

Owning the curriculum: How a Spanish program replaced commercial textbooks with OER

Giovanni Zimotti - March 13, 2026

Open Educational Resource Initiative

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

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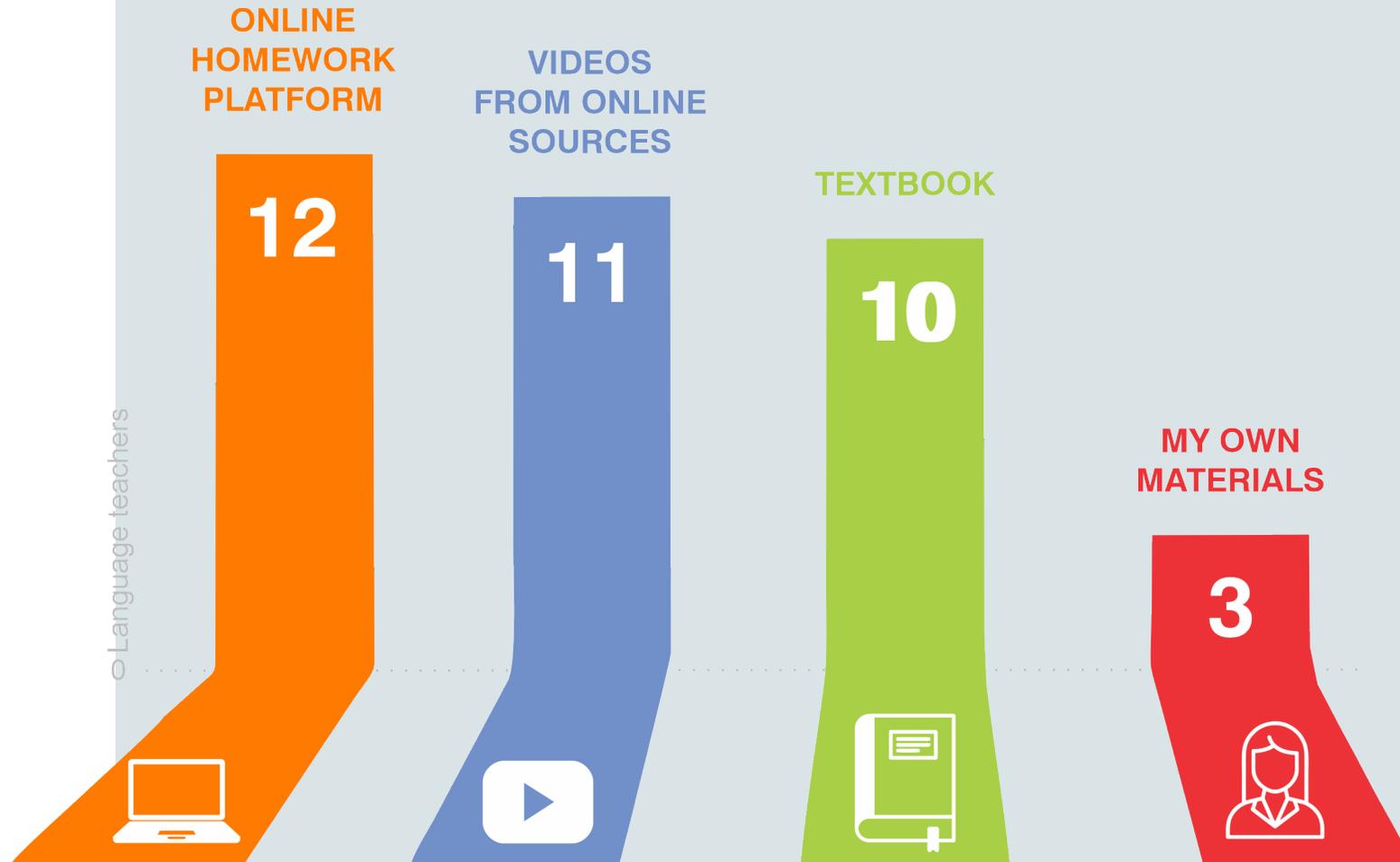
Why does OER Adoption **Fails**?

According to language instructors surveyed in 2022 during an OER conference

What components do you regularly use?

Less popular components

- Test and quizzes created by others
- Lesson plans created by others
- Annotated edition of a textbook
- Tech tools



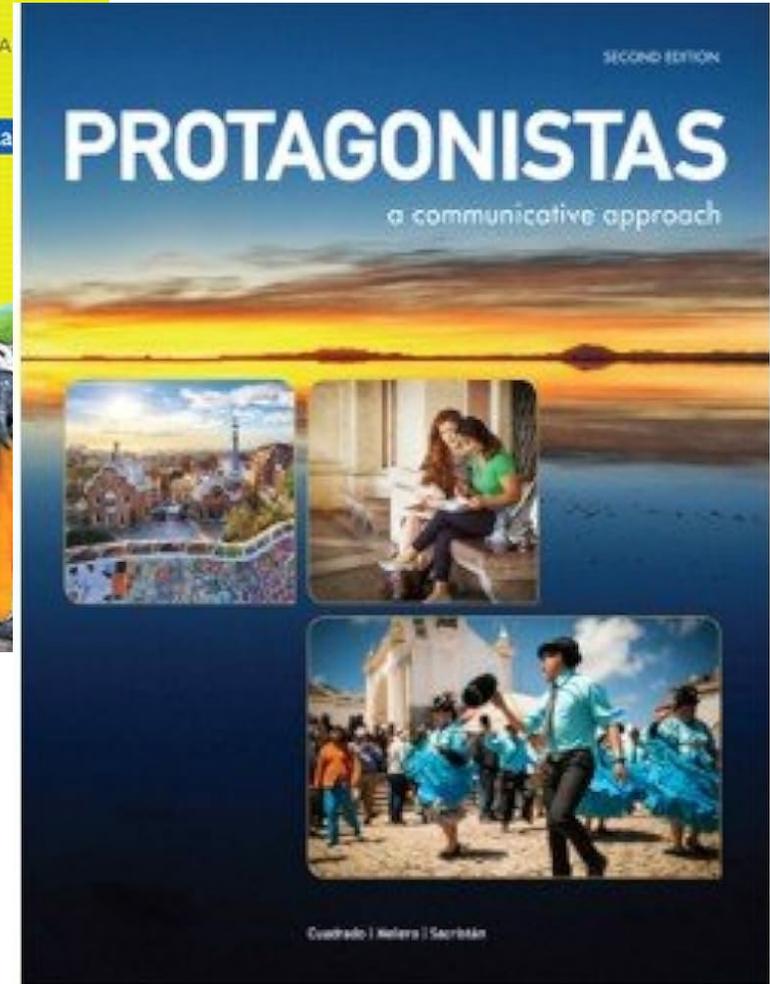
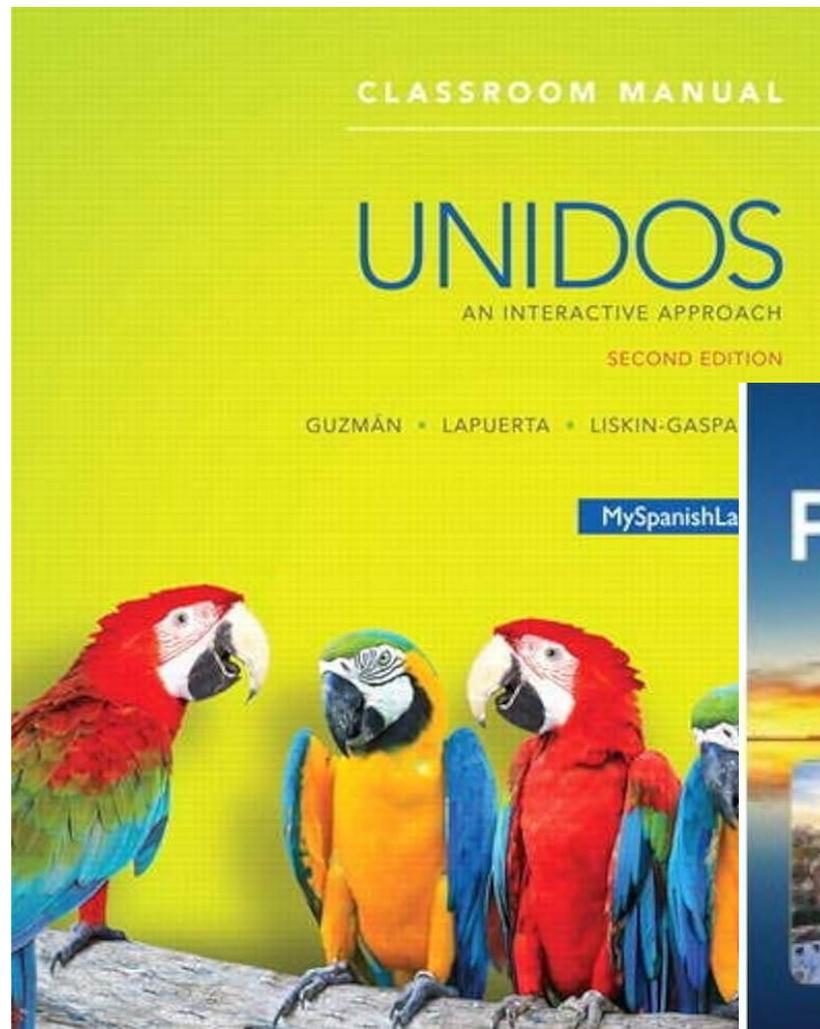
What's the biggest barrier of adoption for OER?

(Open ended question)

1. Time/lots of work
2. Lack of online homework
3. Hard to find
3. Lack of ancillary videos
3. Need for a cultural change

University of Iowa Spanish Program

Before OER



Spanish Basic Program (Iowa)

Elementary Spanish

SPAN:1001 -Elementary I

SPAN:1002 -Elementary II



Intermediate Spanish

SPAN:1501 – Intermediate I

SPAN:1502 – Intermediate II

Spanish for the Professions:

- 1502 for educators
- 1502 for healthcare

Exit Goal: Intermediate Mid

Spanish Basic Program (Iowa)

Graded Items	% of final grade
• 4 chapter exams (1 per module)	28%
• 4 projects (1 per module)	28%
• Guidel Learnings	28%
• Participation (self-assessed)	10%
• Language Self-Assessment	6%

Language Self-Assessment

I can say hello and goodbye

I can talk about what I eat...

Personal Reflection

Please write a 100-word response concerning your learning of Spanish this semester. Compare your results in the Can-Do Statements form the start of the semester with those you completed at the end of the semester to help you evaluate what you've learned and how your language skills have improved.

FIRST

Week of class

Can-Do Survey

Completion grade 2%

LAST

Week of class

Can-Do Survey

Completion grade 2%

LAST

Week of Class

Personal Reflection

Completion grade 2%

FIRST

Week of class

Can-Do Survey

Completion grade 2%

LAST

Week of class

Can-Do Survey

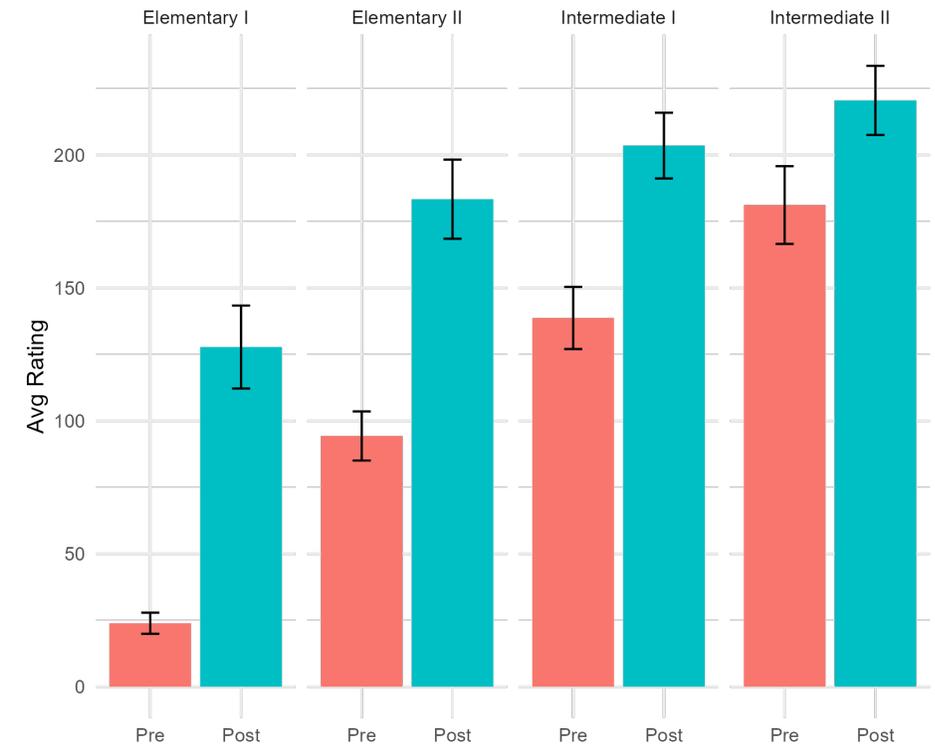
Completion grade 2%

Language Self-Assessment

- App created by us
- Source code available upon request

- Great for **advising & metacognition**
(helping students reflect)
- **Too weak** for placement or predictions

264 students - 4 levels



Zimotti, G., Smith, A. M., Frances, C., Whitaker, L., & Russell, J.-E. (under review). *Validating a Can-Do Self-Assessment Tool: Validity, Utility, and Student Reflections*. Manuscript submitted for publication to *Second Language Research & Practice*.

Participation (Self assessed)

At the end of each module

Categories assessed:

- Active Participation
- Language Use
- Technology Use
- Respect

Module Check-in

I want to make sure that you are on the right track to succeed in this class and help you if you need me.

- How do you feel?
- Are there things you are confused about?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- What's your biggest take away from this module?
- What could you do to improve your participation?

If you need immediate help send me an email.

Guided Learnings

GOAL: free class time for interaction

In the past

Weekly worksheets to be submitted on Monday

Ongoing transition

Using an online learning platform called **Greyled**

Homework due the night before class (review + new content)

SPAN:1001 — University of Iowa
Guided Learning – Week 3 - Semillas Elementary Spanish I

Week 3

Due on Thursday:

Estudios y Clases

Learn the vocabulary from 01CD and then complete the following activities

Activity 1 – Multiple Choice Activity - Choose the correct English translation for each subject

1. **Los negocios**
 - a. Business
 - b. Chemistry
 - c. History

2. **La biología**

The screenshot shows the Greyled platform interface. On the left, a sidebar lists the course contents for 'Semillas, Elementary Spanish I (1)', including modules 01 AB through 04 CD. The main area displays 'Lesson 1A' with a video player and a list of assigned activities. The activities include grammar exercises such as 'Pick the correct subject pronoun' and 'Pick the correct form of "ser" based on the context'. The interface also shows navigation options like 'Watch on YouTube' and 'Add chapter option'.

Projects

In the past (Formative assessment)

- Task-based projects
- Completed individually or in group
- 2 mostly written – 2 mostly oral

In the age of AI

For elementary:

1 project was redesigned to be an oral exam

For Intermediate:

2 projects were redesigned to be 2 oral exams

Other projects were reduced in scope and are now completed mostly in class.

Summative assessment: Chapter exams

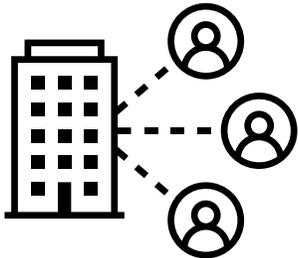
Proctored , in-person exams (lockdown browser)

4 sections:

- Reading comprehension
- Communication (Open ended questions)
- Vocabulary
- Grammar

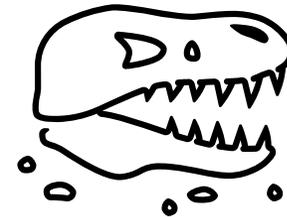
Why *Salón de clase*?

Courses of Spanish for specific purposes are needed/wanted by our students.



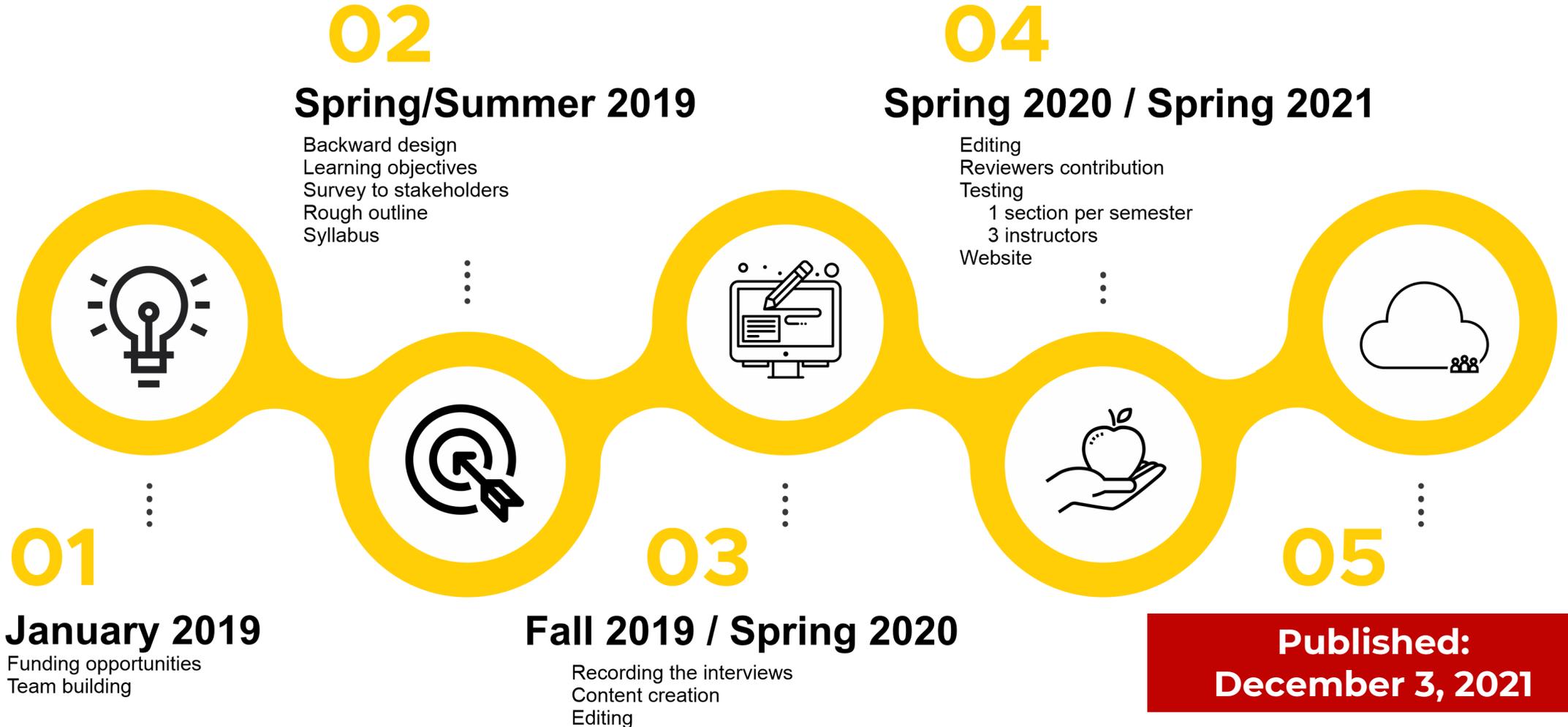
Textbooks about Spanish and Education:

- Expensive
- Outdated
- Too basic or specific



Timeline

From *Salón de clase*



Incremental Adoption

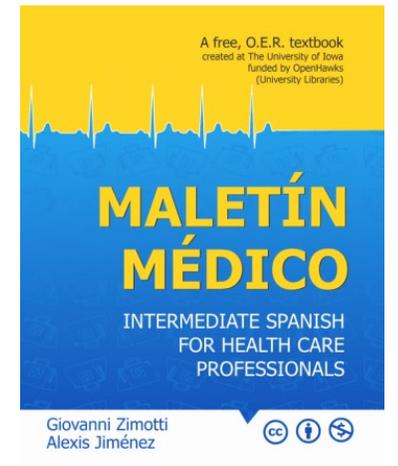
1 course

1 audience (small and limited in scope)

1 clear gap

Adapting Salón de clase

Summer 2020 - Maletín Médico: Intermediate Spanish for Healthcare Professionals.



Guiding principles

Backward Design

Learning objectives created following recommendations collected in a survey sent to various stake holders in the field of education and based on our own experience.

Video interviews

Videos interviews with 7 Spanish speakers involved in the educational field in the U.S. (Students, Teachers, Parents, Superintendent, School board member).

1.

Content Design

Guiding principles

Thematic modules and authentic resources.

Communicative activities

Task-based projects (formative assessment)

Guided Discussions

for critical thinking and in-depth investigation

Real-world tasks in school settings

to acquire employability skills

2.

A student-centered classroom

Guiding principles

One thing at a time

Organically (in context)

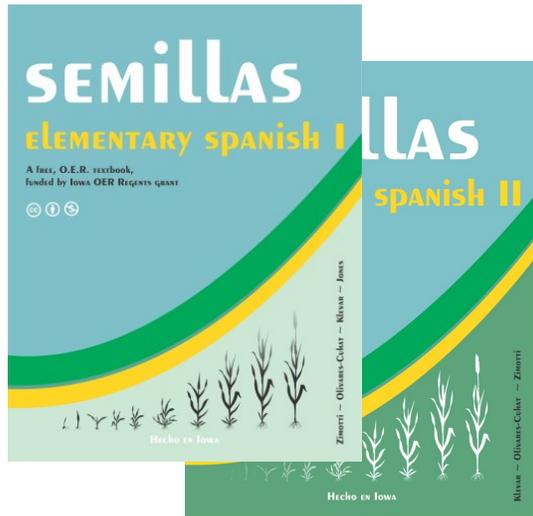
Input first, then output

Videos with explicit explanations in English

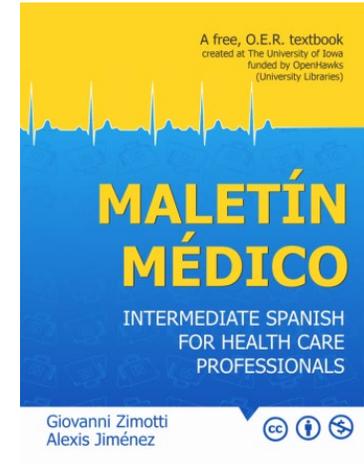
3.

Grammar Teaching

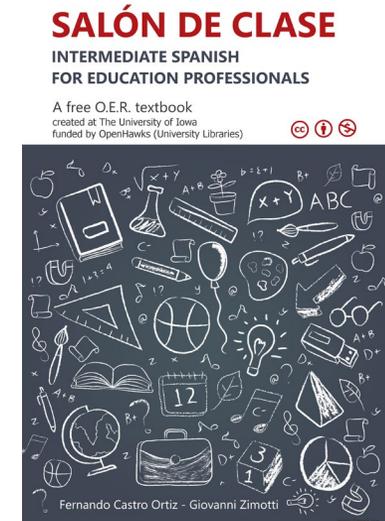
OER at Iowa



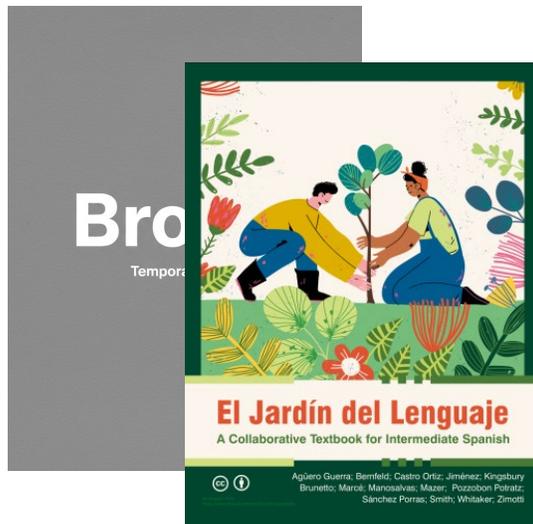
Semillas, Elementary Spanish



Spanish for the professions (Intermediate II)



Brotes, Intermediate Spanish I



El Jardín del Lenguaje, Intermediate Spanish II

Access all textbooks:

<https://tinyurl.com/OERSpanish>

Books organization

4 Modules

Each module has:

- Lessons (3 or 4)
- Vocabulary lists
- Grammar videos and explanations
- Project

I. Module 01 - Todo sobre mí −

1. 01AB Vocabulary List

[2. 01AB Grammar](#)

3. Lesson 1A

4. Lesson 1B

5. 01CD Vocabulary List

6. 01CD Grammar

7. Lesson 1C

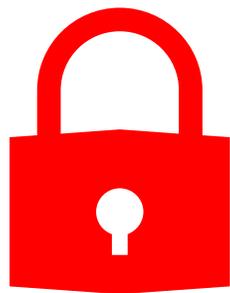
8. Lesson 1D

9. Proyecto 1

II. Module 02 - Todo sobre mi vivienda +

Adapting principles to reality

Based on data and external changes



We need to stop outsourcing some of the most important curriculum decisions in our programs.

The real advantage of OER: We own the Curriculum

We can adjust it, change it, mix it however we want based on:

- Students' needs
- Data driven evidence
- Locally adaptable



The image shows a digital table of contents for a course titled "Semillas, Elementary Spanish I". The title is centered at the top under a horizontal line. Below the title, there is a list of chapters, each with a chapter number and a title, followed by a downward-pointing chevron icon. The chapters are: "00 Intro, Acknowledgments, etc.", "01 - Todo sobre mí", "02 - Todo sobre mi vivienda", "03 - Todo sobre mi familia", and "04 - Todo sobre mis gustos". At the bottom of the list, there is a plus sign icon followed by the text "Add chapter option".

CONTENTS	
Semillas, Elementary Spanish I	
00	Intro, Acknowledgments, etc. ▾
01	- Todo sobre mí ▾
02	- Todo sobre mi vivienda
03	- Todo sobre mi familia
04	- Todo sobre mis gustos ▾
+	Add <u>chapter</u> option

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And all the people that volunteered their voices/faces for our books

Questions?

I am happy to share everything we have created.

Thank you!

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