .................................................. 106

Figure 8: Examples of sub-themes ................................................................. 107

Figure 9: Thematic map of freelancers’ digital networking practices .......... 108

Figure 10: Main themes and sub-themes RQ 1a and RQ 1b ....................... 109

Figure 11: How and what freelancers learn through OEP (RQ 2 and RQ 3) .... 110

Figure 12: SQ 21 Familiarity with CC licences. ............................................ 121

Figure 13: SQ 20 Importance of copyright .................................................. 121

Figure 14: SQ 11 Digital resource practices in the last 12 months ............. 123

Figure 15: SQ 24 Types of OER used in the last 12 months ...................... 124

Figure 16: SQ 25 OER use for language teaching ...................................... 124

Figure 17: SQ 13 Purpose of using digital resources in the last 12 months ... 128

Figure 18: SQ 26 Why do you use OER? .................................................... 129

Figure 19: SQ 15 Purpose of participatory tools in the last 12 months ....... 134
Figure 20: SQ 16 Knowledge and skills development. ........................................ 147

Figure 21: SQ 27 How does OER contribute to your professional development?
........................................................................................................................................ 148

Figure 22: SQ 17 How freelancers learn through practices associated with digital content. .................................................................................................................................................................................. 154

Figure 23: SQ 28 Learning and developing through practices associated with OER................................................................. 154

Figure 24: SQ 18 Learning and developing through practices associated with participatory tools................................................................. 156
List of tables

Table 1: The Swiss ELT Association's CPD opportunities........................................ 19
Table 2: Effective CPD characteristics. .................................................................... 56
Table 3: Summary of research design....................................................................... 73
Table 4: Online survey structure............................................................................. 84
Table 5: Survey schedule....................................................................................... 89
Table 6: Summary of interview types ..................................................................... 92
Table 7: Summary of sampling strategies................................................................. 95
Table 8: Interviewee demographics....................................................................... 98
Table 9: Overview interview guide......................................................................... 101
Table 10: Themes and sub-themes RQ 1a and RQ 1b. ........................................... 117
Table 11: OER and non-OER users........................................................................ 120
Table 12: Types of digital and non-digital resources: OER and non-OER............ 125
Table 13: Types of websites accessed..................................................................... 127
Table 14: Purpose and type of resource adaptation............................................... 132
Table 15: Participatory tools.................................................................................. 134
Table 16: Contextual issues: constraints and enablers to OEP............................... 141
Table 17: Themes and sub-themes RQ 2 and RQ 3............................................... 145
Table 18: RQ 2 Learning and developing what through OEP?............................. 149
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Education Research Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Creative Commons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELTA</td>
<td>Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>English for Specific Purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAVOR</td>
<td>Finding a Voice through Open Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREC</td>
<td>Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICTs</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JISC</td>
<td>Joint Information Systems Committee (United Kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERLOT</td>
<td>Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEP</td>
<td>Open Educational Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OER</td>
<td>Open Educational Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLCOS</td>
<td>Open e-Learning Content Observatory Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPAL</td>
<td>Open Educational Quality Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU</td>
<td>Open University (United Kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROER4D</td>
<td>Research on Open Educational Resources for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGs</td>
<td>Special Interest Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Personal motivations

Freelance English language teachers in Switzerland often work in precarious conditions which can impact on their continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. This enquiry investigates freelance English language teachers’ engagement with open educational practices (OEP) and what and how they learn informally through these practices as an alternative approach to formal CPD programmes and activities.

The impetus to research this topic stems from my professional interest both as a freelance English language teacher and as a National Council member of the English Language Teaching (ELT) Association in Switzerland where participants were recruited for this enquiry. I have been teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Switzerland since 1992 and have been actively involved with the ELT Association’s publication team since 2012.

The Association was targeted for research participants partly because of ease of access to participants, but also because as an EdD researcher I wanted to make a practical contribution to this under-researched target group and research domain in Switzerland. My National Council role locates me in a position to discuss findings from this enquiry directly with the Association’s Executive Committee and suggest practical recommendations and actions that can aid freelancers and other members with their CPD. On a broader scale, I aim to disseminate findings to similar teaching associations and relevant stakeholders interested in language teaching and teachers’ CPD.

The introductory chapter provides the context for the study. It includes information about freelance English language teachers, EFL teaching in Switzerland and the role of the Swiss ELT Association. It outlines the research rationale and identifies a research gap to justify my research focus. I conclude by stating my research aims and questions and present an outline of the thesis structure.
Freelancers

The terminology used to describe freelance English language teachers in Switzerland and the wider ELT domain varies, e.g. part-time and casual workers. Throughout my thesis, I refer to English language teachers who work on an hourly basis and whose employment is dependent on learner numbers as freelancers. This definition is based on relevant literature concerning freelancers’ employment conditions, lack of CPD opportunities and tensions regarding the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Stickler and Emke, 2015; Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014; Leigh, 2014).

Freelancers in Switzerland are employed in a wide variety of language teaching settings, mainly outside of mainstream education. It is common for individual freelancers to teach in multiple settings where employment is not always based on a contract and some work solely as independent teachers. Independent teaching means that freelancers are responsible for finding their students and providing appropriate infrastructure and relevant teaching/learning materials. Freelancers might offer lessons in a fixed place (e.g. the freelancer’s home/office), or in students’ homes; freelancers may also provide in-house lessons for different businesses.

Freelancers seldom work within the primary or secondary school sectors because generalist, specialist or semi-specialist teachers who have a Swiss teaching qualification usually provide this tuition (Eurydice, 2017). However, from my knowledge, there are exceptions. Employment opportunities in vocational and higher education (HE) institutions and language teaching centres are commonly based on hourly contracts and student demand.

It is difficult to find figures relating explicitly to freelancers in Switzerland and their role in language teaching. Part-time employment is widespread within the teaching profession in Switzerland (Wolter et al., 2018), but no distinction is made between fixed part-time or hourly based employment, nor between compulsory educational sectors and diverse sectors where freelancers commonly work, e.g. adult and further education. Stickler and Emke (2015) experienced similar difficulties when researching part-time language teachers in Europe, suggesting
that freelancers might not be ‘recognised as part of the teaching force’ (p. 28) and figures could possibly be subsumed under other employment statistics.

In Switzerland, freelancers who teach EFL outside of mainstream education require at the minimum a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), which is an initial teacher training course and takes approximately four weeks to complete as a full-time course and longer part-time. Numerous language teaching centres in Switzerland provide CELTA courses. On completion of a CELTA course, teachers are often encouraged to attain a SVEB1 certificate, i.e. a Swiss qualification for teaching in the adult sector, but this is not an essential requirement. Nonetheless, CPD as part of lifelong learning is considered a necessity for freelancers and other workers in Switzerland and particularly in relation to improving knowledge and skill gaps as a consequence of disruptions stemming from technological changes, increasing digitalisation of processes and economic changes (Wolter et al., 2018). Digitalisation is acknowledged as a challenge that teachers and students need to cope with and it is advised that teachers be supported in their CPD which includes raising their pedagogical awareness of the integration of ICTs (Wolter et al., 2018).

1.2 Language teaching in Switzerland

The HarmoS Agreement, which passed into legislation in Switzerland in 2007 sets out compulsory objectives for school students and advocates that two foreign languages should be learned by the time their compulsory education is completed (Wolter et al., 2018). Swiss cantons have the option of choosing one or more national languages, i.e. German, French or Italian, as well as English as an additional foreign language. To date, 22 of the 26 cantons have implemented the HarmoS 5/7 Model as a language strategy which stipulates that tuition for the first foreign language should commence before grade five and for the second, before completion of grade seven (Wolter et al., 2018). However, there are exceptions, e.g. in Ticino, the Swiss-Italian speaking region, three foreign languages are taught (Wolter et al., 2018).

Due to labour market demands in multilingual Switzerland, learning one or more national languages as well as English is considered essential beyond compulsory education, i.e. in vocational, tertiary and adult education sectors
Ronan (2016) draws attention to the increasing use of English in Switzerland: its ‘strong status as a foreign language’ (p. 20), its economic significance and the fact that it is sometimes used as a means of communication between Swiss citizens who come from different language regions. Therefore, English language teachers play an essential role in teaching EFL in Switzerland.

In Swiss schools, EFL instruction is formalised and lesson time per week is limited (Pfenninger and Watts, 2020). Because freelancers often teach in multiple contexts, making generalisations about their teaching practices is difficult. Borg (2003) contends that numerous contextual issues can inform language teachers’ practices and how they teach, which is compounded in the case of freelancers by the sheer diversity of their teaching contexts. Nonetheless, in EFL contexts it is broadly acknowledged that lesson time per week is limited and students’ exposure to English in their immediate and broader sociocultural settings can vary (Collins and Muñoz, 2016). Global ELT coursebooks (which can be analogue/digital, or have a digital component) and other materials (e.g. workbooks, CDs, digital resources and devices) play a central role in contemporary language teaching and learning (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2013). However, global ELT coursebooks which are commercial products designed for a broad audience, are often critiqued for their lack of cultural relevance in different contexts (Tomlinson, 2012; Mishran, 2005).

Although English is increasingly used in many personal and professional contexts in Switzerland (Ronan, 2016), language learners’ exposure to English can be minimal in physical situations beyond instructional time. This accords with the findings of Collins and Muñoz (2016) that limited exposure time to the target language being learned in and beyond the instructional setting is typical of foreign language learning environments in general. However, it is acknowledged that the integration of technologies in and beyond the classroom can offset this and provide learners with more exposure to the target language and access to richer and more authentic learning opportunities (Kessler, 2018; Collins and Muñoz, 2016). The notion of authenticity in language teaching refers to materials and tasks that are personally relevant and meaningful to learners and facilitate the development of communication skills that can be used in real-world contexts.
Mishran (2005) suggests that authentic materials should interest and motivate learners and comprise topics and language that are current, raise cross-cultural awareness and challenge learners. However, providing authentic teaching materials for individual learners or groups can be expensive for independent teachers and also for teachers in contracted work if employers do not adequately supply relevant resources.

Since the 1970s, there has been a paradigm shift in language teaching from formal structured approaches to an emphasis on engaging language learners in real-world interactions (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018; Howatt and Smith, 2014) that are learner-centred and promote learner autonomy, i.e. where learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning (Mishran, 2005). This shift is known as the communicative turn (Howatt and Smith, 2014). In an EFL context, this means providing learners with opportunities for authentic interactions (to develop diverse communication and intercultural competencies) and integrating relevant resources and ICTs that are meaningful for learners (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018). Using the Web and ICTs in language teaching and learning is recognised as a means of increasing learners’ exposure to relevant and culturally broad resources and providing more flexible opportunities for authentic interaction which can aid in counteracting coursebook limitations such as lack of authenticity and lack of relevance to students’ needs and interests in differing contexts (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018; Mishan, 2005).

However, to leverage these opportunities for the benefit of language learners, teachers need to be aware of these possibilities (Kessler, 2018). Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that developing the necessary digital literacy skills and pedagogical knowledge to integrate digital resources, and technologies into language teaching contexts requires meaningful support and training (Karamifar et al., 2019; Kessler, 2018; Germain-Rutherford and Ernest, 2015; Stickler and Hampel, 2015). This can be a challenge for freelancers in Switzerland because of the precarious nature of their working conditions.

In a study of the precarious working conditions of English language teachers in Canada, Breshears (2019) observes that conditions such as job insecurity, managing multiple jobs and unpaid work (e.g. lesson preparation and grading) have pervaded the ELT industry for decades and can impact on teachers
in different ways including affecting their access to CPD opportunities. Teaching irregular hours can mean that freelancers are not as well integrated into the workplace as their fixed part-time or full-time colleagues and may not be supported in their CPD, which can lead to a sense of isolation making it difficult to network and exchange knowledge. The precariousness of freelancers’ work was notably foregrounded during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and provided the Association with some insight into the digital literacy needs of freelancers and the need for ongoing CPD and capacity building.

In Switzerland, whether or not language centres or institutes offer freelancers in-service CPD opportunities or financial support to travel to workshops or attend conferences varies depending on the institute, its policy requirements and contractual conditions. Otherwise, freelancers are largely responsible for organising their own CPD which can be influenced by numerous factors such as self-motivation, agency, changing personal needs, a willingness to develop professionally (Kyndt et al., 2016) and presumably time and financial issues. Teacher agency in the context of this thesis is not solely about a teacher’s capacity to act, but as something that teachers do and achieve within a particular sociocultural context which points to the relational and temporal nature of agency (Biesta et al., 2015). In this sense, agency is shaped by a teacher’s interaction in their environment and can be constrained or enabled by it (Biesta et al., 2015).

1.2.1 Role of the Swiss Language Teaching Association

Freelancers recruited for this enquiry are members of a Swiss non-profit ELT association which is the main organisation to join for language teachers. The Association’s primary focus is to promote CPD to keep teachers informed and up to date with diverse topics relating to the current ELT landscape. This is a key component of the Association’s mission statement and is reflected in the activities and events regularly provided, such as workshops, annual professional development days, national conferences, and informal teacher meetings throughout Switzerland (see Table 1 below). Members unable to attend national events can benefit from archived event resources on the Association’s website and from teacher colleagues cascading the information, a practice which largely aligns with a transmissive model of CPD (Kennedy, 2014).
### The Swiss ELT Association’s CPD opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face-to-face events</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National conference</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development day</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional activities, e.g. workshops</td>
<td>Varies (12 regions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special interest groups (SIGs) activities, e.g.</td>
<td>Varies (12 regions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional informal teacher groups</td>
<td>Varies per group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital events</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher talking time sessions: via Zoom (video-</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conferencing tool)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content dissemination: digital and print</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eNewsletter</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal (peer-reviewed)</td>
<td>Three issues per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website (diverse resources)</td>
<td>Always accessible; some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>restrictions for non-members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIG newsletters</td>
<td>Varies per group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media: Twitter, Facebook and YouTube</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the development and expansion of Web 2.0 technologies, there are increasing expectations on language teachers in Europe to integrate ICTs into their teaching contexts (Stickler et al., 2020; Germain-Rutherford and Ernest, 2015; Stickler and Hampel, 2015). Expectations on language teachers can emanate from diverse stakeholders and sources such as employers, students,
teaching associations and the broader ELT domain. Frameworks such as the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu) developed by the European Union, illustrate the expectations placed on teachers to develop their digital and pedagogical skills (Caena and Redecker, 2019).

The DigCompEdu framework is a comprehensive and flexible model that describes specific digital competencies relevant to teachers. According to Redecker (2017), the DigCompEdu framework comprises 22 digital competencies that are grouped into six key areas:

- Area 1 Professional Engagement;
- Area 2 Digital Resources;
- Area 3 Teaching and Learning;
- Area 4 Assessment;
- Area 5 Empowering Learners;
- Area 6 Facilitating Learners’ Digital Competence.

The DigCompEdu framework can be used as a general reference not only by different stakeholders to inform education policy and CPD activities, but also as an accessible tool for teachers to assess their learning needs and guide their professional development in a structured manner.

The DigCompEdu framework encourages teachers to reflect on and critically assess the appropriateness and relevance of technologies for educational purposes and has a strong pedagogical dimension that aims to foster change and innovation in education (Caena and Redecker, 2019). In this sense, the framework is not a mere checklist for developing specific technical or digital skills. More importantly, it is meant to aid teachers in developing professional competencies and pedagogical skills so that they can integrate technologies into their teaching practices effectively. Fuchs and Synder (2013) argue that this pedagogical understanding is significant because it is not necessarily the integration of a specific technology that leads to learning but the pedagogical design and function of a task.

The Association places a strong focus on informing teachers about ICTs, associated pedagogies and online resources. Information is disseminated through
social media channels and the Association’s monthly eNewsletter. Members are encouraged to network and share their expertise and content via social media and the Association’s informal teacher groups. Where possible, the Association’s infrastructure is adapted to suit members’ changing needs. The latter are established through surveys and diverse feedback sources (e.g. events and social media tools) and through Google analytics on the Association’s website. For example, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all educational institutes in Switzerland (public and private) were officially required to close in March 2020 in an attempt to minimise infections. The Association became aware (through social media channels and other means) that, as a result, many members were experiencing professional and personal difficulties. Members who retained their jobs required assistance with moving their teaching online, many experienced financial issues, and in general, there was a need to connect and support each other. Consequently, the Association invited members to a video-conferencing session to discuss these issues and to find solutions collaboratively. This initiative evolved into a series of online meetings which are now scheduled monthly (see Table 1 above). The Association also published a website page relating to online teaching and openly shared this via social media in an effort to include other teachers. Furthermore, a Covid-19 relief fund was created to support former and existing members who, due to lost employment, were unable to renew their membership.

Members are also encouraged to participate actively by contributing articles or material reviews to the Association’s peer-reviewed journal, sharing their expertise through the eNewsletter, taking on a National Council role, or starting their own informal teacher group. The Association has mechanisms to assist members in these activities, e.g. book review guidelines; a model that can be used as a template to develop, run and sustain an informal teacher group, and volunteer mentoring. Thus, potential CPD opportunities stemming from the Association comprise a blend of top-down and bottom-up approaches providing members with a broad spectrum of opportunities for learning and development which range from transmissive to democratic approaches that aim to empower teachers, and support networking and collaboration. Although the Association provides a broad array of CPD opportunities, there is no guarantee that members will take advantage of these, or take steps to participate and network with other members.
In other disciplines where teachers work in similar freelance conditions, the tensions discussed above, such as lack of support and minimal or no access to CPD opportunities, in their working contexts, have been identified in research. For example, a professional development study situated in the further education sector in the United Kingdom (UK) found that the increasing casualisation of the sector can impact on teachers’ CPD opportunities, in part because of isolating conditions and also because it hampers the building of strong networks which can facilitate the exchange of ideas and resources (Broad, 2015). Similar tensions have also been identified in research relating to freelancers' ICT needs in Europe (Stickler et al., 2020; Stickler and Emke, 2015) and research which has explored the potential of OEP to provide meaningful learning opportunities for part-time and hourly paid language teachers in the UK (Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014).

I was interested in investigating how these issues could be mitigated, i.e. how freelancers could expose learners to authentic and relevant resources and how freelancers could develop professionally in a meaningful way that addresses their individual needs. Thus, I reviewed literature relating to OEP and open educational resources (OER) because it is claimed that engagement in these practices can act as a catalyst for informal learning opportunities (Hood and Littlejohn, 2017; Comas-Quinn and Borthwick, 2015; Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014) and provide learners with access to rich and authentic content and interactive learning opportunities (Thoms et al., 2018; Geser, 2007).

There are differing conceptualisations of OEP (see section 2.2.2). However, this study uses the definition in the Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007) as it includes OER as well as open technologies (e.g. YouTube, Flickr and social media tools such as Twitter) that can facilitate participatory practices, such as sharing teaching experiences, knowledge and content (Comas-Quinn and Borthwick, 2015). OER are free of cost, openly licensed resources, digital and/or non-digital, that enable users to adapt and share them as required (UNESCO, 2012). However, practices such as adaptation and sharing can be restricted depending on the type of licence under which OER are made available (Wiley, 2014). OER can benefit freelancers because they offer the potential to adapt and localise resources to suit learners’ needs (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme,
2020; Thoms et al., 2018) without incurring costs, so that they can provide learners with a broad range of authentic resources (Thoms and Thoms, 2014) that are meaningful to learners. OER and licensing are defined and discussed more fully in section 2.2.1.

It has been argued that the affordances of open technologies can facilitate networking practices where personal learning networks can develop (Veletsianos, 2013), teachers’ knowledge and ideas can be shared, isolation mitigated (Malik et al., 2019; Wesely, 2013), meaningful learning opportunities provided (Davis, 2015) and resources shared (Zourou, 2016). These characteristics could facilitate peer learning, enable freelancers to benefit from the sharing practices of others, and open possibilities for them to share their own expertise and content (Carpenter and Harvey, 2019; Malik et al., 2019; Davis, 2015).

1.3.1 Research questions and aims

As the discussion above shows, there are tensions in the Swiss context concerning expectations of freelancers in their teaching practices and their lack of CPD opportunities which could possibly be mitigated through engagement with OEP. Therefore, the research informing this thesis aimed to explore what types of OEP freelancers are engaging in and why. I also aimed to elicit freelancers’ motives for taking or not taking part in these practices because I wanted to provide a more holistic insight into freelancers’ situated teaching practices in their teaching contexts in Switzerland. Further, I aimed to identify whether informal learning was occurring through freelancers’ engagement with OEP and understand what was being learned in terms of knowledge and skills development and how learning was being stimulated. I intended to achieve this research objective by generating data that addressed the following research questions (RQs):

- **RQ 1a**: Are freelance English language teachers taking part in OEP and if so, what are these practices?
- **RQ 1b**: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, why do they take part in these practices?
- **RQ 2**: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, what knowledge and skills do they learn and develop?
• **RQ 3:** If freelance English language teachers develop knowledge and skills from taking part in OEP, how do they learn and develop such knowledge and skills?

Understanding what OEP freelancers take part in and why, and how and what they learn and develop from taking part in these practices, could contribute to research on OER, OEP and CPD. To date, research investigating language teachers’ engagement with and learning through OER/OEP is scant and has prioritised language teachers in HE who have received training and support. Thus, this enquiry aims to address a research gap by exploring freelancers’ OEP and informal learning in their multiple teaching contexts which enables a unique insight into their language teaching practices in Switzerland.

Findings and suggested recommendations from this enquiry could help teacher training, teaching associations and the practices of freelancers in general. Understanding how freelancers are learning and what strategies are acting as a catalyst for informal learning, could potentially assist interested stakeholders in guiding the design of CPD opportunities so that they are more meaningful and effective for teachers.

**1.4 Structure of Thesis**

This thesis comprises six chapters.

Chapter 1 commences by explaining my personal motivations for this enquiry. It provides a detailed contextual background for the study, outlines the research rationale and identifies a research gap to justify my research focus. I conclude by stating my research aims and questions which are informed by reviewed literature.

Chapter 2 critically summarises and situates my research in relation to relevant literature on OER, OEP and CPD. It provides working definitions of OER and OEP for this enquiry and reviews literature relating to engagement with and learning through OER and OEP as well as the benefits and challenges of taking part in these practices. Informal learning and CPD are discussed as conceptual lenses to frame this study which is underpinned by a sociocultural perspective. The theoretical framework which emerges aids in understanding the significance
of CPD and why there is value in investigating informal learning as an alternative approach to formal CPD and is useful for interpreting and understanding how freelancers learn informally.

Chapter 3 describes and justifies the theoretical perspectives underlying this study and explains how the methodological approach and methods align with this position. The methods used to recruit participants, generate and analyse data are discussed in detail. Key ethical considerations that are an integral part of this enquiry are discussed. Finally, I provide a brief overview of my pilot study and discuss implications for the main enquiry.

Chapter 4 presents the findings which provide evidence of freelancers’ engagement with and informal learning through OEP, and introduces the themes and sub-themes generated through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006).

Chapter 5 discusses the findings and relates them to relevant literature. The types of OEP that freelancers are taking part in are discussed, as are contextual issues that influence their practices. Learning strategies that were identified as contributing to freelancers’ informal learning through OEP are explained. Finally, I discuss how taking part in OEP has led to changes in freelancers’ teaching practices and how OEP contributes to their CPD.

Chapter 6 summarises the findings and discusses the limitations of this enquiry. I outline how this thesis contributes to knowledge on OER, OEP and CPD, and to professional practice and policy. Recommendations are made for diverse stakeholders such as language teaching associations and teacher trainers. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research and my final reflections.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review positions my study within relevant research on OER, OEP and CPD. The literature review process is outlined before literature relating to engagement with and learning through OER and OEP is summarised and critically analysed. Finally, the theoretical framework for this enquiry, which brings together the concepts of CPD and informal learning, sociocultural theory, and informal and incidental learning theory, is discussed together with relevant literature.

2.1 Literature review process

Several digital databases were consulted for my literature search: Academic Search Complete, ERIC, FIS Bildung (for articles in German) and Google Scholar. Additional searches were carried out using the OU library and relevant peer-reviewed journals relating to open education, OER and OEP, e.g. Open Praxis, and teacher CPD and informal learning, e.g. Professional Development in Education and TESOL Journal.

To locate and evaluate relevant literature, combinations of key words, synonyms and phrases, and acronyms were used, e.g. freelance language teachers/language teachers, continuing professional development/CPD/PD, open educational practices/OEP, open educational resources/OER and informal learning. Filters such as dates and types of media as well as search strategies, i.e. Boolean searches, phrase searching and truncation with selected key words and phrases, were used to broaden, refine and exclude results. For example, "language teacher" AND "professional development" AND "open educational practices" yielded four results in ERIC. One of these results included an article of mine relating to preliminary findings from the small-scale pilot study which preceded this enquiry (see Daniels, 2019). Changing AND to OR before "professional development" increased the result to 13 within a ten-year period, and swapping "open educational practices" to "open educational resources" yielded 55 articles, but still included OEP articles.
OEP research is an emerging field in comparison with OER research (Cronin and MacLaren, 2018), which explains the increased results when I changed the search term to OER. This situation is exemplified in Koseoglu and Bozkurt's (2018) exploratory review of OEP literature which found an increase in OEP publications between 2014 and 2017 and identified a strong association between OER and OEP, but located only one OEP paper in 2007 by Geser (2007). This paper is considered to provide the earliest definition of OEP (Cronin and MacLaren, 2018) and is discussed in section 2.2.2.

Finding one OEP article in 2007 does not mean that educators were not taking part in OEP (in 2007 or earlier), but that research into their open practices was perhaps being reported using different descriptors (Koseoglu and Bozkurt, 2018). Another plausible explanation is that literature reviews are conducted for particular purposes and, therefore, differ in their approach, design and inclusion criteria. Inevitably, they exclude research and materials which do not meet these criteria (Snyder, 2019). It follows that Koseoglu and Bozkurt's (2018) literature review could have illuminated different findings had they used another approach or other criteria.

To broaden my literature search, I consulted the FIS Bildung database to include German literature, but results were similar and primarily drew on English-language papers from ERIC. I regularly reviewed my search alerts in Zetoc and Google Scholar and email notifications about suggested reading from Mendeley and Academia.edu. Furthermore, I used snowballing, i.e. checking reference lists from articles to identify further literature; followed up on links from my OU supervisors, other teachers on Twitter and OER/OEP conferences; undertook general searches in Google Scholar, and consulted relevant blogs and books relating to open education, teacher CPD and learning theories. The literature review process was ongoing throughout my research and comprised diverse strategies which were used not only to identify and synthesise research findings from relevant studies on OER, OEP and teacher CPD research, but to refine, broaden or change the direction of the search as my research developed. The literature review informed the development of the research questions, which were refined after the initial pilot study (see section 3.7), and served to inform the research methodology and interpretation of this study's findings.
2.2 Conceptualising OER and OEP

The following sections (2.2 - 2.2.2) discuss and define OER and OEP and related concepts relevant to this enquiry. Sections 2.2.3 - 2.2.5, critically review and discuss literature concerning the benefits and challenges of taking part in OEP and opportunities for learning and development.

Research on OEP is relatively new, and critical interpretations of what comprises OEP vary and are continually emerging globally as understandings of openness embodied within different teaching practices and learning environments develop (Bozkurt et al., 2019; Cronin and MacLaren, 2018; Koseoglu and Bozkurt, 2018; Cronin, 2017). In their review of OEP literature, Koseoglu and Bozkurt (2018) identified two dominant OEP research strands: OER-based practices, and practices positioned within other areas of open education, such as open learning, open teaching and open scholarship.

This enquiry investigates freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP in their multiple teaching contexts. While the focus is on freelancers’ OER-based practices, it also includes their broader OEP comprising the use of open technologies (e.g. YouTube, Flickr and social networking tools such as Twitter). I aim to understand not only how freelancers engage with OER-based practices from an individual perspective but also their participatory practices as they interact with students and other teachers. Empirical evidence has shown that the affordances of open technologies can enable teachers to take part in participatory practices such as digital networking and benefit from knowledge sharing which can contribute to their CPD (e.g. Malik et al., 2019; Zourou, 2017; Beetham et al., 2012). Before OEP is discussed, the section which follows defines OER and discusses relevant characteristics to clarify the concept and to provide a working definition of OER for this enquiry.

2.2.1 OER

As part of the broader field of open education, OER were conceptualised as a means of opening up and democratising education (UNESCO, 2002). The term open education currently comprises a wide range of practices (Jordan and Weller, 2018), that are often understood as digitally enabled (Havemann, 2016) that aim to
widen access to more equitable learning opportunities where sharing practices play a crucial role (Hug, 2014).

It is widely accepted that the term OER was coined at UNESCO’s Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education Contexts in Developing Countries nearly two decades ago (Stracke et al., 2019). Forum participants were inspired by innovative educational transformations occurring at the time, such as open courseware initiatives and Web developments (UNESCO, 2002). It was argued that emerging digital tools and technologies enabled new opportunities for teaching and learning and for engaging in participatory practices such as sharing content and expertise (Mishra, 2017). It was suggested that these opportunities could contribute to educators’ CPD and improve the quality of education, making it more equitable and socially inclusive as well as supporting lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2002). Forum participants agreed to ‘develop together a universal educational resource available for the whole of humanity’ (UNESCO, 2002, p. 28) which they defined as OER:

‘The open provision of educational resources, enabled by information and communication technologies, for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes’ (UNESCO, 2002, p. 24).

Since UNESCO’s (2002) initial conceptualisation, different organisations, foundations and researchers have proposed definitions of OER which amplify and clarify specific aspects, such as open licensing which is discussed later. OER definitions have been compared and discussed extensively in the literature (e.g. Stracke et al., 2019; Armellini and Nie, 2013; Geser, 2007). Despite the plethora of OER definitions, there is currently a unified understanding of what key characteristics comprise OER, i.e. content is freely available, of no cost, and is openly licensed permitting reuse and adaptation (Mishra, 2017; Havemann, 2016).

The definition of OER for this enquiry is as follows:

‘teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open licence that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others
with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work’ (UNESCO, 2012, p. 1).

In 2012, at the first World OER Congress in Paris, UNESCO redefined their original definition (2002) to clarify certain points. The above OER definition (UNESCO, 2012) is appropriate as a definition for this enquiry because it explains that OER can be teaching and learning materials in any medium or format and includes both digital and non-digital resources. Significantly, the definition clarifies that materials (e.g. videos, texts, images and lesson plans) should be made available under an open licence that enables a broad range of practices such as the use, adaptation, and sharing of resources. This is important for freelancers because it is common in language teaching to replace or supplement commercial coursebooks with digital resources (such as texts, images and videos) and non-digital materials and to adapt them so that they are more relevant and meaningful for learners (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018). Nonetheless, it is possible that contextual issues might hinder these practices (e.g. lack of digital infrastructure). It is easy to find evidence on the Web (e.g. social media sites and teacher blogs) of language teachers openly sharing resources and tips about how to digitise or “hack” your coursebook so that it is more interesting and motivating for language learners. However, the materials that freelancers share are often a mixed ecology of resources, i.e. OER and other content (non-OER) that is available on the Web from specific language teaching sites or otherwise.

There are different categories of OER and varying licensing conditions which have implications for freelancers, such as whether the process of adaptation is permitted or not. The following sections discuss these issues, as well as attributes that are considered essential if freelancers are to engage in OER-based practices capably.

**Big and little OER**

Weller (2011) distinguishes between two types of OER and adopts the terms coined by Hoyle (2009): big and little OER. Big OER comprise larger resources such as open courses and open textbooks whereas little OER are smaller resources such as images, videos and texts (Weller, 2011). Little OER are
characterised as having less quality and a different level of intentionality than big OER because individuals often create them for various purposes (Weller, 2011). Big OER are primarily created by institutions for educational purposes and often reside in institutional repositories, e.g. MERLOT (Weller, 2011). Thus, there are variances between little and big OER in terms of ‘granularity, quality and explicit learning intentions’ (Weller, 2011, p. 105). Little OER ‘may not have explicit educational aims … and are typically shared through a range of third-party sites’ (Weller, 2011, p. 105) such as YouTube and Flickr, which to my knowledge are commonly used by freelancers in Switzerland for teaching purposes.

Language teachers are expected to provide students with relevant materials (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018) and one way to achieve this is through the process of adaptation. Tomlinson (2012) claims that teachers regularly adapt materials. Therefore, freelancers might prefer little OER because of the flexibility to personalise and localise them to suit learners’ needs which might be more difficult with big OER. Armellini and Nie (2013) who investigated academics’ OER reuse as part of the EVOL-OER project, found that granularity was a significant criterion for reuse and that little OER were preferred because of the ease with which they could be integrated into other teaching materials. This suggests that little OER are valued because their decontextualisation from a specific learning scenario increases the potential for adaptation, providing teachers with more flexibility to reuse or modify them to suit students’ needs. Indeed, Hood (2018) advises that classroom materials should permit adaption to local contexts because teachers want the autonomy to personalise resources so that they are meaningful for learners.

Open licensing

Creative Commons (CC) licences are recognised as the most commonly used open licensing framework for OER (Havemann, 2016). Creators of content can choose between a range of licensing provisions, i.e. by attribution (BY), non-commercial (NC), share alike (SA) under the same licence and no derivatives (ND). These provisions can be combined in different ways to open or restrict usage permissions for materials that are published (Hilton et al., 2010).
Wiley (2014) built on the 4R framework (Hilton et al., 2010; Wiley, 2007) which is widely acknowledged as a set of permissions that aid in determining the level of openness of content. Wiley (2014) added the right to retain copies of resources and presented the 5R framework as follows:

- Retain – the right to make, own, and control copies of the content
- Reuse – the right to use the content in a wide range of ways (e.g., in a class, in a study group, on a website, in a video)
- Revise – the right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself (e.g., translate the content into another language)
- Remix – the right to combine the original or revised content with other open content to create something new (e.g., incorporate the content into a mashup)
- Redistribute – the right to share copies of the original content, your revisions, or your remixes with others (e.g., give a copy of the content to a friend)

According to Wiley (2014), OER should enable the 5Rs, so content published with a ND restriction is not considered as OER because it does not permit revising and remixing. OER can open up possibilities for creation, use, adaptation and sharing by teachers, learners and the broader community that could be hindered by restrictive licences or by content that is not openly licensed. However, users such as freelancers, need to understand what characterises OER if they are to benefit from OER-based practices which might not always be the case.

Based on their OER Research Hub work about OER engagement, Weller et al. (2016) observed that OER can be confused with other digital resources, particularly by what they categorised as the OER consumer group where end-users' awareness of open licensing is considered low. Similarly, Schuwer and Janssen (2018) who investigated the adoption and sharing practices of 55 stakeholders from 10 Dutch Universities, found that while participants took part in these practices, it was often with materials that were not openly licensed.
Likewise, Baas et al. (2019) in their study of HE educators' adoption of OER in a Dutch University, also found that educators often shared content without a licence and that the pedagogical benefits of a resource were more important.

Needless to say, OER and in particular digital OER, have the potential to be disseminated widely and enable a broad range of learners and educators to interact with them in different ways, anytime and anywhere, if certain conditions are fulfilled. These conditions include the availability of digital infrastructure and devices, awareness of OER and CC licences, and a readiness for and interest in using OER.

OER adoption

Cox and Trotter (2017) argue that certain factors are essential if individuals are to engage in OER-based practices. As part of the Global South’s ROER4D project in South Africa, Trotter and Cox (2016) developed the OER adoption pyramid which lists six essential factors for OER adoption: access, permission, awareness, capacity, availability and volition. The lower layers of the OER adoption pyramid reflect factors where educators potentially have less control because these factors are primarily, externally determined. Attributes further up the pyramid are defined as being more internally determined, implying that educators have more control (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Adapted from OER Adoption Pyramid (Trotter and Cox, 2016), CC BY.
Baas et al. (2019) who used the adoption pyramid as an analytical framework to investigate faculties’ adoption of OER, found that availability should be lower, arguing that it was ‘a prerequisite for teachers to explore their capacity and volition’ (p. 8) and suggested that the sequence of attributes might differ in other contexts. In the case of freelancers in Switzerland, it is also possible that the range and sequence of attributes for OER adoption might differ and could vary in cases where freelancers teach in multiple contexts. For example, the provision of infrastructure (e.g. digital devices and access to internet connectivity) might not be externally determined by an institute or language centre but may be the responsibility of freelancers and/or students. This is common where freelancers teach independently and use their home or an external office for teaching, or provide lessons in students’ homes. It is also possible that freelancers might not be fully autonomous in their choice of teaching materials which could hinder their engagement with OER-based practices and with broader OEP.

In Switzerland, it is not uncommon for ELT coursebooks to be prescribed. I am also aware of isolated instances where freelancers lack permission to supplement coursebooks with additional resources. This is significant because Pitt et al. (2020) who surveyed UK educators about their OER awareness and textbook use suggest that the autonomy to choose teaching materials can act as an enabler for engagement with OER and OEP. They suggest that the level of autonomy might vary between staff on permanent contracts and those on other contracts (Pitt et al. 2020). This is relevant because it is acknowledged that the precariousness of freelancers’ working conditions can impact on language teachers in different ways, including undermining their professionalism (Breshears, 2020).

Schön and Ebner (2019) investigated the role of OER in the adult education sector in German-speaking countries in Europe, i.e. Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and found that Switzerland lags behind its neighbours in terms of open initiatives, OER policies and public funding for OER projects. For example, Switzerland held its first OER conference at the University of Teacher Education in Lucerne in January 2019, which is more than a decade after Austria and Germany organised their first OER conferences (Schön and Ebner, 2019). It was specifically mentioned at the Lucerne conference that the OER movement in Switzerland was still at the grass-roots stage and that OER awareness and usage were not yet
mainstream in sectors such as HE, vocational training, further education, or compulsory education. Therefore, it is possible that the freelancers in the study reported here will exhibit varying levels of OER awareness which could influence their capacity to engage with OER-based practices and broader OEP.

Following the conceptualisation of OER, initial research trajectories were primarily content-focused and explored aspects of OER such as access, creation, quality and policy issues (Havemann, 2016). As Haas et al. (2018) note, much of this research focused on tertiary education contexts and adoption of OER in developing countries. While the value and benefits of OER for lifelong learning were recognised, the notion that static resources could transform educational practices was challenged (Geser, 2007). Arguments started to emerge advocating a shift to open practices that included OER use, and also engagement with social networking tools and Web platforms that supported learner-centred activities, increased student participation and enabled teachers to share content and expertise and learn from the open teaching practices of others (Geser, 2007).

2.2.2 A shift to OEP

According to Cronin and MacLaren (2018), the first sign of a shift to OEP is evident in the OLCOS project report (Open e-Learning Content Observatory Service, authored by Geser, 2007) which provided an overview of OER developments at the time, including future developments in Europe and beyond. Geser (2007) argued that OEP ‘are more likely to allow for learning experiences that are real, rich and relevant’ (p. 120) because such practices draw on participatory tools that enable ‘constructive engagement of learners with digital content, tools and services in the learning process’ (p. 124), and provide opportunities for teachers to share practices and experiences of OEP with like-minded communities. Furthermore, the report advocated that to benefit from OER, a cultural shift needed to occur that supported sharing practices, e.g. sharing digital content and expertise, so that teachers could develop the required skills and competencies needed to engage with OER and OEP and learn from other educators (Geser, 2007). Therefore, the emphasis was on shifting from OER-based practices that were primarily based on a transmissive model of education to social constructivist approaches that drew on participatory tools to support
collaborative learning and communication and sharing practices that benefited students and teachers alike.

Briefly, social constructivism views learning as socially and culturally mediated and highly contextual, a perspective which has its roots in Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory (see section 2.4.3). Pedagogically, social constructivist approaches are learner-centred and aim to shift the locus of control to the learner and promote interaction with others as part of the learning process and co-construction of knowledge (Adams, 2006). The teacher’s role is one of facilitator and mediator who aids in providing and scaffolding meaningful learning opportunities that encourage communication and collaboration (Mutekwe et al., 2013; Adams, 2006). Mutekwe et al. (2013) suggest that encouraging a shift to social constructivist approaches can be disruptive and challenge teacher and student identities. However, as Dron and Anderson (2014) argue, adopting new approaches to teaching and learning is not synonymous with the demise of what teachers and learners were doing beforehand. On the contrary, new teaching approaches often become integrated into educators’ teaching practices and form part of their repertoire (Dron and Anderson 2014; Howatt and Smith, 2014). Nonetheless, it is plausible that tensions could be experienced by freelancers in this enquiry and their learners when adopting OEP.

Since Geser’s (2007) recommendation to move beyond a primary focus on OER and shift to promoting OEP, numerous interpretations of OEP have been published and debated. The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007) is used as a working definition in this enquiry and is discussed in detail below. To clarify why this is relevant as a definition of OEP for this study, some examples of well-cited OEP definitions which amplify different aspects of openness are first examined.

Cronin and MacLaren (2018) in their review and synthesis of OEP literature, highlighted the complexity and diversity of understandings of OEP and related concepts, and concluded that definitions of OEP can be strongly influenced by the contexts in which teaching and learning is situated. They observe that assumptions embodied within earlier conceptualisations of OEP can still be identified in current literature (Cronin and MacLaren, 2018). For example, the
notion that OEP is based on the use of OER can be traced to earlier OEP definitions such as Andrade et al. (2011) and Ehlers (2011).

In a similar vein to Geser (2007), Andrade et al. (2011) who investigated the use of OER and OEP in HE and adult education sectors as part of the Open Educational Quality Initiative (OPAL), advised exploring open practices associated with OER and how they were being used in teaching and learning scenarios. They defined OEP as:

‘practices which support the (re)use and production of OER through institutional policies, promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning path’ (Andrade et al., 2011, p. 12).

This definition amplifies the promotion of innovative learner-centred pedagogies that are closely linked to OER. This definition was appropriate for Andrade et al.’s (2011) research because they were interested in gaining deeper insight into educators’ practices in order to investigate the effectiveness of OER in transforming teaching and learning in innovative ways and improving the quality of education.

Similarly, Ehlers (2011), who was involved in the OPAL project and research report, described the move to OEP as phase 2 in the OER movement. This involved a transition from a focus on content to exploring OEP that use ‘OER to improve learning experiences and innovate educational scenarios’ (p. 3). In a related paper, he reformulated the OPAL project’s OEP definition as:

‘collaborative practice in which resources are shared by making them openly available, and pedagogical practices are employed which rely on social interaction, knowledge creation, peer-learning, and shared learning practices’ (Ehlers, 2011, p. 6).

In Ehlers’ (2011) definition, OEP are defined with reference to OER, but there is an emphasis on engaging learners in a broader set of social practices that facilitate learner agency and aid in the construction and sharing of knowledge as part of improving the learning experience. Although Andrade et al. (2011) did not explicitly state this in their definition, they argued that the use of open learning
architectures and OER constitute OEP, and that degrees and types of openness can vary depending on the extent of OER adoption and use of open pedagogical models. For example, in a teaching practice there could be a high integration of open technologies where student participation is promoted, but low OER usage. Conversely, there could be high engagement with OER embedded within a transmissive pedagogical approach that is more teacher-led as opposed to student-centred. Thus, both definitions imply that levels of openness can differ and are dependent on multifarious factors, such as institutional policies that promote OER usage, innovative pedagogical approaches, student engagement, and the level of integration of OER and open technologies.

A pedagogical approach closely associated with OER-focused definitions of OEP, is OER-enabled pedagogy:

‘the set of teaching and learning practices only possible or practical when you have permission to engage in the 5R activities’ (Wiley, 2017, n.p.).

The implication is that OER-enabled pedagogy supports student engagement in a ‘broader range of activities’ (Wiley and Hilton, 2018, p. 135) than would be possible with non-OER due to possible copyright restrictions on teaching and learning materials. Wiley and Hilton (2018) argue that OER-enabled pedagogy can lead to meaningful learning experiences because students can actively participate in the creation, adaptation and publication of open content that can be reused and adapted by others. Renewable assignments, a concept defined earlier by Wiley (2013), are an example of OER-enabled pedagogy. In contrast to disposable assignments that might be thrown away, renewable assignments can be openly licensed and shared publicly enabling others to use them. This gives them value beyond the classroom and can potentially afford further learning opportunities through activities such as peer feedback and online discussions (Wiley and Hilton, 2018).

In language teaching, examples of OER-enabled pedagogy would include students creating texts or videos, as a collaborative process and publishing them with a CC licence on the internet. Although these types of practices are learner-centred, encourage meaningful learning and locate students as more agentic in
the learning process, Bali et al. (2020) caution that students cannot be coerced into publishing open content and should be informed about potential risks of taking part in OEP. A further possible tension associated with language teaching, is that lower level learners might be particularly anxious about publishing content openly. For freelancers, this raises questions about the suitability of OEP for their learners which would need to be evaluated in each of their teaching contexts and in relation to students' learning needs.

Beyond OER-focused definitions of OEP, Cronin and Maclaren (2018) argue that there are more expansive definitions which can ‘allow for multiple entry points to, and avenues of, openness’ (p. 128). This implies that practitioners might be engaging in more expansive practices before using OER and that these practices might lead to OER adoption. It has been suggested that OEP are a necessary prerequisite of OER (Hodgkinson-Williams et al., 2017), which has been observed in other studies (e.g. Paskevicius and Irvine, 2019; Cronin, 2017).

Beetham et al. (2012) who published a briefing paper based on findings from the UK OER programme, suggest that OEP can include the following activities which are considered examples of expansive practices:

- practices involving production, use and reuse of OER;
- developing and applying open pedagogies in teaching practice;
- open learning and access to open learning opportunities;
- practices involving open scholarship;
- open sharing of teaching practices;
- using open technologies for educational purposes, e.g. third-party software and services (n.p.).

Comas-Quinn and Borthwick (2015) comment that this wider set of OEP potentially relate to language teachers’ work. However, whether freelancers in this enquiry embrace a narrow or broad range of these open practices will invariably be dependent on numerous factors emanating from their teaching contexts and also from their assumptions, values, and beliefs about teaching and their willingness and capacity to adopt an open identity (Tur et al., 2020; Nascimbeni and Burgos, 2016). This is supported by Cronin (2017) who reports that engaging with OEP is ‘complex, personal, contextual and continually negotiated’ (p. 28).
which posits educators as agential and potentially as change agents who are instrumental in transforming educational practice. However, in the context of her research it is also evident that teachers’ agency can be influenced by contextual issues (Cronin, 2017).

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007) is used as the definition of OEP for this enquiry because it encourages a broad set of open practices based on:

‘open technologies that facilitate collaborative, flexible learning and the open sharing of teaching practices that empower educators to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues’ (n.p.).

The above definition of OEP is suitable for this enquiry because it emphasises open sharing practices and the use of open technologies (e.g, social media sites, blogs and wikis). The inclusion of open technologies in this definition is significant because such technologies can support both teacher and student learning and capacity building. The amplification of open technologies signals that OEP need not necessarily focus primarily on OER, but can include other practices facilitated through such technologies (Koseoglu and Bozkurt, 2018), e.g. open sharing practices and digital networking practices.

Open technologies that support digital networking have a lot of potential for language teaching and learning and can enable teachers and learners to benefit from open content and ideas that others have shared (Liu et al., 2013). This is particularly important for freelancers in this enquiry who are often unsupported in their CPD and lack opportunities to engage with other teachers at work. Furthermore, digital networking spaces are conducive to ‘user-centred, participatory and collaborative practices’ (Liu et al., 2013, p.138) and provide opportunities for language learners to participate in designed pedagogical tasks and engage in authentic interactions with other users. It follows that such learning opportunities are invaluable for EFL learners in Switzerland because exposure to English or the chance to practise their communication skills in real-world scenarios beyond lesson time might be limited. However, as Fuchs and Snyder (2013) remind us, for language learners to fully exploit the affordances of digital
networking tools, teachers should not neglect the fact that students require specific skills.

The discussion above shows that conceptualisations and understandings of OEP vary, and that OEP as a research field is still emerging. The OEP definitions reviewed, differ in their emphasis on OER, but concur in their promotion of social engagement through networks, collaborative practices and the use of open technologies to improve teaching and learning experiences for teachers and students. Examining this sample of OEP definitions has illustrated that OEP can be more narrowly defined as OER-based practices, or more broadly in the context of participatory technologies, e.g. Twitter, blogs and wikis (Koseoglu and Bozkurt, 2018).

2.2.3 Benefits of OEP

A potential benefit for freelancers who take part in OER-based practices is that using OER could reduce the cost of educational materials in cases where teachers want to replace or supplement coursebook materials to provide students with resources that are current and authentic (Thoms and Thoms, 2014). Thoms et al. (2018) who surveyed 310 language teachers in the US concur, observing that language teachers find OER ‘more interesting, dynamic, authentic and current’ (p. 16) than commercial coursebooks. The comparison with coursebooks is noteworthy because ELT coursebooks are widely used in contemporary language teaching (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2013) and often criticised for their lack of authentic and current material. This is why academics suggest that language teachers should be encouraged to integrate supplementary materials into their teaching practices (Tomlinson, 2012; Mishran, 2005).

OER are valued for their flexibility which enables different types of adaptation and is therefore perceived as a pedagogical benefit (Belikov and Bodily, 2016). Some studies have observed high levels of adaptation (Perryman and Seal, 2016; Weller et al., 2015) and others different types of adaptation. For instance, Beaven (2018), who explored language teachers’ engagement with the OER lifecycle identified types of adaptation ranging from physical changes to repurposing content. This concurs with de los Arcos et al. (2014) who suggest that
the openness of OER ‘allows a continuum of adaptation to develop’ (p. 14). Thoms et al. (2018) identified the possibility to make adaptations as the top reason for language teachers’ use of OER. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme (2020) who examined language teachers’ practices with OER, report that teachers adapted OER to take ownership of materials and that the range of adaptation varied. The latter was influenced by teachers’ beliefs about language teaching and, in part, by their confidence in their digital skills (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). The flexibility to adapt OER is significant for freelancers because it permits personalisation and localisation of resources to suit students’ language learning needs and to fit different pedagogical approaches.

It is also claimed that OER-based practices can save time in creating resources; improve the quality of content through a cycle of adaptation and sharing (Comas-Quinn and Borthwick, 2015); benefit students by making available a broader range of resources (Jhangiani et al., 2016; Perryman and Seal, 2016), and provide teachers with inspiration for their teaching practices (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Baas et al., 2019; Jhangiani et al., 2016; Perryman and Seal, 2016; de los Arcos et al., 2014).

Freelancers who take part in broader OEP can benefit from practices associated with open technologies which can facilitate the location, curation and sharing of OER (Zourou, 2016; Comas-Quinn and Borthwick, 2015), and support networking practices where teaching expertise can be shared (Wesely, 2013), where personal learning networks can develop (Veletsianos, 2013), and OER can be discovered or mediated (Hegarty, 2015). This is particularly relevant to freelancers who often work alone and might have difficulties connecting with other teachers (Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014), which can hamper opportunities to learn from one another, to share content and engage in collaborative activities.

Apart from the practical benefits noted above and the potential to improve the cultural diversity, authenticity, currency and localisation of content, another strand of OEP research relating to CPD has found that engaging in OEP can have professional development benefits in terms of improving relevant knowledge and digital competencies as well as supporting professional growth.
2.2.4 Learning through OEP

Only a few small-scale studies have explored the potential of learning through OEP in the field of language teaching. Comas-Quinn and Fitzgerald (2013) reported on two Open University (OU) case studies which introduced OER and OEP to language teachers. This study found that tutors benefited from working within a community and receiving support. They observed CPD gains, i.e. skills and knowledge development, and increased confidence, and it was observed that reflection on practice stimulated learning and development (Comas-Quinn and Fitzgerald, 2013).

As part of the Finding a Voice through Open Resources (FAVOR) project in the UK, which was designed to educate and support hourly paid and part-time language tutors as they engaged with OER and OEP, Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett (2014) found that tutors improved their digital literacy and pedagogical skills, capacity to use and create OER, knowledge of technology for language teaching and awareness of CC licensing, their confidence was increased, and feelings of isolation were mitigated. Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett (2014) drew attention to the importance of working within a community where a significant benefit reported by tutors was the 'social and collaborative nature of open working' (p. 176). Engaging in these practices provided opportunities for collaborative reflection and hands-on work resulting in CPD gains (Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014).

As part of a staff development project involving OU language teachers and their networked collaborative engagement with OEP, Gallardo et al. (2017) observed improvements in teachers’ professional practice and confidence. Exposure to other teachers’ work was perceived as motivational, and enabled teachers to compare their work with others which prompted critical self-reflection (Gallardo et al., 2017).

Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme (2020) found that through the process of reuse and adaptation, language teachers learned how to improve OER and integrate them into their online teaching. They reported that processes such as learning by doing, self-reflection, feedback from students, and learning from the practices of other teachers who contributed to the Department of Languages online resource
repository¹, contributed to teachers’ learning (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). Sharing materials in the resource repository enabled language teachers to observe how other teachers developed and adapted OER.

From the discussion and examples above, it would seem that CPD benefits can be amplified through networking activities enacted through open technologies which provide a window into other educators’ teaching practices, enabling teachers to network, interact, draw comparisons and reflect on their teaching practices. In this sense, OEP provide a reference point for comparison, which is useful for freelancers who might not have opportunities to observe other teachers in their practices and/or who seek confirmation about different aspects of their own teaching. This concurs with the view of Mastermann and Wild (2011) who, in their OER impact study, reported that educators can benefit by comparing their OER-based practices to other teachers.

While these studies illustrate the benefits of collaborative learning enabled through OEP, a recognised limitation concerning purported benefits is that language teachers were supported and enacted OEP within closed communities encompassing like-minded educators with a common purpose, which could have exaggerated the benefits. Despite the perceived CPD benefits, Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett (2014) questioned whether participants would continue to engage in OEP because issues such as extra workload and lack of support at work impacted on some tutors’ motivation.

My research offers a unique perspective to these studies above because it explores freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP in their multiple teaching contexts, where support may or may not be available. It is plausible to assume that freelancers identify professionally and interact with particular

¹ The Department of Languages at The Open University, UK, developed the Language Open Resources Repository (LORO) in 2009. LORO is an OER repository for language teaching and learning. The repository is currently in the process of migrating to another platform.
networks and may well receive some professional support from these connections. However, how freelancers choose to interact with these networks will depend on the individual.

Schreurs et al. (2014), who investigated educators’ social learning activities associated with OEP, confirmed that OEP support networking. However, in contrast to the studies above, Schreurs et al. (2014) found that core participation in a network is not a criterion for social learning, and that participation can be enacted in numerous ways. Regarding digital networking practices, studies that have focused more closely on teachers’ use of social networking sites have also reported CPD benefits. For example Davis (2015), who investigated teachers’ perceptions of using Twitter, and in particular #EdChat for CPD, found that engagement with a global network supported knowledge sharing, stimulated reflection and provided meaningful learning opportunities. Zourou (2016) investigated the role of social networking in enabling OEP. Interview data from 18 language teachers showed that the affordances of social networking tools supported access to and dissemination of OER as well as communication and peer learning relating to OEP (Zourou, 2016). Carpenter and Harvey (2019) observed that learning through social networking sites can lead to improvements in pedagogical practices. Malik et al. (2019) reviewed 103 peer-reviewed studies about different stakeholders’ use of Twitter for educational purposes and found strong evidence that Twitter supports networking, CPD, and the sharing of resources, which can lead to ‘improved teaching, learning and collaboration’ (p. 18).

Beyond language teaching, CPD benefits gained through OEP have been recognised in other studies. Findings show that engaging in OEP can enable teachers to keep up to date, learn about new topics and improve their ICT skills (Jhangiani et al., 2016; Perryman and Seal, 2016), and can lead to a positive shift in their mindsets towards aspects of openness such as sharing open content (Karunanayaka and Naidu, 2020). In accordance with findings from language teacher research, opportunities for observation and reflection seem to figure prominently as drivers for knowledge development (Karunanayaka and Naidu, 2020; Baas et al., 2019; Jhangiani et al., 2016; Perryman and Seal, 2016; de los Arcos et al., 2014).
Whilst the summary of benefits presented above seems promising for freelancers, it cannot be accepted uncritically because it is widely recognised that taking part in OEP can be challenging.

2.2.5 Barriers to OEP

It can be concluded from the discussion above that taking part in OEP requires: a cultural shift and change in mindset; considerable engagement with open content and open technologies; an awareness and understanding of OER, CC licences and copyright, and the volition and desire to embrace openness. This suggests that taking part in OEP requires skills and knowledge that are relevant to a particular teaching context. It follows that a lack of adequate skills and knowledge could be a barrier to OEP. These points are discussed in more detail below.

Awareness of OER and CC licensing

Hood and Littlejohn (2017) argue that for educators to make changes to their teaching practices such as engaging with OER and OEP, they need to construct knowledge that is relevant to their specific contexts. Their mixed methods study, i.e. a survey with 521 educators and 30 semi-structured interviews, explored learning through engagement with OER (Hood and Littlejohn, 2017). They found that multiple knowledge areas were constructed, i.e. general and specific conceptual/theoretical knowledge, practical/experiential knowledge, and sociocultural knowledge that is community and workplace based (Hood and Littlejohn, 2017).

Hood and Littlejohn (2017) explain that fundamental to educators making informed decisions about OER and related OEP in their teaching contexts, is a conceptual and theoretical knowledge of OER and licensing frameworks which they note concurs with the first step of Wild’s (2012) OER engagement ladder. Wild’s (2012) model uses the metaphor of a ladder to map levels of engagement with and changes in awareness and understanding of OER as a consequence of educators’ increased engagement with OER (see Figure 2 below).

The model implies that educators undergo a process of change in their behaviour as they progress from piecemeal to embedded use of OER which
encompasses practices such as use, adaptation and sharing of OER, but also ‘advocating OER and open practice’ (Wild, 2012, p. 6.). It is suggested that reflection on the effectiveness of OER and OEP in their teaching contexts can hinder or enable teachers in further engaging in these practices (Wild, 2012). This aligns with Guskey’s (2002) model of teacher change, where it is argued that evidence of improvements in student learning experiences can influence a teacher’s behaviour and lead to changes in their attitudes and beliefs (see section 2.3.3.).

![Figure 2: OER Engagement Ladder (Wild, 2012, p. 4), CC BY.](image)

A lack of awareness and knowledge of OER and CC licensing have been identified as common barriers to the adoption of OER and associated practices in language teaching and other disciplinary fields (Schuwer and Janssen, 2018; Thoms et al., 2018; Thoms and Thoms, 2014; Clements and Pawlowski, 2012). Consistent with Weller et al. (2016), it has been observed that a lack of awareness of OER and CC licensing can lead to OER being confused with non-OER. Belikov and Bodily (2016) in their qualitative analysis of 218 U.S faculties’ perceptions of OER, observed a similar confusion and attributed this to a lack of understanding of OER, but also lack of knowledge, e.g. that OER can be non-digital. And Bass et al. (2019) reported that teachers’ lack of awareness of CC licences was limited in comparison to their awareness of OER and that many treat all digital resources as OER because they are uncertain of what characterises the latter. It follows that a lack of awareness of OER and CC licensing can hinder the intentional adoption of OER and engagement in practices associated with openly licensed resources.
such as sharing materials with an open licence that enables reuse and adaptation. This is significant because non-engagement in this practice alone limits opportunities for diverse end-users to benefit from others’ shared resources and is of particular significance for speciality domains such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) where it can be difficult to locate relevant materials (see section 5.3.1).

These findings support Cox and Trotter’s (2017) claims that awareness of OER and CC licensing are important attributes that can influence OER adoption and related OEP. Another attribute that they identified, which is often reported in OER and OEP literature as a barrier to engaging in OEP is an individual’s capacity which includes technical skills and knowledge (Trotter and Cox, 2016) (see Figure 1, p. 33).

Digital literacy skills

Adequate digital literacies are viewed as ‘critical to open practices of all kinds’ (Beetham et al., 2012, p. 4). Nonetheless, a lack of adequate digital literacy skills is recognised in many studies as a barrier to engagement with OEP (e.g. Baas, 2019; Cronin, 2017). As discussed in section 1.2.1, there are increasing expectations of language teachers to develop their digital competencies. From a language teaching perspective, my understanding of digital literacy skills aligns with Stickler et al. (2020) and Caena and Redecker (2019) who argue that teachers require a broad range of both technological and pedagogical skills with an emphasis on pedagogical knowledge. Stickler et al. (2020) state that the latter is essential if language teachers are to integrate ICTs into their multiple teaching practices more effectively and confidently and in a way that supports student-centred learning.

Therefore, considering the diverse technical skills and pedagogical knowledge required to take part in OEP that are specific to a teaching context, digital literacy in this enquiry is understood as:

‘those capabilities which fit an individual for living, learning and working in a digital society. Digital literacy looks beyond functional IT skills to describe a richer set of digital behaviours, practices and
identities. What it means to be digitally literate changes over time and across contexts, so digital literacies are essentially a set of academic and professional situated practices supported by diverse and changing technologies’ (JISC, 2014, n.p.).

This definition encompasses the following capabilities which can vary depending on an individual’s needs and practices (JISC, 2014):

- media literacy;
- communications and collaboration;
- ICT literacy;
- learning skills in ICT environment;
- digital scholarship;
- information literacy.

As highlighted in JISC’s (2014) definition, capabilities needed will depend on the situated practices of an individual and may change depending on their contexts and types of technologies used. Regarding freelancers and their potential engagement with OEP, it is easy to understand possible challenges that they might experience. For example, discovering and evaluating OER will require information and media literacies. Discovering OER has been identified as a challenge and particularly in specialised domains (Thoms et al., 2018; Belikov and Bodily, 2016; Thoms and Thoms, 2014) which could be problematic for freelancers who work in ESP contexts, such as law. Baas et al. (2019) assert that ‘teachers are not specialists in finding resources’ (p. 8) and that when they do, capacity related issues are a concern. It takes only these few examples to illustrate the complexity of skills and knowledge needed to engage in OEP.

Adapting OER requires ICT literacy, and although adaptation is considered a key benefit of OER, research has shown that lack of ICT skills can hinder educators from engaging in this process (Baas, 2019), as do formats such as PDFs that cannot be edited (Blyth, 2017). Publishing OER in an editable format is promoted as good practice for OER creators and is a requisite if users are to engage fully in Wiley’s (2014) 5R framework. However, in reality this does not always happen (Blyth, 2017).
Sharing practices also require information and ICT literacy. Numerous studies have pointed to the willingness of teachers to share interpersonally, but a reluctance to share on the internet for different reasons. Some examples relate to personal issues such as being unsure about the usefulness of their OER for other users (Beaven, 2018; Van Acker et al., 2014) and worrying about being criticised (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Zourou, 2016). Other reasons for not sharing OER relate to inadequate digital literacy skills and infrastructure (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Zourou, 2016) and indicate a need to address technical barriers in specific contexts. A salient study on sharing practices is Van Acker et al.’s (2014) who investigated the interpersonal and Web-based sharing practices of 1568 teachers in the Netherlands. They found that teachers share more frequently and with greater intention interpersonally as opposed to Web-based sharing and were willing to share if they felt that their resources were valued. The result of sharing OER in interpersonal contexts more often than sharing them on the Web, is that the number of people who can access and reuse these OER is limited (Van Acker et al., 2014).

In order to use participatory tools to network with other teachers, share content and experiences, and benefit from the sharing practices of others, freelancers will need to understand the affordances of different technologies and know how to use them. This requires using ICT literacies, communication and collaboration literacies, and sociocultural knowledge (Hood and Littlejohn, 2017). Engaging with participatory tools necessitates going public and developing an open online identity which means potentially being scrutinised by peers (Nascimbeni and Burgos, 2016). Tur et al. (2020) who explore the concept of becoming an open educator, agree that this process can be troublesome for varying reasons, but notably because it requires a shift in mindset, attitudes and beliefs. In addition to this, Cronin (2017) observed that boundaries can become blurred between educators’ professional and private identities which can make it challenging to balance privacy and openness.

Regarding mindset, it is highly likely that freelancers’ assumptions, values and beliefs about teaching and students’ needs will influence their decision-making regarding OEP. As Hood (2018) points out, it is commonly recognised that changes teachers make to teaching materials are closely associated with their
beliefs about teaching and students’ learning needs, so it is plausible to assume that this also relates to their use of participatory tools in the classroom. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme (2020) concur, finding that the adaptations language teachers made to OER, were closely related to their beliefs about teaching and their students’ learning needs.

One belief that is pervasive in the ELT landscape in Switzerland is that the younger generation have better digital literacy skills than the older generation. It is not unusual to hear discourse around digital natives and digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001a, 2001b) being used to promote the integration of ICTs for language teaching. According to Smith et al. (2020), these labels are pervasive in academic literature more broadly.

Briefly, the terms digital natives and digital immigrants were coined by Prensky (2001a) to distinguish between the supposed technical fluency of the younger generation who grew up in an omnipresent digital environment and culture, and the less sophisticated digital skills of the older generation who are immigrants within this culture. Prensky (2001a) asserted that an educational transformation was necessary to accommodate to the learning needs of digital natives who he claimed, ‘think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors’ (p. 1). Prensky’s (2001a, 2001b) claims, which were not based on empirical evidence (Smith et al., 2020) have since been widely debated and criticised. Recently, Costa et al. (2019) explored the lived experience of 21 older adults when using ICTs and concluded that generational gap arguments such as Prensky’s (2001a, 2001b), do not ‘account for the eclecticism of digital practices and their agents’ (p. 575), which concurs with earlier research (e.g. Bennett et al., 2008; Kennedy et al., 2008).

Assertions about digital natives and digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001a, 2001b) seem to permeate language teaching conferences and workshops in Switzerland and are often used as an argument to persuade teachers to use more ICTs to motivate students and provide learning opportunities that are engaging and authentic. These arguments are also used to persuade teachers to develop professionally by keeping up to date with technology in language teaching. Needless to say, this type of discourse can be problematic. It can cause anxiety if freelancers believe their digital literacy skills are lacking in comparison with
students, and it could lead to some teachers feeling pressured to use participatory tools and OEP without an appropriate pedagogical purpose. This, in turn, could challenge some students digitally and cognitively in classes where learners’ digital skills are on different levels, or are inadequate for the task at hand. Smith et al. (2020) agree and advise that educators should not rely on assumptions about learners’ digital literacies, and should provide training as required.

The discussion in this section shows that freelancers’ adoption of OEP might be challenging because it requires an understanding and awareness of OER and OEP, considerable technical and pedagogical knowledge and skills, and a shift in mindset to work more openly with students and to engage with others in practices such as openly sharing knowledge and content via diverse open technologies.

2.3 CPD

Sections 2.3 and 2.4 discuss the theoretical concepts used to frame this study. First, CPD is defined followed by a summary of what characterises effective CPD. The limitations of formal CPD are reviewed and discussed to establish why there is value in investigating freelancers’ informal learning. Section 2.4 clarifies the concept of informal learning. Then, I discuss Schugurensky’s (2000) tri-part typology of informal learning, Marsick and Watkins’ (2018, 1990) informal and incidental learning theory, sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and learning strategies because these concepts can aid in making sense of freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP.

There is an extensive body of research relating to teacher CPD, which as Furner and McCulla (2019) contend, can be overwhelming because of the diversity of research themes covered, e.g. models of CPD, characteristics of effective CPD, impact and sustainability in improving teacher CPD, teachers’ attitudes and preferences towards CPD, and drivers for teacher change. This is further compounded by the multiplicity of terms which are sometimes used interchangeably, e.g. professional development, professional learning and teacher learning, as well as varying conceptualisations of CPD and its purpose during different phases of teachers’ careers. When I became aware that CPD literature comprised numerous sub-domains that used varying terminology to describe
teachers’ CPD and that these sub-domains intersected with literature on workplace and lifelong learning, I needed to broaden my search terms to locate and synthesise relevant literature.

It should be noted that research into language teachers’ CPD is scant (Stickler and Emke, 2015) which highlights the value of the research in this thesis. Furthermore, the inclusion and critical review of relevant literature from the broader field of teacher learning and development illustrates the potential relevance and applicability of my research to a broader context.

2.3.1 CPD defined

Day (1999) takes an expansive view of CPD and looks beyond what he considered to be the narrow conceptualisations of it at the time, i.e. acquisition of competencies and content knowledge. He argues that CPD includes ‘all natural learning experiences and … conscious and planned activities’ (Day, 1999, p. 4). This takes into consideration different types of learning, i.e. formal, non-formal, informal and incidental learning (see section 2.4). Marsick and Watkins (1990) propose that incidental learning can be a by-product of learning in situ through everyday experiences. Day (1999) argues that this process occurs ‘alone and with others’ (p. 4) emphasising the individual and collaborative nature of CPD which implies that learning is constructed through both individual and social processes. Day (1999) claims that this is how teachers:

‘renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice … through each phase of their teaching lives’ (p. 4).

Day’s (1999) definition emphasises the role of teachers as change agents and the lifelong nature of CPD. The phrase ‘good professional thinking’ is a nod to reflective practice and how it can be developed through the array of CPD processes he describes (Day, 1999).

Moving forwards, Richards and Farrell (2005) argue that professional development means ongoing growth which is consistent with Day’s (1999) view
that CPD is enacted throughout teachers’ careers. They argue that ongoing growth serves to develop teachers’ understanding of themselves and their practices and current developments (Richards and Farrell, 2005). They suggest that CPD can be facilitated through strategies that prompt reflection on various aspects of teachers’ practices (Richards and Farrell, 2005). They further summarise broad categories of teacher learning which include teacher learning as skills development, as a cognitive activity where teachers’ beliefs influence their decision-making, as personal construction where knowledge is viewed as being constructed and, finally, as reflective practice (Richards and Farrell, 2005).

Both definitions contend that CPD is ongoing and entails teachers developing a better understanding of aspects of their teaching practices and of themselves as professionals. Day’s definition (1999) highlights that CPD can be undertaken individually or collaboratively and can occur through engagement in formal, non-formal and informal learning activities. Furthermore, learning might occur incidentally and stem from a teacher’s engagement in their everyday practices, but might not always be recognised as learning by the individual (Day, 1999). Learning that is grounded in a teacher’s everyday experiences points to the situated nature of learning, i.e. it is bound within a specific context. Webster-Wright (2009) argues that understanding how context shapes what and how teachers learn is significant and warrants investigation. She suggests that this knowledge could benefit various stakeholders interested in CPD, e.g. researchers and teacher trainers (Webster-Wright, 2009).

It is commonly agreed that CPD is an important process that does not end with pre-service teacher training (Wolter, 2018; Guskey, 2002; Day, 1999) and assists teachers in keeping up with changing demands in their teaching contexts (Schleicher, 2016). Because teachers are viewed as change agents who are key influencers on student learning (Guskey, 2002; Day, 1999), it is considered crucial to provide meaningful CPD opportunities that are effective and support teachers in learning and developing relevant competencies and knowledge (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) linked to their individual needs (Schleicher, 2016). In the 2016 OECD report on teacher learning and policy reform, it is stressed that involving teachers as ‘active agents’ (Schleicher, 2016, p. 93) in assessing their own practices is an integral part of ongoing and sustainable CPD, and that
encouraging teachers to share expertise is a means of acknowledging their professionalism.

CPD is viewed as a dynamic complex process which can take place in diverse contexts, in numerous formats for different purposes (Kennedy, 2014; Guskey, 2002; Day, 1999), can be mandatory and/or voluntary and broadly relates to the development of teachers’ knowledge, skills and growth as professionals. CPD opportunities are often viewed as interrelated (Desimone, 2009) because the various forms tend to complement each other, e.g. formal, non-formal programmes and activities, informal learning experiences situated in teachers’ daily practices and individuals’ self-directed efforts (Richards and Farrell, 2005).

From an institutional and policy perspective, a link is commonly made between formal CPD programmes and transformations in teachers’ practices and improved student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Schleicher, 2016; Richards and Farrell, 2005). This seemingly linear relationship implies that CPD programmes can drive teacher change and lead to improvements in the quality of teaching and student learning (Kennedy, 2014; Guskey, 2002). However, as discussed in the next section, top-down approaches to CPD are not always effective and numerous factors can contribute to their success or failure.

### 2.3.2 Characteristics of effective CPD

There is a broad consensus concerning what characteristics contribute to effective CPD (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Schleicher, 2016; Desimone, 2009). Desimone’s (2009) summary of effective CPD characteristics is well-cited throughout CPD literature with current figures in Google Scholar showing 4 446 citations. Table 2 below summarises and compares these features that have been drawn from empirically based research spanning decades.
Table 2: Effective CPD characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Effective CPD characteristics</th>
<th>Source of evidence</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darling-Hammond et al. (2017)</td>
<td>• content focused&lt;br&gt;• integrates active learning&lt;br&gt;• supports collaboration&lt;br&gt;• uses models of effective practice&lt;br&gt;• provides coaching and support&lt;br&gt;• offers feedback and reflection&lt;br&gt;• sustainable</td>
<td>Drawn from a synthesis of 35 studies that show a positive relationship between teacher CPD, teacher practice and student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schleicher (2016)</td>
<td>• clear priorities&lt;br&gt;• ongoing support&lt;br&gt;• deals with content pedagogies and practical classroom strategies&lt;br&gt;• actively involves teachers and encourages sharing expertise&lt;br&gt;• provides opportunities to experiment&lt;br&gt;• provides feedback&lt;br&gt;• ongoing and sustainable</td>
<td>Based on comparative analysis of OECD publications from 2005 - 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desimone (2009)</td>
<td>• content focused&lt;br&gt;• integrates active learning&lt;br&gt;• coherent, i.e. aligns with teachers’ knowledge and beliefs&lt;br&gt;• ongoing and sustainable&lt;br&gt;• collective participation</td>
<td>Based on empirical evidence from decades of case studies including experimental work.</td>
</tr>
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Based on the summary above, effective CPD comprises:

- actively involving teachers in the process;
• opportunities for experimentation and collaboration;
• relevant programmes and activities that are meaningful to teachers;
• appropriate feedback enabling teachers to reflect on their practices;
• suitable support.

The fact that CPD should be an ongoing and sustainable process is noted by all authors as contributing to its effectiveness. This is inevitably reliant on institutional support and a teacher’s interest and motivation. The latter is particularly relevant in the case of freelancers, who lack support and are accountable for their CPD. Mann (2005), in his review of language teachers’ CPD, emphasises that bottom-up approaches that comprise activities such as exploration and reflection on classroom practices, as well as opportunities to collaborate with other teachers, are core to teacher development and should be encouraged. A recent mixed methods study (Bachtiar, 2020) in Indonesia investigating characteristics of effective CPD from the perspective of EFL teachers, found that good quality CPD which aligned with teachers’ needs, facilitated their skills and knowledge development, and encouraged collaboration. Consistent with the summary in Table 2, the author suggested actively involving teachers in the design and implementation of CPD activities to optimise its effectiveness and benefits (Bachtiar, 2020).

It can be concluded from this brief overview of effective characteristics of CPD, that both top-down and bottom-up approaches to CPD should actively involve teachers in the process, and encourage experimentation and reflection on their classroom practices so that learning opportunities are meaningful and sustainable. However, as discussed in the following section, formal CPD approaches are often considered ineffective which has prompted a call for more research into teachers’ informal learning.

2.3.3 Limitations of formal CPD

In much the same way as it does for freelancers, the precarity of teachers’ working conditions across diverse teaching sectors impacts on numerous factors in the workplace that hinder teachers’ access to formal CPD activities (Breshears,
To understand the justification for my line of enquiry and its value, it is useful to explore a snapshot of the critique of formal approaches to CPD because this has played a part in sparking a call for research into informal CPD opportunities that, it has been argued, are more authentic and meaningful to teachers (Evans, 2018; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Despite the recognition that formal CPD approaches have become more interactive and flexible (Webster-Wright, 2009), programmes and workshops are often critiqued for their limitations. Discourse relating to the ‘ad hoc approach’ (Hitch et al., 2018, p. 286) of formal programmes is pervasive in the CPD literature contending that they deliver ‘episodic updates of information’ (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 703) in the form of ‘one-size-fits-all’ (Patton et al., 2015, p. 27) events that, it is claimed, lack relevance and do not necessarily meet teachers’ learning needs (McElearney et al., 2019). As an example, Stickler and Emke (2015), in their small-scale exploratory study of freelance language teachers’ ICT use and CPD needs, found that participants were interested in CPD but courses fell short of meeting their needs. They identified a dissonance between institutional training expectations and CPD offerings, stating that the latter conflicted with the needs of freelancers (Stickler and Emke, 2015). The tension between formal CPD offerings and the individual learning requirements of teachers is frequently cited as a limitation of this type of CPD because teachers’ preferences for meaningful development activities are not met (McElearney et al., 2019; Su et al., 2017).

Such critique suggests that despite recommendations to involve teachers actively in the decision-making process, which would aid in tailoring programmes to suit their needs (Schleicher, 2016), this is largely being ignored. This line of thought has implications in the light of Kennedy’s (2014) models of CPD which illustrate that if CPD is to be transformative, the approaches taken should be more democratic and support teacher agency as opposed to transmissive and prescriptive because such approaches fail to engage teachers in the process. Formal CPD is also criticised because it often occurs outside the classroom, and is therefore decontextualised, which Webster-Wright (2009) argues, ignores ‘the value of ongoing and situated learning’ (p. 703) where context plays an integral role in shaping what is learned and how (Lave and Wenger, 1991) as teachers engage in authentic activities relevant to their teaching practices.
This brief summary of formal CPD critique suggests that some institutions fail to recognise what characterises effective CPD (as exemplified in Table 2 above), which models of CPD are appropriate for their context, and their relevance in supporting teachers’ needs. It also points to a lack of understanding about which conditions facilitate teacher CPD and how and why this leads to change in the classroom.

Guskey (2002) argues that a range of factors can contribute to the failure of formal CPD programmes. He suggests that two important points are not considered: ‘(1) what motivates teachers to engage in professional development, and (2) the process by which change in teachers typically occurs’ (Guskey, 2002, p. 382). He claims that what initiates change in teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and practices does not necessarily stem directly from the CPD activity, but is a result of a teacher’s ‘experience of successful implementation’ (Guskey, 2002, p. 383) evidenced through improved ‘learning outcomes of their students’ (p. 384), which also encompasses changes in student behaviour and motivation. Therefore, if teachers recognise improvements in student learning, behaviour or motivation, then this is what acts as a catalyst for change in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs and can result in enduring changes (Guskey, 2002). Guskey (2002) suggests that through a process of trial and error, teachers will retain what they believe is working and disregard what is not contributing to student learning.

This model of teacher change inherently assumes that socially situated experiential learning can drive teacher change and be more sustainable and effective (Guskey, 2002) than formal CPD events that are disconnected from practice. It places teachers in a more agentic role, positioning them as professionals who have the autonomy to act and react in context when they see evidence that something they have used is beneficial to student learning and/or behaviour and motivation. This teacher change model offers an alternative to conceptualisations of teacher change that are based on the premise that participation in a CPD event acts as a driver for change in teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and practices.

While formal CPD clearly has its place, it is evident from the above critique that if teachers are not actively involved in the process of identifying their developmental needs and preferences, and are not provided with contextual
learning opportunities that support their agency and empower them to transform their practices, then structured learning opportunities might not be effective. This suggests that there is value in investigating alternatives to these approaches which are authentic, context-based and more meaningful. These types of learning opportunities have the potential to be more transformative in terms of teacher change and contribution to improved student learning. These alternative opportunities are particularly relevant for freelancers, who, as noted earlier, often face challenges concerning access to CPD due to the precarity of their working conditions.

Over a decade ago, Webster-Wright (2009) in her critique of the ineffectiveness of formal CPD programmes argued that the research field would benefit from investigating how professionals learn in their everyday practices as they engage in authentic experiences, which acknowledges the socially situated nature of learning and takes into consideration contextual influences that can potentially shape what is learned and how. This suggests that research is needed that investigates the interrelated nature of context, professional practices and authentic learning in order to deepen understanding of this process and how teachers can be supported. More recently, Evans (2018) argued that there was a need for research that explored informal and implicit learning processes so that the research gap identified by Webster-Wright could be addressed. Such research could move the CPD field forward and contribute to a knowledge base about how learning occurs in these contexts and what conditions facilitate it (Evans, 2018). Kennedy (2014), reflecting on the models of CPD that she developed in 2005 and their positioning in relation to more current literature, criticised the field for being ‘fragmented and … under-theorised’ (p. 689) with research gaps. The latter is particularly evident concerning freelance language teachers’ CPD and informal CPD opportunities.

Exploring language teaching freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP in their professional practices is, therefore, justified and of value because it aids in addressing a research gap in the CPD domain, and also contributes to a growing knowledge base relating to engagement with and learning through OER/OEP. Furthermore, it will have a broader application and contribute to the body of literature on hourly paid teachers in other disciplines.
2.4 Types of learning

To understand the concept of informal learning and how it fits in the context of my research, it is useful to distinguish it from formal and non-formal learning by comparing differences in their characteristics. Clarification is warranted because the three types of learning are not always defined consistently in learning-related literature and the terms non-formal and informal learning are sometimes used interchangeably (Malcolm et al., 2003).

In an effort to foreground the value of informal and non-formal learning to improve social inclusion in the labour market, the European Commission (2000) characterised formal, non-formal and informal learning as below:

- **Formal learning** occurs within ‘educational settings and institutes’ and results in ‘recognised diplomas and qualifications’.
- **Non-formal learning** ‘takes place alongside mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalised certificates’. It can occur in workplaces and organisations such as clubs and associations and be provided to ‘complement formal systems’.
- **Informal learning** occurs in everyday life, is not necessarily intentional and might ‘not be recognised … by individuals as contributing to their knowledge and skills’.

(European Commission, 2000, p. 8).

Based on this overview, formal learning is institutionalised, structured, and formally assessed, leading to certificates and diplomas that enable learners to enter the workforce. Eraut (2000) concurs, stating that formal learning is broadly characterised by any one of the following features: presence of a teacher, being an organised event, adhering to a ‘prescribed learning framework’, having an ‘external specification of outcomes’, and resulting in an ‘award of qualifications or credit’ (p. 114).

Non-formal learning can include an extensive range of courses and learning contexts, involve tutors, complement formal learning and be validated by a certificate of attendance (Schugurensky, 2000). Non-formal learning tends to be
voluntary, usually short-term, and more flexible and less structured than formal learning (Merriam et al., 2007; Schugurensky, 2000).

Informal learning on the other hand, is embedded in everyday lives and might not be recognised as learning. Eraut (2004) likens informal learning to experiential learning, and argues that it affords the learner greater agency but is largely invisible and taken for granted, and individuals might be unaware of it. He places learning along a continuum of formality, and characterises informal learning as ‘implicit, unintended, opportunistic … unstructured’ (Eraut, 2004, p. 250) and without a teacher. Informal learning can include individual and social learning, and be additive, building on existing knowledge and values, or transformative, challenging assumptions and values and acting as a catalyst for change (Schugurensky, 2000).

Although it is widely acknowledged that formal, non-formal and informal learning can be distinguished by their characteristics, it has also been observed that overlaps can occur and that the boundaries between the categories of learning are not as distinct as their features might suggest (Merriam et al., 2007). For example, Schugurensky (2000) explains that ‘informal learning can take place inside formal and non-formal educational institutions’ (p. 2). However, what is learned informally in this instance would not be part of the ‘intended goals of the explicit curriculum’ (p. 2), but would be unintended and incidental to the activity that an individual was performing. In a similar vein, Eraut (2004) points to the pervasive nature of informal learning, arguing that it occurs ‘in a much wider variety of settings than formal education and training’ (p. 247). Marsick and Neaman (2018) concur, claiming that informal learning is ubiquitous and occurs ‘naturally in the workplace’ (p. 53).

2.4.1 Informal learning

To clarify the concept of informal learning for research and policymaking, Schugurensky (2000) proposed a tri-part typology which identified three forms of informal learning (i.e. self-directed learning; incidental learning; and socialisation, which he also describes as tacit learning), and suggested two criteria which help to distinguish them: intentionality and consciousness. The former refers to learning intention and the latter to awareness of learning. He locates the three forms of
informal learning along a continuum with self-directed learning at one end, and socialisation (tacit learning) at the other (Schugurensky, 2000).

According to Schugurensky’s (2000) framework, self-directed learning is intentional and conscious. In the context of this enquiry, an example of self-directed learning could be a freelancer who follows up on a link openly shared on social media and purposively does further research on the topic. This could include consulting books and diverse websites for further information. Incidental learning is characterised as unintentional and conscious (Schugurensky, 2000). An example of incidental learning could be a freelancer taking part in a social media discussion and learning about something unrelated to the topic and then recognising later that they had learned something new. In this instance, what was learned incidentally would have been unintentional, but the individual recognised that they had learned something from the experience. Socialisation (tacit learning), is considered unintentional and unconscious, so it occurs through daily experiences where new skills, values and behaviours become internalised but are not recognised as such. This could happen as freelancers engage in different practices associated with OEP, e.g. through digital networking practices, which prompt a gradual change in their beliefs about teaching or an aspect of their teaching practice, without the individual being aware that they have learned something new, or developed additional skills from these experiences. Schugurensky (2000) adds that in the case of socialisation, it is possible that ‘retrospective recognition’ (p. 5) of learning could occur. In this case, it is plausible that during the research interviews for this study, questions and probes about freelancers’ learning through OEP might have stimulated awareness of prior learning or skills development.

In the course of a freelancer’s career, their approaches to CPD will probably vary in the level of formality, structure and learning intention based on what is relevant to a teacher’s needs (Livingston, 2014). My research focuses on informal learning through OEP, so the categories incidental learning and socialisation as described by Schugurensky (2000) could possibly be triggered by learning experiences generated through activities that are connected to freelancers’ everyday teaching practices. It is also plausible that freelancers’ engagement with OEP might act as a catalyst for self-directed learning. Therefore, Schugurensky’s
(2000) tri-part taxonomy of informal learning can aid in determining and understanding the types of informal learning that might be occurring as freelancers take part in OEP, whether this is grounded in individual or social experiences relating to their teaching practices.

I am interested in understanding how freelancers learn and develop new knowledge and/or skills (RQ 3). This means enquiring into the types of learning processes (e.g. reflection or learning by doing) that might contribute to their informal learning. A better understanding of these processes will provide deeper insight into freelancers’ learning as they take part in OEP. Understanding what acts as a catalyst for learning and the processes that contribute to freelancers’ learning will benefit diverse stakeholders who are interested in teacher training and development and improving the design and effectiveness of CPD programmes and events.

In this context, informal and incidental learning theory (Marsick and Watkins, 2018, 1990) can be useful as a theoretical lens to make sense of freelancers' interpretations of their learning through OEP.

2.4.2 Informal and incidental learning theory

There is value in grounding freelancers' learning in a theoretical framework. This can assist in making sense of and understanding what and how freelancers learn informally through their OEP, as well as aiding with the interpretation of the research findings of the study reported here.

Marsick and Watkins’ (1990) initial model of informal and incidental learning focused on individual agency and provided a way of understanding how adults learned informally through everyday experiences in their workplaces. Their original model was informed by numerous well-known theorists who have been noted for their theoretical contributions relating to reflection and learning through experience (e.g. Kolb, 1984; Argyris and Schön, 1974; Dewey, 1938). As such, reflection and experience-based learning are key tenets of Marsick and Watkins’ (1990) cyclical model of informal and incidental learning. They reconceptualised their model in reaction to a growing body of empirical research on informal learning and because of technological developments, which opened up new ways for individuals to
network and engage in participatory practices beyond physical workplaces (Watkins et al., 2018). Marsick and Watkins’ (2018) view of informal learning shifted to encompass a broader sociocultural perspective (see section 2.4.3) in which social learning and contextual influences were considered integral to an individual’s learning. This epistemological shift is significant because it highlights the highly contextual and interrelated nature of informal learning as individuals interact with resources and people in their working environment, including social learning opportunities mediated through open technologies. Marsick and Watkins (2018) define informal learning as organic and ubiquitous, can vary in its intentionality and structure and can include self-directed learning and networking. By contrast, incidental learning is defined as unintentional, ‘largely tacit and unobservable’ (Marsick et al., 2013, p. 12) and an individual’s awareness or consciousness of learning can vary.

Similar to Schugurensky’s (2000) tri-part typology of informal learning, Marsick and Watkins (2018) use intentionality and consciousness of learning as criteria to determine whether an individual is engaging in more intentional types of learning embodied within informal learning, or learning that is unintentional, i.e. incidental learning. Their theoretical model proposes that learning through daily experiences is triggered by a need or challenge that stems from the workplace (Marsick and Watkins, 2018). To resolve the issue, an individual frames and interprets the situation by drawing on prior experiences and knowledge, considers alternatives, takes a course of action, and assesses the consequences of their actions. Reflection is viewed as integral to meaning-making and the learning process. Marsick et al. (2013) argue that reflection may or may not be conscious and explicit, but using reflection more consciousness can benefit incidental learning because it can raise an individual’s level of awareness and attention to the issues at hand, which in turn, might prompt them to frame the situation from a different perspective and take another course of action. Reflecting consciously on the experience can aid an individual make sense of and learn from the situation, and potentially, new knowledge can be used to inform a similar experience (Marsick et al., 2013).

Although the model is presented as a cycle, Marsick et al. (2013) contend that in reality the process of informal learning is non-linear, dynamic and iterative;
‘contains learners in an interaction with self, one another, and the environment’ (p. 10); is individual and social, and engages ‘reflection in action as well as on action’ (p. 10). The iterative nature of informal learning suggests a back and forth movement as individuals draw on prior experiences to inform new ones and build on existing knowledge. The notion of a continuity of experience builds on the works of Dewey (1938) who observed that ‘every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after’ (p. 35). This implies that individuals continually make connections with past experiences to inform future experiences, which suggests that what they have learned in prior situations can increase their understanding and aid in dealing with new situations.

Despite this, Dewey (1938) cautions that not all experiences are educative and can in fact mis-educate and lead to the development of undesirable qualities, i.e. values, attitudes and beliefs, that can impact on an individual’s future development. Following a similar sort of train of thought, Marsick and Watkins (2018) claim that informal learning might not always be effective. They suggest that an individual’s capacity to carry out a task successfully and learn from the experience could be hindered by, for example, their interpretation of the situation, lack of relevant resources and lack of knowledge or skills (Marsick and Watkins, 2018). Referring to language teachers, Mann and Walsh (2017) contend that the quality of learning through interactions with peers or experienced teachers will inevitably be influenced by the many factors underpinning an interaction, e.g. an individual’s ability to engage with the environment and interpret and make sense of the situation.

Bringing together the literature discussed above, informal learning in this thesis is viewed as learning that results from the research participants’ engagement with OEP in various contexts. Participants’ informal learning through OEP can be an individual process or occur in interaction with others (e.g. teachers and students) or with objects (e.g. OER and open technologies) (Marsick et al., 2013). It can vary in its level of intentionality and consciousness, and participants might be unaware that they have developed new knowledge and skills (Marsick and Watkins, 2018; Schugurensky, 2000). By contrast, incidental learning is viewed as mostly tacit and unintentional, but participants might become aware of it
through retrospective reflection, e.g. during the research interview process (Marsick and Watkins, 2018; Schugurensky, 2000). The learning outcomes of participants’ informal and incidental learning through OEP might not always be effective or predictable (Marsick and Watkins, 2018; Mann and Walsh, 2017).

2.4.3 Sociocultural theory

In this thesis, freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP is underpinned by a sociocultural perspective. Sociocultural theory stems from Vygotsky (1978) and views a person’s development as inherently situated in a sociocultural and historical context (Wertsch, 1991). This theoretical perspective emphasises the dynamic nature of social learning and the significance that social interaction plays on an individual’s cognitive development within a specific context (Vygotsky, 1978). Although Vygotsky (1978) focused on children’s development, central concepts of his work are relevant to adult education and are increasingly being theorised in connection with language teachers’ CPD (e.g. Mirzaee and Aliakbari, 2017; Shabani, 2016) and their reflective practice (Mann and Walsh, 2017). A key tenet of Vygotsky’s (1978) theory relevant to this thesis is the notion that an individual’s development is socially and culturally mediated through the use of symbols and tools (e.g. language and writing) which aid an individual in making sense of and navigating their environment. Ontologically, the concept of mediation locates humans as ‘mediated beings’ (Lantolf, 2006, p. 69), whereby the ‘social and the individual mutually shape each other’ (Daniels, 2015, p. 34). From a sociocultural perspective, therefore, freelancers in this thesis are viewed not as passive recipients of influences emanating from their multiple teaching contexts, but as reciprocally active in shaping their contexts through the process of mediation (Eun, 2019). This highlights the complex, relational and mediated nature of learning as freelancers interact with individuals (e.g. learners) and objects (e.g. teaching resources and technologies) in their varying sociocultural contexts.

Another Vygotskian (1978) concept that is relevant to freelancers’ CPD is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). This refers to the distance between the developmental level where a child can achieve a task independently and the potential developmental level where support is needed from a more knowledgeable other, e.g. parent or peer (Vygotsky, 1978). In this enquiry, freelancers’ informal learning could potentially be supported and developed by
learning from peers or more experienced teachers who openly share examples of their teaching practices on the internet. Opportunities for learning through OEP in these contexts, could be mediated through technologies that enable synchronous and asynchronous dialogue, but also through objects where teaching expertise can be shared, e.g. OER and blogs (Comas-Quinn and Borthwick, 2015). This concept (ZPD) is echoed in learning theories such as Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning theory, which emphasises the situated and social nature of learning in a community that has a shared understanding of a particular practice, e.g. teaching. In essence, Lave and Wenger (1991) situate learning within social practices where less competent members of a particular practice learn from more competent members. In their view, learning and identity development is mediated through the process of legitimate peripheral participation in a specific community (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

2.4.4 Learning strategies

Marsick and Neaman (2018) observe that diverse strategies can contribute to how individuals learn informally, e.g. learning by trial and error, reflection and observation. Learning opportunities triggered by freelancers’ engagement with OEP could potentially include these strategies.

Reflection and the notion of reflective practice are recognised as an important and desired element of teacher education and teachers’ ongoing CPD (Mann and Walsh, 2017; Farrell, 2015). Dewey (1938) and Schön (1983) are widely recognised as seminal contributors to the concepts of learning through reflection and the reflective practitioner. Dewey (1933) described reflection as purposeful thinking that involves ‘turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration’ (p. 3), which implies focused, systematic reflection.

The notion of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action is primarily attributed to Schön (1983). Reflection-in-action, is the process whereby professionals think on their feet and improvise, which means responding to the situation at hand (Schön, 1983). This type of reflection is intuitive and context-bound and can influence decision-making in response to the immediate situation. Day (1999) criticises reflection-in-action, arguing that the process is temporally
and contextually constrained and might not lead to deeper reflection. A possible countercriticism to this argument is that if teachers are prompted to reflect on a particular aspect of their teaching practice after an event, then this might indeed lead to change or contribute to their CPD. Schön (1983) referred to this process as reflection-on-action, and suggested that it can lead teachers to have an increased understanding of their teaching practices and student learning, because problematising aspects of their teaching in this way can serve as a catalyst for practitioners to think about a phenomenon from a different perspective. The process of noticing, framing and reflecting on experiences, can prompt teachers to question their assumptions and beliefs which can aid them develop new understandings of their teaching practices (Schön, 1983). Making sense of and deriving meaning from a particular teaching situation through the process of reflection, can lead to change in a practitioner’s teaching practices and contribute to their CPD (Schön, 1983).

Reflection-on-action is retrospective and suggests a critical evaluation and assessment of a prior professional situation; it can also occur in engagement with others, e.g. through dialogue, which can open up further learning opportunities (Day, 1999). In the case of freelancers, there may not be an opportunity to discuss aspects of their teaching with others in their immediate workplace/s; however, reflection-on-action could potentially be supported through digital networking practices that enable teachers to enter into synchronous or asynchronous discussions.

Comas-Quinn and Borthwick (2015) suggest that taking part in OEP provides language teachers with a broad range of opportunities for ‘reflective and evaluative activities’ (p. 103) that are significant for their CPD. For example, they explain that the process of selecting and adapting OER requires a teacher to think about their teaching contexts and their students’ language learning needs and provides an opportunity to evaluate other teachers’ resources and learn from their practices (Comas-Quinn and Borthwick, 2015). Therefore, it is possible that the need to select and adapt an OER for a teaching context could act as a trigger for informal learning by prompting a teacher to draw on their knowledge about teaching to frame the situation and reflect on what action they should take to provide their students with a relevant resource. Adapting an OER might involve
learning through trial and error, and using the resource with students could prompt further reflection whether that be, reflection-in or reflection-on-action. And, as discussed in section 2.2.4, taking part in OEP can provide opportunities for freelancers to compare their work with others and learn through observation, evaluation and reflection (Gallardo et al., 2017; Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014; Comas-Quinn and Fitzgerald, 2013).

Therefore, the learning strategies identified by Marsick and Neaman (2018) as contributing to an individual’s informal learning, could potentially be stimulated as freelancers engage with OEP. However, as discussed, learning might not always be effective due to multiple contextual and agential issues that can hinder or impact on the quality of informal learning (Marsick and Watkins, 2018; Mann and Walsh, 2017).

In summary, Marsick and Watkins’ (2018) model of informal learning theory can be useful as a theoretical lens through which to understand how and what freelancers learn through their engagement with OEP, and can aid with the interpretation of my research findings. Their reconceptualised model (Marsick and Watkins, 2018) takes a sociocultural perspective which can be valuable in the context of this enquiry because it situates freelancers’ teaching practices and learning within a specific social and cultural context. It follows that numerous issues in the workplace, including political, cultural and social norms, can influence a teacher’s capacity to engage in certain teaching practices and to learn through these experiences (Furner and McCulla, 2019; Boud and Hager, 2012). Therefore, a sociocultural perspective means that freelancers’ decision-making and actions with regard to OEP, will be based on and shaped by a multitude of complex and interrelated issues within their teaching contexts as they interact with their environment, e.g. beliefs about language teaching, prior teaching/learning experiences, their personal and professional knowledge, students’ learning needs, availability of infrastructure, and workplace culture and policy (Borg, 2003). In this sense, it is not only structural issues in a teaching context and perhaps the broader ELT landscape that might afford or hinder freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP, but agential issues stemming from freelancers themselves. For example, a freelancer’s perceived level of digital literacy skills might either afford or hinder potential learning opportunities mediated through
open technologies which, in turn, could support or hamper opportunities for peer learning. In an attempt to understand freelancers’ interpretations of their learning, Schugurensky’s (2000) tri-part typology of informal learning can aid in determining and understanding the types of informal learning that freelancers describe and their interpretations of this learning.

It has been argued that informal learning is challenging to research, because by its very nature it is embedded in daily routines and processes and may not be recognised by individuals as learning due to a lack of awareness of the development of new knowledge or skills (Marsick and Neaman, 2018; Eraut, 2004). This had the potential to cause problems in this enquiry. However, as discussed above, it is possible that freelancers’ awareness of their learning and the processes that contributed to their CPD might have been stimulated retrospectively (Schugurensky, 2000) during the research interviews. This accords with Schön (1983) who theorised that practitioners can surface tacit knowledge through the process of reflection.

2.5 Summary

In comparison with the few studies that have investigated language teachers’ learning through OEP, this study takes a more holistic approach by investigating freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP in their multiple teaching contexts. This enquiry expands on previous studies by exploring what types of OEP act as a catalyst for learning and how teachers use the knowledge and skills gained. The research focus is on freelancers’ OER-based practices including their use of open technologies which can support both OER-based practices and broader OEP.

This chapter began by providing definitions of the concepts OER and OEP for this enquiry. I explained that UNESCO’s (2012) definition of OER is relevant because it includes OER in digital and non-digital format and in any medium, and supports a range of OER-based practices that can enable freelancers to not only supplement ELT coursebook materials but adapt resources so that they are more meaningful for learners. The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007) was selected as a definition of OEP because it encourages a broad set of OEP that are not necessarily inclusive of OER. The inclusion of open technologies and the
emphasis on open sharing practices can aid freelancers provide learners with more interactive and authentic learning opportunities. Similarly, such technologies can support freelancers’ participatory practices such as digital networking and enable them to benefit from the sharing practices of others which can contribute to their CPD.

The literature reviewed in this chapter has outlined many benefits that can be gained from taking part in OEP which could assist freelancers in their teaching practices and contribute to their CPD. However, as discussed, taking part in such practices can be challenging. Cox and Trotter (2017) argue that specific attributes are essential for OER adoption which may or may not be relevant to freelancers in this enquiry. The findings from other literature discussed in this chapter suggest that engaging with OEP requires relevant digital literacy skills and knowledge, an awareness and understanding of OER and CC licences, access to appropriate digital infrastructure and a cultural shift in mindset to embrace openness. Therefore, freelancers’ engagement with OEP in this enquiry might be constrained by various structural and agential issues.

I clarified the concept CPD and drew attention to the acknowledged limitations of formal CPD and tensions that freelancers can experience concerning learning opportunities at work due to the precarious nature of their working conditions. I argued that an alternative approach to formalised CPD activities was needed that was more meaningful and supported freelancers in their CPD. Teachers’ informal learning was identified as a research gap that warranted investigation.

As part of the conceptual framework, Schugurensky’s (2000) tri-part typology of informal learning, Marsick and Watkins’ (2018) informal and incidental learning theory, and sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) were discussed. Their usefulness was justified in terms of understanding and interpreting freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP.

Chapter three discusses the research methodology and methods used to generate data about freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP and so aid in answering the research questions.
Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical perspectives underpinning my enquiry, the choice of research paradigm and methodological approach, and the ethical considerations that were addressed. I describe and discuss the methods used to recruit participants, generate and analyse data and explain how procedures were operationalised. The chapter concludes with a description of my pilot study which preceded this enquiry. I also discuss the lessons learned from the pilot study and how they informed this study. An overview of the RQs and research design is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of research design.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative case study approach: Interpretivist paradigm</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research questions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ 1a: Are freelance English language teachers taking part in OEP and if so, what are these practices?</td>
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<td>RQ 1b: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, why do they take part in these practices?</td>
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<td>RQ 2: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, what knowledge and skills do they learn and develop?</td>
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<td>RQ 3: If freelance English language teachers develop knowledge and skills from taking part in OEP, how do they learn and develop such knowledge and skills?</td>
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<td><strong>Theoretical perspectives</strong></td>
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<td>- relativist ontology</td>
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<td>- constructivist epistemology</td>
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<td><strong>Methodological approach and methods</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Case study approach</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Data generation:</strong></td>
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<td>- online survey (45 respondents)</td>
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<td>- semi-structured interviews (15 participants)</td>
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<td><strong>Sampling strategy:</strong></td>
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<td>- criterion-based purposive sampling</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data analysis:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Theoretical perspectives

As part of maintaining methodological rigour and trustworthiness, it is important to justify which methodologies and methods are considered suitable for an enquiry and how they aid researchers in achieving their research aims (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Briefly, methodology means the framework used to inform a researcher’s decision-making in relation to research methods (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Crotty, 2003). Methods are strategies and techniques used for research procedures such as participant recruitment, data generation and analysis (Robson and McCarten, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

It is widely accepted that a researcher’s ontological and epistemological perspectives inform their choice of methodologies and methods (e.g. Robson and McCartan, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Crotty, 2003). Therefore, clarifying these theoretical perspectives is important because it is a means of acknowledging the foundation and trajectory of an enquiry, and justifying to readers why and how decisions were taken during each phase (Maxwell, 2013; Crotty, 2003).

Ontology is about the study of being and how we experience and understand reality (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2013). A realist ontology, for example, assumes that reality exists external to individuals and can be observed and measured (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). A relativist ontology acknowledges multiple realities that are socially constructed (Cohen et al., 2007). Social constructions of reality are based on a person’s subjective interpretations of their experiences as they interact with objects and other people in specific contexts (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013).

Epistemology is a theory of knowledge, so epistemological questions relate to the bases of knowledge, and how it can be acquired and transmitted (Cohen et al., 2007). A researcher will need to think about epistemological questions such as what knowledge is, whether meaning already exists, whether it is constructed or imposed on something (Crotty, 2003), and how knowledge can be accessed. These types of questions inevitably inform a researcher’s decisions about the suitability of research methods (Crotty, 2003). Therefore, adopting a specific ontological and epistemological perspective provides the foundation from which informed decisions can be made about how an enquiry is framed, designed,
operationalised and reported (Robson and McCarten, 2016; Crotty, 2003). A researcher’s theoretical perspectives also shape how they decide to interact with participants in an enquiry (Creswell, 2013). In practice, adopting a specific ontological and epistemological perspective means viewing an enquiry through a worldview which is commonly called a paradigm (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

My enquiry aimed to generate data that would aid in understanding what OEP freelancers take part in and why, as well as how and what they learn and develop by taking part in these practices. Furner and McCulla (2019) observe that the teaching context plays a key role in shaping what teachers do and how they develop. Because freelancers often teach in multiple contexts, their engagement with OEP and subjective interpretations of their experiences will most probably be shaped by various contextual influences. The assumption is that freelancers’ meanings will be multiple and varied which is suited to a relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology because this perspective acknowledges multiple realities and the social construction of knowledge. This theoretical perspective underpins a qualitative interpretivist paradigm which is discussed in the following section.

3.1.1 Interpretivist paradigm

A qualitative interpretivist paradigm inherently assumes that knowledge is subjective and that multiple realities are socially constructed, and hence meanings derived from these realities will be interpreted differently (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Key to interpretivism is understanding participants’ interpretations and sense-making of their realities in a specific context. Crotty (2003) argues that individuals’ interpretations are ‘culturally derived and historically situated’ (p. 67).

The premise underpinning my research was that freelancers would be taking part in different types of OEP for individual purposes and that what and how they learned through practices associated with OEP would be interpreted by them in multiple ways. I was conscious that freelancers might not be aware that they were engaging in OER-based practices, e.g. unintentional use of OER. Further, I assumed that the way in which freelancers derived meaning from OEP in their teaching contexts would be based on their values and beliefs about teaching and
learning and their professional motives. These issues are inevitably shaped by multifarious cultural, contextual and historical factors (Crotty, 2003), which highlights the complexity of meaning-making.

Accessing freelancers’ subjective accounts necessitated choosing methods to generate data that captured these nuances, enabled me to interact with participants and acknowledged my key role in the meaning-making process. In general, qualitative research accepts the central role that researchers play in processes such as data generation and analysis (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2013). As such, it is recognised that a researcher’s views, beliefs and interests are brought into an enquiry (Mann, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2013). One acknowledged limitation resulting from a researcher assuming a central role is that their biases can influence their research (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). This can be mitigated by being reflexive and identifying and reporting biases as well as being transparent about all aspects of the research process. However, as Simon’s (2009) cautions, qualitative research is subjective, so being reflexive is not about attempting to eliminate subjectivity, but acknowledging how a researcher’s beliefs and values have impacted their research. The way in which this is handled can contribute to a researcher’s credibility and the trustworthiness and quality of their enquiry (Simons, 2009).

Understanding freelancers’ multiple perspectives would not have been possible had I chosen to frame my research within a positivist paradigm. Positivism is associated with a realist ontology, i.e. the notion of a single external reality that is stable, and an objectivist epistemology (Robson and McCartan, 2016; Crotty, 2003). This perspective assumes that knowledge is to some extent observable, can be explained, measured and generalised by means of statistical techniques and causal relationships, and the researcher’s role is detached from the subject (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). It seeks to test theory and verify hypotheses through deductive means (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995) which does not align with research aims that inductively seek multiple perspectives such as mine.

A qualitative interpretivist paradigm is better suited to framing my research because it aligns with my theoretical perspective and supports my research aim to understand freelancers’ multiple interpretations of their engagement with OEP. It
also acknowledges my central role in the enquiry and the influence this can have on how participants’ meanings are negotiated, analysed, interpreted and reported.

Interpretivism has been critiqued for its tendency to accept things at face value and be uncritical (Crotty, 2003). Although I played a central role in generating, analysing and interpreting data and linking freelancers’ interpretations of their OEP to relevant literature, I sought to foreground freelancers’ interpretations and in so doing, adopted a reflexive, interrogative and questioning role (Mann, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2013). Therefore, while using an interpretative framework, my stance was critical and reflexive throughout my enquiry.

3.2 Research design

There are numerous qualitative research approaches, e.g. ethnography, phenomenology, action research and case study, but they differ in their research focus. Because the focus impacts on the research design, it is neccessary to choose an approach that aligns with the research aims and its underlying theoretical perspective (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). As illustrated in Table 3 above, my research focus was on understanding what OEP freelancers were taking part in and why, and what and how they learned from engaging in these practices.

Had I focused on cultural aspects that impacted on freelancers’ behaviour regarding OEP, e.g. workplace culture, then an ethnographic approach with its roots stemming from anthropology (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) would have been appropriate. Pragmatically, an ethnographic enquiry would have been challenging because participant observation and site immersion play a central role in data collection (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2013). Freelancers are geographically dispersed throughout Switzerland, so gaining site access and carrying out the research within a suitable time-frame could have been difficult. Certainly, cultural aspects that constrain or enable freelancers’ engagement with OEP are of interest to my enquiry, e.g. cultural norms at work that impact on freelancers’ sense of agency to enact OEP, but this was not the central focus of my enquiry.
Phenomenology intersects with my research objective in that it seeks to interpret and understand participants’ perspectives. However, it diverges in other ways. Firstly, phenomenology focuses on the lived experience of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013) and seeks to capture how the essence of a phenomenon is directly experienced from a participant’s perspective (Crotty, 2003). Secondly, it is argued that phenomenology is suited to ‘studying affective, emotional and often intense human experiences’ (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 28). Neither of these aims aligns with my research focus. Furthermore, phenomenological researchers should attempt to bracket their preconceived interpretations or assumptions of the phenomenon concerned to present an untainted account of the participant’s perspective (Crotty, 2003). As an insider researcher, I viewed my experiential knowledge as a valuable resource that I could draw on throughout my enquiry to assist with understanding and interpreting data. Therefore, I did not want to assume a researcher role that put this knowledge aside.

The primary focus of action research is to bring about change and improvement (Robson and McCartan, 2016). A central tenet of this approach is to involve research participants actively in the process so that they can improve their practices (Cohen et al., 2007). Through cycles of planning, observation, reflection and change, participants can improve their understanding of their situation and enact change for the better (Cohen et al., 2007). Although I do intend to use my enquiry’s findings to develop recommendations for stakeholders interested in language teachers’ CPD (including freelancers), which could lead to changes in freelancers’ professional practices, intervening in freelancers’ teaching practices was not an aim of this enquiry.

A case study approach, on the other hand, is suited to capturing and understanding participants’ perspectives in real-world contexts, and is used in a wide variety of practice-based professions, such as teaching (Yin, 2014; Simons, 2009). This approach aligns with my enquiry in that it seeks to understand and interpret phenomenon, i.e. the case, in a specific context (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). It focuses on the particular and places temporal, contextual or other concrete boundaries around the phenomena under investigation (Yin, 2014). To elicit whether a phenomenon is bounded, Merriam (1998) suggests asking whether data collection is finite or whether an unlimited number of participants
could be interviewed. The former bounds the case, whereas the latter signals incompatibility with a case study approach.

Contextually, the participants in this enquiry are members of the same ELT association in Switzerland and are freelance language teachers. Hence, they are part of a particular group, making data collection finite, which aligns with Merriam’s (1998) suggestion for assessing boundedness. Boundedness was also achieved temporally, i.e. there were time limitations on data generation as freelancers’ survey and interview questions related to current and retrospective OEP within a twelve-month period.

This context was selected because as a National Council member of the ELT Association and fellow freelancer, I wanted to contribute to knowledge building in this domain, and contribute to enhancing and informing freelancers’ professional practices. The latter is considered an aim of case study research (Simons, 2009). The Association was not the object of focus but acted as what Bryman (2016) calls a ‘backcloth’ (p. 61) for data generation while freelancers were foregrounded as the object of enquiry. The case in my enquiry is freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP, bounded within the context and time-period outlined.

Yin (2014) outlines two further conditions (apart from boundedness and understanding phenomenon in real-world contexts) that are important for a case study approach:

- asking how and why questions about a contemporary phenomenon;
- participants’ behaviour cannot be controlled or manipulated by the researcher.

These conditions are consistent with my research design which asked what, why, and how questions about freelancers’ OEP in their multiple teaching contexts. Therefore, taking the focus and characteristics of a case study approach into consideration, this approach seemed the most appropriate fit for my enquiry.

There are numerous types of case studies; they are often categorised by their research intent which can influence a researcher’s choice of methods (Stake,
1995). Because the research intent is not always clearly delineated case study categories can overlap. For example, Yin (2014) distinguishes between exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case studies and cautions that the boundaries are not always distinct. According to Yin (2014), an exploratory case study tends to use ‘what’ questions and aims to form relevant hypotheses and identify issues for further research. An explanatory case study is suited to ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions and seeks to explain aspects of the phenomenon under enquiry, whereas descriptive case studies are suited to a broad range of research questions because they aim to describe various aspects of a case (Yin, 2014).

Stake (1995) differentiates between intrinsic, instrumental and collective. Intrinsic means the researcher has an intrinsic interest in a particular case and the purpose of an instrumental study is to gain a general understanding of a phenomenon (Stake, 1995). A collective case study is the study of several cases (Stake, 1995). Merriam (1998) distinguishes between descriptive, interpretative and evaluative, and concurs with Yin (2014) that a descriptive case study provides a description of the case. An interpretative case study also describes, but goes deeper than a descriptive cases study in its analysis and interpretation of findings (Merriam, 1998). By comparison, an evaluative case study is useful for evaluating programmes; it judges and explains (Merriam, 1998).

It follows, that this enquiry is suited to an interpretative case study approach (Merriam, 1998) because it aims to understand freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP by means of an interpretative approach to data generation and analysis.

3.3 Evaluating research methods

This section discusses my choice of research methods to generate data, i.e. an online survey and semi-structured interviews, as well as the alternative methods I evaluated.

Because the purpose of a case study is to generate in-depth and rich information to gain insight into multiple interpretations of the phenomenon under enquiry (Merriam, 1998), I was concerned that using one research method might not capture the breadth and depth of information I was seeking. Yin (2014) argues that combining methods in case study research can lead to a ‘richer and stronger
array of evidence’ (p. 66). Therefore, I evaluated the appropriateness of online surveys, interviews and focus groups, and their potential strengths and limitations in relation to my research.

An online survey had the potential to enable me to generate data from a larger sample of freelancers than would have been feasible with interviews or focus groups. It could provide breadth of information and also be instrumental in recruiting volunteers for interviews or focus groups. However, I was concerned about the commonly stated drawbacks:

- self-reported data cannot be probed for clarification or expansion (Bryman, 2016; Robson and McCartan, 2016);

- quality of data generated relies on the interest and motivation of respondents (Bryman, 2016).

By contrast, focus groups could have been useful as an initial exploratory method to generate a broad range of views from freelancers and aid me in identifying topics for inclusion in a survey or follow-up interview. However, Association members are distributed geographically throughout Switzerland, so it would have been difficult to arrange a suitable location. This could have been mitigated by conducting online meetings. Nonetheless, I was concerned that some freelancers might have technical issues which would have disrupted the discussion and made it difficult to transcribe the conversation. This could have meant scheduling another online meeting which would have inconvenienced all the participants and is something I wanted to avoid. Furthermore, the following limitations of focus groups concerned me:

- inability to generate in-depth insight into freelancers’ individual OEP;

- conversation management issues, e.g. potential that some voices dominate and less articulate voices are lost (Robson and McCartan, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2013);

- maintaining confidentiality (Robson and McCarten, 2016);
transcription difficulties from audio-recorded conversation (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Interviews are recognised as an effective means of capturing participant stories and providing core insights into a researcher’s line of enquiry (Yin, 2014; Simons, 2009), which is what I wanted to achieve. Stake (1995) describes interviews as the ‘main road to multiple realities’ (p. 64), while Patton (2015) views them as a means of entering into another ‘person’s life and worldview’ (p. 426). Therefore, generating data from interviews is consistent with the constructivist epistemology underpinning my research where the aim is to gain insight into multiple perspectives of freelancers. However, there are also limitations which vary depending on the type of interview structure selected. The types of interviews I evaluated and their strengths and limitations are discussed in detail in section 3.4.1.

Having evaluated these methods, I decided that an online survey in combination with semi-structured interviews would suit my research aim; the breadth of data generated from the survey would complement the depth of information generated from interviews. A further reason for using interviews is that I wanted to be able to compare and corroborate evidence between survey and interview data to verify findings, thereby contributing to the study’s rigour (Yin, 2014). Consequently, data generation comprised two phases. The first phase commenced with the development, piloting and delivery of an online survey which is discussed in the following section. This was followed by the second phase which comprised interviewing recruited participants and is discussed in detail in section 3.4.1.

3.4 Phase 1 of data generation: online survey

Figure 3 below provides an overview of steps taken in phase one of data generation from survey design to closure. Each stage is discussed in this section.
1. Planning and design

Based on my RQs and informed by literature relating to freelancers (e.g. Beaven 2018; Stickler and Emke, 2015; Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014) and teachers in other contexts who take part in OEP (e.g. Cronin, 2017; Veletsianos, 2015), I developed categories for inclusion in the questionnaire:

- OEP relating to OER-based practices and digital networking practices;
- copyright awareness;
- motives for taking part in OEP;
- learning and development through OEP.

I selected the JISC online survey tool to design and deliver my survey because it is web-based, designed for researchers, and data is secure. The survey comprised nine sections (see Table 4 below) and included closed-ended questions, i.e. multiple choice and Likert scale, and open-ended questions (see Appendix A for the survey). Survey questions were designed to align with my RQs to generate relevant data. Czaja and Blair (2005) comment that this process of alignment with RQs causes researchers to reflect on what data is wanted and how it can be generated. Furthermore, this design strategy was used to aid in minimising the generation of unnecessary data.
The survey introduction reminded potential respondents about the purpose of my research and target audience. It included information about survey navigation, data security, consent and withdrawal date (30 November 2018) and my OU email address.

The demographic section (SQs 2 - 8) asked about gender, age, first language spoken and employment status to provide detailed characteristics about
participants for readers. Questions 9 and 10 asked information about satisfaction with job security and CPD opportunities to understand freelancers’ working conditions and whether CPD was supported at work or not. Survey questions 11 and 12 focused on general digital practices relating to online content and open technologies which aligned with RQ 1a. This was followed by questions concerning freelancers’ motives for taking part in OEP or not (SQs 13 - 15) and aligned with RQ 1b. Learning and developing through OEP was the focus of SQs 16 - 18. These questions asked what and how freelancers learn through practices associated with digital content and open technologies and addressed RQ 2 and RQ 3.

Copyright awareness and use of OER in freelancers’ teaching practices were explored in SQs 19 - 22. The following image of various CC licences (see Figure 4) was embedded in SQ 21, which asked about familiarity with the licences to gauge freelancers' awareness and understanding of them.

Figure 4: SQ 21 Familiarity with CC licences.

https://pixabay.com/en/creative-commons-licenses-icons-by-783531 CC0

The definition of OER for this enquiry, i.e. UNESCO (2012), was cited directly before SQ 22 (which asked whether freelancers use OER in their teaching practices) to aid respondents to self-identify as OER users or not, and to minimise misinterpretations of OER. Skip logic was embedded in SQ 22 so that freelancers who identified as non-OER users could skip to section 8 where they were invited to volunteer for an interview. Self-identified non-OER users were also asked to volunteer for an interview because a) they might have been engaging with OER unintentionally and b) they might have been engaging in practices associated with
broader OEP. These were points that were evaluated after survey closure against
interviewee selection criteria (see section 3.4.1) to aid in identifying and recruiting
suitable interviewees.

Section 7 questioned the importance of OER in teaching (SQ 23, RQ 1b),
associated practices (SQs 24 - 26, RQ 1a) and learning and development
(SQs 26 - 28, RQ 2 and RQ 3). I drew on the openly licensed dataset from the
Open Education Research Hub in the UK (see Farrow et al., 2015) to design these
questions. The dataset was used to gain ideas for question and response design
because the OER Hub survey questions are based on nine surveys relating to
OER-based practices. The OER Hub has used these survey questions in research
collaborations, where either the complete set of survey questions or adaptations
have been used (e.g. Jhangiani et al., 2016; Perryman and Seal, 2016).

Using piloted survey questions to gain ideas is common practice and can
enable researchers to compare findings (Bryman, 2016). However, Toepoel (2016)
cautions that piloted survey questions need to be critically reviewed for their
appropriateness. A brief overview of the questions I used from the OER Hub’s
dataset is provided and I explain how and why I adapted them. Survey questions
were drawn from their hypothesis B section which is aimed at OER usage and
adoption patterns.

OER Hub SQ 3_15:

- How important is open licensing to you when using resources in your
teaching?
- 5 point Likert scale response, i.e. very important to not important.

My SQ 23:

- How important is it to use openly licensed resources such as OER in
your teaching practice?
- 5 point Likert scale response, i.e. very important to not important at
all.

The question was adapted to focus on OER use in teaching practices. I had
already asked about copyright and open licensing in SQ 20 and SQ 21.
OER Hub SQ 3_2:

- Which, if any, of the following types of open educational resources have you used for teaching/training? (Select all that apply)
- Respondents had the choice of 15 options, e.g. open textbooks, images, lectures, as well as specifying others.

My SQ 24:

- What types of OER have you used in the last 12 months? Please select all that apply.
- Respondents had the choice of 10 options, e.g. images, videos, interactive games, and the option to specify others.

The time-period was changed to align with the temporal boundary of this case study (12 months). Response options were adapted to suit freelancers, e.g. instead of ‘open textbooks’, I adapted this to ‘texts’ (e.g. articles, short stories and books). And I removed the OER Hub’s response, ‘learning tools, instruments and plugins, dataset and E-books’ (nr. 15) and ‘lectures’ (nr. 9), because these are less relevant to language teachers.

OER Hub SQ 3_1:

- In which of these ways, if any, have you used or created open educational resources (OER)? [Tick all that apply].
- Respondents had the choice of 11 options, e.g. use, creation, adaptation, publishing with a CC licence and practices associated with using a resource repository, including specifying others.

My SQ 25:

- In which of these ways have you used OER in relation to language teaching? Please select all that apply.
- Respondents had the choice of nine options relating to OER practices (i.e. creation, adaptation, sharing, translation) and publishing in an OER repository, e.g. OER commons, including specifying others.
The question and responses were contextualised so that they were relevant to language teachers. For example, I adapted OER Hub’s, ‘I have adapted open educational resources to fit my needs’ to, ‘I have adapted and changed them to suit my teaching needs’. I added, ‘I have translated them’, in my responses because it is common in language teaching in Switzerland to use translation as a teaching/learning method.

OER Hub SQ 3_4:

- For which of the following purposes have you used educational resources in the context of your teaching/training? (Select all that apply)
- Respondents had the choice of 17 options, as well as specifying others. Responses related to motives for OER use in teaching practices, e.g. gaining ideas, broadening the range of resources and giving students optional learning material. Responses also related to learning, e.g. enhance professional development and learn about a topic.

My SQ 26:

- Why do you use OER? Please select all that apply.
- Respondents had the choice of 10 options as well as specifying others. Responses focused on motives for OER use in teaching practices and learning and development.

Survey responses were adapted so that they were relevant to freelancers. For example, I added endings to some OER Hub responses such as ‘for teaching’, ‘relevant to my teaching practice’ and ‘give to my students’. I also added, ‘I don’t have to create materials from scratch’, ‘I can translate them’ and ‘I don’t have to pay for them’.

On survey completion, respondents were invited to volunteer for an interview (section 8). The interview process was outlined, i.e. duration between 30 - 45 minutes, face to face or via Skype, audio-recorded and transcribed word for word. The concluding message (section 9) thanked respondents and my OU email address was reiterated in case of queries.
2. Pilot survey

Before discussing how and why I piloted the online survey, an overview of the survey schedule from piloting to closure, which took approximately 2.5 months in 2018 is provided (see Table 5).

Table 5: Survey schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot survey</th>
<th>Launch invitation</th>
<th>Reminder</th>
<th>Closure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 September to 24 October 2018:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Further iterations tested on my OU supervisors.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is argued that a poorly designed survey can impact on how participants respond, and consequently can affect data quality (Toepoel, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2013). Therefore, I piloted the first survey draft on family members and friends during September 2018. This group was selected because I wanted to assess the inclusiveness of terminology, clarity of instructions and definitions, check for ambiguities and technical issues, and assess the overall design comfort, i.e. aesthetics and question layout to make the survey experience comfortable for respondents.

Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that piloting a survey is a justified means of testing whether you will generate relevant data and whether aspects such as sequencing of questions, wording and instructions, are logical and clear for respondents. As Czaja and Blair (2005) note, completely removing ambiguity is not simple but ambiguity can be minimised by using several readers. The resulting feedback from family and friends led to minor issues being resolved, e.g. adding further possibilities for respondents to answer by including ‘other’, addressing ambiguous terminology and reframing some questions, e.g. the question that
asked about respondents’ gender. The latter led to a discussion with my supervisors about collecting demographic data and my ethical responsibility as a researcher, i.e. treating participants equally and sensitively regarding potential inequalities such as gender (BERA, 2018, see guideline 2, p. 6).

Collecting demographic data is important because it provides information about research participants and illustrates how results relate to the sample and where limits are in relation to reported claims (Braun and Clarke, 2013). However, ethical consideration needs to be given to what data is generated. It was not necessary to know how participants identified themselves sexually. Therefore, after taking feedback and ethical considerations into account, I added the options, ‘I prefer not to say’ and ‘Other’ to ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ in SQ 3 which asks about gender. This example is indicative of the meticulous process of my survey design and highlights the iterative nature of piloting the study.

Second and third iterations of the survey were tested by my OU supervisors. Both are experts in the field of open education and one is a language lecturer, so they focused on content, terminology, sequencing of questions and functionality. Further survey adjustments were minor and related to language consistency in survey section headings and avoiding repetition of information.

3. Survey invitation

On 28 August 2018, I emailed the President of the ELT Association in Switzerland about delivering the online survey to members and explained that the anonymity and privacy of potential participants must be protected (BERA, 2018). It was mutually agreed that I would work with two National Council members to assist with disseminating the survey invitation because they had access to members’ email addresses. This meant that I would only have knowledge of survey respondents’ identities if they volunteered for an interview and would be fulfilling my ethical responsibility as a researcher (BERA, 2018). On Tuesday 30 October 2018, I Skyped with the two National Council members to discuss dissemination of the survey introductory leaflet which was approved by the OU’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Ethics are discussed in detail in section 3.6. The introductory leaflet outlined information about my research and included participant requirements, confidentiality and privacy issues, the
withdrawal process, and my OU email address (see Appendix B). The National Council colleagues and I designed an official eNews notification which was emailed to members and outlined the purpose of my research and invited freelancers to participate (see Appendix C). The notification included a direct link to a hidden page on the Association’s website which publicised a link to my survey invitation and reminded teachers that only members who are freelancers should participate.

The eNews notification was launched on 31 October 2018 at 6.30 am. A reminder was emailed on 16 November 2018 in an attempt to increase the number of responses which at this stage was 29. The survey closed on 25 November 2018 with a recorded total of 46 respondents. Overall, the survey remained open for 3.5 weeks. Consent to withdraw was scheduled for 30 November 2018.

4. Closure

After survey closure, the National Council colleagues who had assisted with the survey launch informed me that 338 unique email addresses (not duplicated) had opened the eNews notifications. It is not known whether these were freelancers or not. Based on these figures the response rate was 13.6% (46 respondents/338 x 100). One female respondent was later excluded from the survey because she did not meet the freelancer criterion of being an hourly paid language teacher. This demonstrates that despite steps taken to foreground freelancer participation, misunderstandings can still occur. This respondent also volunteered for an interview, so I thanked her via email for her participation and explained why I could not use her survey data.

The majority of respondents were female (86.7%, n=39) with male respondents totalling 13.3% (n=6) which reflects proportions in the ELT Association’s membership. This gender distribution is characteristic of the English language teaching profession and the teaching profession in Switzerland in general (Wolter et al., 2018).
3.4.1 Phase 2 of data generation: semi-structured interviews

This section explains the processes involved in the second phase of data generation, i.e. considerations given to the type of interview used, the recruitment of suitable participants and the interview process.

Interview types

Interviews are commonly distinguished by degrees of structure, e.g. structured, semi-structured and unstructured. They vary in their levels of formality, and researcher control, and in the level of flexibility possible in the delivery of interview questions (Mann, 2016; Robson and McCartan, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2013). Summarised in Table 6 below are typical characteristics, strengths and limitations of interview approaches.

Table 6: Summary of interview types
(based on Mann, 2016; Robson and McCarten, 2016; Patton, 2015; and Braun and Clarke, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview type</th>
<th>Structured</th>
<th>Semi-structured</th>
<th>Unstructured</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
<td>- predetermined questions</td>
<td>- predetermined questions as a checklist</td>
<td>- planned themes for discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- detailed script</td>
<td>- flexible delivery method</td>
<td>- open-ended interactions and spontaneous questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- flexible probing</td>
<td>- very flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td>- standardised questioning; useful for direct comparative purposes</td>
<td>- flexibility with question wording, sequencing and probing</td>
<td>- informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- can use several interviewers</td>
<td>- negotiation possibilities</td>
<td>- conversational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- conversational</td>
<td>- very flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- data generation is more systematic than in an unstructured interview</td>
<td>- personalisation of questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This summary of interview types demonstrates that a researcher needs to understand how different approaches can impact on the interactional dynamics between the researcher and interviewee (Mann, 2016) because this can influence the type of data generated.

I wanted an interview approach that would enable me to probe salient points, reword questions as required and access freelancers’ perspectives and interpretations. I was aiming for a conversation-like interview between peers that would empower interviewees and reduce potential power dynamics between myself and them in order to establish rapport and trust. In using the term conversation, I am conscious that the planning, specific purpose, controlled turn-taking and power dynamics of interviews highlight their artificiality in comparison to everyday conversations. Kvale (1996) also draws attention to this distinction and as such labels this type of interview a professional conversation due to its structure and purpose, and the hierarchical inequality between the researcher and interviewee in a research context.

Based on my intended research aims, a structured interview with standardised questioning would have been unsuitable because it does not support flexible questioning, probing or interaction with interviewees. An unstructured interview would have given interviewees the opportunity to speak freely and to engage with me. However, because this method typically uses planned topics rather than a question guide, I was concerned that some of the data might not be relevant to my RQs and could have varied considerably with each interviewee.
The lack of systematic questioning could have led to some areas of relevance not being adequately covered with each interviewee. Furthermore, organising and analysing such broad data might have been too time consuming.

By contrast, a strength of a semi-structured approach in relation to my enquiry is that I could be flexible with questions and probes and be responsive to participants’ contributions in order to generate quality data relevant to my RQs. Additionally, more systematic questioning could be an advantage when analysing data.

Taking the characteristics, strengths and limitations of these three types of interviews into consideration and evaluating them against my research aims, and epistemological assumptions, I selected a semi-structured interview as the most suitable method to generate in-depth data.

The following section explains my choice of sampling strategy choice and the interviewee selection criteria, all of which were designed to recruit suitable interviewees.

**Sampling strategy and selection criteria**

Non-probability sampling is common in qualitative research because these strategies do not seek to generalise, but rather, participants are selected based on their relevance to an enquiry (Bryman, 2016). Because my research is a qualitative case study framed within an interpretive paradigm, it is searching for uniqueness within the chosen target group and does not seek statistical generalisation or representativeness to a larger population. This would be more appropriate in quantitative research where random sampling, which is probability based, is used (Patton, 2015).

I sought a non-probability sampling strategy, or a combination thereof, that would help me achieve the following aims:

- identify freelancers who could provide relevant information for my research;
- minimise stakeholder involvement, e.g. National Council members;
- reduce imposition on participants, e.g. time, emotional pressure;
• minimise ambiguity;
• lower the risk of non-members participating.

Table 7 below provides an overview of the types of non-probability sampling strategies I evaluated, along with their potential strengths and limitations in relation to my research. In the discussion which follows, I explain how and why I selected criterion-based purposive sampling.

Table 7: Summary of sampling strategies.
(based on Bryman, 2016; Robson and McCartan, 2016; and Patton, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling strategies</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Criterion-based purposeful sampling | - focused candidate selection based on relevant criteria  
- strategic purpose | - selection criteria could be misinterpreted by candidates leading to information-poor candidates |
| Convenience sampling          | - useful for initial piloting  
- ease of accessibility  
- convenient | - may lack strategy and purpose  
- can be influenced by researcher biases  
- could identify information-poor candidates |
| Snowball sampling             | - a candidate who is relevant identifies one or more potential candidates  
- ease of accessibility  
- strategic purpose | - prone to failure if candidates cannot identify other potential candidates  
- could identify information-poor candidates |

As a National Council member, I might have been tempted to use convenience sampling which is doing what is most convenient and accessing who is easily available (Patton, 2015). This could have been useful, as Robson and McCartan (2016) suggest, for ‘gaining a feeling … or initial piloting’ (p. 281), but convenience sampling has been criticised for lacking strategy and purpose (Patton, 2015). Because selection is not based on relevant criteria, there is a risk of selecting information-poor candidates.
Alternatively, I could have selected snowball sampling and used my position to recruit a research-relevant candidate and ask them to identify one or more potential candidates who would become new informants (Bryman, 2016). However, because many freelancers work in isolation I was concerned that willing participants might not be able to identify further participants, or they might identify unsuitable candidates. In my experience, not all members build close personal networks within the Association, and isolation can be compounded by the geographical distribution of members throughout Switzerland. Another concern I had with convenience and snowball sampling was that both involved approaching members to explain the purpose of my study, selection criteria and their potential participation. This could have made them feel coerced into volunteering. I wanted to avoid this as it would have been incongruent with the ethical guidelines that I was using to guide my research design and decision-making (BERA, 2018).

After evaluating and reflecting on the appropriateness of these methods for my enquiry, I selected criterion-based purposeful sampling. Patton (2015) defines purposeful sampling as the selection of ‘information-rich cases for in-depth study’ (p. 264) which can ‘yield insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalisations’ (p. 264). Therefore, participants are selected based on criteria relevant to the purpose of the enquiry (Merriam, 2016; Cohen et al., 2007) which is considered a strength of this method (Patton, 2015). A potential critique is that there is no guarantee that freelancers selected against relevant criteria will indeed be information-rich, or that they will be dynamic interview partners, which could impact on the quality of data generated. A further issue that concerned me is that freelancers might misinterpret questions or information that I had designed for the survey to identify suitable interview candidates. This could have resulted in information-rich candidates being missed, or information-poor candidates being selected. I attempted to mitigate these risks by doing the following:

- using clear language and avoiding technical jargon in the survey and interview information leaflets;
- providing a clear definition of freelancer in information leaflets and in the survey and foregrounding this information on the hidden website;
- providing an OER definition in the survey to aid respondents to self-identify as OER users or not.
Additionally, the online survey was used to recruit interviewees based on the selection criteria outlined below. Freelancers were invited to indicate their willingness to participate in a one-to-one conversation (page 8 of the survey, SQ 29). Recruiting interviewees in this way, enabled me to streamline the recruitment process for the interviews and helped me select information-rich candidates who were identified based on their survey responses against the selection criteria.

**Selection criteria**

Interviewee selection parameters such as target population and context, i.e. freelance English language teachers who are members of an ELT Association in Switzerland were already identified. However, further selection criteria were necessary so that recruited participants would be able to provide insight into their engagement with and learning through OEP. It was important to have evidence that participants were taking part in OEP because I wanted to explore whether meaningful informal learning was being supported through these practices and what the potential impact of learning and development was on freelancers, e.g. potential changes to teaching practices and/or professional growth.

Therefore, I sought freelancers from the survey who suited one or more of the following criteria and who had volunteered to be interviewed:

- engaging in OER-based practices;
- engaging in digital networking practices, e.g. using Twitter, Facebook, for teaching and/or learning;
- using open participatory platforms, e.g. blogs, wikis, for teaching and/or learning.

Having selected criterion-based purposeful sampling and established relevant criteria that would aid in recruiting suitable interviewees, I began interview preparation. The following section opens with an overview of interviewee demographics before discussing the interview process and rationale for my decision-making throughout each stage.
Interview process

Following survey closure (25 November 2018), 15 suitable respondents (4 males and 11 females) were recruited from 16 volunteers for a semi-structured interview. As mentioned, one volunteer was declined because she did not meet the freelancer criterion.

Table 8 below provides an overview of interviewee demographics. Male participants are highlighted for clarity. Pseudonyms were used to protect anonymity as discussed later (see section 3.6.2).

Table 8: Interviewee demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>EFL teaching experience in years</th>
<th>Employment Contract</th>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnold</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Teaching certificate MA</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yes/several</td>
<td>Language centre - In-company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>Teaching certificate and diploma BA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Independent teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>Swiss-German</td>
<td>Teaching certificates and diplomas</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Teaching certificates</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Independent teaching - Language centre - In-company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Teaching certificates BA</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Yes/several</td>
<td>Independent teaching - Tertiary education - Vocational education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treena</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>Slovenian</td>
<td>Teaching certificate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Language centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Teaching certificate</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes and No</td>
<td>Independent teaching - Language centre - In-company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Teaching certificates</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Yes/several</td>
<td>Independent teaching - In-company - Adult education centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Teaching certificate Teaching degree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes/several</td>
<td>Independent teaching - Language centre - In-company - Vocational education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Teaching certificates and diploma BA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Independent teaching - Language centre - In-company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Teaching certificates BA/MA Doctorate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yes/several and No</td>
<td>In-company - Tertiary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Swiss teaching degree BA/MA</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Independent teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewee ages range from 45 to 65+. The age groups and gender mix reflect the current ELT Association membership. Younger members are a minority. The majority (60%, n=9) of interviewees speak English as their first language. Eleven (73%) have more than one qualification with at least one being teaching-related. Ten freelancers (67%) teach in two or more places per week and within this group, 8 (53%) combine independent teaching with teaching in other contexts. Freelancers’ EFL teaching experience ranges from 11 to 44 years. The majority (60%, n=9) have taught EFL in Switzerland for 20 years or longer.

After participant selection, I emailed volunteers an interview invitation (see Appendix D) which included:

- appreciation message for volunteering;
- information sheet explaining the purpose of the interview and process; consent, withdrawal process, and confidentiality;
- consent withdrawal date, i.e. 28 February, 2019.

Planning the interview schedule (see Appendix E) was time-consuming and involved sending numerous emails and reminders. Interviews were scheduled from Wednesday 12 December 2018 to Wednesday 20 February 2019. Interviewees were invited to choose between a physical location of their choice, or a virtual interview, e.g. via Skype. They were requested to email me the signed interview consent form prior to their scheduled interview (see Appendix F).

**Location**

Mann (2016) argues that consideration should be given to interview location because it can influence a participant’s interaction. For example, he points to...
possible distractions from family members at home and to power dynamics being an issue in the interviewer’s home (Mann, 2016). Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2013) draw attention to the potential sterility of a room chosen by the researcher, e.g. university room, which might be uncomfortable for the interviewee, but a safe and controlled space for the interviewer. Both arguments illustrate that the choice of interview location is important because it can impact on interview dynamics. However, in the case of my research I needed to be pragmatic because interviewees were distributed across Switzerland. Consequently, I explained to participants that I would not be able to travel to them if they were more than 1.5 hours away because of my work commitments.

Eleven participants agreed to be interviewed by Skype because of its time-saving convenience. Four freelancers requested meeting in a physical location because they felt it was more personal. Of these meetings, one was at my home, one at a participant’s private school, and two participants organised rooms (free of cost).

Language

Because six interviewees spoke another language besides English as their first language, they were given the choice of speaking German, Swiss-German or English, but all chose English. I wanted to ensure that they fully understood my questions and could interact without feeling disadvantaged. Although they teach EFL, I could not assume that they would be comfortable using their English for this purpose. Swiss-German was used in a couple of instances when interviewees spoke about an institute’s location or a local event which related to resources they were discussing, e.g. one interviewee described how she sourced teaching materials associated with Fasnacht. This is a traditional winter festival celebrated throughout Switzerland.

Interview guide

The interview guide I prepared was approved by the HREC and questions were designed to align with my RQs (see Appendix G). Table 9 below provides an overview of each interview section and alignment of topics with my RQs.
During the interview introduction, freelancers were reminded about the purpose of my research, data security, confidentiality, consent withdrawal date, and confirmation of signed consent. Concerning data security, participants were informed that the interview would be audio-recorded, each recording would be deleted after verbatim transcription, and pseudonyms would be used when reporting and disseminating data to protect anonymity. Furthermore, I informed participants that the online survey would be anonymised after all the interviews were completed (see section 3.6.2 for further details). I invited participants to choose their own pseudonym to involve them in the research process. Three participants chose a pseudonym and the others asked me to select a pseudonym for them. Questions and probes in sections 2 and 3 in the interview guide aligned with RQs and were adapted during the interviews to expand on and clarify relevant points. Questions and follow-up probes were open-ended, e.g.: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semi-structured interview guide sections</th>
<th>Alignment with Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 interviews enquiring into each freelancer’s OEP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Freelancer’s OEP:</td>
<td>RQ 1a: Are freelance English language teachers taking part in OEP and if so, what are these practices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- OER-based practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- digital networking practices and use of open participatory platforms</td>
<td>RQ 1b: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, why do they take part in these practices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Freelancer’s learning and development through OEP:</td>
<td>RQ 2: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, what knowledge and skills do they learn and develop?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- what does each freelancer learn or develop?</td>
<td>RQ 3: If freelance English language teachers develop knowledge and skills from taking part in OEP, how do they learn and develop such knowledge and skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- how does each freelancer learn or develop?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Invitation for freelancer to comment further</td>
<td>Dependent on each individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Closure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question: Can you explain what this resource is and how you used it in your teaching practice?

Probe: How did you modify the resource and why?

In many cases, freelancers’ responses were so detailed that prepared probes were unnecessary. For example, sometimes they jumped ahead of my interview guide and spoke about copyright. In a case like this, once they were finished speaking, I either guided them back to the original point of the discussion or probed the issue of copyright further and then made a transition back to the next relevant question. This flexibility meant that the interviews were fluid and akin to a professional conversation which was my objective. Additionally, by using transitions to draw freelancers back to relevant questions, I was ensuring that I was covering planned interview topics with all interviewees.

Section 4 provided an opportunity for interviewees to contribute further information that might have been stimulated by the discussion. This was effective and generated more relevant data. The closure was used to thank participants and invite them to contact me with queries or further insights. Interviews ranged between 30 and 60 minutes and were recorded on the application audionote on my iPhone and iPad. I used this application because I could create folders, make notes and slow down speech when transcribing.

Transcription

I could have followed Stake’s (1995) advice and attempted to capture the essence of each interview and provide interviewees with an account of their interview for ‘accuracy and stylistic improvement’ (p. 66). However, because freelancers were questioned about their engagement with and learning through OEP, this resulted in a significant amount of detail being recorded, e.g. types of resources and open platforms they use and associated processes, as well as what and how they learn through these practices. Attempting to capture only the essence would have resulted in relevant data being lost. Therefore, I transcribed verbatim, i.e. word for word, but excluded irrelevant digressions as suggested by Gillham (2000).
Using the speech-to-text function in Word sped up the transcription process and resulted in 98 pages of transcript constituting 48 541 words for data analysis. In comparison with listening to the recording and then transcribing, I found this method more valuable. Narrating both parts, i.e. interviewees and mine, helped me relive the interview and I experienced a deep level of immersion in the data. This prompted reflection and reflexivity, and aided in familiarisation with the data and deepened my understanding of interviewees’ multiple perspectives.

3.5 Data analysis method

I had already begun familiarising and immersing myself in the data generated from the online survey and 15 transcribed interviews which is considered common in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). For example, I commenced reading survey responses on their completion and documented points of interest in my reflective diary, such as the differences between OER users’ familiarity with CC licences. Consequently, I made a note to clarify this point with relevant respondents who had volunteered for an interview. Furthermore, I summarised interviews in my reflective diary immediately on completion, and recorded initial impressions and reflections which related to my RQs. I regularly compared interview transcripts with each other and survey responses and noted potential probes for further interviews (see Appendix H).

The next step involved organising, reducing and analysing data by means of an appropriate data analysis method so that I could make sense of it as a whole and relate findings to relevant literature. Although it is agreed in case study research that the researcher plays an integral part in interpreting data, the choice of data analysis method is flexible (Yin, 2014; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). Categorising strategies are typically used in qualitative research to code meaningful segments of data and group them into categories (Maxwell, 2013; Simons, 2009) thereby facilitating further analysis and interpretation. Saldana (2016) defines codes as words that are researcher-generated which capture the essence or meaning of data, prompt reflection and facilitate interpretation.

I initially evaluated both qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2014; Mayring, 2014) and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 2006) as data analysis methods because both are compatible with an interpretive paradigm and
case study approach. Both methods can be used for analysing qualitative data in a rigorous way, they are flexible, and can be used to analyse texts and visual material (Mayring, 2014; Schreier, 2014; Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, a limitation with qualitative content analysis in my research context is that it predefines theoretically driven categories and relies on inter-coder reliability to check the validity of codes (Mayring, 2014). This did not align with the inductive and reflexive approach to data analysis that I was taking, and I was solely responsible for coding. By comparison, thematic analysis would enable me to generate themes from the data in a flexible and critically reflexive way using Braun and Clarke’s (2019, 2013, 2006) six-phase model (see Figure 5 below) which would also contribute to the trustworthiness and quality of this study.

Figure 5: Phases of reflexive thematic analysis (based on Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006).

I have adapted the model to align with Braun and Clarke’s (2019) current thinking about the analytical process. They prefer the term ‘generating’ themes as opposed to ‘searching’ for themes because the former reflects a researcher’s active engagement with, reflection on, and interpretation of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019). On the other hand, ‘searching’ for themes suggests that themes are out in the data waiting to be retrieved (Braun and Clarke, 2019) which sits better with the theoretical perspectives underpinning a positivist paradigm.

Braun and Clarke (2019) recently renamed their six-phase model reflexive thematic analysis, because the recursive coding process is central to their approach. This process involves a researcher reflecting deeply on data as they engage with it and being reflexive during the analytical process. Therefore, the role of the researcher and their subjectivity is viewed as a central part of the interpretative process (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) should not be interpreted as a step-by-step, linear procedure but involves deep reflection as a researcher immerses themselves in
the data to generate themes that represent shared patterns of meaning that have been interpreted from codes across the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

In the following section I explain how I used reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006) to code and generate themes relevant to my RQs.

3.5.1 Generation of themes

As discussed above, I began to familiarise myself with the data and reflected on it while the survey was still open. I noted initial impressions and tentative codes, and reflected on prompts for scheduled interviews, as suggested by Merriam (1998), who views data collection and analysis as simultaneous processes. Transcripts were read multiple times as part of the familiarisation process (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006). I highlighted sections relevant to my RQs, documented initial points of interest, and commenced relating these to the data as a whole and to salient literature (see Figure 6).

![Figure 6: Example of data familiarisation.](image)

The familiarisation phase was a valuable part of data analysis because this immersive phase meant that I had spent a lot of time reflecting on potential codes and themes which contributed to my understanding of the data before entering the coding phase. To facilitate coding and theme generation, the 15 transcripts were uploaded to the qualitative software tool MAXQDA. Braun and Clarke (2013, 2006) recommend using complete coding which is a flexible approach that enables data
excerpt to be coded in multiple ways. I initially coded everything that was relevant to my RQs across the entire data set and then became more selective during the analytical process as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). In-vivo coding captured participants’ voices, descriptive coding synthesised points through nouns, and process coding elicited actions through gerund forms, i.e. ‘ing’ forms (Saldana, 2016). The first round of complete coding resulted in 795 coded items (see Figure 7).

![Figure 7: Initial round of complete coding.](image)

In further iterations of coding, codes were synthesised into meaningful groups and sub-themes that had shared patterns of meaning. They were colour-coded to provide a better overview of their relationship with each other which eased the recursive process of coding and theme generation (see examples in Figure 8).
Initially, the following themes were generated from patterns across the data set:

1. digital networking practices
2. digital content practices
3. sharing practices
4. assumptions, values and beliefs
5. copyright
6. learning through open practices
7. CPD.

I created thematic maps of each of these to aid in reviewing and comparing them for reduction to a few overarching themes which related to my RQs (see one example in Figure 9 and also Appendix I for further examples).

Figure 9: Thematic map of freelancers’ digital networking practices.

The example above details participants’ motivations for using participatory platforms such as YouTube and Facebook for teaching purposes, and also indicates why some do not use them. After creating detailed thematic maps, I continued recursively with the theme-reviewing phase which involved rereading the transcripts and coded excepts in order to reflect on themes that would capture the meaning of the initial codes more broadly and relate to my RQs. During this phase, Braun and Clarke (2006) comment that themes need to be refined, which could involve, joining, separating, discarding and potentially generating new themes. As I reviewed and reflected on my thematic maps, transcripts and
excerpts of coded data, and analysed the relationships between them, it was evident that freelancers’ motives for taking part in OEP were underpinned by their assumptions, values and beliefs about teaching and learning, including teacher learning. Furthermore, as I compared the thematic maps that comprised their digital networking practices, use of digital resources (OER and non-OER) and sharing practices it was apparent that contextual issues played a significant role in freelancers’ engagement with OEP. Consequently, for RQs 1a and 1b, themes 1 to 5 above were reduced to the following themes and sub-themes as illustrated in the thematic map below (see Figure 10).

![Thematic Map](image)

Figure 10: Main themes and sub-themes RQ 1a and RQ 1b.

Regarding learning through OEP (RQ 2 and RQ 3), I repeated the same interpretative and analytical process described above. Relevant items that related to my RQs were initially coded into the themes learning what and how, and learning influences and outcomes. Following several iterations of coding and reviewing and comparing codes with interview transcripts and coded excerpts, five sub-themes relating to what freelancers learn through OEP (RQ 2) were generated:

1. digital literacy skills
2. critical awareness raised
3. new ideas
4. content knowledge
5. new methods and approaches.

On reviewing the sub-themes with their retrieved excerpts in MAXQDA, ‘new ideas’ was subsumed under ‘content knowledge’ because it was clear that
freelancers were describing the same thing. And ‘new methods and approaches’ was renamed ‘pedagogical approaches’ because freelancers described how they learned more about different teaching practices. Consequently, this part of the analytical process resulted in the generation of the following four sub-themes relating to RQ 2:

1. digital literacy skills
2. critical awareness raised
3. content knowledge
4. pedagogical knowledge.

Regarding how freelancers learn through OEP (RQ 3), the initial rounds of coding including verbatim items such as ‘trial and error’ and ‘experimenting’, which in further reflexive iterations were subsumed under ‘learning by doing’. Other verbatim codes such as ‘think’ and ‘reflect’ were collapsed into the sub-theme ‘reflection’. Freelancers frequently mentioned how they learned by comparing themselves with other teachers who shared their expertise via participatory platforms. Therefore, relevant items were categorised as ‘benchmarking’.

It was evident from the data that how and what freelancers learned through OEP varied depending on whether they engaged with digital content or through social practices. The informal learning strategies they described included reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking. The following thematic map, illustrates the themes and sub-themes relating to how and what freelancers learn through their engagement with OEP and relate to RQ 2 and RQ 3 (see Figure 11).

![Thematic Map](image)

Figure 11: How and what freelancers learn through OEP (RQ 2 and RQ 3).
All the themes and sub-themes discussed in this section are presented with supporting evidence in the findings section before being elaborated on in relation to my RQs in the discussion.

3.6 Ethical principles

Ethics are an integral part of research permeating through each phase of the design process and underpin a researcher’s decision-making (Bryman, 2016). To ensure the integrity of this research project and to respect the rights of all involved, I adhered to the British Educational Research Association’s (BERA) (2018) ethical guidelines. Ethical approval was sought from the HREC for my pilot study in October 2017 and for minor changes to my main research project in November 2018. Both projects received clearance (see Appendix J).

During both projects, key ethical considerations were addressed to protect the rights of participants and ensure their respectful treatment, and included: informed consent, detriment to participants, confidentiality and anonymity, and data protection. Furthermore, I was conscious of my dual role as an insider researcher, i.e. freelancer and National Council member, and as an outsider, being a doctoral researcher, and how this dual positioning could potentially impact on different aspects of my research and my relationship with participants. In the following sections, I discuss how I dealt with these issues.

3.6.1 Informed consent

Detailed information sheets were created for the survey and interviews (see Appendices B and D respectively), which informed potential candidates about relevant aspects of my research. Unnecessary jargon was avoided to improve the readability of leaflets and minimise information being misinterpreted because I was aware that some participants do not use English as a first language. My actions adhered to BERA’s (2018) guideline, number 9, which advises that researchers ensure participants are well informed and understand their role and rights, and implications of giving consent.

The introduction to the survey was detailed and reiterated information pertaining to the rights of participants before being invited to give consent. Interviewees were requested to return their signed consent form before the
interview. I recorded the dates on which they were received in the interview schedule matrix as part of maintaining an audit trail of evidence for my research (see Appendix E).

3.6.2 Detriment to participants

The possibility of doing harm to participants was difficult to pre-empt as interpretations and perceptions will differ with individuals and be context dependent (Simons, 2009). I attempted to eliminate this by following BERA’s (2018) ethical principles rigorously. For example, obtaining informed consent was a means of counteracting duress and establishing trust with participants (Kvale, 1996). I was transparent about confidentiality and anonymity procedures, which can deepen trust, and communicated my willingness to respect participants’ status as well as their right to withdraw from my research without consequences.

Regarding confidentiality and anonymity, in the interview introduction ethical procedures were reiterated to ensure participants understood. To protect interviewees’ anonymity, freelancers were invited to choose a pseudonym and were informed that only pseudonyms would be used in my thesis and in any publications or dissemination activities relating to my research. This was a further step in establishing trust.

Data protection was also an integral part of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity throughout my research. The JISC online survey tool was chosen because data security is assured. Participant entry was possible only via the link I provided on a hidden page on the ELT Association’s website, and I could access the survey only via a password. The survey data was not anonymised until completion of the interviews because I needed to access each interviewee’s survey responses during the interview process to identify points for clarification and probing. However, downloaded copies of the survey were immediately anonymised and stored on an external hard drive. The latter was also used to store digital copies of signed consent and printed versions were locked securely in a filing cabinet at home. Participants were informed about raw data disposal in the survey information leaflet (see Appendix B). All data relating to my enquiry will be deleted and/or shredded on completion of my doctorate (after the viva).
Interviewees’ audio recordings have already been deleted from my iPhone and iPad.

Steps were taken when designing the survey to ensure ethical principles were upheld. For example, survey and interview questions were designed to align with my RQs which aided in minimising the generation of unnecessary data and I was sensitive to the sexual identity and rights of survey participants, e.g. the formulation of SQ 3 (gender) was changed.

3.6.3 Researcher role

Reflective practice and reflexivity played an important part in my engagement with all aspects of my research including my insider-outsider researcher roles. I situated myself primarily as a doctoral researcher but could not ignore that I had a strong insider connection to my participants as a fellow freelancer and National Council member. From an ethical perspective, it was important to be self-aware and critically reflect on these identities because of the potential impact they could have had on my decision-making and interaction with participants during different phases of the research process (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Hellawell (2006) argues that it can be challenging to delineate between one’s insider and outsider position as a researcher and that a researcher can shift between various insider and outsider roles during the research process. Hellawell (2006) states that particularly doctoral students can benefit from being more reflexive about their research and their researcher role. At times, I found it difficult to distinguish between these roles and balance them so that I could be critical and mitigate potential bias, i.e. imposing my values, assumptions and beliefs on diverse aspects of my research.

As suggested by Mann (2016), one strategy that I used to enhance my self-awareness and criticality and to mitigate potential bias was to regularly document my research journey in a reflective journal. Consequently, my digital reflective diary became an audit trail of my reflections and the decisions I took throughout my research and illustrates how I used critical reflection and reflexivity to balance my insider-outsider identities. As an example, Appendix H is evidence
of how I reflected on Sue’s interview responses in my doctoral role. I make links to relevant literature and question her responses as a means of feeding developing ideas forward into scheduled interviews. Furthermore, I have been transparent in this thesis about my decision-making with regard to various aspects of this study including processes such as data analysis and the interpretation of findings.

I experienced the insider-outsider researcher roles as interrelated and, in some situations, emotionally challenging. For example, as a freelancer, I found myself strongly empathising with freelancers during interviews when they spoke about prescriptive work conditions, e.g. Anna and Matt. At times, I found Emma’s interview upsetting. Emma explained that she was recovering from burnout and was anxious about resuming specific ELT lessons because of the lack of infrastructure and support at work. During these interviews, I felt angry as a fellow freelancer and National Council member about the issues that the interviewees had reported. Although I was very concerned about the impact these problems were having on each participant’s well-being, I found myself attempting to suppress my emotions and take some distance so that I could foreground my doctoral researcher role to make sense of what freelancers were saying. Despite experiencing a range of emotions, it was necessary to retain a professional perspective to focus on the participants’ dialogue and probe responses accordingly for relevant information.

Although this emotional dimension was challenging with regard to foregrounding my doctoral research role, my insider position was an advantage during the interviews because I understood what freelancers were speaking about when they used abbreviations and jargon, or made references to particular publishers, language teaching websites and workplace issues. This meant I did not have to interrupt our conversation to ask for clarification, and we could speak as peers. However, I was conscious that in my role as a National Council member and a doctoral researcher, potential power dynamics could have shaped interviewee interaction in terms of communicating information that they thought I wanted to hear, or perhaps withholding details, particularly with freelancers who were less experienced and/or less qualified than I. To mitigate this, I commenced building trust and rapport before the interviews took place by being authentic and open during preceding email exchanges, as well as inviting participants to contact
me with queries via email or phone. Secondly, at the beginning of the interviews I clarified that I was not going to judge participants’ responses and that I had a sincere personal and professional interest in their current practices and their perspectives. Patton (2015) terms this ‘empathic neutrality’ (p. 60), where the aim in an interview is to establish rapport by being mindful of interviewees and their voices, but then taking a non-judgemental stance to content.

3.7 Pilot study

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, my pilot study preceded this investigation and enabled me to trial research methods, explore freelancers’ OEP and gain practical experience as an interviewer and with data analysis procedures. Furthermore, the pilot study provided an opportunity to establish possible limitations within my research design that could be resolved for the enquiry reported here.

Participation for the pilot study (from November 2017 to December 2018) was restricted to National Council members because I wanted to approach the membership for my main study. I used an online survey and a professional conversation as an interview method to generate data. In an educational setting, professional conversations can be used to discuss practice as peers, and prompt analytical thinking and reflection to support professional learning (Danielson, 2016). From 35 National Council members, eight responded to the survey and three agreed to take part in a Skype interview (two females and one male).

As a consequence of pilot study findings, I refined the research questions and redesigned the survey. Initial findings revealed that there was a lack of awareness of OER and CC licensing and that inadequate digital literacy skills constrained freelancers’ engagement with OEP. There was evidence that freelancers were improving their digital literacy skills, professional and general knowledge, as well as language and literacy skills from taking part in OEP. Additionally, it was evident that the process of reflection was key to freelancers’ learning. Therefore, I redesigned the survey so that it asked focused questions about OER awareness and use, and significance of copyright. I also wanted to understand more about what freelancers might be learning in terms of knowledge and skills development as well as the learning strategies that contributed to their
learning. Consequently, I expanded on RQ 3 in the pilot study which asked more broadly about the impact of OEP on freelancers’ CPD, and developed two new research questions for the study in this thesis. RQ 2 sought to understand what knowledge and skills freelancers learn from taking part in OEP whereas RQ 3 focused on how they learn, i.e. their learning strategies (see Table 3, p. 73).

Despite having an interview guide, I found that using a professional conversation as an interview method led to digressions and the generation of irrelevant data. Therefore, for this enquiry, I decided to use semi-structured interviews with a loosely framed interview guide so that I could still retain flexibility with questions and probes, but data generation would be more organised and focused.

The pilot study also proved useful for trialling technologies, e.g. data management software (MAXQDA) and speech-to-text functionality in Word. The latter more than halved transcription time.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the theoretical perspectives informing this research and considerations given to the choice of methodology framing this enquiry and the methods for data generation and analysis. The operationalisation of the research process (i.e. participant recruitment, data generation, data analysis and interpretation) and generation of themes and sub-themes were discussed. The ethical considerations that were addressed in this study including my insider-outsider researcher role were discussed next. Finally, I explained that the pilot study was useful for trialling methods and technologies to generate and analyse data to assess their suitability for the enquiry reported in this thesis. As mentioned, lessons learned from the pilot study did indeed inform changes in this enquiry.

The next chapter presents the research findings and provides evidence for the themes and sub-themes generated using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006).
Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents research findings based on my analysis and interpretation of synthesised data from the online survey and 15 semi-structured interviews. Themes in the data, and their relationship with RQ 1a and RQ 1b are addressed first. The findings cover the OEP that participants engage in, their motives and the contextual issues that enable and constrain their OEP. Findings relating to what (RQ 2) and how (RQ 3) participants learn through OEP are then presented. The final part of the chapter demonstrates how learning through OEP can lead to changes in participants’ teaching practices. It concludes with participants’ interpretations of how OEP contribute to their CPD.

4.1 Themes and sub-themes: RQ 1a and RQ 1b

The two overarching themes generated through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006) that relate to RQ 1a and RQ 1b are a) participants’ assumptions, values and beliefs about teaching and learning, including teacher learning and b) contextual issues. Sub-themes relating to the first theme include, digital content and digital networking practices and sharing practices. Sub-themes relating to contextual issues include structural and agential influences. Themes and sub-themes are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Themes and sub-themes RQ 1a and RQ 1b.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes relating to RQ 1a and RQ 1b</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Participants’ assumptions, values and beliefs about teaching and learning (including teacher learning) | - digital content practices  
- digital networking practices  
- sharing practices |
| Contextual issues                 | - structural  
- agential |


The purpose of RQ 1a was to establish what OEP freelancers take part in:

- RQ 1a: Are freelance English language teachers taking part in OEP and if so, what are these practices?

The purpose of RQ 1b was to establish freelancers’ motives for taking part in OEP, or not:

- RQ 1b: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, why do they take part in these practices?

4.1.1 Assumptions, values and beliefs

Overall, participants’ assumptions, values and beliefs as language teachers underpin their motives for taking part in OEP or not. Further influences stem from factors emanating from and mediated through their immediate teaching and workplace environment and the broader ELT landscape. Participants’ assumptions and beliefs about their students’ language learning needs and expectations can constrain or enable their engagement in OEP.

The majority of participants are confident about what students do or do not want, and what motivates them to learn. Participants have a strong desire to motivate students and to satisfy their language learning needs and expectations. Leanne and Tammy’s comments are salient examples of how interviewees spoke about learners:

‘I know them and I know what they like and what they don’t.’
(Leanne)

‘We have to satisfy our students.’ (Tammy)

Participants accommodate to students’ learning needs and what they believe are student expectations. Simon explains why he localises OER and uses open technologies:

‘Not so much that students need it, but that they expect it and they want it.’
Similarly, Julie believes that using open technologies motivates students and it is her obligation to provide choices:

‘If I want my students to be interested, I have to provide them with some of those tools … that meet their needs and their interests.’

The majority of the participants associate the ‘younger generation’ with technical savviness. Rebecca, Julie, Treena, Tammy and Simon, used digital native discourse to describe students, and digital immigrant discourse to describe themselves (Prensky, 2001a, 2001b). The belief that students are digitally skilled and interested in technologies motivates participants to use open technologies such as social media tools in their teaching practices:

‘The younger the learner, the greater their expectations, the more savvy they are … the more entertainment they want. My job is to teach them English in a way that they can use it to communicate.’ (Simon)

‘So, the idea of using videos and the internet and especially for the younger generation they are so attached to it … the phone is almost a part of their body. It automatically turns them on and gets them interested.’ (Arnold)

A minority of participants did not take part in OEP because it was unsuitable for a specific context, e.g. conversation classes:

‘I’ve got one man who’s been coming to me for 11 years. We don’t use a thing. What we do is talk.’ (Rebecca)

Participants’ assumptions, values and beliefs as language teachers permeate the sub-themes. Therefore, further references are made to them as findings relating to the sub-themes are presented.

4.1.2 Digital content practices: what and why?

Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 present findings about the digital resources (OER and non-OER) that participants use, and also cover: copyright and licensing issues, their content-based practices, and motives for using digital content.
One criterion for selecting interviewees was their self-identified use of OER. Of the survey respondents, 20 (44.4%) identified as OER users and 25 (55.6%) indicated that they do not use OER, or not intentionally or knowingly. Fifteen respondents were recruited for an interview. Of these, 8 self-identified as OER users and 7 did not (see Table 11 below). Survey responses indicated that the 15 volunteers were all engaging in diverse participatory practices (e.g. commenting on blogs and sharing information) via social media platforms and other open technologies (e.g. blogs and YouTube). Therefore, the 7 respondents who identified as non-OER users could be recruited for an interview because they satisfied at least one of the selection criteria below:

- engaging in OER-based practices;
- engaging in digital networking practices, e.g. using Twitter/Facebook, for teaching and/or learning;
- using open participatory platforms, e.g. blogs and wikis, for teaching and/or learning.

Table 11: OER and non-OER users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OER users (8 interviewees)</th>
<th>Non-OER users (7 interviewees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Leanne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Tammy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treena</td>
<td>Nell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Emma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Julie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnold</td>
<td>Alicia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Copyright awareness

The majority of survey respondents are unfamiliar (66.7%, n=30), or not very familiar (22.2%, n=10) with CC licences, whereas 5 (11.1%) have some familiarity (see Figure 12, SQ 21). Of the 20 self-identified OER users, 11 (55%) were not at all familiar with CC licences, 6 (30%) were not too familiar and 3 (15%), were somewhat familiar with CC licences.

![Figure 12: SQ 21 Familiarity with CC licences.](image)

Of all the survey respondents, the majority believe copyright is important (62.2%, n= 28) and a minority signalled lack of importance (13.3 %, n=6) (see Figure 13, SQ 20).

![Figure 13: SQ 20 Importance of copyright.](image)

Interview data

Probing during the interviews provided deeper insight into participants’ understanding and awareness of OER and CC licences. The majority are concerned about copyright but when asked whether CC licences are used or recommended where they work, some did not recognise the term:
‘I don’t know what that is. What is that?’ (Nell)

Many interviewees reported feeling confused about CC licensing and terms and conditions on websites:

‘I think it’s (CC licensing) a bit complicated … it’s still better than the long texts (terms and conditions) that they (diverse websites) have. You can’t read the small print in the contract. Who reads that?’ (Matt)

‘The licences are a bit hazy.’ (Alicia)

The majority of interviewees assumed that many teachers breach copyright:

‘I think teachers have a disinclination to think about copyright. When you think how much gets photocopied illegally, people don’t worry too much about it.’ (Sam)

Sometimes copyright breach is intentional. Rebecca described copying and pasting from ELT resources when it is not legally permitted:

‘I know it’s not the right attitude. I’m just being honest. I certainly do things like that (breach copyright) and probably along with half the nation.’

A practice that seems common when participants use digital resources with learners, is providing a reference or hyperlink to the original source (for digital and print format):

‘If I use an article from a newspaper or magazine then I reference where I got it from, and when it was retrieved if I downloaded it from the internet.’ (Anna)

Freelancers do this even when they know they are breaching copyright:

‘When I copy from a textbook, and I know you’re not supposed to do that, but I do, because I think all teachers do. I don’t think I’m going to get arrested. I put the name of the book, the person who wrote it and the publisher on the resource.’ (Emma)
**Mixed ecology of resources: OER and non-OER**

Overall, survey findings show that respondents use diverse digital resources for teaching, i.e. quizzes and videos (84.4%, n=38). The majority download and adapt content for teaching purposes (93.3%, n=42) and use unmodified digital content (80%, n=36). A minority have shared resources that they have created (6.7%, n=3) or adapted (2.2%, n=1) on the internet (see Figure 14, SQ 11).

![Figure 14: SQ 11 Digital resource practices in the last 12 months.](image)

Self-identified OER users indicated that the most popular OER they have used in the last 12 months are: texts (85%, n=17), images (80%, n=16), videos (75%, n=15) and full lesson plans (60%, n=12) (see Figure 15, SQ 24).
The majority of OER users adapt OER (84.2%, n=16). Sharing practices are more popular via email (36.8%, n=7) compared with sharing via social media (21.1%, n=4) and other Web platforms (see Figure 16, SQ 25).

I questioned interviewees about the types of digital resources they accessed for teaching, the platforms they used, and their search strategies. The
majority of interviewees use a mixed ecology of resources (OER and non-OER) in their teaching practices and for their CPD. They access them from diverse sources, i.e. specific language teaching sites, broader educational sites, general websites and platforms that have educational and non-educational resources, e.g. YouTube. Non-digital resources are accessed or shared in physical contexts such as participants’ immediate teaching environment, at workshops, teacher conferences and informal teacher meetings. See Table 12 for the types of resources participants described and where they accessed them.

Table 12: Types of digital and non-digital resources: OER and non-OER.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of resources</th>
<th>Language teaching and educational sites and repositories</th>
<th>General websites</th>
<th>Physical contexts (print materials)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>images</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>texts</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>podcasts</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>webquests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quizzes</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lesson plans</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flash cards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>videos</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dictionaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infographics</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewees use different strategies for locating OER and non-OER (digital and non-digital) for teaching and for their CPD. They search familiar language teaching or educational sites, as well as:

- general websites;
- institutional or language centre repositories;
- Merlot (multidisciplinary resource repository);
- recommended sites from teachers;
- Web browsers, e.g. Google;
- explore links and tips shared openly via various educational sites such as language teaching publishers, e.g. Macmillan, and teaching associations;
- explore email links, e.g. from diverse newsletters, teaching associations and teacher friends;
- follow up social media platform notifications or actively search;
- follow up links shared via open platforms such as blogs and forums or actively search;
- ask for suggestions in digital contexts, e.g. social media sites, blogs and via email;
- ask for suggestions in non-digital contexts, e.g. workshops, informal teacher meetings and conferences.

An example of the websites the interviewees discussed have been categorised according to the types of resources, licensing and usage rights in Table 13 below (see Appendix K for further details).
When this data was reviewed and compared with individual transcripts, it was evident that self-identified non-OER users integrate a mixed ecology of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of websites accessed</th>
<th>CC licences: open to restrictive</th>
<th>Own licence: usage rights subject to terms and conditions</th>
<th>Copyright: usage rights subject to terms and conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Websites for images</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence. Photos in the Commons Project are public domain.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pixabay</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Changed from public domain to own licence in 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational: multimodal resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikipedia</td>
<td>Default CC BY SA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merlot</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites with a blend of educational and non-educational videos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TED Talks</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence.</td>
<td>Default standard YouTube licence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes/Games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizlet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahoot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
resources into their teaching practices (i.e. OER and non-OER), unknowingly and unintentionally because they lack awareness of OER or of CC licensing.

### 4.1.3 Engagement with OER and non-OER

The majority of the respondents use digital content to supplement and broaden their range of teaching material (88.9%, n=40), get ideas and inspiration (88.9%, n=40), and provide relevant (80%, n=36) and culturally diverse material to their learners (68.9%, n=31) (see Figure 17, SQ 13).

![Figure 17: SQ 13 Purpose of using digital resources in the last 12 months.](image)

OER users indicated using OER to supplement their teaching material (100%, n=20), gain ideas and inspiration (90%, n=18), and broaden the range of teaching materials used in class (85%, n=17) and given to students (75%, n=15). They use OER because it minimises creating materials from scratch (75%, n=15) and they are free (60%, n=12) (see Figure 18, SQ 26).
Findings relating to learning through OEP are presented in sections 4.5 and 4.6.

**Interview data**

During the interviews, the responses interviewees had provided in the survey were probed to ascertain whether they use OER and/or non-OER for further reasons, and to elicit whether intentional OER users prioritise OER, over non-OER, for teaching purposes. The main reasons for using OER and/or non-OER are:

- supplement or replace existing material;
- provide authentic and relevant resources;
- use the work of others as a benchmark;
- learn and develop.

The majority of interviewees supplement or replace existing teaching material for multiple reasons. Sometimes, this is prompted by their beliefs about coursebook limitations. Arnold described coursebooks as ‘lacking in a lot of things’ whereas Matt commented that ‘many coursebooks don’t have good videos’. Nell explained that she taught a fellow teacher’s conversation class for six months and had to locate and create relevant resources because no coursebook was used.

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**Figure 18: SQ 26 Why do you use OER?**
Authentic and relevant digital resources are sought to meet students’ learning needs and expectations. Authentic materials refer to resources that cover current topics and use language that is meaningful for learners and aids in motivating them (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018; Tomlinson, 2012; Mishran, 2005). For intentional OER users, these criteria take priority over whether a resource has a CC licence or not.

Treena explained that she uses TED Talks to prepare her students for real-world interactions because many of them do not communicate with native speakers of English and TED Talks enable them to ‘hear people speaking different varieties of English’. Treena always uses free digital resources, but ‘they are not always licensed’ because supplementing with ‘authentic material’ is more important. Similarly, Matt commented:

‘It doesn’t really matter where the material comes from. It’s just got to be relevant.’

Leanne explained that her older adult students are not interested in generic topics, so she uses materials from the Web that are relevant to their needs and interests:

‘Like I said … they’re older and don’t like talking about rock groups or what you’re buying your parents this Christmas. I’m being very straight. So, I take what I need online … it’s got to be real. It’s got to be, you know, more authentic than coursebook stuff. I know what they like.’

Simon spoke about the necessity to use videos from YouTube that were relevant to students’ needs in his varying ESP courses:

‘I access YouTube videos for my ESP courses quite a bit. Young people enjoy the videos. They want digital access and expect videos that are actual and real. They want to see things and hear specific language that they can use in their jobs.’

Further quotations from the interview transcripts relating to the relevance and authenticity of resources are provided in Appendix L.
Many interviewees compare what they do in their teaching practices with other educators who publish content:

‘I can compare how other teachers work. I can compare their ideas. I usually don’t get to meet other teachers while I’m working because I work in different schools. So that’s even more important because I’m rarely in direct contact with another teacher.’ (Debby)

Benchmarking is used to confirm if participants are on the right track:

‘It’s not just inspiration. It’s that feeling of: “right, that’s going on out there?”’, and “this is roughly what I’m doing”.’ (Anna)

‘I learn, or I see what I don’t know enough of. I learn about my own mistakes.’ (Treena)

And benchmarking can provide impetus for change:

‘I ask myself can I do this, or am I doing this already?’ (Matt)

The main reasons given for creating or co-creating materials with fellow teachers and/or students are:

- personalise content;
- save time;
- meet specific learning needs of students, i.e. language level and content area.

Interviewees explained that using online materials saved time, which was a motivating factor. However, freelancers such as Alicia, who works in an ESP context, finds it difficult and time-consuming to locate suitable resources. Therefore, she uses the experience and knowledge of her students to co-create materials with her for their classes. She explained that this saves time and is more meaningful for her learners:

‘There is some stuff out there. But for me, the most valuable material is the material that students generate. Then I can be sure that this is where they’re at and that this is where they need the language.’
Julie values the opportunity to co-create digital and non-digital material with fellow teachers at school because she gains new ideas and can improve her own resources:

‘I learn a lot. Sometimes you have your idea which is a good start. Then you brainstorm and we have a new and better resource. I love to work together like that.’

The majority of interviewees adapt both OER and non-OER for teaching purposes. Table 14 presents examples where the interviewees described the types of resource adaptations they made and why.

Table 14: Purpose and type of resource adaptation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of adaptation</th>
<th>Type of adaptation</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meet students’ language level and lesson needs.</td>
<td>Modify vocabulary and/or grammatical structures.</td>
<td>‘If it’s too difficult I might change some words, or I might explain some words.’ (Tammy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adapt length of text and simplify.</td>
<td>‘I might just make a text shorter or transcribe a video so we can work with the text. I change things so it’s easier for them to read and to work with.’ (Arnold)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcribe videos.</td>
<td>‘I’ll take that activity and leave out step five because I don’t want to do that.’ (Leanne)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scaffold: adapt steps in an activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mix different resources and content.</td>
<td>‘Taking bits and pieces and adapting them based on the students’ needs and my students’ interests.’ (Emma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet students’ interests.</td>
<td>Modify vocabulary and/or grammatical structures.</td>
<td>‘Especially for insurance and banking … I’d have to download and change it, adapt it to my class.’ (Simon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For an ESP context.</td>
<td>Change purpose of original activity.</td>
<td>‘I’ll make gap fills or take out the topic sentence, jumble them up and people will have to put the topic sentences back.’ (Alicia)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of interviewees adapt resources to:

- localise and personalise content to meet students’ language learning needs;
- motivate and interest students.

Interviewees explained that how and why they adapt resources is context-dependent. Adaptations can be minor, e.g. improving aesthetics by changing font and colour, shortening and/or simplifying texts, modifying vocabulary and grammatical structures, and adjusting a sequence in an activity. Sometimes, more substantial adaptations are required, such as remixing diverse resources into a lesson activity, repurposing resources to suit another activity, and adapting materials to suit a specific content area such as insurance.

Meeting students’ needs is a key reason for adapting resources:

‘I invest a lot of hours. It’s very rewarding. I can really adapt to the students rather than saying we’re just going to page so and so. My students don’t like that. They’re happy if they can have something where they feel I’ve invested time in it and adapted it to their needs.’ (Matt)

Similarly, other interviewees explained that they will take time to adapt resources if it contributes to student motivation.

The following section presents findings about participants’ participatory practices and covers their digital networking practices and use of open technologies. In addition, it provides evidence of their motives for engaging in these practices or not.

4.2 Participatory practices: what and why?

The majority of survey respondents (55.6%, n=25) indicate that enhancing their CPD is a motivating factor in using participatory tools; connecting with learners (40%, n=18) is the next common motive (see Figure 19, SQ 15). Less significant motivators include: improve professional profile (26.7%, n=12); connect with teachers (22.2%, n=10), and expand their personal learning network.
(20%, n=9). Sharing expertise (13.3%, n=6) and connecting with researchers (2.2%, n=1) recorded the lowest responses.

Figure 19: SQ 15 Purpose of participatory tools in the last 12 months.

Interview data

I questioned interviewees about their participatory practices and their motives for engaging in these practices or not. Table 15 summarises the participatory tools that interviewees discussed, and their motives for using them professionally.

Table 15: Participatory tools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open technologies</th>
<th>Interviewees (n=15) (Pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Professional motives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>8: Anna, Simon, Matt, Emma, Neil, Sue, Rebecca, Sam</td>
<td>gain ideas and inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4: Sue, Matt, Simon, Anna</td>
<td>network with teachers and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3: Sue; Matt, Simon</td>
<td>exchange ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>share content with teachers and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open technologies</td>
<td>Interviewees (n=15) (Pseudonyms)</td>
<td>Professional motives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Twitter</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3: Matt, Sue, Treena</td>
<td>gain ideas and inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2: Matt, Sue</td>
<td>network with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>exchange ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>share content with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LinkedIn</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6: Simon, Matt, Nell, Treena,</td>
<td>gain ideas and inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arnold, Rebecca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4: Simon, Matt, Nell, Arnold</td>
<td>network with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4: Simon, Matt, Arnold, Rebecca</td>
<td>job-seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2: Matt, Simon</td>
<td>exchange ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>share content with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blogs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7: Simon, Sue, Treena, Alicia,</td>
<td>gain ideas and inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leanne, Tammy, Treena</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3: Sue, Simon, Alicia</td>
<td>network with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>exchange ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2: Sue, Alicia</td>
<td>share content with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YouTube</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9: Simon, Sue, Alicia, Nell,</td>
<td>gain ideas and inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julie, Emma, Anna, Debby,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7: Simon, Julie, Anna, Rebecca,</td>
<td>share content with students and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nell, Sue, Debby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2: Rebecca, Debby</td>
<td>CPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning management system (LMS)</strong></td>
<td>3: Nell, Sue, Simon</td>
<td>gain ideas and inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>share content with teachers and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>inform students about administrative issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WhatsApp</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3: Debby, Arnold, Anna</td>
<td>share resources with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2: Debby, Arnold</td>
<td>send notifications about lessons and homework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of interviewees (n=8) use more than one participatory tool, with YouTube (n=9) and Facebook (n=8) being the most popular. The interviewees primarily use participatory tools for the following reasons:

- gain and share ideas about teaching content, teaching methods and teaching experiences;
- interact and network with teachers and students.

Interviewees described their interaction with specific platforms and users in different ways, e.g. as ‘observer’, ‘passive’, and ‘active’. Matt and Sue’s comments summarise how levels of interaction with specific tools can differ between users:

‘I use LinkedIn as a tool to stay in touch with people and to place myself on the job market. If there is a text that is interesting, I’ll post it on LinkedIn … my favourite platform. Facebook and Twitter I get notifications from. In Facebook, I’m in several teaching groups such as the Association. Sometimes when someone uploads a text, or links to a text, then I look at it and see if I want to read it. It’s the same with Twitter. I use it, but in a passive way. I read, I receive notifications and I have a quick look.’ (Matt)

Sue is referring to Twitter and Facebook:

‘I am in the position of observer. I’m isolated at the moment. So, I observe, but I also share ideas.’

The interviewees use Facebook and Twitter mainly to gain ideas about teaching content and methods, and to network. Some interact with students personally and professionally:

‘I use Facebook with a number of my learners especially the younger learners. I often help them with a CV, or an email, or a report, … and we interact. We’re friends on Facebook, but also professionally.’ (Simon)

Others were concerned about personal and professional boundaries becoming blurred with students’ parents:
‘I found with fellow teachers being on Facebook, parents connected with them and wanted to have contact. It’s so hard to draw the line.’ (Julie)

and preferred to respect students’ privacy:

‘I think my students have the right to express their opinions about me as a teacher. I don’t want to read that.’ (Julie)

Interviewees report consulting and commenting on blogs to gain ideas for teaching and for CPD (n=7), to network (n=3) and to share and exchange ideas (n=2). Alicia finds blogs useful for staying up to date in her ESP field, and values the content and ideas she gains for teaching purposes and for CPD:

‘It’s … like being a plant in a vase. You need to top it up with water all the time. That’s what these inputs are all about … to keep fresh.’

Treena finds reading teachers’ blogs useful because she is isolated and rarely has contact with other teachers:

‘I read blogs from teachers who write about their experiences as class teachers. It helps me a lot.’

YouTube is used mainly to gain ideas and inspiration for teaching (n=9), to locate and share learning materials with students and teachers (n=7), and for CPD (n=2). Rebecca described YouTube as a learning repository and consults recorded webinars relating to language teaching. A minority of participants have shared content on YouTube that has been co-created with students.

LMSs are used primarily to share curriculum materials with fellow teachers and students in an institution or language centre, and students interact with uploaded material in different ways:

‘We upload everything onto their platform. Some print it out. Most of them have a huge tablet where they have a program with software. They can highlight … take notes and that kind of stuff.’ (Nell)
WhatsApp is used by the minority (n=3) to share resources and information about lesson activities with students. Treena explained that she attempted to create a WhatsApp group with one class but decided against it due to concerns about inclusivity:

‘One person in class did not want that at all. I didn’t think it was a good idea to go ahead with that when one person wasn’t part of the team.’

The next section focuses on participants’ sharing practices, which includes sharing diverse resources (OER and non-OER) as well as ideas and expertise mediated through participatory tools, including email and LMSs, for teaching and learning.

4.3 Sharing practices

The majority of survey respondents willingly share content and ideas via email, but fewer use the Web or via social media. I questioned interviewees about their sharing practices to elicit the types of open sharing practices they engaged in, and with whom, and their motives for doing so.

Participants appreciate those who share openly on the Web:

‘I’m so thankful for all those people who put materials on the internet and make them available for teachers like us.’ (Sue)

The majority of interviewees (n=11) commented that they share resources and ideas with fellow teachers via participatory tools, and six described sharing language learning resources with students. Sometimes, these resources are not linked to classroom learning, but are used to motivate students and create interest, e.g. sharing humorous videos or texts.

Motives

The sharing practices that the interviewees described are context-dependent. Their reasons for sharing vary and can be motivated by altruism, reciprocity and demand-sharing, i.e. when someone requests a resource. Participants motives for sharing often overlap. The findings show that the format,
i.e. digital and/or non-digital, can influence how something is shared. The following quote illustrates demand-sharing:

‘It depends if the materials are available electronically. If I’ve seen somebody and they’ve said they find that useful, I’ll send it to them.’ (Sam)

Demand-sharing is perceived as valuable and beneficial to individual freelancers and groups. Alicia described sharing content and ideas with ESP teachers via an online forum:

‘If I need to know something you only need to ask. If you ask, you get the information. If they ask, they get information.’

Matt’s comment demonstrates how demand-sharing can be prompted:

‘Sometimes, a colleague comes in and asks what I’m doing. I tell them you can have it if you want. That’s the way I share.’

The availability of a repository or LMS can drive reciprocal and altruistic sharing and is supported by a culture of sharing:

‘There are different platforms that we use to make our ideas and lesson plans visible to all colleagues. If you need any ideas you can use it.’ (Sue)

‘There’s a dedicated back-office website for teachers. You can access a presentation on the server and it’s there. And another teacher could theoretically use that.’ (Nell)

Freelancers also share with students via diverse platforms:

‘I almost always create a WhatsApp group … I’m constantly sharing resources and links, just like I would with friends.’ (Arnold)

‘I’ll share a lot on Facebook. There’s a lot of funny memes about language, grammar and English inconsistencies. I’ll post it and within minutes about 20 of my learners will like it. They get a laugh
out of it. That’s a bit of indirect teaching. It’s about being in touch with my learners and not just soulfully, but professionally.’ (Sam)

The interviewees also described how links and notifications about teaching resources are shared with them via email and participatory tools. The volume of input via this route can be overwhelming:

‘The overload is enormous. I had to unsubscribe to a lot of stuff, which originally, I thought was useful. I just can’t take any more on board.’ (Alicia)

but can be controlled:

‘There’s just too much coming into my inbox. You need to know what you really want and what’s the essence of it.’ (Rebecca)

The next section presents findings about contextual issues that constrain and/or enable participants’ engagement with OEP.

4.4 Contextual issues

The contextual issues that influence participants’ OEP were only revealed in the interview data as a consequence of detailed probing about freelancers’ motives for engaging in OEP or not. Table 16 below provides an overview of the findings.
Table 16: Contextual issues: constraints and enablers to OEP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme:</th>
<th>Constraints and enablers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextual issues</td>
<td>(Figures relate to the number of interviewees who mentioned a specific constraint or enabler.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Structural issues** (sub-theme) | **Constraints:**  
- prescriptive policy, i.e. coursebooks prescribed (4)  
- class size and purpose (4)  
- structural and technical issues, e.g. lack of digital devices and internet connectivity (3)  
| **Enablers:**  
- teacher agency and autonomy (8) |
| **Agential issues** (sub-theme) | **Constraints:**  
- inadequate digital literacy skills (12)  
- lack of awareness/knowledge of CC licensing (8)  
- lack of awareness of OER (7)  
- discoverability (6)  
- inadequate social media literacy skills (4)  
- quality of OER (2)  
| **Enablers:**  
- awareness of CC licensing (7)  
- awareness of OER (5) |

**Structural issues**

Interviewees described how lack of infrastructure (e.g. digital devices) and technical issues (e.g. lack of internet connectivity) are context-dependent and can physically constrain and hinder the integration of OER and/or non-OER into lessons as well as their engagement with participatory tools:

‘We have internet access at school but the director said it’s for teachers and not for students.’ (Sam)
‘I’ve not been able to use the computer in the classroom because it hasn’t been set up.’ (Emma)

Conversely, adequate infrastructure can be an enabler and motivator:

‘We have fantastic facilities. I just walk in, plug it in and everything is there.’ (Nell)

‘This particular place is absolutely state-of-the-art. They’ve got one of these wonderful beamer things.’ (Rebecca)

Sometimes, teaching material is prescribed and/or participants are expected to encourage learners to use a LMS. When questioned about using OER with learners, Anna responded:

‘I would like to, but (institution’s name removed) has a rather restrictive policy. They have their own online learning platform where I should send people to those exercises.’

Not all comply with prescriptive policies:

‘With the groups from the (business name removed) we have books we’re supposed to work with … but I supplement a lot.’ (Matt)

Others who have more agency feel empowered:

‘I fully adapt my lessons. It’s nice to have this freedom as a freelancer. It’s a plastic way of doing things because you really work for your students.’ (Sue)

The size of a class and its purpose, e.g. conversation class, can influence decision-making concerning OEP:

‘My classes are very small: one-to-one. They do various activities and group work rather than something digital.’ (Alicia)

Leanne teaches a conversation class one hour per week and finds it ‘too much hassle’ to use digital resources or technologies for language learning. In
similar cases where participants also teach independently and have individual students, OEP are considered less relevant or appropriate for student learning.

Issues such as finding OER and locating good quality resources, were mentioned as factors that constrain participants from using specific Web platforms. Quality issues led the minority to be more critical when locating and evaluating resources:

‘You have to sift through a lot of material because it’s (iSL Collective) totally democratic. There’s a lot of mistakes with spelling and wrong information and grammar.’ (Arnold)

‘Merlot I use a lot. But all of these resources such as TED and others, I’ve noticed you have to be very careful because the quality is not always the same.’ (Treena)

Agential issues

Agential issues were also identified as influencing capacity to engage in OEP (see Table 16, p.141). The main constraints relate to participants’ lack of awareness and conceptual knowledge of OER and CC licensing, and inadequate digital literacy skills.

Copyright and CC licensing issues (see section 4.1.2) can cause confusion and uncertainty, and hinder participants from sharing on open platforms, but not in interpersonal situations or via email platforms and LMSs. Reasons given for not engaging in sharing practices varied, and were individual and context-dependent. For example, Alicia explained that although generic materials are shared in her ESP domain, there is little demand for localised content that is specific to different regions in Switzerland.

Matt and Sam are concerned about sharing on the internet because of copyright uncertainty:

‘I don’t post so much on the internet because I’m afraid of copyright. I’m not always sure if it’s ok.’ (Matt)
'If I just put a bunch of stuff out there on the network for free and it hasn’t been copyright approved, I have trouble with that.' (Sam)

The majority of interviewees (n=12) reported that they have inadequate digital literacy skills. However, self-evaluation of their capabilities varied depending on what they wanted to do. Rebecca explained why she has difficulties with participatory tools:

‘I’m so untechy. I’ve had to force myself over the years to make myself even just a bit techy … otherwise you’re hopeless … you fall totally behind.’

Participants’ beliefs about their students’ digital capabilities and potential access to broadband may influence whether they engage in OEP or not:

‘I couldn’t assume that the people I’ve taught have had internet access or could do very much on the internet.’ (Sam)

Nell explained how sceptical her students are, and felt that this influenced what participatory tools she could use in classes:

‘There is a huge move away from social media. I think a lot of it has to do with data protection.’

The minority are sceptical about data privacy which can constrain participants’ engagement in OEP:

‘Yes, my digital literacy skills for one thing. Second, would maybe be my scepticism … Big Brother is watching.’ (Emma)

A negative disposition can also act as a constraint:

‘I’m completely not into this stuff … I hate the way you just see people (puts her hand in front of her face mimicking someone staring into a phone) … I’m really against that. I’m old-fashioned.’ (Leanne)
4.5 Themes and sub-themes: RQ 2 and RQ 3

Chapter 3 (section 3.5.1) explained that participants’ learning and development through OEP varied depending on whether learning was occurring as an individual or a social process. I described what knowledge and skills participants developed through taking part in OEP as well as the learning strategies that contributed to their CPD. These themes and sub-themes are summarised in Table 17.

Table 17: Themes and sub-themes RQ 2 and RQ 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Learning what skills and knowledge?</th>
<th>Learning how?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(sub-themes RQ 2)</td>
<td>(sub-themes RQ 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning as an individual</td>
<td>- pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td>- reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process</td>
<td>- content knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- digital literacy skills</td>
<td>- learning by doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- critical awareness raised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning as a social</td>
<td>- pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td>- benchmarking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process</td>
<td>- content knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- digital literacy skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning as an individual process refers to:

- teaching practices associated with OER and non-OER, e.g. evaluation, adaptation and use/reuse;
- teacher learning practices associated with OER and non-OER, e.g. interacting with blogs and Web platforms (where resources can be accessed).

Learning as a social process refers to learning from and/or with other people and is enacted through:

- sharing practices, i.e. sharing content and/or teaching experiences;
• networking, which includes synchronous and asynchronous communication, or peripheral learning;
• collaborative activities.

I recognise that learning as an individual process is underpinned by social processes, i.e. access to OER and non-OER is mediated through engagement with participatory platforms on the Web. However, I want to distinguish between contexts where participants are learning from and/or with people in open spaces and through digital networking practices, and situations where participants are learning through interaction with materials for the purpose of teaching and/or learning. I feel that categorising freelancers’ learning as a) individual and b) through social processes provides a clearer overview of the findings, and facilitates deeper insight into what and how freelancers learn through these practices.

The findings in the next section address RQ 2:

• If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, what knowledge and skills do they learn or develop?

4.5.1 What knowledge and skills do freelancers learn or develop? (RQ 2)

In SQ 16, respondents were asked what they learn or develop when engaging in practices associated with: digital resources, i.e. evaluation, creation, use/reuse, adaptation and sharing; social media tools (e.g. Twitter), and with open technologies (e.g. blogs and YouTube). An overview of synthesised findings is presented below (see Figure 20). The term ‘digital resources’ was used in this section of the survey to gain an overview of freelancers’ general digital resource practices.
Responses suggest that freelancers learn and develop new knowledge and skills when engaging in practices linked to social media tools, digital resources and open technologies. The highest figures are recorded for activities associated with digital resources and the lowest for social media tools. Regarding digital resources, the majority of participants (67.4%, n=29) responded that they acquire mainly new knowledge about a topic (content knowledge). There is little difference among: developing digital skills (37.2%, n=16), knowledge about digital tools and technologies (39.5%, n=17), and teaching methods (39.5%, n=17).

OER users indicated that they use OER to learn about a new topic (80%, n=16), stay up to date (75%, n=15), and enhance their CPD (65%, n=13) (see Figure 18, SQ 26, section 4.1.3). In SQ 27 (see Figure 21, below), the majority of respondents (75%, n=15) indicated that using OER has contributed to their knowledge about topics related to language teaching, helped to broaden their range of teaching methods (65%, n=13), and improved their digital skills (50%, n=10). A minority have a better understanding of CC licences (10%, n=2).
Interview data

The interviews enabled me to explore freelancers’ CPD through OEP in more depth. Leanne’s interview data is excluded because she responded vaguely when asked about CPD, which made it difficult to assign suitable codes to her transcript. She is 'less interested’ in CPD because she teaches only one conversation class per week. Therefore, interview findings for RQ 2 and RQ 3 relate to 14 interviewees.

Interviewees reported that they learn pedagogical and content knowledge, and develop their digital literacy skills and a raised critical awareness of issues associated with OER and non-OER from taking part in OEP. Table 18 below provides a description of these sub-themes and lists interviewees who provided examples of one or more of these types of knowledge and skill areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge or Skill Area</th>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a more up-to-date knowledge of topics related to language teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using OER has helped to broaden my range of teaching methods</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my digital skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using OER doesn’t contribute to my professional development</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of Creative Commons licenses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21: SQ 27 How does OER contribute to your professional development?
Table 18: RQ 2 Learning and developing what through OEP?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ 2 Learning and developing what?</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
<th>Discussed by: (14 from 15 interviewees represented.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td>Pedagogical knowledge refers to learning about theory or teaching methods and/or approaches.</td>
<td>Rebecca, Nell, Matt, Debby, Sam, Julie, Simon, Tammy, Alicia, Arnold, Anna, Sue, Treena (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content knowledge</td>
<td>Content knowledge refers to learning about a specific topic and/or language-teaching domain.</td>
<td>Rebecca, Nell, Matt, Debby, Julie, Simon, Tammy, Alicia, Arnold, Sue, Emma, Treena (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital literacy skills</td>
<td>Digital literacy skills refers to the development of technical skills and improved knowledge (pedagogical and technical) about using specific digital tools.</td>
<td>Nell, Matt, Julie, Simon, Alicia, Arnold, Anna, Treena (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical awareness raised</td>
<td>Critical awareness raised refers to being more critical when evaluating the quality and suitability of OER and non-OER for teaching.</td>
<td>Arnold, Anna, Treena (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pedagogical knowledge*

Overall, the majority of interviewees responded that engaging in OEP has improved their pedagogical (n=13) and content knowledge (n=12), and contributed to the development of their digital literacy skills (n=8). A minority (n=3) reported that they were more critical when evaluating the quality of OER and non-OER for teaching.

Sam’s comment is typical of interviewees’ attitudes towards learning:

‘I’m a learner first and foremost. To be a good teacher, you need to be a good learner.’

Interviewees’ comments about pedagogical knowledge were sometimes articulated in general terms, e.g. Sam was asked to clarify what he meant by pedagogical knowledge development:
'It's probably … sort of theoretical development and ideas that are becoming current. It's interesting to see them emerge and get talked about.'

Simon’s comment typifies how interviewees responded to questions about what they learn through OEP. Simon is referring to OER, in particular, videos that other teachers share online which provide insight into their teaching practices:

‘I pay attention as a fellow professional. I hope I can learn and I do. It’s how they do it … how they manage large groups, a small conversation … how they manage difficult questions. It might be a difficult grammar question or a cultural question. To really see what others are doing with digital resources and online platforms encompasses so much.’

Similarly, other interviewees described learning from teachers’ YouTube videos, or learning openly from webinars in which they had participated synchronously or had viewed later on YouTube:

‘I learned about different ways of expressing a tricky point.’
(Rebecca)

‘I get inspired. I get new ideas about teaching from different angles.’ (Debby)

**Content knowledge**

Interviewees (n=12) who reported learning new things about content, provided examples associated with ESP classes, conversation classes, or general English classes. Alicia explained how she gains ideas about content from reading and evaluating ESP teachers’ blogs:

‘The ideas, you can use, and the substance. If you’re talking to lawyers you need to know the subject. And you constantly need the input.’

Nell explained that teaching in an ESP domain means she has to keep up to date with relevant content. Evaluating and adapting resources for students
contributes to her knowledge development. She showed me an example of a text and grammar worksheet that she had adapted to meet her students’ needs and explained how, in the process, she had learned more about blockchain during the process:

‘You’ve got to research it because you’ve got students in your class who are specialists. Doing the conditional exercise that I showed you there, those are difficult conditionals and by using blockchain terminology in the exercise, that’s what I mean about learning. So, I’ve definitely learned a lot.’

Digital literacy skills

Digital literacy skills development was sometimes described in general terms:

‘I would definitely say my skills have developed.’ (Nell)

And in some cases, participants’ responses were stimulated by retrospective reflection during the interview:

‘So, back to talking about learning. I think my digital skills are better through trial and error. It’s not something you stop and think about. Yes, mostly I think it’s trial and error.’ (Arnold)

‘Good question. What do I learn? It depends. You’re not always aware of it. Yes, I think I learn about technology along the way but at my level it’s pretty basic stuff.’ (Alicia)

Other interviewees were more specific. Treena described how sharing her resources online, e.g. presentations and photographs, has improved her digital literacy skills. She is conscious of the need to develop her digital literacy skills which drives her to engage in these activities:

‘These types of practices and using different tools play an important role in my professional development and in my work … as a freelance teacher.’
Treena added that developing pedagogical knowledge and/or technical skills through digital networking practices and interacting with blogs increases her confidence and contributes to her CPD:

‘I won’t go into a classroom knowing that I don’t feel comfortable in one area or another. That’s why I continue looking for opportunities to improve my skills and knowledge.’

Simon explained that at one institute they have three LMSs that they use with different classes. Therefore, he has had to learn how to use the LMSs in order to teach his students how to use them:

‘I sit in front of them and say … open your laptop, your phone, iPad. I’m going to show you things on the platform. I have to know how to use it because I have to train them. They’re all much better digitally than I am but I have to show them what to do.’

**Critical awareness raised**

Three freelancers described how their critical awareness has been raised by taking part in OER-based practices. I asked them whether they learn from practices such as evaluating and adapting materials:

‘Yes, for sure, it helps you to read with a critical eye, helps you to learn. You can encounter other teachers’ work which you can use or imitate.’ (Arnold)

‘I look at work and I see that exercises are sometimes absolute nonsense, or the sequence is not right, or even huge mistakes in the exercises. So, I’ve become more critical thanks to experiences like that where I’ve found material online.’ (Treena)

‘I learn skills through adapting, especially when I reword and kind of pick up on vocabulary that hasn’t been picked up … so analysis skills are certainly something that I’ve learned and sometimes only realised after the fact.’ (Anna)
Summary

To summarise, the findings indicate that participants’ engagement with OEP has contributed to the development of their pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge and digital literacy skills. A minority of interviewees have become more critical when evaluating the quality and suitability of resources for teaching purposes.

The following section addresses RQ 3 and provides examples of how learning is prompted through participants’ engagement with OEP:

- If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, how do they learn and develop such knowledge and skills?

4.6 Learning as an individual process (RQ 3)

When questioned about how they learn or develop new knowledge and/or skills from digital content-based practices, the majority of survey respondents (56.8%, n=25) indicated that they learn by reflecting on how digital resources can be created or adapted to suit learners’ needs, and thinking about new pedagogical approaches (56.8%, n=25). Of the respondents, 47.7% (n=21) indicated that they learn by browsing and evaluating other teachers’ materials that have been shared online. Lower figures were recorded for learning through the process of creating or adapting resources (27.3%, n=12). In 27.3% of cases (n= 12), respondents indicated that they do not learn anything, or are unaware of any impact on their learning (see Figure 22, SQ 17).
The majority of OER users (60%, n=12) indicated that using OER acts as a driver for reflection (see Figure 23, SQ 28). Learning by creating and adapting OER was cited by 35% (n=7), and the same figure was recorded for learning by comparing how other teachers create OER. Therefore, other teachers’ OEP act as a benchmark.

Figure 22: SQ 17 How freelancers learn through practices associated with digital content.

Figure 23: SQ 28 Learning and developing through practices associated with OER.
When questioned about how they develop new knowledge and skills, interviewees frequently responded that this was done through reflection on both OER and non-OER-based practices:

‘It’s through reflecting on the material and the process of working with the material.’ (Alicia)

‘I’m constantly reflecting on the things that I use.’ (Arnold)

Overall, interviewees described more than one informal learning process that contributed to their CPD. Interviewees reported how digital content practices, e.g. evaluation, adaptation and reuse, prompt reflection, and they often linked the process of reflection to learning by doing and benchmarking:

‘It makes me reflect. It also relates to my personal development. I can compare how other teachers work, or I can compare their ideas.’ (Debby)

‘It’s very much a part of reflection … I compare myself with others. It’s like watching you and seeing what you’re doing. And then “okay… that’s not how I would do it”, or I might think, “that’s an interesting way of doing things”.’ (Simon)

In other instances, interviewees reported learning by doing and reflection:

‘I learn through … experimenting and through trial and error, and through … reflecting on things. There’s a lot of self-reflection. The reflection that happens has made me sometimes too critical.’ (Treena)

Others described the learning process as cyclical:

‘It’s a complex network of input and then reflection and then shifting things around.’ (Alicia)

‘Adapting texts to the level of students, that was mainly trial and error and learning by doing. And realising that maybe this could
have been modified or simplified so the next time I go back, I know what key points I should look at and maybe simplify. With other things, it's kind of learning by doing and sometimes also reflection.’ (Anna)

Anna’s comment was followed by an extensive description of how she works with different classes and is constantly reviewing, reflecting and adapting materials and using them with other learners.

The learning strategies: reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking, also acted as a catalyst for learning as interviewees engaged in digital networking practices facilitated through social media sites and open technologies for teaching purposes and their own CPD. These findings are presented in the following section.

4.6.1 Learning as a social process (RQ 3)

Participants were asked in SQ 18 (see Figure 24) how they learn when using social media tools and open technologies for teaching purposes. Of these, 46.7% (n=21) responded that they learn through reflection, trying out new technologies (42.2%, n=19), and by reading discussions (40%, n=18). A minority (8.9%, n=4) indicated that they learn by engaging in discussions. In comparison with the responses for SQ 17 (see Figure 22, p. 154), the overall figures are lower which suggests that respondents learn and develop more from practices associated with digital resources than from participatory practices.

![Figure 24: SQ 18 Learning and developing through practices associated with participatory tools.](image-url)
Interview data

I probed participants’ survey responses about learning through digital networking practices and open technologies to gain a deeper understanding of how they learned through these practices. Matt described using LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. When he finds an idea about a teaching approach in a post or discussion interesting, he reflects on it, which can lead to learning:

‘I think about it and … relate it to my teaching. I ask myself, “can I do this or am I doing this already?” Maybe, there’s something I learn to improve my teaching. To test it, or check it, or to learn, I also need texts because it’s a process.’

The following example provides insight into the interconnectedness of the learning processes, i.e. reflection, benchmarking, and learning by doing:

‘What you have to do is check it out yourself and try it and apply it to your groups … see how it works and how you can work with it.’

(Matt)

Similarly, Rebecca’s comment typifies how interviewees described the interconnectedness of learning processes. She described learning from openly shared ideas about methodology:

‘It’s trying out the ideas but also thinking about whether it’s going to work with my students. It’s both things … it provokes you into thinking about other things and relationships with concepts so you can think about that and your students.’

Reflection involved not only giving thought to how a particular method or approach could be used, but also analysing how it would suit a specific context and learner/s. Sometimes reflection occurred in-action:

‘Sometimes, you have to adapt by doing. Class to class can be really different. You can apply one technique in this class, but it will not be possible in others. I could plan something, but change it in the course of the lesson to do something totally different.’ (Sue)
And reflection occurred after a lesson:

‘I think about my students a lot. I leave a classroom … get a bus or train … I’ve got time to think and I do. I sometimes think “you know, … that could’ve been better”.’ (Simon)

Overall, interviewees value social interaction and learned from engaging in online discussions, sharing and exchanging ideas, and working collaboratively to develop resources:

‘I enjoy doing online webinars and TED talks. But in my opinion, there’s nothing like being in the room with peers … particularly people who are much more experienced and educated as teachers.’ (Simon)

Alicia described learning about content and methodology by having discussions, and sharing and exchanging ideas and resources with ESP association members on a digital forum:

‘It’s a brilliant organisation. I love it … there’s a lot of exchange. Going back, people were literally desperate to know how to teach. And then it was used a lot.’

Sam values learning through social interaction but described its haphazard nature:

‘It’s a bit haphazard. That doesn’t make it (learning) less valuable. It comes about through interaction and talking to each other … When it does come it’s a very valuable thing.’

Overwhelmingly, interviewees attributed their digital skills and knowledge development to learning by doing and to benchmarking:

‘My digital skills have improved … it’s a mixture of working with specific tools and learning from others.’ (Simon)

‘My digital skills are better through trial and error … it’s also from being forced to always have digital documents so that I can come
to the school and display them on the beamer, or print them off.’
(Arnold)

A few interviewees reported having to learn to use specific technologies (e.g. a LMS) or integrating digital technologies and resources into their classroom practice to comply with institutional requirements and expectations. Interviewees explained that they improved their digital literacy skills through learning by doing, and observing how other teachers used open technologies via social media and other participatory platforms.

**Summary**

The findings in this section indicate that participants are learning and developing new knowledge and skills through their engagement with OER and non-OER-based practices (individual processes) and through interactions mediated through broader OEP (social processes). Participants’ learning was stimulated through reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking. Section 4.7 presents evidence of how such knowledge and skills development is leading to changes in participants’ teaching practices. Section 4.8 illustrates the role that these practices play in their CPD.

### 4.7 Changes to teaching practices

Data generated through the interviews provided deeper insight into participants’ learning through OEP. Overall, interviewees expressed their passion for teaching and desire to motivate students and improve their learning. The majority (n=9) described how learning through OEP has led to changes in their teaching practices. Some explained that this has prompted them to reflect on their pedagogical approaches and use of digital content:

‘Sometimes there are things that I’m familiar with already and that I’ve stopped using … That’s a reminder that I should take them out of the drawer and try it again.’ (Treena)

Others discussed how implementing new methods and introducing students to open technologies has led to positive changes in student learning and motivation, which in turn, motivates them as freelancers. Interviewees indicated
that they monitor the success or failure of a new teaching approach or method used in class by students’ reactions:

‘That’s the point of learning how to do something better. That’s the motivation, not just to learn, but to learn how to implement it in my teaching. If students aren’t unchanged after one of my lessons, then I’ve failed.’ (Simon)

‘It’s a good change because students really appreciate it and have fun. I like applying games and really playing with teaching methods. This creates a lovely atmosphere. I look forward to teaching and I love it.’ (Sue)

Nell and Alicia sought student feedback about changes they had made in their teaching contexts. Nell surveyed her students via Survey Monkey:

‘I wanted to know how it was going … so I did a survey. It was good to see some of those changes like using different media, using iPhone, iPad, using YouTube was well accepted by students.’

while Alicia sought feedback during lessons:

‘I love it because I learn such a lot. That’s clearly what it’s about. I share the bits that I’ve learned with my students. And the feedback I get is really good.’

Digital skills and knowledge development have also led to personal and professional growth:

‘It makes me more confident and I feel more professional.’ (Matt)

‘I still have to learn … but I’m really excited about that. This definitely makes me more confident. It’s my responsibility to feel comfortable using these tools because that’s the world we live in.’ (Treena)
‘You change … you don’t get stuck in your old ways, or ideas, … that’s why I love it.’ (Julie)

Before interview closure, I invited participants to comment on the role that OEP play in their CPD. The findings are presented in the following section.

4.8 Contribution to CPD

The majority of interviewees hold strong beliefs about CPD, and feel it is their responsibility as typified in Nell’s comment:

‘I think shame on the teacher who’s not willing to do professional development in whatever capacity.’

Overwhelmingly, the interviewees value and appreciate teachers who openly share their expertise and teaching resources. They are grateful for the plethora of learning opportunities afforded through OEP and the open Web in general. They provided multiple reinforcing arguments about why they engage in these practices, as summarised below:

- keep up to date with changes in ELT;
- get ideas and inspiration;
- learn about new teaching methods and approaches;
- learn about using open technologies with students;
- develop more confidence to use open technologies;
- feel accountable for their CPD.

Sue’s comment captures how access to learning opportunities afforded through OEP is appreciated:

‘We are privileged to have all these different resources … working with any aspect of language teaching has become so much easier. Those professional sites and others are just fantastic. The videos are great … I’m just so grateful. It’s an ongoing process to catch up with all the novelties. Technology allows us to do that … as well as make these fantastic contacts with other colleagues.’

Treena described positive and negative aspects of learning through OEP:
‘These types of practices and using different tools play an important role in my professional development and in my work as a freelance teacher. This way of doing things is very enriching but also time-consuming. That’s the negative aspect. I find myself surfing a lot, … and discovering things that can’t be used. But these opportunities … I would not be able to live without them. I’m interested, and the more I explore, the better equipped I am to notice which direction I should go.’

Julie’s comment exemplifies how freelancers feel the necessity to develop specific skills to keep up to date:

‘They play a big role in my professional development lately because I really have to tackle with it (digital literacy skills). I think, “are you going to be that teacher who has no idea of anything that students use in their daily life or do I tackle it and try to learn about it”?’

In some instances, this part of the interview stimulated retrospective reflection and prompted participants to think about their future actions. For example, reflecting on her current competencies (i.e. technical and pedagogical) made Emma realise that she needed to develop her skills:

‘I haven’t really thought about the role these things have on my professional development. This is like, wow, what a wonderful experience with you. It’s made me realise that I need to pull up my cotton socks and get back in the ballgame. I want to learn … but I just don’t know where to begin, and I think that’s very typical with teachers. What I do is play the ostrich and put my head in the sand. I get depressed because I love learning.’

Similarly, Nell felt motivated by the discussion and described what she had learned during the interview process:

‘Like I said, these things play a huge role in my professional development. And I’m going to go and look now at teachers’ blogs that you mentioned and to materials in other open spaces. To be
frank, I’d never considered some of these things. You know, at this stage in my teaching life it’s not just seeing things to confirm, “okay yes, I’m on the right road”, it’s about knowing how to motivate somebody who’s stuck.’

4.9 Summary

The findings indicate that participants in this enquiry are taking part in OER and non-OER-based practices, and broader OEP that relate to their use of open technologies for teaching purposes and for participants’ CPD. Overwhelmingly, participants’ assumptions, values and beliefs as language teachers inform their motives for taking part in OEP or not. Several contextual issues (i.e. structural and agential) were identified that hampered or enabled participants’ engagement with OEP. Conditions constraining participants’ OEP included, lack of access to digital infrastructure, restrictive workplace policies that did not permit the use of supplementary teaching materials, and participants’ lack of awareness of OER and CC licensing and their lack of digital literacy skills. In many cases the opposite of these conditions acted as enablers, e.g. access to adequate infrastructure, and the autonomy and agency to use supplementary materials and technologies in class, motivated and empowered participants to take part in OEP.

The evidence clearly shows that participants are learning and developing new knowledge and skills through their engagement with OEP, i.e. pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, digital literacy skills, and a raised critical awareness of issues relating to OER and non-OER such as the quality and relevance of resources for teaching purposes. Participants’ learning is occurring through their engagement with content-based practices (individual processes) and through broader OEP, i.e. social processes mediated through their interaction with open technologies (e.g. social media tools). Reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking were identified as informal learning strategies, and interrelated processes, that contributed to the development of participants’ learning and development.

Some interviewees reported that the knowledge and skills they have developed have led to changes in their teaching practices. These changes have reportedly had a positive impact on student learning and motivation. Finally, the
interviewees explained that they value the benefits afforded through their engagement with OEP for varied reasons such as the impact on their teaching practices, their CPD, and their confidence and sense of professionalism.

The following chapter discusses the research findings in relation to relevant literature underpinning this study. Where appropriate, I discuss how the choice of methodology and methods for this enquiry impacted on data generation.
Chapter 5 Discussion

Introduction

The previous chapter presented detailed findings from this small-scale, qualitative case study which is framed within an interpretative paradigm. The themes and sub-themes that were generated from the survey and interview data using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006) were presented and supported by results from the survey (n=45 respondents), and extensive quotes from the interviewees (n=15). It is important to note that according to Braun and Clarke (2019), the researcher and their subjectivities play a central role in the interpretation of the data. Therefore, data analysis in this enquiry was guided by my interpretation of the data and informed by my research focus as well as my experiential knowledge as a freelance English language teacher in Switzerland. By taking a case study approach and a sociocultural perspective to this research, I aimed to provide a rich and unique insight into freelancers’ engagement with and informal learning through OEP.

Participants’ assumptions, values and beliefs about teaching and learning, including teacher learning, were identified as a key theme underpinning their motives for taking part in OEP, i.e. OER-based practices, and broader OEP which includes participants’ open sharing practices. Contextual issues that shape participants’ engagement with OEP (i.e. structural and agential issues) were identified as a second key theme. Four RQs were designed to generate data that would address this research focus, and they are used to structure this chapter. The generated themes and sub-themes (see Table 10, section 4.1 and Table 17, section 4.5) are discussed in each section where they are relevant to the RQ. I compare this study’s findings with the reviewed literature and draw conclusions that aid in guiding the development of recommendations for professional practice and policy, and also for further research. These recommendations are discussed in the final chapter.

I begin by discussing what OEP participants are taking part in (RQ 1a), and the reasons why (RQ 1b) they engage in these practices or not. Answering these RQs sets the discussion for the second part of the chapter which focuses on what
(RQ 2) and how (RQ 3) participants learn through their engagement with OEP. The findings reveal that the development of new knowledge and skills has led to changes in some participants’ teaching practices. Participants’ interpretations of these changes are discussed towards the end of the chapter along with the role that OEP play in their CPD.

5.1 OER-based practices: what and why?

The findings in the previous chapter indicate that participants are taking part in OEP and that their motivations are personal and context-dependent, which accords with numerous OEP studies (e.g. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Cronin, 2017; Clements and Pawlowski, 2012).

The survey findings indicate that participants use a broad range of digital resources for teaching but only a minority use OER and take part in OER-based practices, such as the reuse, creation, adaptation, and sharing of OER for teaching and learning purposes. The most popular types of OER used by participants are texts (85%), images (80%), and videos (75%). Videos are used more frequently in comparison to findings from other OER surveys (e.g. Jhangiani et al., 2016; Perryman and Seal, 2016; de los Arcos et al., 2014). A possible explanation for the variations in usage patterns is the differences in educational settings and most likely educators’ motives for using OER. For example, survey respondents in this enquiry overwhelmingly use OER to supplement teaching material such as coursebooks which suggests that coursebook materials and other standardised resources do not adequately meet their students’ learning needs. Furthermore, the findings show that participants not only use OER but peruse them to gain inspiration for teaching which accords with related studies (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Baas et al., 2019; Weller et al. 2015). The interview findings provided a more detailed insight into participants’ OER-based practices.

The interview data revealed that all the interviewees (n=15) use OER and non-OER for teaching and learning. However, when investigating patterns in each interviewee’s transcript for their use of open platforms for digital content practices, I found that the seven interviewees who responded on the survey that they do not use OER, were indeed using them, albeit unknowingly. This suggests a lack of awareness of OER which is discussed in section 5.3.3. Therefore, I interpreted
their OER-based practices as unintentional compared to the participants who reported that they use OER.

This specific finding illustrates the value of using two data generation methods in this study. Data generated from the interviews enabled a deeper insight into each participant’s OEP compared with the online survey data which provided the breadth of information. This example accords with the view that semi-structured interviews are a useful method for capturing multiple perspectives (Stake, 1995) and for generating rich data which is the purpose of case study research (Yin, 2014; Merriam, 1998). The semi-structured interviews proved to be a valuable data generation method because I could probe interviewees’ survey responses for more detail concerning each RQ.

Little OER are used by the majority of participants in this enquiry. Little OER differ from big OER in their granularity, quality and educational intentions (Weller, 2011) (see section 2.2.1), and might not be explicitly designed for learning purposes. Little OER are typically shared on websites such as YouTube and Flickr (Weller, 2011) which are just two of the platforms that the interviewees reported using regularly for teaching purposes. In particular, YouTube is used by the majority of interviewees to access resources for teaching purposes and to gain inspiration.

The interview data revealed that the lack of an explicit educational aim attached to a little OER does not deter participants from using materials from third-party sites for teaching. A plausible explanation is that the majority of participants feel confident about evaluating and adapting both OER and non-OER based on their students’ learning needs (see section 5.1.1). If participants consider a resource relevant they will adapt it irrespective of what it was originally intended for (e.g. educational or non-educational purposes). The interviewees did not mention big OER such as open textbooks or open online courses. However, this does not mean that they are not being used for teaching purposes.

Regarding the OER users who knowingly use OER, it is not easy to determine why they use OER in some teaching scenarios and not in others. This is because the relevance and authenticity of a resource were identified as key criteria for all the interviewees when choosing teaching resources. These criteria
took priority over whether a resource had a CC licence or not and concurs with related research (e.g. Baas et al. 2019; de los Arcos et al. 2014). Authentic materials are resources that are meaningful for learners so that they can develop language skills relevant to their real-world contexts (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018). Arnold reported using OER such as videos and texts to supplement coursebooks because of the lack of relevance to his students’ needs. Likewise, Matt commented that coursebooks lack suitable videos and texts and he uses TED talks instead because of their currency and authenticity. Similarly, Treena uses TED Talks to expose her learners to diverse varieties of English to prepare them for real-world interactions. Simon also uses different types of OER because of their authenticity and relevance to his teaching contexts.

In these examples, OER were sought by participants from specific platforms to supplement coursebook materials because of their currency, authenticity, and relevance to students’ needs, which accords with other language-teacher research (Thoms et al. 2018; Thoms and Thoms, 2014). Thoms and colleagues (2018) reported that language teachers who used OER preferred them to coursebooks because of the criteria reported here. However, the findings in this thesis move beyond their conclusions. The evidence shows that participants integrate OER and non-OER into their teaching practices, which suggests that non-OER can also fulfil these criteria. Distinguishing between openly licensed resources and other available materials on the Web is not always the main priority for them. If participants consider the resources authentic and relevant for their teaching contexts, this has more significance because of the relevance to their students’ learning needs and interests.

Concerning the interviewees who use OER unknowingly, it was not possible to identify differences in their motives for using non-OER as opposed to OER. Nonetheless, the relevance and authenticity of a resource are as important to these participants when they are evaluating resources for their students, as they are to participants who recognised their OER use. Participants working in ESP contexts, e.g. Alicia and Nell, expressed the need to have authentic resources for their adult learners because this increased the relevance of material for learning purposes and increased student engagement. And Leanne explained that it was
important to provide students with relevant materials because topics in
coursebooks were too generic.

The interview data revealed that coursebooks are either prescribed for
participants or they select them, and class time is often limited, e.g. Leanne’s
conversation class meets once a week. These language teaching conditions are
common in Switzerland (Pfenninger and Watts, 2020) and in EFL contexts in
general (Collins and Muñoz, 2016). This can make it challenging for language
teachers to assist their students develop balanced speaking, listening, reading and
writing skills, and particularly in classes that have mixed-levels of learners.
Therefore, to increase students’ exposure to the English language, in and beyond
the classroom, it would be expected that participants in this enquiry provide
learners with media-rich resources that are authentic and meaningful.

There are expectations of language teachers to use authentic materials that
are rich and culturally relevant for learners (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018; Mishan,
2005). Coursebooks are frequently criticised for their lack of relevance and
authenticity (Tomlinson, 2012; Mishran, 2005), so to mitigate acknowledged
limitations, it is recommended that language teachers provide learners with a
range of authentic, supplementary materials (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018;
Tomlinson, 2012). Therefore, an argument for promoting language teachers’ use
of OER is that they can be adapted (UNESCO, 2012) which means that teachers
can improve them and increase the relevance to students’ needs.

The interview data clearly indicates that participants are confident about
their students’ needs and expectations and foreground these factors when
choosing and evaluating learning resources to improve their students’ learning
experiences (see section 4.1.1 for examples). The interviewees make a
connection between the integration of relevant and authentic resources, and
learner interest, motivation, and learning. This enquiry indicates that student
motivation can influence participants’ behaviour to enact change, i.e. if something
is successful with learners, participants will put it into practice again despite the
effort involved. Indeed, many participants explained that they felt personally
rewarded when students were motivated, and when their work as teachers was
appreciated. Participants correlated student motivation with the types of learning
resources, open technologies and teaching methods used in class. This finding
closely accords with Guskey’s (2002) model of teacher change which suggests that if a teacher sees positive outcomes in student learning, motivation and behaviour, then this acts as a catalyst for change in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs. It is worth noting that the teaching experience of the interviewees in this enquiry range from 11 to 44 years, so findings may have been different with less experienced freelancers.

It can be seen from the findings and the examples provided, that participants are capable of evaluating the needs of their students against coursebooks materials and want to introduce materials that are better suited to their learners’ needs. This accords with Hood (2018) who recommends that language teachers have the flexibility to do this. The findings show that participants choose materials primarily based on the criteria authenticity and relevance. What is interpreted as authentic and relevant is context-dependent and evaluated against students’ learning needs and interests. The participants believe that providing students with resources that fit these criteria increases student engagement and motivation and enhances their learning. Overwhelmingly, these criteria are prioritised over copyright restrictions on resources.

5.1.1 Adaptation and creation of resources

Evidence in this enquiry indicates that the majority of participants adapt materials to improve and personalise resources so that they are relevant for students. This finding accords with other research in the broader ELT domain where adapting materials is recognised as a common practice (Tomlinson, 2012) and considered necessary if teachers, in general, are to provide students with resources that support meaningful learning (Hood, 2018).

The survey responses in this study show that the majority of respondents who use OER adapt them for pedagogical purposes. Adapting OER has been identified in other studies as a significant practice (Perryman and Seal, 2016; de los Arcos et al., 2014), but the interview data generated here provided more insight into what adaptations participants make to resources and why. Interviewees adapt materials to localise content, to motivate and improve students’ learning experiences and meet their expectations. Treena reported adapting OER because resources are often unsuitable as they are. Simon commented that he is
more likely to adapt OER for ESP classes as opposed to general English courses because ‘someone else has already done the work’. This could be an indication that there is a lack of availability of OER for ESP, but these comments also show that adapting OER is context-dependent. It follows that teachers will make adaptations based on criteria that are relevant to their students learning needs and their teaching practices.

The resource adaptations that interviewees described ranged from minor modifications, e.g. shortening and/or simplifying texts, adjusting a sequence in an activity; to remixing a combination of resources and adapting materials to suit specific ESP areas, e.g. banking. Adaptations were made to align with students’ language level and the purpose of the lesson. de los Arcos et al. (2014) also noted that the range of OER adaptations identified in their study differed from minor to more complex changes and suggested that this was an ‘impact of openness’ (p. 14), i.e. OER provide educators with the flexibility to adapt resources as needed. The process of adapting materials has been noted in related OER and OEP research as being important for language teachers (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Beaven, 2018; Thoms et al., 2018). Beaven (2018) reported similar resource adaptations by language teachers to those found in this study, with the purpose and types of OER adaptations identified as being individual and contextualised. Although some interviewees in the study reported here described the process of adaptation as time-consuming, the evidence shows that they will invest time if they believe it motivates students and benefits their learning, e.g. Matt, Simon and Treena. This finding concurs with Belikov and Bodily (2016) but contradicts Baas et al. (2019) who reported that faculty showed low interest in adapting resources because of the time and effort involved.

The evidence presented here demonstrates that interviewees are motivated to adapt materials to improve and localise content for their learners because they believe this motivates students and enhances their language learning. However, besides OER adaption, many adapt non-OER, and in some instances breach copyright. This suggests that raising participants’ awareness of OER and copyright, and supporting them in their capacity building is important so that they can make informed decisions about engaging in OER-based practices or not. Awareness of OER and copyright are discussed in section 5.3.3.
Creation

A few interviewees described why they created or co-created materials (OER and non-OER) with other teachers and/or students as opposed to using a resource as is, or in an adapted form. Besides wanting to localise content, some commented that it saved time and particularly where they encountered difficulties locating resources for an ESP context (e.g. Alicia) or where too much adaptation was needed (e.g. Arnold). Co-creating resources with teachers and students was perceived as a learning opportunity because the co-creators, be they teachers or students, gained ideas and inspiration from each other. Alicia described the creation and co-creation of resources by students (student-student and teacher-student participation) as being the ‘most valuable’ and meaningful because as students co-create resources it exposes differences within their specific ESP domain and enables the production of materials that are highly relevant to students’ working contexts.

The co-creation of OER could potentially benefit all freelancers with regard to gaining ideas and peer learning. The findings indicate that this is particularly relevant to participants who work in ESP contexts, where locating appropriate resources to suit the Swiss context is challenging, e.g. legal resources (see section 5.3.1).

It has been claimed that the social nature of collaborative practices such as co-creating resources can mitigate isolation for language tutors working in similar conditions to freelancers (Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014). Several interviewees in this thesis described feeling isolated due to working conditions where they have little or no contact with other teachers which limits their possibilities to engage in collaborative practices. Nonetheless, such collaborative practices could be encouraged in digital contexts given that many participants reported engaging in digital networking practices (see section 5.2).

5.2 Participatory practices and open technologies

As noted in section 2.2.2, The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007) is used as a definition of OEP in this enquiry because of the emphasis on open technologies which can facilitate OER-based practices and broader OEP,
and capacity building. Of significance to freelancers in this enquiry is the potential that open technologies have to support open sharing practices and digital networking practices which can benefit teachers’ and students’ learning alike. This is important because educators’ access to CPD opportunities at work can be hampered by precarious working conditions (Broad, 2015) such as those of the freelancers in this enquiry, and the lack of interaction with other teachers can lead to a sense of isolation (Breshears, 2019). The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified these issues for freelancers working in ELT in Switzerland. Many have had to transition to online teaching or a combination of remote and face-to-face teaching. Based on anecdotal evidence from members of the Swiss ELT Association, little support has been provided by employers to aid freelancers cope with these changes. This unprecedented situation has further highlighted the need for ongoing CPD that is relevant and meaningful for freelancers as well as a need for language teachers to expand their networks to benefit from each other’s support and expertise.

The findings presented in Chapter 4 indicate that the majority of survey respondents use participatory tools to enhance their CPD. This suggests that participants are interested in developing professionally and are motivated to engage in self-directed learning. Although survey respondents reported using open technologies to connect with learners, they indicated less interest in using them to connect with teachers.

The interviewees use participatory tools to support OER-based practices and broader OEP related to the use of open technologies for teaching, learning and CPD purposes. Participants reported using participatory tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube primarily to gain ideas about teaching content and teaching practices from other educators, to share content with students and teachers, and for professional networking purposes. The findings suggest that open technologies provide a valuable window into other teachers’ practices and that the interviewees benefit not only from shared resources but from knowledge that is shared by other teachers and mediated through these tools which accords with other studies (Carpenter and Harvey, 2019; Malik et al., 2019; Zourou, 2016). The role that open sharing plays in participants’ engagement with open
technologies is a significant area of interest and is discussed in the following section.

5.2.1 Sharing practices

Open sharing has been recognised as an important practice if teachers and students are to benefit from OER-based practices and knowledge sharing mediated through open technologies (Hug, 2014; Pegler, 2012; Geser, 2007). Open sharing can provide opportunities for participants to leverage OER for their contexts and to draw inspiration from the OEP of others (Panda and Santosh, 2017). The findings of this study clearly indicate that these activities and benefits are indeed happening, with the interviewees frequently sharing resources in spaces such as LMSs, file sharing systems and by email, with the latter being the most popular. Interviewees also indicated that they share resources and ideas in face-to-face contexts, e.g. the staffroom, workshops, and informal teacher meetings such as those mediated through the Swiss ELT Association. However, despite a willingness to share ideas and expertise, only a minority of participants (survey respondents and interviewees) share resources on Web platforms. Overwhelmingly, the interviewees described benefiting from the open sharing practices of others which they valued, which concurs with Beaven’s (2018) findings.

Because this enquiry took a case study approach that investigated freelancers’ engagement with OEP in their multiple teaching contexts, the findings also provide insight into contextual issues that shape participants’ OEP. The interview findings show that various contextual issues, both structural and agential, influenced participants’ motivation to share resources with other teachers and students, with implications for our understanding of the way these things impact on freelance language teachers. Structural and agential issues are expanded on in section 5.3 because these issues influence the participants’ engagement with OEP in general.

Significant factors shaping the interviewees’ sharing practices include:

- presence of a sharing culture;
- request to share;
• individual’s volition to share;
• perceived value of sharing;
• format (digital/non-digital);
• quality concerns;
• adequate skills and knowledge about where and how to share.

Some interviewees were uncertain about where, and how, technically to share resources. This impacted on their confidence which hindered their sharing practices. Matt was uncertain about which Web platforms were the most relevant for teachers. He wanted his resources to be valued and used, and not just disappear in an ELT Facebook thread. Both Matt and Sam described being uncertain about copyright issues which prevented them from sharing OER that they had reused. While this accords with previous research that OER reuse practices might not be problematic (Wills and Pegler, 2016), it also indicates that resharing an OER with an appropriate licence and label can be. This confirms Hood and Littlejohn’s (2017) findings that to engage with OER capably, OER users require knowledge types such as practical/experiential and conceptual/theoretical knowledge of OER.

Some interviewees in this enquiry described a culture of institutional sharing which encouraged and supported open sharing practices (e.g. Sue and Nell). Many interviewees spoke about the reciprocal benefits of sharing and using social media sites to share resources and/or hyperlinks to content with students, to provide students with additional support, to encourage autonomous learning, student-student sharing, and to encourage social interaction beyond lesson time. Using open technologies in this way is recommended in ELT contexts to increase students’ exposure to the English language (Kessler, 2018), and to increase opportunities for students to interact with each other, and with authentic materials (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018). A further point that hampered interviewees from openly sharing resources related to external expectations from the ELT domain concerning the quality of shared OER. The findings reported here accord with Beaven (2018) who identified similar constraints to open sharing practices with language teachers, i.e. a lack of confidence, and technical and copyright issues. Likewise, Schuwer and Janssen (2018) identified technical and copyright issues...
as barriers to open sharing and reported that participants had concerns about the quality and personal value of sharing.

Findings relating to the interviewees’ preference for interpersonal sharing corroborate findings in similar research and show that in accordance with related research (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Bass et al., 2019; Beaven, 2018; Van Acker et al., 2014), the interviewees are willing to share interpersonally with students and fellow teachers, and within specific networks. Additionally, in concurrence with Beaven’s (2018) findings, there is evidence that the interviewees are not hindered by barriers that prevent them from sharing on the open Web. Barriers to sharing on the Web, such as copyright and/or quality issues were not mentioned in these interpersonal contexts. A plausible explanation for the participants in this enquiry sharing more frequently in interpersonal contexts can be drawn from Pegler’s (2012) research. In a longitudinal cross-case study in the UK in HE contexts, Pegler (2012) reported that tensions relating to open sharing such as technical, motivational and quality issues are more likely to increase when the relationship between sharers and users of content is at a greater proximity. And in accordance with Clements and Pawlowski (2012), trust was identified as an enabler for sharing with close connections (Wills and Pegler, 2016).

However, in contrast to the studies above, this enquiry advances knowledge of sharing practices concerning what motivates teachers to share their content. When other teachers requested interviewees to share resources, most of the interviewees were confident about sharing their materials compared to when they considered Web-based sharing. The findings in this thesis clearly indicate that it is vital for freelancers to recognise a demand for their resources because this signals to them that their resources are considered useful and of value to other teachers. Evidence in this enquiry shows that attributing value to their resources is an important criterion for freelances in making the decision to share. In part, this is because of the abundance of resources on the Web which some interviewees described as being overwhelming. This concerns participants because they are worried that content they share on the Web might not reach the intended audience.

Despite the reported barriers to sharing highlighted in this discussion, it is clear that if teachers are to be encouraged to share their resources openly on the
Web, they need to feel that their resources are valued. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme (2020) reported that language teachers felt their localised resources lacked value for other teachers. As discussed in section 5.1.1, the majority of participants in this enquiry frequently localise their resources. Bringing together the idea of value and concerns about localised resources being too specific, it may be that language teachers would in general be more willing to share locally and openly on the Web with teachers working in similar domains. While this has positive points, one implication of sharing practices being confined to smaller networks is that it can minimise the potential for OER to be disseminated on a broader scale which can in turn impact on the sustainability of OER and hinder end-users from benefiting from the OEP of others.

5.3 Factors influencing freelancers’ OEP

The findings discussed in this section relate to factors that influence engagement with OEP. These findings were revealed during the interviews which again validates the use of semi-structured interviews as a data generation method to complement data from the online survey. Trotter and Cox’s (2016) OER adoption pyramid lists six essential attributes that are considered necessary for individuals to engage in OER-based practices (see p. 33). A valuable contribution to knowledge is that the findings in this thesis indicate that specific conditions are needed for participants to take part in broader OEP, i.e. the agency and autonomy to enact change, the capacity to use open technologies (adequate digital literacy skills and knowledge), and access to digital infrastructure and internet connectivity. These attributes overlap in part with Trotter and Cox’s (2016) framework and are drawn into the discussion that follows where relevant.

A significant constraint described by the majority of interviewees is inadequate digital literacy skills which, according to JISC (2014), encompass a broad range of literacy skills and relevant knowledge. Research has demonstrated that adequate digital literacy skills and relevant knowledge are essential if individuals are to take part in OEP (Hood and Littlejohn, 2017; Beetham et al., 2012). Trotter and Cox (2016) use the term capacity to refer to the digital skills and knowledge needed to engage in OER-based practices.
The extent to which the interviewees in this enquiry felt digitally challenged differed depending on how each individual evaluated their capabilities concerning what they wanted to achieve and whether they were engaging in OER-based practices or broader OEP. When participants described their digital literacy skills as inadequate, this was often associated with negative emotions. For example, Emma described herself as feeling ‘stupid’ and ‘obsolete’. Rebecca and Julie expressed feeling behind and although this caused anxiety, it also acted as an incentive to improve their skills. While Cronin (2017) also found that participants experienced negative feelings about their inadequate digital literacy skills she related this to the fact that they did not have the time to invest in capacity building and were uncertain about how to improve their skills. In the case of participants in this enquiry, some interviewees described how they deliberately took steps to improve their skills such as experimenting with technologies, watching archived ELT webinars on YouTube, and observing what other teachers were doing online.

The majority of the interviewees in this enquiry explained that taking part in OEP enabled them to compare their teaching practices with the practices of others. They could compare how teachers use and design OER and non-OER, integrate participatory tools into their teaching practices, and use different teaching methods which influenced the participants’ teaching practices. Therefore, taking part in OEP enabled participants to use other teachers as a benchmark to evaluate their own skills and professional knowledge. While Mastermann and Wild (2011) observed that a key benefit of OER is that teachers can benchmark their own practices against others, this seems to be under-reported in OEP literature. Students’ digital literacy skills were also used as a benchmark by the majority of the interviewees to compare and evaluate their own digital literacy skills. Some interviewees believe that younger students are more digitally capable and want and expect freelancers to use technology for language learning. Smith et al. (2020) argue that these kinds of assumptions can lead to teachers framing student learning through a ‘technologically deterministic lens’ (p. 3). Indeed, there is evidence in this enquiry that interviewees’ assumptions about younger students and their use of technology influenced freelancers’ decision-making with regards to OEP.
Some interviewees specifically drew on Prensky’s (2001a, 2001b) metaphors, i.e. digital natives, to describe their students; and digital immigrants to describe themselves, i.e. Rebecca, Julie, Treena, Tammy and Simon. For example, Tammy described herself as not being a digital native when questioned about the types of digital resources she uses. Similarly, in response to questions about learning and developing through the use of participatory tools Treena stated:

‘I do not feel like a digital native … but I keep pushing myself.’

She later explained that it is her responsibility to feel confident when using technology with students because:

‘… students are natives in that world and I don’t think I would feel comfortable teaching them if I had no clue.’

The belief that students are digital natives acted as a driver for Treena to improve her digital literacy skills. In contexts where interviewees assumed students were more digitally adept and had specific expectations about the integration of digital content and technologies, their sense of identity was affected. In Emma’s case, this made her question her relevance as a teacher.

These examples suggest that Prensky’s (2001a, 2001b) metaphors are still pervasive in ELT contexts in Switzerland, despite the lack of empirical evidence to support them (Smith et al., 2020). This is significant because some interviewees use Prensky’s (2001a, 2001b) outdated metaphors to make decisions about OEP and everyday teaching activities, and also as a framework to evaluate their own and their students’ digital literacy skills which can be counterproductive for themselves and their learners. These problematic assumptions are causing anxiety about the participants own capabilities and affecting their well-being.

It can be contended from these examples that if freelance language teachers are to make informed decisions about OEP and take part in these practices confidently, as well as benefiting from other educators’ OEP, then there is a need for capacity building. However, support and training would need to involve freelancers actively in the process, so that it is relevant and meaningful to their individual needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Schleicher, 2016). This could further their understanding of the affordances of specific open technologies
and OER, the relevance of these for student learning, and the types of digital skills needed for students and teachers to make choices about the suitability of OEP for language learning in their specific sociocultural contexts (Smith et al., 2020). Capacity building in this manner could lead to confidence-building and improve freelancers’ sense of identity. Furthermore, it could help freelancers avoid making stereotypical assumptions about learners’ digital literacy skills and their expectations of teachers and using technologies for the sake of it rather than evaluating them for their pedagogical suitability and relevance to student learning.

5.3.1 Lack of discoverability of resources

A further factor that was identified as influencing freelancers’ OEP in this enquiry was locating appropriate OER for specialised domains (e.g. ESP) which has been identified in related research as problematic (Belikov and Bodily, 2016; Thoms and Thoms, 2014), and so has locating relevant and high-quality OER (Baas et al., 2019; Jhangiani et al., 2016; Thoms and Thoms, 2014). Findings in the previous chapter indicate that locating suitable ESP resources can be difficult and time-consuming. Some participants commented on the lack of quality of OER on some platforms, e.g. TED. The quality issues related to incorrect spelling and grammatical errors. These experiences have raised some participants’ critical awareness when evaluating resources for teaching purposes (e.g. Arnold and Treena).

It is possible that inadequate search skills and knowledge of suitable OER platforms could explain why some interviewees experience difficulties locating OER for specialised domains because a lack of digital literacies was identified as a significant barrier to participants’ engagement with OEP. Furthermore, apart from the multidisciplinary OER repository Merlot, the interviewees did not mention using OER repositories specific to language teaching, which suggests a lack of awareness of institutional repositories or repositories such as OER commons. A low awareness of established OER repositories in comparison to sites such as TED has been reported elsewhere, e.g. Weller et al. (2016). Weller and colleagues (2016) argue that if OER adoption is to be increased, then these types of resources need to be more visible and suggested the possibility of creating an open brand that could compete with well-known sites such as TED.
The interviewees described using multiple search strategies to locate and access resources for teaching purposes and to contribute to their CPD. They consult familiar sites and Web browsers; use recommended links from teachers, publishers and teaching associations; and use resource tips shared via social media and other participatory platforms. It may be that their use of personal networks and connections could be explored as a means of raising awareness of OER repositories and the concept of OER to mitigate discoverability issues. Clements and Pawlowski (2012) found that if teachers trusted the person who created or recommended a particular OER, this was a significant quality instrument and facilitated OER reuse. OER repositories are often community-based with mechanisms for peer-reviewing and networking which can aid in building trust. Therefore, it is possible that if freelancers can be encouraged to engage with local and broader networks of language teachers and/or OER repositories, they could have access to more relevant OER. This could save time when searching for OER and aid in improving the quality of relevant resources. It might also encourage teachers to network and collaborate which could contribute to freelancers’ CPD (Malik et al., 2019; Zourou, 2016).

The findings relating to participants’ use of recommended links from teachers and other sources, accord with that of Masterman and Wild (2011), who also recognised the benefits of teachers using personal networks for recommendations and support, and commented that those who are not part of a community might miss out. The latter issue could be minimised in the case of the freelancers represented in this enquiry because the ELT Association could disseminate information to members through several digital and non-digital avenues (e.g. informal teacher groups) as well as sending personal emails. On a broader scale, disseminating information about OER and specific repositories to language teachers who work in similar freelance conditions is more complex. Information can be disseminated via diverse digital media and in various formats, e.g. webinars, but might not reach the intended audience. However, to benefit from knowledge sharing and support within larger networks, freelancers in ELT contexts could be encouraged to become members of local language teaching associations and join special interest groups because these are acknowledged as playing a significant role in language teachers’ CPD (Breshears, 2019; Mann, 2005).
5.3.2 Contextual issues: structural and agential

Cox and Trotter (2017) reported that access to relevant digital infrastructure is essential for individuals to take part in OER-based practices. Significantly, the enquiry reported here found that this condition is also necessary for participants to take part in broader OEP. Access to digital infrastructure was identified both as a structural constraint and an enabler to some interviewees’ OEP, and is context-dependent. The majority of freelancers in this enquiry are employed in multiple places, and some combine this with independent teaching. Therefore, access to adequate digital infrastructure can be problematic as participants shift from one teaching context to the other.

Sam described internet access at one institute being restricted to teachers only, and Emma explained that at one place of employment she had no access to digital devices. Additionally, Sam explained that some learners have no access to digital devices and internet connectivity at home which can hinder them from consulting learning materials in their own time and from interacting with other students via open technologies. In other instances, the interviewees described having access to some hardware in institutes, e.g. beamer and Smartboard but no access to computers or iPads. By comparison, participants whose places of employment had ‘state-of-the-art’ infrastructure (Nell) and ‘fantastic facilities’ (Rebecca) felt motivated and empowered to teach in well-equipped contexts that afforded more opportunities for them to work with digital resources and open technologies.

Another finding which furthers our understanding of what conditions constrain participants’ engagement with OEP relates to prescriptive work policies. Prescriptive policies hindered some interviewees from using supplementary teaching materials and technologies. There was no evidence of this structural constraint in the survey data. When asked why they do or do not introduce OER and non-OER into classes, a minority of the interviewees explained that they are not permitted to use supplementary materials with their learners and are required to use prescribed coursebooks. Nonetheless, the interviewees explained that they still attempted to adapt or supplement materials because they wanted to provide students with resources that were better suited to their learning needs in comparison to coursebook materials.
Participants in these contexts are not being trusted or respected as professionals neither are they empowered to work autonomously. Instead, they have to make choices between complying with policy, or potentially facing consequences from their employers when they introduce supplementary materials. Anna commented that in one teaching context where she breached policy, her actions were ‘frowned upon’ because the institute wanted her to use the standardised materials that her fellow teachers were using. This is a significant finding because the autonomy to choose teaching materials has been identified as an enabler to engagement with OER and OEP (Pitt et al. 2020), so it is crucial that freelancers are not disempowered in their teaching practices.

It is evident from the findings reported here that participants want to take ownership of materials by adapting the supplementary materials they are introducing, which correlates with findings in Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme’s (2020) enquiry. According to Hood (2018), selecting and changing materials to suit learners’ needs is a complex process because teachers need to reflect on the appropriacy of resources for their context, the relevance for student learning, and how to adequately improve materials, which involves drawing on their beliefs about language teaching and past teaching experiences. Hood (2018) argues that engagement in these processes can contribute to a teacher’s CPD, so particularly in contexts where teachers are required to use standardised materials, she suggests that teachers should be able to exercise autonomy so that they can localise materials to suit learners’ needs, and strengthen their skills in the process.

Although the interviewees explained that they do not adhere strictly to prescriptive policies, their agency is constrained in comparison to counterparts who can choose teaching resources. In contexts where the interviewees described exercising agency, they felt empowered and motivated because they could provide students with resources that were suitable and meaningful, and that motivated student learning. This is evidenced in Sue’s comment (see p. 142) where she explains how she enjoys having the flexibility to adapt OER to her students’ needs. It can be contended from these findings that if freelancers are to provide students with meaningful learning opportunities and enable them to interact with authentic, localised materials, they require adequate digital infrastructure and adaptable materials, and they must be trusted and empowered to do their job as language
teachers. Furthermore, supporting freelancers’ use of relevant OER could ease their access to authentic and adaptable materials.

Encouraging the implementation of policies that provide freelancers with more agency and involvement in the decision-making process regarding the choice of language teaching materials and technologies might address these tensions and minimise potential constraints to engaging with OEP. However, as Cox and Trotter (2016) note, policy alone may not be an enabler for change because policy is interdependent on institutional culture, which includes an educator’s agency, and an institution’s social culture and policies. Therefore, it is evident that a change in cultural mindset is needed on an institutional, workplace and individual level if freelancers are to benefit from OER and OEP (Karunanayaka and Naidu, 2020; Geser, 2007), and develop their own open identities in the process (Tur et al., 2020).

Further agential issues that constrain participants’ engagement with OER-based practices relate to their understanding of copyright, OER awareness and CC licensing, and are discussed next.

5.3.3 Awareness of OER and CC licensing

A lack of awareness of OER and CC licensing were identified as key barriers to the interviewees’ OEP. These issues were also considered by Cox and Trotter (2017) to be important attributes for OER-based practices. A lack of awareness of OER and CC licensing was identified primarily by the non-OER users, but OER users such as Matt also described copyright concerns. Matt explained that he finds copyright and CC licensing somewhat complicated which can hinder him sharing OER on the Web. Research has shown that lack of awareness of OER and CC licensing are not uncommon (Schuwer and Janssen, 2018; Thoms and Thoms, 2014; Clements and Pawlowski, 2012), neither is a disparity between teachers’ awareness of OER and awareness of CC licences (Baas et al., 2019), or confusing non-OER with OER (Belikov and Bodily, 2016; Weller et al., 2016) which points to the need for capacity building in this area more broadly.
The majority of survey respondents in this enquiry indicated that they do not use OER. The findings indicate varying levels of familiarity with terms such as the public domain, CC licences, and OER. The definition of OER for this enquiry (UNESCO, 2012) was cited in part six of the online survey to aid participants to identify as OER or non-OER users. It is possible that some survey respondents interpreted this in different ways. For example, from the 20 self-identified OER users, 11 responded that they are not at all familiar with CC licences. So there seems to be a disparity between OER use and knowledge of CC licensing. Not all self-identified OER users could be questioned about this which highlights two acknowledged limitations of online surveys: 1) they comprise self-reported data which may not be reliable, 2) responses cannot be probed for further clarification (Bryman, 2016; Robson and McCartan, 2016).

It is plausible, that like Matt, some of the self-identified OER users might find CC licensing and copyright confusing, which is possibly why they responded the way they did. It is also possible that some survey respondents do not know that they are using OER. The interviews enabled survey responses to be probed and as discussed earlier, revealed that interviewees who identified as non-OER users were using OER unintentionally. Although it was acknowledged at the OER conference in Lucerne in 2019 that there is a grassroots OER movement in Switzerland within mainstream education, any efforts to promote OER/OEP and increase digitalisation within this educational sector do not appear to have cascaded to freelancers in ELT contexts. Therefore, it is possible that the low level of intentional OER use by participants in this enquiry can be explained by a lack of relevant information reaching freelancers.

Regarding copyright, the majority of survey respondents indicated that they recognised copyright is important; however, the interviewees reported instances where they knowingly breached copyright by copying and pasting material from educational platforms where this was not permitted, e.g. Rebecca. Some interviewees explained how they provide a reference and hyperlink to the original source irrespective of the format (i.e. digital or non-digital) to show its provenance and cover themselves with regard to copyright, which seems to be common practice. The findings suggest that the participants who handle copyright in this manner believe that copyright breach is mitigated if they are transparent about the
provenance and ownership of a resource. However, this practice becomes problematic once participants share non-OER because they lose ownership and control over how and with whom students or other teachers might disseminate the resource. This behaviour supports the survey findings that some participants are aware of copyright but this example also demonstrates a lack of understanding of copyright.

The findings discussed here suggest that there is a need for a better understanding of copyright and a need to raise awareness of CC licensing and OER (UNESCO, 2012). An argument for promoting the uptake of OER in diverse educational contexts is that the permissions underpinning OER, i.e. Wiley’s 5R’s (2014), afford users the opportunity to adapt OER legally, and to engage in open practices such as OER-enabled pedagogy (Wiley and Hilton, 2018) that would otherwise be problematic with non-OER due to copyright restrictions. A further argument for raising awareness of OER is that an important requirement for participants in this enquiry is the possibility to localise materials through the process of adaptation to suit their learners’ needs.

As well as raising freelancers’ awareness and understanding of OER it would be beneficial to introduce them to the benefits of OER for learners, and value for their teaching practices. In recommending that freelancers’ awareness of OER be raised, this does not imply that non-OER are not valuable and that freelancers should use OER only. Indeed, Mastermann and Wild (2013) found that faculty who showed a high level of engagement with OER perceived both OER and non-OER to be part of their ‘ecology of resources’ (p. 5). In a similar fashion, the interviewees in this enquiry who self-identified as OER-users also combine OER and non-OER from diverse internet platforms for teaching purposes.

Recommendations from researchers with regard to raising awareness of OER suggest that training should be personalised (e.g. Bass et al., 2019; Belikov and Bodily, 2016; Thoms and Thoms, 2014). These studies suggest implementing suitable recommendations and tailoring them based on the needs of individual educators, which is considered necessary if CPD is to be effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Schleicher, 2016; Desimone, 2009). A further step to optimising the effectiveness of support and training for freelancers in ELT contexts
would be to closely involve them in the design and implementation of relevant CPD activities (Bachtiar, 2020).

5.4 RQ 2: learning and development through OEP

This section begins with a summary of the findings relating to participants’ learning through OEP before discussing the types of knowledge and skills that they developed, which specifically addresses RQ 2. To provide deeper insight into how freelancers learn through OEP (RQ 3) this is discussed in two parts: a) learning as an individual process that is stimulated through a participant’s interaction with content and b) learning as a social process which refers to a participant’s interaction with other individuals. In this enquiry, learning as a social process is mediated through digital networking practices, sharing practices and collaborative activities, and is enacted through synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication and peripheral learning.

The majority of freelancers in this study take part in broader OEP which includes the use of open technologies for teaching and learning purposes (including participants’ learning). The minority intentionally engage in OER-based practices. Overall, the findings are consistent with studies that suggest engaging in OEP can afford diverse learning opportunities (e.g. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Hood and Littlejohn, 2017; Comas-Quinn and Borthwick, 2015; Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014). Evidence in this thesis indicates that what and how participants learn is dependent on the individual freelancer and influenced by the OEP they are engaging in, the purpose of the activity and the context in which the activity is situated.

Through the process of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006) patterns were identified in the data relating to participants’ knowledge and skills development. The findings indicate that OEP has improved participants’ (survey respondents and interviewees) pedagogical and content knowledge and digital skills, and raised their critical awareness of issues such as the quality and suitability of OER and non-OER for teaching purposes. The latter category was identified from the interview data, which further confirms the value of using two data generation methods for this enquiry. Probing participants’ survey responses during the interviews provided deeper insights into their multiple
perspectives. This accords with the theoretical perspectives (i.e. a relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology) underpinning this qualitative interpretivist study which supports the view that participants’ subjective interpretations of their learning through OEP will differ (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013). From this theoretical stance, variations in how participants interpret their learning would be expected. Borg (2000) argues that various contextual issues can inform language teaching practices, including teachers’ beliefs about teaching. It follows that diverse influences in participants’ multiple teaching contexts will impact on how each participant socially constructs meaning from their OEP experiences including how interactions with people and objects have contributed to their CPD (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013).

From the data, I interpreted pedagogical knowledge as comprising learning about language teaching methods, approaches and relevant theory; content knowledge constitutes learning about a specific topic for teaching purposes and/or content that is specific to language teaching. Overall, I interpreted participants’ understanding of digital literacy skills as a broad range of technical skills and knowledge. The latter includes improving their pedagogical knowledge of how to use specific open technologies for teaching, learning and professional purposes. A raised critical awareness means that freelancers are more critical when evaluating aspects of OER and non-OER for teaching purposes (see Table 18, section 4.5.1). The types of knowledge and skills the participants developed are consistent with their motivations for engaging in OEP, and include: to gain inspiration and broaden their teaching methods, to provide relevant and authentic material to students, and to use the work of others as a benchmark. The development of participants’ digital literacy skills and technical and pedagogical knowledge is closely related to their hands-on experimentation and use of open technologies, their engagement in OER and non-OER-based practices and learning through benchmarking, i.e. observing and comparing how and why other teachers and students use specific open technologies, and how and why teachers design and use content.

In many cases, participation in the interviews stimulated retrospective reflection on participants’ learning (e.g. Arnold and Alicia). In some instances, it made them aware that they had learned new things from the process (e.g. Nell and Emma). In this sense, there is an indication that participation in a research
interview can contribute to a participant’s CPD. Despite being a research interview, the experience provided an opportunity for participants in this study to discuss and reflect on specific aspects of their teaching practices with me as a fellow professional. According to Mann and Walsh (2017), because experiences such as these enable teachers to discuss teaching practices and reflect on the dialogue, they can lead to the development and internalisation of new knowledge.

Pedagogical knowledge

Overall, survey respondents indicated that taking part in OEP has broadened their range of teaching methods. Comments about pedagogical knowledge were articulated mainly in general terms during the interviews. The interviewees did not describe specific open approaches or methods but explained how they gained ideas about new teaching perspectives and methods and how to put them into practice. This lack of specificity could have been a consequence of the semi-structured interviews which involved spontaneous responses and retrospective reflection on their informal CPD through OEP. By comparison, a strength of the online survey was that respondents could navigate back and forth, and exit and resume the survey which meant that they had more time to reflect on their responses.

Some interviewees explained how they specifically used OER and/or participatory platforms, e.g. ESP forums and YouTube, for the explicit purpose of learning about different pedagogical practices and teaching methods. This indicates that self-directed learning which is recognised as a form of informal learning characterised by intentionality and consciousness of learning (Marsick and Watkins, 2018; Schugurensky, 2000), can be prompted through OEP.

Content knowledge

The majority of survey respondents indicated that taking part in OEP has helped them develop their content knowledge. The interviewees who described developing content knowledge provided examples relating to ESP classes, conversation classes, and general English classes. In ESP contexts, interviewees described the necessity to keep up to date with students’ specialist knowledge to provide them with meaningful content. This process acted as a catalyst for
participants’ learning. The findings suggest that participants learn content
knowledge through OER and non-OER-based practices, through digital networking
practices, and through self-directed learning which involved researching specific
content topics. The interviewees who teach conversation classes and/or general
English courses learn about new topics by consulting platforms such as Wikipedia
for content that they believe will interest and motivate their students, and through
content-based practices (e.g. evaluating and adapting resources). This accords
with Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme (2020) who found that practices such as reuse
and adaptation of OER contributed to language teachers’ CPD. Hood’s (2017)
enquiry which focused on teachers’ interactions with online resources also
indicates that it is a teacher’s active engagement in these complex practices that
leads to learning. From a CPD perspective, the findings in this thesis indicate that
taking part in both OER and non-OER based practices to localise and improve
content has contributed to participants’ CPD.

*Digital literacy skills*

A minority of the interviewees discussed the digital literacy skills they have
developed through taking part in OEP in general terms, e.g. ‘basic stuff’ (Alicia).
Other interviewees provided deeper insight into the skills they have developed and
which OEP have acted as a catalyst for learning. This could indicate that the lack
of specificity in the minority of cases was not the result of limitations in the
research design. Treena described that sharing OER and non-OER online (e.g.
presentations and photographs) has contributed to the development of her digital
literacy skills because this involved numerous steps and engagement with diverse
participatory tools as well as reflection on the process, which concurs with Comas-
Quinn and Borthwick (2015). Other interviewees described how they improved
their digital literacy skills because they were required to learn how to use an
internal repository or LMS stipulated by their institute to teach their learners.

As noted in the findings chapter, survey respondents who self-identified as
OER users indicated that participating in OER-based practices has contributed to
the development of their digital literacy skills (50%, n=10), and a minority (10%,
n=2) reported that this has contributed to their understanding of CC licences. This
accords with Hood and Littlejohn (2017) who argue that taking part in OER-based
practices can lead to the development of different knowledge types. A better
understanding of CC licences suggests that respondents may have developed general and specific conceptual/theoretical knowledge of OER and CC licensing (Hood and Littlejohn, 2017). In the case of Treena, it could be interpreted that she developed practical/experiential and self-regulative knowledge (which includes an educator’s capacity to reflect on and monitor their actions) according to Hood and Littlejohn’s (2017) knowledge types. However, the specific types of knowledge that participants in this enquiry developed cannot be claimed with certainty because the study aimed to identify broadly what and how freelancers learn and develop through their OEP. Had I wanted to identify particular knowledge types the survey and interview questions would have required a different design to generate suitable data for this specific research purpose.

Overwhelmingly, the digital literacy skills that the interviewees developed are specific to the activities in which they took part and the technologies and platforms they used to support them in their teaching contexts. It is evident that the interviewees’ informal learning is occurring naturally as part of their experiences with OER and non-OER-based practices and broader OEP (Marsick and Neaman, 2018; Eraut, 2004). Learning that is prompted by an interviewee’s desire to improve their digital literacy as well as the necessity to improve their skills due to curriculum and/or policy requirements is self-directed. In cases where digital competency is expected, the findings indicate that training is not always provided.

Critical awareness raised

Arnold, Anna and Treena described how interacting in OER-based practices had raised their critical awareness of issues such as the quality and suitability of OER for their students’ learning. They explained that this was prompted through processes such as evaluating and adapting OER which provided an opportunity for them to critically assess the work of others and to learn from the design of other teachers’ content which concurs with related studies (Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Gallardo et al., 2017).

The development of the participants’ knowledge and skills discussed in this section comprise different types of informal learning that vary in their level of intentionality and consciousness according to Schugurensky’s (2000) tri-part typology of informal learning and to Marsick and Watkins’ (2018, 1990)
interpretation of informal and incidental learning. The findings indicate that less intentional types of informal learning have, in some instances, led to self-directed learning which suggests a linear progression along a continuum of learning as suggested by Schugurensky (2000), with tacit learning at one end and self-directed learning at the other.

This enquiry demonstrates that informal learning through OEP is contributing to participants' learning in a meaningful way. However, the knowledge and skills that participants developed were largely dependent on the OEP they were taking part in, and as such, their CPD could benefit from being more structured. Interviewees such as Emma pointed to the necessity to develop her digital skills and knowledge but explained feeling overwhelmed because she did not know how to begin (see Emma’s quote, section 4.8). To optimise and guide the direction of freelance language teachers’ learning to be more relevant to their current and future needs, they could be encouraged to use the DigCompEdu framework (see section 1.2.1) as a digital competencies reference. Raising awareness of this flexible model and promoting its use could help teachers identify technical and pedagogical areas for development that address their needs and are appropriate for their teaching practices (see section 6.4.1).

5.5 RQ 3: learning through interaction with content

This section addresses RQ 3 and discusses how participants learn through their interaction with both OER and non-OER based practices. This is because self-identified OER users frequently explained that they made no distinction between one category of resources or the other regarding their CPD.

Findings in this enquiry indicate that what participants learn from interacting with content is primarily a result of materials being openly available on the Web and in spaces such as LMSs or ELT forums where content is shared. Participants frequently attributed their learning to the ideas and inspiration gained from evaluating shared materials which they reused and experimented with to create their own resources, and from benchmarking opportunities. This concurs with de los Arcos et al. (2014) who found that using ideas gained from others is a significant part of OER-based practices which is realised through their online availability.

192
The findings indicate that participants’ learning through content-based practices is a complex process enabled through reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking which have been identified as informal learning strategies elsewhere (Marsick and Neaman, 2018). Crucially, this enquiry identified the three learning strategies as interrelated processes whereby the process of reflection was identified as a key learning strategy that contributed to participants’ CPD. Although reflection and reflective practice are recognised as an essential part of teachers’ CPD (Mann and Walsh, 2017; Farrell, 2015), the notion of benchmarking has not been explicitly investigated in OEP literature. Building on previous research, this enquiry found that the benchmarking opportunities facilitated through open technologies contributed meaningfully to participants’ CPD. Overall, the interviewees reported that these learning opportunities were invaluable and played a significant role in their ongoing CPD (see section 4.8). This finding is significant because it contributes to our understanding of what factors contribute to language teachers’ informal learning which has implications for teacher training.

When the interviewees described how they learn from their interaction with resources, they frequently mentioned learning by doing as they actively engaged in practices such as the creation, evaluation, adaptation and reuse of content. The majority of interviewees indicated that taking part in these practices stimulated reflection which contributed to their learning. They recounted how working with other teachers’ materials prompts them to reflect on their learners’ needs and different pedagogical approaches which can influence how they adapt and deliver resources. This accords with research where reflection that is stimulated by exposure to other teachers’ work and by taking part in OER-based practices has been identified as an important learning strategy (e.g. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Gallardo et al., 2017; Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014; Comas-Quinn and Fitzgerald, 2013).

Evidence in this enquiry indicates that in some instances there may be a sustainable learning effect, which is considered an effective characteristic of CPD (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Schleicher, 2016; Desimone, 2009). This seems, in part, a result of the cyclical nature of reflecting on an experience and transforming reflections into action. For example, Alicia explained how the content-
based practices she engages in prompt constant reflection and that this process is linked to her learners’ needs and involves input (i.e. ideas gained from other teachers online and student feedback), reflection on practice and further action. Similarly, Anna described how she constantly reflected and reviewed her previously adapted OER which often prompted further changes based on what she felt her students required and how they reacted to her lessons. In these examples, the participants’ learning is highly contextual and shaped by the quality of their interactions which are mediated through and by resources and people in their immediate sociocultural contexts. This accords with the sociocultural perspective underpinning this enquiry which ontologically views freelancers as ‘mediated beings’ (Lantolf, 2006, p. 69) whose actions are influenced by their environment, and who reciprocally shape it (Eun, 2019; Daniels, 2015).

The cyclical process of reflection and action described by Anna and Alicia is consistent with Marsick and Watkins’ (2018, 1990) informal and incidental learning framework where reflection is viewed as a key tenet of the learning process. Both Alicia and Anna first frame the teaching situation by reflecting on their learners’ needs and then select and adapt content which involves further reflection and alignment with their pedagogical approaches. When using the adapted content in class they reflect-in-action (Schön, 1983) and after the lesson, they reflect on the experience which is consistent with Schön’s (1983) reflection-on-action. Students’ behavioural reactions to the lesson and their explicit feedback stimulated further reflection and influenced whether Alicia and Anna made additional changes to their content or pedagogical approach for future classes. This accords with Guskey’s (2002) model of teacher change where Alicia and Anna’s motivation to enact further change was based on their students’ reaction to their lessons.

Marsick and colleagues (2013) argue that the level of reflection and cycles of reflection, can influence the quality of learning and inform an individual’s future experiences and contribution to knowledge-building. In the case of Alicia and Anna, this involved cycles of different types of reflection. These examples also indicate that the quality and interactional nature of experiences can contribute to the lasting effect of learning (Mann and Walsh, 2017). This is relevant because the findings indicate that engaging with content-based practices in this manner is facilitating learning experiences that are contributing to each participant’s CPD in a
meaningful way. In many instances, the participants’ learning is prompted through cycles of reflection and action that is transforming what they do in their teaching practices which suggests a sustainable learning effect.

Another process which prompted the interviewees’ reflection is benchmarking. The interviewees frequently commented that they learned by comparing what other teachers were doing in their practices with OER and non-OER and pedagogical approaches with their own practice. This suggests that CPD can be prompted by evaluative and comparative practices where freelancers use ideas from others as opposed to physically reworking shared resources.

Although these findings relate not only to participants’ OER use, but also non-OER based practices, they support, in part, Weller et al.’s (2015) fifth hypothesis which states that critical reflection can be prompted through OER use, ‘with evidence of improvement in … practice’ (p. 352). The changes reported in participants’ teaching practices are discussed further in section 5.6.

5.5.1 Learning through social processes

This section discusses how participants learned from their interactions with other individuals as they took part in OEP mediated through participatory technologies, e.g. social media tools, blogs, forums and LMSs systems. These social processes comprise activities where the interviewees specifically described learning from or with one another, as they took part in sharing practices, i.e. sharing content and/or teaching experiences; networking, which included synchronous and asynchronous communication, and/or peripheral learning; and collaborative activities. These practices provided learning opportunities that aided in improving the participants’ pedagogical and content knowledge and digital literacy skills. Learning was prompted through the informal learning strategies of reflection, learning by doing, and benchmarking.

Taking part in OEP has been shown to provide learning opportunities that enable teachers to learn from the teaching practices of others, and support collaborative learning and digital networking practices mediated through open technologies (Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014; Beetham et al., 2012). Many participatory tools enable users to connect, communicate, interact, share content
and ideas, and collaborate openly to varying degrees (Malik et al., 2019; Zourou, 2016). The findings in the previous chapter indicate that the diverse affordances of open technologies influenced participants’ motivations for using them and their level of interaction. Overall, the majority of the participants use open technologies for CPD purposes which accords with other studies (Carpenter and Harvey, 2019; Davis, 2015), and to connect and share content with teachers and learners. The interviewees reported using open technologies to network, gain ideas and inspiration, and as a means of sharing and exchanging ideas and content (see Table 15, section 4.2). Based on the interviewees’ descriptions, participatory technologies provide a valuable window into other teachers’ practices and enable freelancers to engage in, or react to, discussions and shared material, e.g. retweeting, liking or commenting on something. These benchmarking opportunities facilitate reflection and contribute to the participants’ CPD, which is consistent with other studies (e.g. Karunanayaka and Naidu, 2020; Baas et al., 2019).

The interrelatedness of informal learning strategies is evidenced in Matt’s quote (see section 4.6.1). Matt explained that when he finds an interesting ELT post on social media, he reflects on it and relates the ideas to his current teaching practice and past teaching experiences. This process can lead to further evaluation and reflection over a long period (up to two years) as he puts the ideas into practice which stimulates additional iterations of reflection and evaluation. Therefore, Matt first compares what other teachers are doing (benchmarking), frames the situation in relation to his students’ needs and teaching context, and then engages in active cycles of learning by doing and reflection which can contribute to his CPD. This learning scenario is consistent with Marsick and Watkins’ (2018, 1990) claims that the depth of reflection and a person’s capacity to engage in a task effectively can influence the quality of learning. This example also illustrates how Matt builds on prior experiences during the reflective process which accords with Dewey’s (1938) notion of the continuity of experience, i.e. prior experiences can inform future experiences. Similarly, Treena recounted that through benchmarking she gained different perspectives about teaching, and recognised her own mistakes which encouraged her to expand her skills. These examples suggest that informal learning through broader OEP can motivate freelancers to take part in more structured and intentional learning (i.e. self-directed learning) as a part of their ongoing CPD.
The interviewees also recounted examples of how they learn through social interactions when engaging with participatory tools and in face to face encounters, e.g. staffroom and informal teacher meetings. Overall, the interviewees value social interaction and what can be gained from having discussions, sharing and exchanging ideas, and working collaboratively to develop resources. However, working collaboratively was restricted to a minority which could be explained by the isolating nature of freelancers’ work. When describing their digital networking practices, the interviewees indicated that they interact on different levels with individuals in varying networks. Alicia described a vibrant online ESP forum with teaching association members where she learned about content and methodology by having discussions and sharing and exchanging ideas and resources. Other interviewees described following specific ELT groups or individuals on social media and learning from their discussions which promoted reflection. It is evident that some freelancers in this enquiry identify with specific groups belonging to the ELT domain and engage with them synchronously, asynchronously and peripherally.

The participants in this enquiry attributed the development of their digital literacy skills primarily to learning by doing and benchmarking as they interacted and experimented with diverse participatory tools. Some interviewees described how they learn about digital networking practices by observing what types of social media tools and open technologies teachers use for professional purposes and how they use them. Although encouraging the use of participatory technologies could potentially contribute to freelancers’ CPD (Gallardo et al., 2017) and mitigate their sense of isolation by facilitating the development of personal networks (Jordan and Weller, 2018; Prestridge, 2017; Wesely, 2013), interaction requires the will and interest of individuals (Ford et al., 2014), and the relevant skills and knowledge. The lack of relevant skills and knowledge were identified as a barrier to OEP for many participants in this enquiry. This is significant because it is acknowledged that the quality of informal learning in these scenarios can be influenced by an individual’s capacity to interact with other teachers (Marsick and Watkins, 2018; Mann and Walsh, 2017). This is an indication that participants require tailored support and training so that they can benefit from the learning opportunities afforded by interaction.
5.6 Changes to practice and contribution to CPD

During the interviews, some participants reported that the knowledge and skills they have learned through taking part in OEP have led to changes in their teaching practices, which have impacted on student motivation and learning. In accordance with other research, this study has shown that engagement with OEP can contribute to participants’ CPD (e.g. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Gallardo et al., 2017; Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014). However, it builds on these studies and makes an original contribution by providing evidence of a transference of knowledge to the classroom which suggests that learning through OEP can have a sustainable learning effect.

The interviewees attributed improvements in student learning and motivation to the new teaching methods and technologies that they used and experimented with in class, which were inspired by the OEP of others. Rebecca explained that she has improved her teaching methods as a consequence of self-directed learning from webinar recordings on YouTube. In three instances, the participants described experiencing changes in personal and professional growth, i.e. feeling more confident due to improved digital literacy skills, and feeling more professional from learning about and experimenting with new teaching methods and the design of content. This concurs with Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett (2014) who inquired into the motivational benefits of language tutors working with OER collaboratively, and reported improvements in participants’ confidence.

The findings described here indicate that the learning and development afforded through OEP can act as a catalyst for change in teachers’ practices and may lead to improvements in student motivation and learning.

Many participants stressed the significance that engaging in OEP plays in their CPD (see section 4.8). Overwhelmingly, participants feel accountable for their CPD and hold strong beliefs about it. They are critical of those who show a lack of interest in CPD. The interviewees expressed appreciation for teachers who share resources on diverse open platforms, and also for those who blog and share ideas about their teaching practices through open technologies. Frequent mention was made of the wealth of learning opportunities afforded through increased access to diverse digital resources and open technologies on the Web.
5.7 Summary

This chapter addressed the four research questions that were designed to generate data for this study. It provides an in-depth insight into freelancers’ teaching practices and their engagement with and learning through OEP. Many of the findings in this thesis concur with related research, but more significantly, they make an original contribution to knowledge that has important implications for diverse stakeholders. Critically, the findings have a broad applicability to diverse teaching contexts due to increasing levels of casualisation in other areas of education (e.g. HE in the UK). As discussed, educators working in similar precarious conditions often face challenges that mirror those of the freelancers in this study, e.g. lack of CPD and networking opportunities (Broad, 2015). It follows that the implications for professional practice and recommendations outlined in the following chapter extend beyond the ELT domain and will be of value to educators working in a variety of contexts.

The enquiry shows that the majority of freelancers take part in broader OEP which are facilitated through open technologies for teaching and learning purposes and to support their CPD, and a minority engage in OER-based practices. The findings indicate that participants’ OEP are influenced by their assumptions, values and beliefs about language teaching; their strong desire to enhance student learning, to motivate students and meet their expectations; and by diverse contextual issues (structural and agential) which can hamper or enable their OEP.

OER users in this enquiry use mainly little OER, and integrate a mixed ecology of resources into their teaching practices. Building on related research, the evidence clearly shows that the key criteria participants use for choosing OER and non-OER are the relevance and authenticity of a resource. This is because participants believe that resources fitting these criteria interest and motivate students and are more meaningful for their learning. These criteria are prioritised when evaluating resources and are more important than copyright restrictions on materials. Equally, non-OER users select teaching resources by these criteria and for the same reasons. It is important for all participants to supplement ELT coursebooks with a broad range of resources that can be adapted to suit their learners’ needs. Adaptation of resources was identified as a significant practice and indicates that participants want materials that are adaptable. Nonetheless, the
findings revealed that some participants are not permitted to supplement prescribed coursebook materials. This causes tension and compromises participants’ agency to enact change.

The findings indicate that the affordances of open technologies support the practices of participants associated with OER and non-OER, as well as their broader OEP. The participants use a range of open technologies to network with teachers, encourage student-student interaction, support student learning in and beyond the classroom, and to facilitate participants’ CPD. The ways in which participants benefit from the open sharing practices of others were also discussed.

This study advances knowledge about teachers’ sharing practices and increases our understanding of what motivates them to share content. Engaging in sharing practices, whether via the Web or in physical contexts (e.g. informal teacher meetings), enables participants to gain ideas about content design, teaching methods, and open technologies for language teaching. It was explained that participants share teaching content mainly interpersonally, as opposed to Web-based sharing. More importantly, this study builds on existing OEP research and found that participants were motivated to share if they recognised a demand for their resources. For participants, this indicated that their resources had value and would be used by other teachers. This new knowledge can help stakeholders support teachers in their sharing practices, and benefit freelancers themselves, particularly ESP teachers and educators teaching in other specialised domains who find it difficult to locate relevant resources.

The findings in this study also increase our understanding of the contextual conditions needed to support freelancers in their OEP, and overlap, in part, with Cox and Trotter’s (2017) OER adoption framework. The conditions identified in this enquiry include the agency and autonomy to engage in OEP; relevant digital skills and knowledge about open technologies (capacity), and access to adequate infrastructure. This contribution to knowledge is valuable because it can aid various stakeholders, such as freelancers’ employers, understand how to support freelancers in their teaching practices.

Furthermore, this study has clearly demonstrated that participants learn informally through their everyday experiences with OEP and that learning is
mediated through their interaction with people and objects, i.e. through OER and non-OER based practices and broader OEP. Through their engagement with OEP, participants have improved their pedagogical and content knowledge and their digital literacy skills. A minority have raised their critical awareness of issues such as the quality and relevance of resources for their teaching purposes. Reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking were identified as informal learning strategies that have contributed to participants’ informal learning. The strategies were shown to be interrelated with reflection playing a central role which has important teacher training implications. Significantly, this study has expanded on related research and shown that the new knowledge and skills participants gained through their engagement with OEP have led to changes in their teaching practices with reported positive effects on student motivation and learning. Additionally, gains in participants’ professional development have positively impacted some freelancers’ confidence and sense of professionalism.

Crucially, this enquiry has demonstrated that taking part in OEP can contribute to freelancers’ informal learning in a meaningful way, and in some instances has acted as a catalyst for self-directed learning. The study has shown that the learning opportunities afforded through OEP play a significant role in the participants’ CPD. And as reported by the majority of the interviewees, these learning opportunities are invaluable for their professional development. Furthermore, taking part in OEP has enabled the participants to provide their learners with more authentic learning opportunities in and beyond the language classroom which is a desired aim of ELT.

Overall, this thesis makes a unique contribution to knowledge in an under-researched area and has important implications for educational policy and professional practice. Its broad applicability means that it can be of value to teachers and learners in various contexts and to diverse stakeholders interested in OER, OEP and CPD.

In the concluding chapter, the research in this thesis is summarised followed by a discussion about this study’s limitations. I discuss the contributions that this study makes to theory and practice. Several practical recommendations are made for professional practice and policy and for further research. The chapter concludes with final reflections on this enquiry.
Chapter 6 Conclusion and recommendations

This final chapter commences with a summary of my research followed by a discussion of this study’s limitations. Contributions to knowledge on OER, OEP and CPD, and the implications of the findings for professional practice and policy are then discussed. Recommendations for professional practice and policy and further research are proposed before I conclude with some final reflections.

6.1 Research summary

As explained in Chapter 1 there are increasing expectations on language teachers to use ICTs in their teaching practices (Stickler et al., 2020) and to develop their digital literacy skills (Caena and Redecker, 2019) so that students can benefit from a broad range of authentic resources and flexible and richer learning opportunities in and beyond the classroom (Kessler, 2018; Collins and Muñoz, 2016). To leverage these learning opportunities, research has shown that language teachers need meaningful support and training (Karamifar et al., 2019; Germain-Rutherford and Ernest, 2015). However, the precarious nature of freelance ELT teachers’ working conditions can hamper them from accessing meaningful CPD opportunities at work (Breshears, 2019).

These issues provided the impetus for this study which investigated freelance ELT teachers’ engagement with and learning through OEP in Switzerland. This research trajectory was taken because research has indicated that taking part in OEP can foster informal learning opportunities that aid in developing diverse types of skills and knowledge (Hood and Littlejohn, 2017; Comas-Quinn and Borthwick, 2015), and support networking (Malik et al., 2019; Wesely, 2013) and open sharing practices which can facilitate peer learning (Carpenter and Harvey, 2019; Davis, 2015). This is an under-researched area in the language teaching domain. To my knowledge, no research has been carried out in Switzerland relating to this research focus and target group. Therefore, this enquiry provides a unique insight into the OEP of freelance ELT teachers, and casts light on the knowledge and skills they developed from taking part in these practices, and the informal learning strategies that contributed to the development of such knowledge and skills.
The Covid-19 pandemic this year (2020) has further highlighted the importance of such research. As a consequence of the pandemic, many freelancers from the ELT Association in Switzerland have had to transition to online teaching and/or combine remote and face-to-face teaching modes, and have not been adequately supported in their work. Anecdotal evidence from members of the ELT Association suggests that this transition has challenged freelancers in numerous ways but particularly with regard to the development of their digital literacy skills and knowledge of suitable ICTs and digital pedagogies to cope with language teaching in these unprecedented times.

The following RQs were developed to generate data that addressed the research focus outlined above:

- **RQ 1a**: Are freelance English language teachers taking part in OEP and if so, what are these practices?
- **RQ 1b**: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, why do they take part in these practices?
- **RQ 2**: If freelance English language teachers are taking part in OEP, what knowledge and skills do they learn and develop?
- **RQ 3**: If freelance English language teachers develop knowledge and skills from taking part in OEP, how do they learn and develop such knowledge and skills?

This small-scale, qualitative case study was framed within an interpretivist paradigm and used an online survey (45 respondents) and semi-structured interviews (n=15) to generate data. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006) was used to analyse data and generate themes and sub-themes. The study demonstrates that freelancers are taking part in OER-based practices and broader OEP which comprise their use of open technologies. Intentional adoption of OER is confined to the minority, and constitutes the use of little OER primarily. Overall, the findings show that freelancers engage in OEP for the following reasons:

- gain ideas and inspiration for teaching;
- broaden their range of teaching materials and teaching methods;
• supplement coursebook materials;
• connect with teachers and learners;
• CPD purposes.

As discussed in Chapter 5, freelancers’ OEP are shaped by their assumptions, values and beliefs about language teaching, their desire to improve student motivation and learning, and to meet students’ expectations. This enquiry found that freelancers’ OEP are influenced by contextual issues (both structural and agential) which can vary from one teaching setting to the other and enable or constrain their OEP. Factors that were identified as enablers to freelancers’ OEP include access to adequate digital infrastructure, awareness of OER and knowledge of CC licensing, and the agency and autonomy to engage in OEP. The following were identified as constraints to freelancers’ OEP: inadequate access to technical infrastructure, inadequate digital literacy skills and knowledge of CC licensing and copyright, and the lack of agency and autonomy to use supplementary resources and open technologies in their teaching practices.

Two key criteria were used by freelancers to select OER and non-OER for student learning: the relevance and authenticity of resources. Participants believe that resources fitting these criteria contribute to student motivation and learning. They are willing to prioritise students’ learning needs over potential copyright restrictions on resources. The majority adapt resources to localise and personalise content and to fit their pedagogical approaches. They share content interpersonally mainly, as opposed to Web-based sharing and are motivated to share if they recognise a demand for their resources. The majority of freelancers in this enquiry use open technologies for teaching and learning purposes, to foster digital networking practices with teachers and students, and for their own CPD.

This study shows that freelancers’ learning through OEP comprises different types of informal learning that ranged in their intentionality and consciousness (Marsick and Watkins 2018, 1990; Schugurensky, 2000). Reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking were identified as interrelated, informal learning strategies that contribute to freelancers’ learning. In some instances, the evidence indicates that freelancers’ learning progressed from less
structured to self-directed learning, which suggests that engagement with OEP can act as a catalyst for more structured learning.

Engagement with OEP has contributed to freelancers’ pedagogical and content knowledge and their digital literacy skills, and raised their critical awareness of issues relating to the suitability and quality of OER for teaching purposes. The development of such knowledge and skills has enhanced some freelancers’ confidence and sense of professionalism and in several instances has led to changes in their teaching practices. Reportedly, this has had a positive impact on student motivation and learning. The connection between freelancers’ use of their newly gained knowledge and skills in the classroom, and student motivation and learning suggests that informal learning through OEP can have a sustainable learning effect. Overwhelmingly, freelancers reported that they value the diverse learning opportunities afforded through OEP.

6.2 Limitations of the study

Due to the specificity of this small-scale, qualitative case study, an acknowledged limitation is the lack of generalisation to other contexts (Kvale, 1996). Although this critique should not be dismissed, as discussed in Chapter 3, it should be borne in mind that case study research focuses on particular experiences in real-world contexts (Stake, 1995). Its intention is not to generalise but to show how inferences might be drawn from a specific case study and transferred to similar contexts (Simons, 2009). Stake (1985) proposes a form of generalisation relevant to case study research, i.e. naturalistic generalisation, that refers to the general conclusions that a reader interprets from a case study. To aid the reader in making naturalistic generalisations Stake (1985) advises that the researcher provides rich details of the enquiry, including a clear description of the research process and evidence of the findings. This thesis offers rich details about the context of this study, the findings and the operationalisation of the research process. Furthermore, data from the online survey was presented in Chapter 4 as well as extensive verbatim quotes from the interview transcripts. Therefore, it is plausible that readers from the Swiss ELT context and the broader ELT and OEP domains will be able to draw conclusions and make decisions about the transferability of this study’s findings to other settings.
Researcher subjectivity also requires addressing. Although subjectivity is acknowledged as being inherent in case study research (Stake, 1985), it can be a limitation because the researcher is the ‘main instrument for data gathering’ (Simons, 2009, p. 81), interpretation and data analysis (Merriam, 1998). Consequently, personal biases can influence the research process. The issue of researcher subjectivity is salient in this enquiry because the method I used for data analysis, i.e. reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2013, 2006), views the researcher and their subjectivity as a central component of the interpretative process. This puts the onus on the researcher to recognise bias. Therefore, I needed to find a way to explore my inner dialogue and render any potential biases explicit. Simons (2009) argues that the aim is not to eliminate subjectivity but to recognise it by being transparent about the research process and by being reflexive. Heeding her words and following Mann’s (2016) advice, I used a research diary throughout this enquiry to record my reflections on different aspects of the research process, such as the link between the findings and relevant literature and theory (see Appendix H). This reflexive process aided in raising self-awareness of my assumptions and values about my research, including my role as an insider and outsider researcher. My research diary also had a practical application: it was useful for documenting things such as the interview schedule and the relevance of reviewed literature which proved invaluable when writing this thesis.

Further limitations relate to the data generation methods used in this enquiry. Both the online survey and semi-structured interviews rely on self-reported data which can be influenced by factors that can impact on the quality of data generated, e.g. participants’ personal biases (Bryman, 2016). Arguably, some interviewees might have recounted what they thought I wanted to hear. I attempted to mitigate against this by explaining to participants that it was essential to understand what they were doing in their teaching practices. Due to the richness of data in each interviewee’s transcript, it is unlikely that participants’ responses were fabricated for my benefit. As explained in section 3.4, careful attention was given to the planning, design and piloting of the survey to minimise potential ambiguities and to aid in generating quality data. Although an acknowledged limitation of online surveys is that responses cannot be probed for clarification (Bryman, 2016; Robson and McCartan, 2016), using two methods for
data generation enabled me to interview 15 participants and therefore validate some of the data generated via the survey. However, because the interview data was much richer than the survey data, all the information could not be checked for consistency in this manner.

Despite these limitations, as discussed in Chapter 5, the findings from this enquiry have strengthened many conclusions in previous research. More significantly, this study’s findings build on related research, and together with the recommendations have a broad applicability which extends to educators who work in similar freelance conditions. As discussed, the increasing casualisation of the education sector means that educators who teach in other disciplines are also experiencing challenges that reflect those of the freelancers in this study, e.g. lack of CPD and networking opportunities (Broad, 2015). Therefore, it follows that this research and its recommendations will be of value to other educators who work in precarious conditions. The following section discusses how this thesis makes a valuable contribution to knowledge.

6.3 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis makes a unique contribution to related research in the Swiss context, and it also builds on research in the broader ELT domain, including research on OER, OEP and CPD. This enquiry addressed a research gap by taking a more holistic approach than similar studies. It investigated freelancers’ OEP and informal learning in their multiple teaching contexts, and in so doing has provided a deep insight into how varying contextual issues shape freelancers’ OEP and their informal learning.

Because freelancers in this study share their content more interpersonally than on the Web, their sharing practices are limited to smaller networks which hinders the dissemination of their teaching resources to a broader audience. In contrast to the reviewed literature (e.g. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Bass et al., 2019; Beaven, 2018), this enquiry found that freelancers are motivated to share openly if they recognise a demand for their resources. This is because they make a correlation between a demand for a resource and its value. This finding is significant and contributes to understanding more about what motivates language teachers to share their content and expertise, and it may be one explanation for
the finding in this study and in other research (e.g. Belikov and Bodily, 2016; Thoms and Thoms, 2014), that locating OER for specialised domains can be problematic. This valuable finding can assist stakeholders in supporting language teachers’ open sharing practices in local and broader contexts, and thus improve language teachers’ access to relevant and authentic materials for specific teaching contexts.

This thesis also advances knowledge of conditions that are important for teachers to take part in broader OEP. The enablers and constraints influencing freelancers’ engagement with OER-based practices support Cox and Trotter’s (2017) claims that specific attributes are required to engage in these practices. Additionally, and concurring with Bass et al. (2019), this enquiry highlights that these attributes are individual and context-dependent. Building on this knowledge, the findings in this thesis clearly show that certain conditions are required for freelancers to take part in broader OEP, i.e. a language teacher’s agency and autonomy, capacity, and access to relevant infrastructure (e.g. digital devices and internet connectivity). This specific knowledge is of significance because having a clear understanding of what conditions can facilitate a language teacher’s engagement with OEP can aid stakeholders (e.g. employers and teacher trainers) recognise what support and infrastructure language teachers need to engage in such practices.

Furthermore, this investigation contributes to research on language teachers’ informal learning. In agreement with Marsick and Neaman (2018), this study identified reflection, benchmarking and learning by doing as informal learning strategies. This enquiry identified these as interrelated learning strategies that can contribute to freelancers’ informal learning through OEP. Although the learning strategies of reflection and learning by doing have been reported as playing a role in language teachers’ learning through OEP (e.g. Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Borthwick and Gallagher-Brett, 2014), the learning opportunities afforded through benchmarking have not hitherto been explicitly explored. This enquiry found that the openness afforded by participatory tools provided crucial benchmarking opportunities for freelancers that contributed to their learning and development in a meaningful way. This finding is significant because it aids in understanding language teachers’ informal learning through
OEP and diverse factors that shape their learning, which is invaluable knowledge for stakeholders interested in language teachers’ CPD.

A further critical contribution to knowledge is that this enquiry has demonstrated a connection between freelancers’ newly gained knowledge and skills to student motivation and learning. This indicates a transference of knowledge to the classroom and points to a sustainable learning effect which is a desired aim of CPD (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Schleicher, 2016; Desimone, 2009). Furthermore, this study also demonstrated that informal learning through OEP can lead to self-directed learning which suggests that engagement with OEP can act as a catalyst for more structured learning.

The findings reported here clearly demonstrate that the learning opportunities afforded through freelancers’ engagement with OEP can offer language teachers a viable means of developing professionally that can contribute meaningfully to their ongoing CPD.

6.4 Implications for professional practice and policy

Overall, this knowledge has implications for diverse stakeholders in the Swiss ELT context and the broader ELT domain, e.g. employers of language teachers, teacher trainers, policymakers, publishers, freelance language teachers, and educators working in similar freelance conditions. Contributions to knowledge from this thesis can benefit relevant stakeholders in terms of optimising the planning, design and delivery of CPD activities, whether using informal or formal approaches. Furthermore, the findings can assist policymakers and employers of freelancers to understand how to support teachers in their diverse contexts.

As discussed in Chapter 5, it is important for language teachers to have adaptable resources. This enquiry has shown that language teachers want to introduce open technologies and supplement coursebook materials to meet the learning needs of their students, and this often means adapting content (both OER and non-OER). However, despite expectations of language teachers to use authentic teaching materials and to localise content (Surkamp and Viebrock, 2018) by adapting resources, many commercial materials that are made available for language teachers on the Web, and teaching materials shared openly by others do
not permit such adaptations due to copyright restrictions. This has implications for policymakers and publishers concerning the promotion and release of copyright licensed materials that can be adapted. An implication for employers of language teachers, teacher trainers and language teaching associations is that freelance language teachers should be supported in their development of relevant knowledge and skills so that they have a better understanding of copyright and where to locate OER. This will aid them in making informed choices about taking part in OER-based practices and broader OEP.

The contextual factors that were identified as shaping freelancers’ OEP are important because in some cases, structural and agential constraints hinder learning opportunities for both teachers and students. This suggests that a cultural change in mindset (i.e. on an institutional, workplace and individual level) and policy is needed, as is the provision of adequate support and infrastructure so that language teachers can engage with OEP.

6.4.1 Recommendations for professional practice and policy

Based on this enquiry’s findings and the implications for professional practice and policy outlined above, recommendations for practice, language teacher training, and policy include:

• raising awareness of the potential benefits of OEP for language teachers’ informal CPD and for teaching purposes;

• raising awareness of OER, CC licensing and copyright issues;

• tailored capacity building;

• raising awareness and promoting the use of the DigCompEdu framework;

• raising awareness of relevant OER repositories;

• improving access to appropriate digital infrastructure;

• increasing language teachers’ autonomy and flexibility to choose and adapt teaching resources;
• encouraging the use of open technologies for digital networking practices;

• encouraging freelance language teachers to join a teaching association or other groups, e.g. informal teacher groups and SIGs.

Raising awareness of OER and OEP (and the benefits for student and teacher learning) and issues such as copyright, CC licensing, OER and OEP would require implementing strategies such as the dissemination of relevant information and hands-on CPD activities that enable language teachers to experiment with varying resources and technologies. Such strategies could be used by teaching associations and other stakeholders interested in language teachers’ OEP and CPD. For example, interested stakeholders could disseminate information via digital and non-digital sources that are used by freelance language teachers, e.g. appropriate social media channels, via newsletters, websites, SIGs and informal teacher meetings. For freelancers in this enquiry, these strategies could be implemented by the Swiss ELT Association.

To aid freelance language teachers develop the relevant digital literacy skills and knowledge needed to engage in OEP, I recommend that stakeholders offer CPD activities such as tailored workshops. An experiential workshop model that could be used as a template for language teacher training is Stickler et al.’s (2020) three-phase developmental framework for teaching language teachers to develop online skills. Their three-phase model comprises a pre-workshop activity, the workshop, and a post-workshop activity which include reflective and hands-on activities that can be customised to suit workshop participants’ needs (Stickler et al., 2020).

Based on the findings in this thesis relating to informal learning, Stickler et al.’s (2020) model could be slightly adapted so that focused opportunities are provided for reflection, learning by doing and benchmarking. For example, in alignment with Stickler et al.’s (2020) model, before a workshop, language teachers should complete a short online survey to identify what they want prioritising to aid in tailoring the event. And teachers should be encouraged to participate in an online activity that prompts reflection in preparation for participation in the workshop. The workshop should be designed so that
participants can experiment with hands-on activities (learning by doing), be able to compare their work (benchmarking) and complete the workshop with a discussion that prompts reflection. Post-workshop, a further reflective activity should be assigned and executed in a digital space (e.g. a social media forum) or physical space that enables language teachers to consolidate their learning by discussing elements of practice from the workshop. Post-event discussions would aim to feed ideas forward from the workshop, promote further reflection and encourage networking and the building of relationships that foster other peer learning opportunities.

Additionally, to assist freelancers guide the development of their digital teaching competencies in a structured and pedagogically meaningful way, it is recommended that relevant stakeholders, including teaching associations, raise awareness of the DigCompEdu framework. As discussed in Chapter 1, the DigCompEdu framework can be used by different stakeholders to inform education policy and the design and delivery of CPD activities, and teachers can use it as a general reference framework. As Caena and Redecker (2019) point out, the framework can aid teachers to reflect on their current digital teaching competence levels and set professional development goals relevant to their teaching needs and contexts. In this sense, using the DigCompEdu framework can help teachers direct and take ownership of their learning and development.

A further recommendation relates to easing language teachers’ access to resources for specialised domains. Findings in this enquiry indicate that particularly ESP teachers have difficulties locating suitable resources. Therefore, a culture of sharing should be encouraged within language teachers’ workplaces and between teaching association members who teach in similar domains. Freelancers indicated a willingness to share, but they needed to recognise a demand for their resources. Therefore, it is important that ESP teachers are encouraged to share in wider networks and that they are assisted in optimising their and other language teachers’ access to relevant resources. Furthermore, awareness should be raised of OER repositories for language teachers, including multidisciplinary repositories, e.g. OER commons. Repositories such as the latter have OER authoring tools and diverse groups of users, so making use of them might assist language teachers to find appropriate resources and might encourage
them to share and network with other groups of educators. Finally, policymakers should promote the release and publication of language teaching materials with copyright licences that enable adaptation, and that are published in an editable format. If publishers release more of their materials in this way, it might ease ESP teachers and other language teachers access to flexible resources that can be localised.

As discussed, some freelancers lacked access to adequate digital infrastructure in their workplaces which constrained their teaching activities. Therefore, places of employment should ensure that language teachers are not hampered in their teaching practices by a lack of digital infrastructure. Strategies such as bring your own device could aid in teaching contexts where the workplace has limited resources, but at a minimum, language teachers and students should have access to internet connectivity.

A critical issue that needs addressing is freelancers’ lack of autonomy to choose teaching materials and to supplement coursebook materials. Teachers are acknowledged as change agents who play a significant role in students’ learning (Guskey, 2002; Day, 1999). And yet, some freelancers in this enquiry were hampered in the learning opportunities they could offer their students due to restrictive workplace policies which disempowered them as language teaching professionals. Therefore, a cultural change in mindset and policy is needed that trusts and respects language teachers as professionals and empowers them to use their knowledge and experience for the benefit of their learners. This means providing language teachers with the autonomy and flexibility to use open technologies and to supplement coursebook materials with suitable resources so that they can adapt and localise them to provide learners with relevant and authentic materials. Furthermore, workplaces should provide opportunities and time for language teachers to experiment in their practices, engage in discussions with other teachers and to reflect on their teaching practices. Enabling language teachers to work as professionals and be involved in relevant decision-making processes, e.g. with regard to teaching materials, might also contribute to their confidence-building and improve their sense of well-being and identity.

Finally, to benefit from peer learning opportunities and as part of their ongoing CPD, it is recommended that language teachers experiment with open
technologies and digital networking tools and be encouraged to join language teaching associations, and take part in local teacher meetings.

6.5 Further research

This enquiry is unique to the Swiss context and can be used as a benchmark for future research. There are many aspects worthy of further investigation that would contribute to knowledge building on OER, OEP and CPD in the Swiss context and the broader research terrain. This was a small case study in Switzerland, and participants were members of an ELT association. Therefore, there would be merit in exploring freelance language teachers' engagement with and learning through OEP in Switzerland on a broader scale. The aim would be to investigate a more diverse target group to explore whether specific demographic variables (e.g. age, gender and teaching experience) reveal differences in how and why language teachers engage with OEP. The interviewees' teaching experience in this enquiry ranged from 11 to 44 years, so investigating the OEP of less experienced language teachers and comparing findings with those of more experienced teachers could aid in understanding how best to support language teachers in their teaching practices and in teacher training.

From this enquiry it is clear that in many cases freelancers use a mixed ecology of resources (OER and non-OER) and open technologies in their teaching practices to compensate for coursebook deficits such as the lack of relevant, authentic and current materials. Given the significant role that coursebooks play in ELT in Switzerland and the broader ELT domain, it would be useful to explore this issue in more depth. A deeper understanding of the types of supplementary resources and open technologies that language teachers use to supplement coursebooks and standardised materials, as well as their motivations for engaging in these practices, could be of benefit to language teachers and their employers, to teacher trainers, policymakers, and to publishers.

Additionally, an area for further research would be an in-depth exploration of how and why teachers in partnership with students develop, co-create and share OERs and the digital devices used to engage in these practices. Particularly the ESP teachers in this enquiry highlighted the significance of co-creating resources with students and the value of this process for their learners. Other
interviewees indicated the importance of mobile devices in terms of contributing to student motivation and learning. Findings from such research could be of benefit to language teachers and learners.

Further research could also investigate how the knowledge and skills that freelance language teachers develop through their engagement with OEP are being transferred to the classroom. As outlined in section 6.1, freelancers reported that this had a positive impact on student learning and motivation. Therefore, it would be useful to know more about how this transference of knowledge and skills is being put into practice and whether changes are impacting on student motivation and learning. A deeper understanding of these practices could be of benefit to language teachers and teacher trainers.

Methodologically, the online survey used in this enquiry could be adapted for use in further research depending on the research focus. However, I would also recommend that semi-structured interviews be considered because as demonstrated in this study, they facilitated the generation of rich data and revealed findings that were not evident from the survey data. Furthermore, as discussed above, the semi-structured interviews provided a way of validating data from the survey, thus providing an extra layer of rigour.

6.6 Personal reflections

I hope that the findings from this study can contribute more broadly to research on OER, OEP and CPD and prompt further research that continues to build on this knowledge. I also hope that the recommendations made for professional practice and policy can aid in improving support and training for language teachers as well as helping freelancers in ELT and other disciplines with their CPD.

Exploring freelancers’ engagement with and learning through OEP has been enlightening and an extraordinary learning journey for myself as a freelance language teacher and as a doctoral researcher. Based on my experiential knowledge as a freelancer and a National Council member of the Swiss ELT Association, I had some preconceptions about freelancers’ OEP which were supported by the findings in this enquiry, e.g. participants lack of awareness of
OER and CC licensing. Although I was aware from anecdotal evidence that some freelancers are restricted in what they can do in their teaching practices, it was disconcerting to find that some freelancers are not permitted to introduce supplementary materials and open technologies into their teaching practices. It undermines freelancers as language teaching professionals and contradicts expectations of language teachers to supplement coursebook materials with current and authentic materials that are culturally relevant to students (Mishran, 2005). It is clear from the findings in this enquiry that coursebooks do not suffice as a standalone resource which raises questions for different stakeholders about the design, purpose, and use of coursebooks in ELT contexts.

Regarding the methodological approach, I would not have changed the research design because this enabled the generation of rich data that provided valuable insight into freelancers’ teaching practices and to diverse structural and agential enablers and constraints to their OEP. However, on reflection, I would have adapted the survey and interview questions so that it was possible to have a clearer understanding of why and how participants use OER in some situations and not in others. I found it challenging to parse this out from the data.

Finally, this research has shown me that taking part in OEP for teaching and learning purposes is about making choices that are relevant to a specific context and involves complex decision-making. For language teachers to make choices about OEP and enact changes that benefit their students’ learning and their own, they need a supportive infrastructure and the flexibility and autonomy to carry out their jobs as language teaching professionals.
References


Appendices

Appendix A – Online Survey/JISC Tool

Section 1: Introduction and consent

Online Educational Practices and Professional Development

Introduction: Survey Information and Consent

The Open University UK

Dear Fellow Member,

Thank you for entering this survey through the link provided on the introductory leaflet that was emailed to you. This project aims to enquire into the role that online educational practices play in the professional development of freelance English language teachers in Switzerland. The information that you provide will only be used for this doctoral research project and any publication or dissemination activity associated with it.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent by 30 November 2018. You can notify the researcher by email of your withdrawal. Data will be anonymised when the survey is closed and before data is exported. It will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. All raw data will be deleted on completion of my Doctorate.
This questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. It commences with general demographic questions followed by questions relating to your professional digital practices. You can navigate back and forth and you also have the possibility to finish later if you are interrupted.

This survey should only be completed by English language teachers who are paid on an hourly basis and whose teaching hours are dependent on the availability of language student numbers. This includes part-time or sessional contracts, i.e. where a teacher is contracted for a set number of hours and for a limited period of time, and teachers who are self-employed and paid on an hourly basis.

Consent: I agree that I have read the information leaflet and understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent by 30 November 2018. I also understand that data will be anonymised, stored securely and eventually deleted. I agree that the information I provide can be used for this research project and any publication or dissemination activity associated with it in an anonymised form.

1. Please click on 'yes' if you agree to provide your consent. *

   Yes
Continued Appendix A

Section 2: Demographics

**Demographics**

2. What is your age bracket?
- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65 and over

3. What is your gender?
- Female
- Male
- I prefer not to say
- Other

3.a. If you selected Other, please specify: \( \text{Optional!} \)

4. Is English your first spoken language?
- Yes
- No

4.a. If you answered No, please specify your first spoken language: \( \text{Optional!} \)

5. What qualifications do you have? Please select all that apply.
- CELTA Certificate
- TEFL Certificate
- TESOL Certificate
- SVEB
- Sales/Teaching Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate Degree
- Other

5.a. If you selected Other, please specify: \( \text{Optional!} \)
Continued Appendix A

Section 2: Demographics

1. How many hours do you teach English as a foreign language, at present, per week?
   - 1.5
   - 6-10
   - 11-16
   - 17-21
   - 22 and over

2. Which of these describes your present employment status? Please select all that apply.
   - I have a part-time contract
   - I have more than one part-time contract
   - I work on an hourly basis without any contract
   - Other
   - If you selected Other, please specify: Optional

3. Where do you teach at present? Please select all that apply.
   - Home or office, away from home (Private students)
   - Language school or centre
   - Tertiary level (e.g. University, Further Education)
   - Vocational Institution (Apprenticeship programme)
   - Incompany or business
   - Teacher training
   - Secondary school
   - Primary school
   - Other
   - If you selected Other, please specify: Optional

4. "Overall, I am satisfied with my job security". To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? Select one
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

5. Could you please explain why you agreed or disagreed with this statement?

6 / 36
"Overall, I am satisfied with my opportunities for professional development". To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? Select one:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. a. Could you please explain why you agreed or disagreed with this statement?
Continued Appendix A

Section 3: Open Educational Practices (alignment with RQ1a)

Online Educational Practices

11. Which of the following activities have you done in the last 12 months? These activities relate to language teaching. Resources can be texts, images, audio or video materials. Please select all that apply.

- Used a digital resource in my teaching practice (e.g. streamed a video, used a quiz)
- Downloaded and used a teaching resource from the internet and adapted or changed it
- Downloaded and used a teaching resource from the internet without adapting or changing it
- Shared on the internet a teaching resource that I have created
- Shared on the internet a teaching resource that I adapted or changed, which was originally created by another person
- None of the above

12. Which of the following activities have you done in the last 12 months? These activities refer to the use of social media tools and digital technologies for practices associated with language teaching. Please select all that apply.

- Shared a teaching resource or teaching related material on a social media platform such as Twitter or Facebook
- Shared teaching resources or information related to language teaching via a blog
- Shared resources with other teachers via a collaborative file storage tool such as Google Drive
- Shared resources with other teachers via email
- Co-created teaching resources with another teacher via a collaborative file storage tool such as Google Drive
- Participated in an online discussion via a social media tool such as Twitter or Facebook
- Participated in an online discussion via a communication platform such as Google Hangout or Skype
- Added a comment to a blog or an online forum site
- Asked a question on a social media platform such as Twitter or Facebook, or an online forum site
- None of the above
Continued Appendix A

Section 4: Open Educational Practices: Motives (alignment with RQ1b)

Online Educational Practices: Motives

13. For which of the following purposes have you used digital resources in the last 12 months for teaching? This includes printed versions of texts or images. Please select all that apply.

☐ I don’t use digital resources
☐ Replace existing resources
☐ Supplement existing resources
☐ Broaden the range of my teaching materials
☐ Provide more relevant material to my students
☐ Provide more culturally diverse material to my students
☐ Get new ideas and inspiration
☐ Other

13.a. If you selected Other, please specify: Optional

13.b. If you answered, I don’t use digital resources, why don’t you? Please explain in the box below.

14. For which of the following purposes have you used digital resources for your professional development in the last 12 months? Please select all that apply.

☐ I haven’t used digital resources for my professional development
☐ Learn about a new topic
☐ Stay up-to-date with English language teaching topics
☐ Enhance my technical skills (e.g. computer or mobile device skills)
☐ Learn about new digital tool/technologies
☐ Learn about new language teaching methods
☐ Other

14.a. If you selected Other, please specify: Optional

14.b. If you haven’t used digital resources for your professional development, why haven’t you? Could you please expand on this in the box below?
Continued Appendix A

Section 4: Open Educational Practices/Motives (alignment with RQ1b)

15. For which of the following purposes have you used social media tools and/or digital platforms (e.g. blogs, wikis, YouTube) in relation to language teaching in the last 12 months? Please select all that apply.

- I don't use social media tools or digital platforms

15.a. If you selected Other, please specify: Optional

15.b. If you don't use social media tools or digital platforms for language teaching purposes, why don't you? Could you please expand on this in the box below?
Continued Appendix A

Section 5: Open Educational Practices: Learning (alignment with RQ2)

Online Educational Practices: Professional Development

26. What have you learned or developed from taking part in these practices? The practices below refer to language teaching. Please select all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pract ces associated with digital resources such as evaluation, creation, use, adoption and sharing</th>
<th>Developed my digital skills</th>
<th>Learned new things about teaching methods</th>
<th>Learned new things about a topic</th>
<th>Learned new things about digital tools and technologies</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pract ces associated with social media tools (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) such as adding a comment or sharing a resource</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pract ces associated with communicative tools (e.g. Google Hangout, Skype) such as taking part in a discussion</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. When taking part in teaching practices involving digital resources such as evaluation, creation, use, adaptation, and sharing, how do you develop new knowledge and/or skills? Please select all that apply.

- [ ] I don’t develop new knowledge or skills through these practices
- [ ] I’m not aware of any impact on my learning
- [ ] Through the process of creating or adapting digital resources
- [ ] By reflecting on how I can create or change digital resources to suit my students’ learning needs
- [ ] Taking part in these practices makes me think about new ways of teaching with digital resources
- [ ] I learn by reviewing and evaluating other teachers’ resources
- [ ] I learn by designing resources with other teachers
- [ ] Other

27a. If you selected Other, please specify: Optional
Continued Appendix A

Section 5: Open Educational Practices/Learning (alignment with RQ2)

48. When using social media platforms or other digital platforms for activities related to language teaching, how do you develop new knowledge and/or skills? Please select all that apply.

- I don’t develop new knowledge and/or skills through these practices
- I’m not aware of any impact on my learning
- I learn by reading about what other teachers are discussing
- I learn by trying out new tools and technologies
- I learn by taking part in discussions related to teaching
- These practices make me reflect on my own teaching practice
- Other

48.a. If you selected Other, please specify:  Optional

[Blank space]
Continued Appendix A

Section 6: Copyright and Open Educational Resources (alignment with RQ1a)

Online Educational Practices: Copyright and openly licensed resources

18. Which of these terms are you familiar with? Please select all that apply.
   - Public domain
   - Creative Commons licenses
   - Open educational resources (OER)
   - None of the above

20. When using digital resources in your teaching practice, how important is copyright to you? Select one
   - Very important
   - Somewhat important
   - Neither important or unimportant
   - Not very important
   - Not at all important

21. How familiar are you with any of the licenses below? Select one
   - Very familiar
   - Somewhat familiar
   - Not too familiar
   - Not at all familiar


CC0
Continued Appendix A

Section 6: Copyright and Open Educational Resources (alignment with RQ1a)

Open educational resources (OER) are commonly defined as ‘teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work’ (UNESCO, 2012).


22. Do you use OER in your teaching practice? Select one

- [ ] I use OER in my teaching practice
- [ ] I don’t use OER in my teaching practice
Continued Appendix A

Section 7 Open Educational Resources: types, motives and learning

(Alignment with all RQs)

23. How important is it to use openly licensed resources such as OER in your teaching practice? Select one

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neither important or unimportant
- Not too important
- Not important at all

24. What types of OER have you used in the last 12 months? Please select all that apply.

- Full lesson plans with worksheets and other resources
- Images
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Infographics
- Quizzes
- Texts (e.g. articles, short stories, books)
- Courses or parts of courses
- Interactive games
- Other

24a. If you selected Other, please specify: Optional

25. In which ways have you used OER in relation to language teaching? Please select all that apply.

- I have adapted and changed them to suit my teaching needs
- I have translated them
- I have shared them on a digital platform (e.g. blog)
- I have shared them via social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)
- I have added a resource to a repository (e.g. OER Commons)
- I have created resources and published them with a Creative Commons license
- I have shared resources via a curatorial tool (e.g. Scoopi)
- I have shared resources via email
- Other

25a. If you selected Other, please specify: Optional
Continued Appendix A

Section 7: Open Educational Resources: types, motives and learning

(alignment with all RQs)

26. Why do you use OER? Please select all that apply.

- I get new ideas and inspiration for teaching
- Supplement material that I use for teaching
- Broaden the range of my teaching materials
- Broaden the range of resources that I can give to my students
- Enhance my professional development
- Learn about a new topic
- Stay up-to-date with topics that are relevant to my teaching practice

21 / 26

26.a. If you selected Other, please specify: Optional

27. How does using OER contribute to your professional development? Please select all that apply.

- Using OER doesn’t contribute to my professional development
- I have improved my digital skills
- I have a more up-to-date knowledge of topics related to language teaching
- I have a better understanding of Creative Commons licenses
- Using OER has helped to broaden my range of teaching methods
- Other

27.a. If you selected Other, please specify: Optional

28. When using OER, how do you develop new knowledge and/or skills? Please select all that apply.

22 / 26
Continued Appendix A

Section 7: Open Educational Resources: types, motives and learning

(alignment with all RQs)

28. When using OER, how do you develop new knowledge and/or skills? Please select all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't develop new knowledge or skills from using OER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm not aware of any impact on my learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using OER makes me reflect more on how I can use digital resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn by comparing how other teachers are creating resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn by designing OER with other teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn through the process of creating or adapting OER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28.a. If you selected Other, please specify. Optional
Continued Appendix A

Section 8: Interview invitation

Participation in a one to one conversation

Dear Fellow Member,

Thank you for completing this survey.

I have one request before you leave.

After the evaluation of the questionnaire data, a small group of participants will be invited to take part in a one to one conversation which will last approximately 30 - 45 minutes. This will be face-to-face or online (e.g. via Skype) depending on where you live and arranged at a time and date that suits you. The interview will be recorded and transcribed word for word. The purpose of this is to gain richer information about some of your specific online educational practices and the role these play in your professional development.

If you are interested in volunteering, please leave your name and email address in the box provided. I will contact you personally via email to arrange a date and meeting point.

If you are interested in taking part in a one to one conversation, please use the box below to provide your name and email address. Thank you.
Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Appendix B – Information leaflet/Survey

*Personal information has been removed from this document.*

---

**Questionnaire invitation: Information leaflet**

Dear Fellow Members,

My name is Patricia Daniels and I have had several active roles with our association and am currently the online content co-ordinator for the Publication Team. I have been on the National Council since 2012 and have learned so much from many of you and would like to be able to give something back to the association. This is why I would like you to participate in this **online questionnaire**, which is part of my doctoral research.

**Research Title:** The role of open educational practices in the professional development of freelance English language teachers in Switzerland.

**Aim of research:**

The aim of this research is to investigate the role that open practices play in the professional development of freelance English language teachers. Open practices can be activities such as openly sharing information and educational resources online or offline. This could be through social media channels or through digital platforms such as blogs.

**Definition:** Freelance

For the purposes of this study, ‘freelance’, means English language teachers who are paid on an **hourly basis** and whose work is dependent on the number of available students. Therefore, this includes part-time or sessional contracts, i.e. where a teacher is contracted for a set number of hours and for a limited period of time, as well as teachers who are self-employed.

This information leaflet has been mailed to you in order to inform you about my research and to invite you to participate in a short questionnaire. It should take approximately 15 minutes. Participation is voluntary and participants will not be paid. If you would like to participate, please use the link provided at the end of this information leaflet to enter the questionnaire.

**If I agree to take part what will be involved?**

You will be asked to provide your consent in the introduction to the online questionnaire. There are some demographic questions followed by general questions about your online educational practices.
Continued Appendix B: Information leaflet/Survey

After evaluation of the questionnaire data, some participants will be invited to participate in a one to one conversation. Hence, you have the option of providing your name and email at the end of the questionnaire.

Is it confidential?

Your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. I have chosen the JISC Online Survey tool because its security policy fully complies with this act. Only the researcher will know your identity.

You are free to withdraw from the research project by 30 November 2018 without consequences. You can do this by sending me an email.

Questionnaire data will be anonymised as soon as is possible. All raw data will be deleted on completion of my Doctorate.

Results:

If you are interested in the outcomes of this study please contact me via email as stated below.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to ask.

Please click on the link below if you would like to complete the questionnaire:

(link removed)

Could you please complete the questionnaire by: 25 November 2018.

Thank you

Patricia Daniels

EdD Candidate

The Open University UK

Dr Beck Pitt

Main Supervisor
Appendix C – eNews notification: survey participation

Personal information has been removed from this document.

Dear [Name],

Please take a moment to read this request from one of our long-time members and contributors, Patricia Daniels. She is conducting research for her Doctorate degree and she needs to learn about the experiences of members working under hourly contracts. I hope you will take a moment to help her out!

Best wishes,

-----

Dear Fellow Member,

My name is Patricia Daniels and I am a member of the Publication Team. As part of my Doctoral research I am looking for voluntary participants to complete my online questionnaire.

I would really appreciate it if you could take a moment to read the information on the linked page which explains what my research is about. My research is targeting teachers who are members of [organisation] and who are paid on an hourly basis. Therefore, this includes part-time or sessional contracts, i.e. where a teacher is contracted for a set number of hours and for a limited period of time, as well as teachers who are self-employed.

If you belong to this group and would like to be a part of my research just click on the questionnaire link provided in the information leaflet. The questionnaire will be open until Sunday 25 November 2018.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Thank you so much.

Patricia Daniels

EdD Candidate
The Open University UK
Appendix D – Interview invitation

Personal information has been removed from this document.

Interview Invitation: information leaflet

Dear Name,

My name is Patricia Daniels and I have had several active roles in our association and am currently the online content coordinator for the Publication Team. I have been on the National Council since 2012 and have learned so much from many of you and would like to be able to give something back to the association. This is why I would like you to participate in an interview, which is part of my doctoral research.

Research Title: The role of open educational practices in the professional development of freelance English language teachers in Switzerland.

Aim of research:

The aim of this research is to investigate the role that open practices play in the professional development of freelance English language teachers. Open practices can be activities such as openly sharing information and educational resources online or offline. This could be through social media channels or through digital platforms such as blogs.

You are being invited because you completed the online questionnaire and indicated that you would be willing to take part in the second phase of data collection, which is an interview. Participation is voluntary and participants will not be paid. If you would like to participate, please use this email address (email removed) and I will contact you to arrange a suitable date.

If I take part what will be involved?

The aim of this conversation is to expand on specific examples of your open practices as indicated in your questionnaire answers and to discuss your perceptions concerning the role these practices play in your professional development. These conversations (approximately 30-45 minutes) will be recorded and then transcribed. Depending on where you live, this conversation will either be face-to-face or online e.g. using Skype or a similar tool.
Continued Appendix D: Interview invitation

If after our discussion I feel that some points require clarification or I need further information, I would like you to consider providing this either by email, or if you prefer, by telephone or Skype.

Is it confidential?

Your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Only the researcher will know your identity. You are free to withdraw from the research project by 28 February 2019 and without consequences. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to ask.

How do I give my consent?

You have several options. If we meet face-to-face, you can sign a consent form when we meet or I can email the consent form in advance and you can sign it electronically and email the signed copy to me. If we meet online e.g. via Skype, I will email you a consent form which you can sign and return to me via email before we meet. I am also quite happy to send a copy by mail and include a self-addressed envelope so that you do not incur any costs. We can discuss this in advance.

Results:

If you are interested in the outcomes of my research please contact me via email as stated below.

Patricia Daniels
EdD Candidate The Open University UK

Dr Beck Pitt
Main Supervisor
### Appendix E – Interview schedule 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Consent received</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Interview date and time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam</td>
<td>02.12.2018</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Wednesday 12 December 2018, 9 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Leanne</td>
<td>05.12.2018</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Wednesday 12 December 2018, 8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Matt</td>
<td>14.12.2018</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Friday 14 December 2018, 11 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Alicia</td>
<td>01.12.2018</td>
<td>Zürich</td>
<td>Tuesday 18 December 2018, 3 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Tammy</td>
<td>07.12.2018</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Friday 21 December 2018, 10 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Treena</td>
<td>24.12.2018</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Wednesday 26 December 2018, 10 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Anna</td>
<td>06.12.2018</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>Friday 4 January 2019, 11 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Nell</td>
<td>14.01.2019</td>
<td>Rotkreuz</td>
<td>Monday 14 January 2019, 3 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sue</td>
<td>10.01.2019</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Tuesday 15 January 2019, 2.30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Rebecca</td>
<td>04.12.2019</td>
<td>Zürich</td>
<td>Friday 18 January 2019, 10 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Simon</td>
<td>23.01.2019</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Tuesday 5 Feb 2019, 10.30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Arnold</td>
<td>07.02.2019</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Thursday 7 February 2019, 3 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Emma</td>
<td>07.12.2018</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Tuesday 19 February 2019, 11 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Julie</td>
<td>12.01.2019</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Tuesday 19 February 2019, 8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Debby</td>
<td>08.01.2019</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Wednesday 20 February 2019, 8 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F – Consent form

*Personal information has been removed from this document.*

**Interview Consent Form**

**Title:** The role of open educational practices in the professional development of freelance English language teachers in Switzerland.

Consent to be interviewed by Patricia Daniels

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information leaflet about this research project.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw by 28 February 2019 without giving a reason. I can notify the researcher by email of my intention to withdraw.

- If I decide to withdraw from the study, my data will be removed and will be destroyed as long as withdrawal is provided within the set date above.

- I understand that the interview will be recorded and written out word-for-word later. The recording will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

- I understand that anything I say will be treated confidentially and only used for the purposes of this research project including any publication or dissemination activity associated with it in an anonymised form.

- Based on the above, I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant_____________________________

Date: ___________      Signature:________________

Name of researcher: ________________

Date: ________               Signature:__________________

If you have any questions, please contact me at the email address below.
Continued Appendix F: Consent form

Patricia Daniels
EdD Candidate The Open University UK

Dr Beck Pitt
Main Supervisor
Appendix G – Interview guide

This draft was approved by the HREC on 7 November 2018.

Opening procedure:

Remind participants that the interview will be recorded and transcribed, data will be secured and stored, and of consent withdrawal date (28 February 2019). Thank them for participating and for returning the consent form.

Tentative probes will be designed based on each participant’s survey responses. In the pilot study this method aided in stimulating recall, prompted reflection and aided the discussion.

Information check:

Confirm status as hourly-paid teacher (freelancer and place/s of employment e.g. language centre, vocational institute.)

Demographic section:

Ask for expansion on Q9 level of satisfaction with job security and Q10 level of job satisfaction with professional development opportunities irrespective of whether the survey response is negative or positive.

Open practices: (relating to resources and practices)

Research questions:

RQ 1a Are freelance English language teachers taking part in open educational practices and if so, what practices are these practices?

RQ 1b If freelance English language teachers are taking part in open educational practices why do they take part in these practices?
Continued Appendix G: Interview guide

Procedure: Participants will be asked to select and share one or two examples of OER or OEP that they have used or taken part in within the last 12 months. *(Purpose: stimulate recall and prompt discussion)* (They will be notified of this in advance.)

Questions/probes concerning resources/OER:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question/probe</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you explain what this is and how you used it in your teaching practice?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you find it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How and why did you modify it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you use it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you share the modified resource further?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why do you</strong> use online resources in your teaching practice? (Why or why not?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your digital skills or technical skills prevent/ hinder you from taking part in some particular practices e.g. adapting a video or using a specific tool? (Which types of practices?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you share your own resources on digital platforms or via social media channels? (Why or why not?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you share resources or teaching ideas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions and probes concerning digital networking practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Probes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Could you tell me more about how you use digital platforms or social media channels for professional purposes?</td>
<td>Probes: What sites do you use? (How and why?) Do you use them for teaching purposes? (How and why?) Do you engage /communicate with other teachers or networks of teachers? (How and why?) Does taking part in these activities help you to expand your personal learning network?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(You indicated in the survey that you don't use digital platforms or social media channels for professional purposes. Could you tell me more about why you don't use these types of tools for professional purposes?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you tell me more about why you don't use these types of tools for professional purposes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and development through open practices:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2 If freelance English language teachers are taking part in open educational practices, what knowledge and skills do the teachers learn and develop?</td>
<td>Participants will be asked to expand on their answers to Q16 and Q27 with regard to what they learn and/or develop through open practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continued Appendix G: Interview guide

Questions and probes

You answered … to Q16 / Q27 could you expand on this please?

What do you learn or develop from taking part in these activities?

Potential probes: (Probes will vary depending on which questions were answered.)

Probes: How does this (learning or development) impact on you as a teacher?

Does this (learning or development) lead to changes in your practice? (How, in what way?)

What role do these activities play in your professional development?

RQ3 If freelance English language teachers are taking part in open educational practices, how do the teachers learn and develop knowledge and skills?

Participants will also be asked to expand on Q17, Q18, Q28, which ask how they learn or develop through engagement in these practices.

Questions and probes

You answered … to Q17, Q18, Q28 could you expand on this please.

How do you learn or develop from taking part in these practices?

Potential probes: (Probes will vary depending on which questions were answered and responses given.)

Example: In question 28 you indicated that using OER makes you reflect more on how you use digital resources. Does this lead to changes in your practice?

How could this/these type/s of learning or development be supported?
Continued Appendix G: Interview guide

Closure:

Is there anything else that you would like to comment on in relation to this discussion?

Ask participant if she/he would like to choose a pseudonym.

Ask participant if she/he would like a copy of the transcript.

Ask if I can email the participant about further queries if necessary.

Thank participant for taking part.
Appendix H – Summary of interview

Personal information has been removed from this summary.

This is an example of how I began to familiarise myself with data while it was still being generated. This is an excerpt from my reflective diary of a summarised interview and my initial reflections.

Interview: Tuesday 15 January 2019 (Number 9)

Interviewee: Sue (pseudonym)

Duration: 35.29 minutes

CPD: Sue feels accountable for her own CPD. She commented that if an employer is going to provide CPD then it needs to meet the needs of teachers, otherwise, it will not be effective.

Reflection: This point is often mentioned in the literature relating to CPD and is viewed as being problematic, i.e. irrelevant CPD.

Sue feels strongly that a teacher should know what they need and either do courses or learn from online material and other avenues i.e. through the association.

Reflection: Is this related to teacher identity and assumptions about teacher learning and development?

Formal/informal learning: She loves learning and feels that it is important to keep up to date.

Reflection: The expression, ‘keep up to date’ is mentioned quite frequently throughout the interviews. Who and what are teachers keeping up to date with? Do they evaluate this through OEP? Why do they feel that they are behind and how is this impacting on them as freelancers and their engagement in open practices? Is this a motivational issue? Do contextual issues have an influence? Does this relate to teacher identity/professionalism?

Job security: Sue feels quite secure but mentioned that her work is totally dependent on student numbers. She commented that in Switzerland there are a lot
Continued Appendix H: Summary of interview

of language schools and that it should not be difficult for teachers to find extra hours.

Reflection: Based on other participants' comments, it seems that employment opportunities depend on the area as well as other issues such as teaching experience and whether a teacher speaks English as a first language or not.

Resources/what types and why: Sue creates a lot of her own materials both in digital and non-digital format. She also uses a mix of educational, e.g. English language sites and non-educational sites. She does this to meet the needs of her students. She downloads texts and videos but mainly adapts textual material and then creates tasks that relate to the text.

Sharing: Sue does not share her own material or adaptations of downloaded resources on the Web. She said she does not have time to do this. However, she does share via email and with her local teacher group who meet once a month in a physical location.

Reflection: This type of interpersonal sharing is quite common and is consistent with other research findings. It seems that there is a reluctance to share on the Web. Is this to do with copyright and a lack of awareness and understanding of CC licenses?

Learning how and what: Sue learns a lot about teaching methods and content knowledge when searching, evaluating and using materials in class. She commented that she gets a lot of ideas from resources that are shared online and uses those ideas to create resources that are better suited to her students. She feels that she learns in many ways but mainly through self-reflection and experimentation. She likes to experiment with different teaching methods, e.g. she spoke about using the concept method to teach grammar.

Reflection: So, this learning seems to be transforming how she designs her resources and how she teaches. It seems that openness provides a window into the teaching practices of others.
Continued Appendix H: Summary of interview

Digital networking: Sue uses open platforms and some social media channels for professional purposes but described herself as a passive user, i.e. she reads what others are discussing and follows links to resources.

Copyright: She feels copyright is important and is aware of the term OER.

Comment in interview closure: Sue feels strongly about CPD and feels that teachers should take care of their own development. She feels privileged that we can work with open technologies and that we have access to so many teaching resources on the Web.

Keywords: experimentation, critical reflection, motivation, teacher agency and autonomy, accountability for CPD.
Appendix I – Thematic map examples

Thematic map: Copyright awareness

Thematic map: Sharing practices
Appendix I continued: Thematic map examples

Thematic map: Digital content practices
Appendix J – HREC Approval

Personal information has been removed from this document.

A: Confirmation of ethical approval for my Year I Initial Study.

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

From: (Name removed)
The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee

Email: (Removed)

Extension: (Removed)

To: Patricia Daniels

Project title: An enquiry into open educational practices as a professional development tool for freelance English language teachers

Date application submitted: 14/09/2017

Date of HREC response: 20/10/2017

Memorandum

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given a favourable opinion by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Please note the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, any information
Continued Appendix J: HREC Approval

contained in the original application, or a later amendment which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.

2. It is essential that any proposed amendments to the research are sent to the HREC for review so they can be recorded and where required, a favourable opinion given prior to any changes being implemented (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is or may be effected).

3. Please include your HREC reference number in any documents or correspondence. It is essential that it is included in any publicity related to your research, e.g. when seeking participants or advertising your research so it is clear that it has been reviewed by HREC and adheres to OU ethics review processes.

4. You are authorised to present this memorandum to outside bodies such as NHS Research Ethics Committees in support of any application for future research clearance. Also, where there is an external ethics review, a copy of the application and outcome should be sent to the HREC.

5. OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and where they exist, their frameworks for research ethics.

6. At the end of your project, you are required to assess your research for ethics related issues and/or major changes. Where these have occurred, you will need to provide the Committee with a HREC final report to reflect how these were dealt with using the final report template on the research ethics website -

http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/full-review-process-and-proforma#final_report

Best regards

(Name removed)

The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee
Continued Appendix J: HREC Approval

B: Confirmation of ethical approval for minor changes to main research project.

Approval was received on 7 November 2018.

Dear Patricia,

The changes that you have made are perfectly acceptable. As you already have a favourable opinion on your project this email will be sufficient for you to use the updated material and changes to the project.

Best wishes,

(Name removed)
Deputy Chair, HREC

B: My email to the HREC requesting approval for minor changes to the main research project.

To whom it may concern,

My main supervisor has notified me that changes have been made to the HREC guidelines and that it is important that you have copies of any changes that have been made to documents, surveys and interview questions etc. As per my 2017 proforma application form, the focus of the research (open educational practices and professional development), targeted population (freelance English language teachers), context (Switzerland), research methods (online survey and loosely structured interviews), method of approaching and informing participants, have not changed. However, the tentative title has been reworded, which is reflected
Continued Appendix J: HREC Approval

in the information leaflet. The survey questions have been expanded based on Pilot Study findings and further reading of current literature.

Changes to research title: The initial tentative title was, ‘An enquiry into open educational practices as a professional development tool for freelance English language teachers’. This has been modified to, ‘The role of open educational practices in the professional development of freelance English language teachers in Switzerland’.

Changes to information leaflet: title has been reworded

Changes to survey: questions are more detailed but still relate to open teaching practices and professional development. The survey tool was originally called Bristol Online Survey and has since been taken over by JISC and has been renamed JISC/Online Surveys.

Loosely structured interview questions: themes are the same as described in the initial proforma form, i.e. interviews will explore how and why participants are taking part in open practices and enquire into whether informal learning and development is perceived as occurring through these practices.

Could you please let me know if you require me to fill out an official form with regard to these amendments or whether this format is sufficient?

With kindest regards

Patricia (Patricia Daniels EdD Candidate OU UK)
Appendix K – Websites accessed

The following table includes further examples of the websites that freelancers use to locate OER and non-OER for teaching purposes and their own CPD. The tools have been categorised according to the types of resources, licensing and usage rights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of websites accessed</th>
<th>CC licences: open to restrictive</th>
<th>Own licence: usage rights subject to terms and conditions</th>
<th>Copyright: usage rights subject to terms and conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language teaching: multimodal resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Stop English</td>
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<tr>
<td>MacMillan</td>
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<td>Learning English BBC</td>
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<td>British Council for Kids</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Teacher Corner</td>
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<tr>
<td>iSL Collective</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breaking News English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources for teachers Cambridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyrics training</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quizzes/Games</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizlet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kahoot</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Continued Appendix K: Websites accessed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of websites accessed</th>
<th>CC licences: open to restrictive</th>
<th>Own licence: usage rights subject to terms and conditions</th>
<th>Copyright: usage rights subject to terms and conditions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Websites for images</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence.</td>
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<td>Photos in the Commons Project</td>
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<td></td>
<td>are public domain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pixabay</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>Changed from public domain to own licence in 2019.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Educational: multimodal resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wikipedia</td>
<td>Default CC BY SA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merlot</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Websites with a blend of educational and non-educational videos</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>TED Talks</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>Users can apply a CC licence.</td>
<td>Default standard YouTube licence.</td>
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Continued Appendix K: Websites accessed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of websites accessed</th>
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<th>Own licence: usage rights subject to terms and conditions</th>
<th>Copyright: usage rights subject to terms and conditions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General websites and online newspapers</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC sounds</td>
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<td>Voice of America</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Permission applies to material that is not included in the public domain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economist</td>
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</table>
Appendix L – Interview transcript excerpts

The interview transcript excerpts below are further examples of how freelancers in this thesis use specific criteria, i.e. relevance and authenticity, to choose materials for language teaching. Authentic materials refer to resources that cover current topics and use language that is meaningful for learners and aids in motivating them.

**Nell**

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me about the types of digital resources that you use for teaching purposes and where you get them from?

*Nell:* I'll tell you about the ESP students I have now. So, I inherited a script … which was very much text and video-based. First, I thought, “what should I do with this?” Essentially, I revamped the entire script and that meant going online and finding relevant stuff and putting it in and whatever. It was difficult. I had to find e-commerce resources and stuff about bitcoin and blockchain and all that kind of thing. So, it had to be relevant and current. I balanced it out with videos from YouTube and texts from places like the Economist and Bloomberg.

**Alicia**

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me about the types of digital resources that you use in your teaching practice?

*Alicia:* I use Wikipedia. I mean, you can’t actually use it as a complete resource but it’s helpful when students don’t understand something. And I use the Economist. There are so many things you can do with it (Economist) but texts need to be something relevant to that class at that time. Otherwise, it's just not meaningful. Very often, I’ll find a great text that I’m so excited about and it works for that week but that’s it then. And I use videos and podcasts that interest my students. My classes are all ESP so resources have to be relatable to students. They don’t want scripted stuff. I can’t spend time on something that doesn’t work in that particular class.
Continued Appendix L: Interview transcript excerpts

Anna

_Interviewer:_ What I’d like to talk about are the types of digital resources that you use and where you get them from. Could you tell me what you do in your classes?

_Anna:_ What I like to do is supplement coursebooks but I can’t always do it. I find that you really have to search for other resources for ESP classes. The coursebooks are just not authentic enough. I mean, it’s not always real so students aren’t interested and they don’t get it. Sometimes, I use short clips from YouTube to complement something. And what I also like to use is One Stop English. It’s great for vocabulary building and also for current topics. Something else that I like to do is use snippets from real guides and create a worksheet or something, and I always adapt the resources to their (learners) needs and today’s level.

Julie

_Interviewer:_ Could you expand on why you implement other resources and adapt your material?

_Julie:_ Because I want to tailor the lessons to the needs of my students. I think what I really do a lot is personalise the lesson and connect it to their social life, you know, outside in the real world. Even though they are at a very young age they have a social life. Let’s say the next unit is about explorers, I mean, sorry, but teenage students are not interested in explorers. It isn’t relevant to their lives. So, I adapt the topic and tasks and ask them to take on the role of an explorer and describe what their first day at secondary school was like. So, this is the kind of adaptation that I do the most. And in this way, I can connect relevant topics and resources to the learners’ needs.