

# OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCES IN EFL TEACHING AT SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES AND TOURISM: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

CƠ HỘI VÀ THÁCH THỨC TRONG VIỆC SỬ DỤNG TÀI NGUYÊN GIÁO DỤC MỞ TRONG GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG NGOẠI NGỮ - DU LỊCH

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## ABSTRACT

OERs provide equal opportunities for learners all over the world, such as free access to high-quality educational materials, augmentation of class materials, and enhancement of standard course content. Vietnam, a developing country, could benefit the most from the OERs movement such as free access to education, promoting active learning, and enabling teachers to customize course materials for their students. Nonetheless, the application of Open Educational Resources (OERs) is not widely recognized by the general public in Vietnam tertiary education, particularly at the School of Languages - Tourism (SLT). The article contends that OERs application at SLT is complicated and constrained by a number of contextual challenges. To be more specific, the use of OERs in the design of courses is hampered by three types of challenges, based on a survey of relevant research from around the world: (a) technological and infrastructure issues, (b) pedagogical concerns, and (c) legal constraints. Finally, the article discusses and suggests solutions for incorporating OERs in EFL teaching at SLT.

**Keywords:** *Open Education Resources (OERs), EFL teaching, tertiary.*

## TÓM TẮT

Tài nguyên giáo dục mở cung cấp các cơ hội bình đẳng cho người học trên khắp thế giới, chẳng hạn như truy cập miễn phí tới các tài liệu giáo dục chất lượng cao, tăng cường tài liệu lớp học và nâng cao nội dung khóa học chuẩn. Tại một đất nước đang phát triển như Việt Nam, việc áp dụng tài nguyên giáo dục mở có thể đem lại nhiều lợi ích như miễn phí khi tiếp cận giáo dục, thúc đẩy học tập tích cực và cho phép giáo viên tùy chỉnh tài liệu khóa học cho sinh viên của họ. Tuy nhiên, Tài nguyên Giáo dục Mở (OERs) chưa được áp dụng rộng rãi trong giáo dục đại học Việt Nam, đặc biệt là tại Trường Ngoại ngữ - Du lịch (SLT). Bài báo này ủng hộ quan điểm: ứng dụng OERs tại SLT tương đối phức tạp và bị hạn chế bởi một số thách thức của bối cảnh. Cụ thể, theo một số nghiên cứu liên quan, việc sử dụng OERs trong thiết kế khóa học bị cản trở bởi ba thách thức chính: (a) các vấn đề về công nghệ và cơ sở hạ tầng, (b) các vấn đề về sự phạm, và (c) các ràng buộc pháp lý. Ngoài ra, bài viết thảo luận và đề xuất giải pháp cho việc kết hợp OERs trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại SLT.

**Từ khóa:** *Tài nguyên giáo dục mở (OERs), EMI, thiết kế chương trình.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The use of Open Education Resources (OERs) in teaching and learning has become increasingly popular in recent years due to the benefits they offer. OERs are educational materials that are freely available and can be modified, reused, and redistributed without any legal or financial restrictions. They include a wide range of resources such as textbooks, videos, podcasts, software, and lesson plans.

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, OERs have great potential to enhance learning outcomes and promote access to quality education. EFL teachers at the School of Languages and Tourism have an opportunity to incorporate OERs into their teaching practices, providing learners with authentic, engaging, and relevant learning experiences.

The paper draws on existing literature on OERs and EFL teaching in order to suggest some recommendations for designing EMI courses, which is a new movement in School of Languages and Tourism (SLT). The paper is significant in that it provides insight into the potential benefits and challenges of using OERs in EFL teaching at the School of Languages and Tourism. The findings of the paper can be used to inform the development of policies and practices that support the effective use of OERs in EFL teaching, and to promote access to quality education for all learners.

Overall, this paper contributes to the growing body of research on the opportunities and challenges in applying OERs in EFL teaching and provides theoretical recommendations for EFL teachers in SLT who wish to incorporate OERs into their teaching practices.

This paper has five major parts. In the first part, we introduce the literature review of OERs, including its definition and characteristics. Following this, findings on current situation of applying OERs in tertiary EFL teaching both on global scale and in Vietnam are presented. Furthermore, opportunities and challenges of applying

OERs are discussed. Finally, conclusion and recommendations are mentioned, especially in SLT context.

## 2. OERs DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

### 2.1. The concept of OERs

The activity of developing and sharing educational resources is the foundation of open educational resources. There were shared lesson plans, libraries of resources available through Gopher, early websites, open software documentation, and more. Up until 2001, the OpenCourseWare project at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was sometimes recognized as the first example of OERs.

The commonly accepted origin of the term OERs is the 2002 UNESCO Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries. In 2007, a revised definition was proposed by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. This definition includes non-digital resources and focuses on different types of OERs, such as full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.

The first World OERs Congress organized by UNESCO approved the 2012 Paris OERs Declaration with its broader OERs definition: "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".

In 2020, The Hewlett Foundation also provided an updated OERs definition: "OERs are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium - digital or otherwise - that resides 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" [8].

### 2.2. Characteristics of OERs

Wiley presented the 5R framework to identify "openness" in OERs [23], including the five features:

**Retain** - Users have the right to make, own, and control copies of the content

**Reuse** - Users can utilize all or part of the materials for their own purposes (for example, downloading educational videos to watch).

**Redistribute** - Users can email electrical articles to coworkers.

**Revise** - Users can alter the work format (for example, translate an English book into Vietnamese and turn it into an audiobook).

**Remix** - Users can build a new resource by merging two or more existing (for example, choose audio from a course

and blend it with PowerPoint slides from another course to produce a derivative work).

OERs "openness" means data owners enable others to reuse it. Data reuse and circulation improve openness. Customization boosts openness and encourages OERs creation. OERs owners must support all five open learning material aspects to make their resources as open as feasible.

## 3. APPLICATION OF OERs IN TERTIARY EFL TEACHING ON GLOBAL SCALE

Li & Li researched CORE member institutions and individuals to survey, analyze, and report on OERs use and development in mainland China [12]. Data on OERs publishing and use, institutional rules, and institutional and individual understanding and perspectives on OERs copyright concerns were all included in the study. According to the report, despite the tremendous growth of HEIs in China, OERs has minimal impact on them. The study highlighted China's potential for OERs development. The use of digital resources by individuals shows that institutional marketing supports OERs utilization. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in China publish OERs and employ tools. Yet, neither institutions nor individuals understand OERs, which has influenced their willingness to publish or use OERs.

Open OERs inspires both institutions and people [12]. Despite being increasingly educated about copyright and open licenses, institutions are concerned about copyright issues and a lack of information. Institutions and individuals alike agree that the most significant barrier to OERs adoption is a lack of comprehension. Second, whereas institutions are concerned with incentive systems to increase OERs use, individuals are concerned with OERs quality and skills.

In the conclusion section, the researchers contend that without an incentive mechanism, institutions and individuals agree that publishing OERs is challenging. Individuals are motivated by institutions, whereas institutions are motivated by external forces. OERs users and publishers are well aware of its benefits. Institutions are concerned about the influence of OERs on their reputation, development costs, and production schedules, but individuals value its positive impact on personal and professional development.

To understand more about the use of OERs in Indonesian higher education, a survey was distributed to institutions that made extensive use of ICT in their pedagogical approaches [3]. The survey found that OERs had been warmly embraced, and the intention to adopt OERs is quite high. Several people also made advantage of free, downloadable Internet materials in addition to the other digital resources that were already available. Respondents were unanimous in their belief that OERs improved education since students had easy access to high-quality materials without having to pay for them. In addition, there

had been no serious incidents of copyright infringement, while understanding of the usage of third-party content and Creative Commons licenses remained low. Because of the lack of national and international cooperation on OERs, OERs policy was disjointed. The respondents' low enthusiasm in creating OERs mirrored their beliefs, as did their high intention of using them. Due to a lack of institutionalized policy and infrastructure to support OERs practices inside universities, OERs practices in Indonesia were still in their formative stages.

Yamada [24], a researcher into the usage of OERs in Japan, said that the Japanese government has implemented a number of top-down initiatives, such as the 'digital textbook' project in elementary and secondary education and 'good practices' subsidies for universities and colleges. Japanese institutions and publishers, for example, have started offering their own online and packaged learning content and sharing it with one another in a bottom-up approach.

However, neither the government nor course and content providers have had the incentive or necessity to make content that has been generated available to the public [24]. The concept of lifelong learning has been used to advocate for open education in Japan. The Open University of Japan (OUJ) has provided free, publicly-broadcast educational programming via terrestrial and satellite broadcast media. Meanwhile, educational content developed for other mediums like books and online media has historically been available only through paid subscriptions or other forms of exclusivity.

In the early 2000s, the MIT OpenCourseWare effort was the first to bring OERs to widespread attention in Japan. The Japan Open Courseware Consortium (JOCW) was established in 2005, and its member organizations immediately began making preparations for open courseware sites. A few years later, the Center for Information and Communication Technology and Distance Learning at the OUJ launched a cross-institutional search service that makes it possible to locate materials from OERs repositories [24].

#### **4. APPLICATION OF OERs IN TERTIARY EFL TEACHING IN VIETNAM (OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES)**

Taking into account the circumstances of the local context, the adoption of OERs in Vietnam is on the rise, but it is still not yet widespread. OERs has been considered as a viable answer to the problem of how to integrate technology and digital resources into the education system of the country, which has been the focus of recent efforts by the country. However, the adoption of OERs in Vietnam is still confronted with significant challenges, such as a lack of understanding and restricted access to digital resources. According to Doan Q., Dao T. Q. [2] and Truong [19], it has been reported that universities in Vietnam have been enthusiastic about the idea of incorporating OERs programs in their teaching and learning practice. Nevertheless, it is

believed that maximizing the potential of OERs is complicated and constrained by a number of different difficulties. These indications are similarly comparable to the findings of the study that Doan et al. [2] conducted. As a direct consequence of this, not a lot of study effort or outcomes have been produced in this field.

Open educational resources have been in place in Vietnam since 2005 but their use in K-12 and higher education has lagged behind expectations. The current investigation makes use of a systematic literature review approach, assessing prior research from 2015 to 2021. Several research papers and scientific reports were reviewed to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of OERs and how they might be overcome. Nguyen et al. [14] conducted research in which the findings indicate that Vietnamese students' lack of autonomy, a lack of direction on how to use the materials explicitly, and a bad Internet connection at school are the main barriers to using OERs. Instructors face challenges in selecting and altering OERs resources to suit the exploiting process due to a lack of familiarity with copyright and open licensing problems. In order to help increase the effectiveness of implementing and using OERs in the Vietnamese higher education context, some recommendations are drawn to overcome the aforementioned shortcomings.

Multiple attempts have been undertaken within the context of higher education in Vietnam to promote the utilization of OERs for both learning and teaching purposes. One example is that RMIT Vietnam's aspirations to link up with other institutions in Vietnam to build the OERs community in the country were discussed by Mr. Chau (RMIT Fosters Open Educational Resources, n.d.). He stated that RMIT Vietnam had offered other universities in Vietnam with advise on the creation and development of open educational resource collections. As a result, the model for the OERs platform has been successfully implemented at a number of universities, some of which are Dong A University, Hoa Sen University, and Ba Ria Vung Tau University. RMIT Vietnam's Open Educational Resources (OERs) collections are currently incorporated as reliable resources into the OERs platforms of these schools.

On the other hand, the use of OERs in English instruction at SLT is currently in its early stages, lacking clarity and consistency. There is a dearth of specific research conducted in the school environment to investigate the benefits and drawbacks of incorporating OERs into English language education. In 2023, two workshops were conducted to update the school's English teachers on the utilization of OERs. The introduction of EMI at the university since 2022 aims to produce proficient English speakers in response to the global labor market's increasing globalization [4]. This initiative aligns with the development and integration objectives of Vietnam educators. In the EMI subject group, which encompasses program design and teaching practice, OERs is frequently employed during the creation of courses

such as Tertiary Study Skills or Introduction to Tourism. However, it is evident that SLT instructors have had limited time to fully grasp and effectively utilize OERs in English teaching.

#### 4.1. The opportunities

Over the past seventeen years since the phrase 'open educational resources' was officially adopted in 2002, OERs has grown and gained more attention from educators and other stakeholders. Expanded access to learning, enhanced methods for sharing and contributing to materials, and adaptability in material use are some of the most often cited benefits of OERs in the literature.

To begin with, open educational resources OERs are one of the best ways to help more people have access to education. Simply said, OERs allows students to study how, when, where, and on what they want [1]. In addition, students are able to broaden the scope of their open-access content searches without financial constraints. When it comes to drastically lowering educational expenditures without sacrificing the quality of learning resources, Wiley et al. [23] likewise agree that OERs is the answer. In fact, students can utilize an open educational resource (OERs) published by Flat World Knowledge for free online or buy in print for only \$40, which is a reduction of one-third from the cost of a traditional textbook of \$175 [23].

Second, OERs has revolutionized information circulation and utilization. By reducing barriers to resource sharing, facilitating pre-adjustment of materials based on individual intents, and encouraging users to participate actively in the learning process rather than passively receiving information, OERs have stoked educational expansion. Due to its importance in promoting equitable, inclusive, open, collaborative, and quality education [6], OERs also facilitates an atmosphere in which teachers can create and distribute high-quality learning materials at reduced or no cost, which increases access to education by allowing those who cannot otherwise afford it to benefit from materials of the same caliber as those used in formal settings.

The third benefit of OERs is that they give teachers the freedom to adapt course materials to their students' needs and interests. In many cases, open educational resources (OERs) can supplement or even replace traditional textbooks. With the help of OERs, teachers and researchers may create lessons that are specifically catered to each student, while also guaranteeing that all students have access to the most up-to-date, high-quality materials possible, regardless of their financial situation [8]. These documents offer greater convenience and adaptability to students than their more conventional counterparts. Students' motivation to learn is influenced by access to OERs, leading to increased effort in the classroom. Reporting on the OERs Research Center's 2014 experiment, 'Building Knowledge of Open Education,' found that as students were more aware of OERs, their pleasure with the learning experience and their ability to retain information both increased [5].

#### 4.2. The challenges

This article supports the view that HEIs in countries like Vietnam confront a number of obstacles in terms of technological and infrastructure issues, pedagogical concerns, and legal limits while using OERs.

##### 4.2.1. The technological and infrastructure

Technological elements were shown to have an impact on the OERs movement and, in particular, the growth of OERs in Vietnam [18]. The most pressing technological issue in Vietnam, however, has nothing to do with lack of access to ICT infrastructure or Internet connectivity, but rather with maintaining the IOER through the use of FOSS. There should be no barriers to access, no restrictions on reuse, and no restrictions on citation when it comes to open educational resources [13]. In the present time, it would be difficult to make sure these essential needs are met in Vietnam. Targeting a scaled-down version of the OERs concept may be a more practical goal. The shift from a "closed" to "open" mindset is the biggest obstacle to achieving OERs and will demand the most time and effort from everybody involved. Regarding technological concerns, it appears that securing the creation, publishing, and distribution of OERs based solely on FOSS would be time-consuming and difficult to do; as a result, we should only promote educational resources that are released in open access and with an open licence. Universities can begin utilizing open source to guarantee the long-term existence of their repositories once stakeholders have gained an understanding of OERs and the 'open' idea.

##### 4.2.2. Pedagogical concerns

Consistent with earlier studies, this article is in line with how pedagogical concerns affect the growth of IOER [18]. However, some progress had been made by Vietnamese universities despite the problems they had noted. Thang Long University and Ha Long University are only two examples of institutions with forward-thinking administration and enthusiastic library workers who have lately taken measures to develop and implement OERs [7]. However, many universities (including Ton Duc Thang University and Hai Phong Private University) have increased spending on libraries, focusing on things like upgrading their information and communication technology (ICT) systems and hiring qualified individuals to work in the libraries. In order to improve their university's standing and the quality of education it provides, these libraries have been given the authority to form alliances with other departments and actively participate in campus life [7].

##### 4.2.3. Legal concerns

According to Truong et al. [18], the expansion of Vietnam's IOER landscape is hampered by the country's shaky legal framework and its many gaps. The issue has been noted in other nations as well [10, 11, 15]. Nonetheless, the adoption of new rules has provided a fertile environment for the OERs movement to grow in Vietnam. The National

Parliament, for instance, passed Law No. 43/2019/QH14, regarding Education, in June 2019. Article 4, paragraph 3 of this law states explicitly, 'Developing an open education system, building a learning society to create opportunities for everyone to have access to education, learning at all levels, all forms, and lifelong,' and Article 6, paragraph 1 states explicitly, 'The national education system is an open and interconnected education system including formal education and continuing education' [20]. The recently passed Law on Libraries will go into effect in July 2020, and it is hoped that this will aid libraries in operating more effectively and bravely by clearly defining the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of agencies, organizations, and individuals in relation to libraries and their activities [21].

Vietnam's copyright law does not explicitly address OERs [17]. Moreover, when OERs are published, they typically have an open license such as Creative Commons (CC) or GNU (GNU is also an open license) that outlines the conditions under which the materials may be used, reused, altered, and distributed. In this way, the lack of familiarity with copyright and related permissions is another factor that prevents the widespread adoption of OERs. According to Vu [22], as many as 75% of professors at Thang Long University are unaware of Creative Commons licenses, and 30% of professors use OERs they find online without verifying whether or not they have permission to do so. This careless disregard for copyright and licensing issues when using OERs could have serious legal repercussions. Do et al. [7] agree that there is not a large proportion of professors who are familiar with open licensing. Many instructors may be hesitant to use or distribute OERs out of concern that they would be in violation of copyright or intellectual property regulations because of their lack of familiarity with these problems.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) in tertiary EFL teaching varies across different countries. In China, OERs has minimal impact despite the tremendous growth of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country. This is due to a lack of understanding of OERs by both institutions and individuals, which has influenced their willingness to publish or use OERs. Institutions are concerned about copyright issues and a lack of information, while individuals are concerned with OERs quality and skills. On the other hand, in Indonesia, OERs has been warmly embraced, and the intention to adopt OERs is quite high. However, due to the lack of national and international cooperation on OERs, OERs policy was disjointed. In Japan, the government has implemented several initiatives to promote OERs, but the concept of lifelong learning has been used to advocate for open education. In Vietnam, OERs has been in place since 2005, but their use in K-12 and higher education has lagged behind expectations due to several barriers, including a lack of autonomy among Vietnamese students, a lack of direction on how to use the materials explicitly, and bad Internet connections at school. Instructors also face challenges in selecting and altering OERs resources to suit

the exploiting process due to a lack of familiarity with copyright and open licensing problems.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that institutions and individuals be educated about OERs and its benefits. The lack of understanding of OERs by both institutions and individuals is a significant barrier to OERs adoption. Therefore, institutions should provide further training and resources to educate their faculty and staff on the use of OERs, including copyright issues and open licensing problems. In addition, national and international cooperation on OERs should be established to ensure that OERs policy is not disjointed. This will encourage institutions to publish and use OERs, knowing that there is a clear policy framework to support their use. Moreover, there should be more emphasis on the quality of OERs. Institutions should incentivize the creation of high-quality OERs and provide resources for individuals to create such materials. Institutions should also ensure that the OERs they publish are of high quality and meet the needs of their students. This will increase the willingness of individuals to use OERs and encourage institutions to publish more OERs. Instructors should also be provided with guidelines on how to select and alter OERs resources to suit the exploiting process. They should be familiarized with copyright and open licensing problems to ensure that they do not infringe on copyright laws. This will ensure that OERs is used effectively in the classroom and that the learning needs of students are met. Finally, more research should be conducted on the benefits and drawbacks of adopting OERs in English language education. There is a lack of clarity and consistency on the use of OERs in English instruction at SLT, and this is the case in many other institutions worldwide. Therefore, more research should be conducted to identify the benefits and drawbacks of OERs in English instruction and to provide guidance to institutions on how to use OERs effectively in English language education.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the use of OERs in tertiary EFL teaching varies across different countries. Institutions and individuals need to be educated about OERs and its benefits, and there should be more emphasis on the quality of OERs. National and international cooperation on OERs should be established to ensure that OERs policy is not disjointed. Instructors in general and SLT instructors in particular should also be provided with guidelines on how to select and alter OERs resources to suit the exploiting process, which is necessary in EMI designing courses at SLT. Finally, more research at SLT should be conducted on the benefits and drawbacks of adopting OERs in English language education.

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#### THÔNG TIN TÁC GIẢ

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