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Research Article

Perception of English Language Studies Students on the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) for Remote Learning

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only created such a massive impact on health but has also drastically transformed the global educational landscape, and with the World Health Organization (WHO) predicting the pandemic to last beyond 2021, Higher Education Institutions across the country resort to various pedagogical methodologies to ensure the continuous delivery of instruction amidst the pandemic, including the use of Open Educational Resources (OER). OER have been widely used in the Marinduque State College since the implementation of remote learning modality in the institution. Given that this is the first semester that these materials have been widely-used in the college, this study sought to determine the perceptions of students on OER being used for their major courses, particularly for English Language Studies (ELS). This mixed method study considered the 2nd year BA-ELS students as participants, and the necessary data was gathered through a Google Forms survey questionnaire. This paper also aimed to determine perceptions of the participants on the learning materials being used for their English Phonology and Morphology course in terms of content, organization & presentation, and accessibility. Results reveal that participants have a general positive perception with OER in terms of content and organization & presentation. However, participants seem to struggle with its accessibility, as the materials are published on platforms that require internet access.

Keywords: *English Language Studies, Open Educational Resources, Remote Learning*

Introduction

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus Virus 2019 (COVID-19) in the country, the national government ordered the suspension of face-to-

face classes to contain the spread of the disease, and many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines have resorted to remote learning to ensure the continuity of the delivery

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of education amidst the pandemic. Since the declaration of Enhanced Community Quarantine on March 15, 2020, for the entire province of Marinduque, the Marinduque State College has employed several strategies and methodologies to adjust accordingly, including the implementation of flexible blended learning. In earlier research done written by the author during this pandemic, teachers in the institution stated that they mainly used social media platforms such Facebook and Messenger to communicate with their students under the quarantine as these are the platforms both parties are most familiar with. Some uploaded learning materials in group chats, while others used Messenger's Video Call feature and Audio Recording. Other teachers used Facebook groups. However, in the opening of the First Semester for Academic Year 2020-2021, the administration of the college also provided teachers training opportunities in the use of Learning Management Systems, specifically, Google Classroom. The platform is now widely used by members of the faculty in MSC in providing the students with learning materials necessary for their courses. Given these circumstances, it is now more than ever that educators are dependent on learning platforms and materials to facilitate student learning in the new normal state of affairs. Fortunately, there is a vast array of learning tools that is made available both to educators and learners, and among them are Open Educational Resources.

Open Educational Resources (OER) refer to learning materials released under an open license. (Zhang, et al, 2020). The use of OER is justified as a means of improving the quality of learning by increasing access to learning materials that would otherwise require payment or subscription. Moreover, users are permitted to download, reproduce, and even revise these materials (Tlili, Huang, Chang, Nascimbeni & Burgos, 2019; as cited by Zhang, 2020). Its use also proves to be cost-efficient not only for academic institutions as a whole but for any individual needing access to educational materials but cannot afford to pay. It also allows for flexibility as its users are permitted to modify these materials to meet their course requirements and learning objectives (Sandanyake, 2019).

In research conducted by Hilton (2019) about the perception of learners on OER, it has revealed that the majority of learners in blended classrooms prefer using OER instead of traditional textbooks, as it effectively eliminates the need to spend to purchase materials. This supports the study conducted by Gurung et al. (2016), wherein it was found that the use of OER significantly lowered students' expenses. In the local context, this also benefits faculty members as the need to purchase textbooks is hereby decreased.

Moreover, further studies revealed that the use of OER sustained the same level of effectiveness in learning when compared to conventional learning materials most commonly used in classrooms, if not better. Studies such as those by Clinton (2018), Hardin et al. (2018), Hilton and Laman (2012), and Jhangiani et al. (2018) showed that there is a significant improvement in teaching effectiveness when OER is used in the classroom. The use of OER is slowly becoming more accepted and practiced in the academe. In fact, in a study by Jaschik and Lederman (2018), they determined that 80% of university students and 70% of faculty members asserted that the use of OER should be widely accepted in academic institutions.

In view of the aforementioned, this research study aimed to determine the perception of Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies students on the Open Educational Resources (OER) being used for their courses. It specifically sought to determine the participants' perception of the content, organization & presentation, and accessibility of the OERs used for their English Phonology and Morphology course. Given that there is limited research into the use of OER in the context of remote learning, exploring students' reception on the use of these materials may be helpful in ensuring that academic institutions still offer quality education even in times of crisis.

Methods

The participants of this study are the English Language Studies (BA-ELS) students enrolled in the Marinduque State College during the first semester of the Academic Year 2020-2021. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study. However, this study

acknowledges that this may be subject to selective bias, as students who may not have had internet access at the time this study was conducted were not able to fulfill the online instrument used to gather data.

Twenty-three (23) students were able to provide their responses. Due to the circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic, a questionnaire deployed through Google Forms was used. The questionnaire was composed of statements to be rated according to the participant’s degree of agreement with them, as well as open-ended questions that allowed them to elaborate on their experiences with OER use. The participants were also assured that all data to be collected would only be used for the purpose of the present study and would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Code names

were also used to ensure that the anonymity of the participants. The quantitative data collected from the participants were tabulated and analyzed for frequency, weighted mean, and rank. Qualitative data was analyzed through the identification of prominent themes and patterns and were used to support the presentation of quantitative data.

Results and Discussion

Perception on Content of OER

Participants were requested to rate their perception on Open Educational Resources used for their English Phonology and Morphology course in terms of content, particularly considering its alignment with course objective, timeliness, accuracy, level of difficulty and integration of real-word experiences.

Table 1. Perception on the Content of OER

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	The OER used in this subject are in line with the course objectives for this subject.	3.60	Very Satisfied
2.	The OER used are timely.	3.13	Satisfied
3.	The content of the OER is accurate. There are no factual or spelling/ grammatical errors.	3.26	Satisfied
4.	The level of difficulty is appropriate for the intended students.	3.22	Satisfied
5.	The content of the materials integrates real world experiences.	3.39	Satisfied
Total		3.32	

Results show that, in terms of content, the participants are very satisfied with the materials’ alignment with the course objectives for their subject, gaining a weighted mean of 3.60. The participants were also satisfied with the integration of real-word experiences in the OER used for the course, with a weighted mean of 3.39. They were also satisfied with the accuracy of content, with a weighted mean of 3.26, as well as the level of difficulty, with a weighted mean of 3.22. The timeliness of the OER was ranked by the participants as fifth, with a weighted mean of 3.13.

Results show that the alignment of the Open Educational Resources being used to the course objectives for English Phonology and Morphology is perceived as the most positive factor on content, with a weighted mean of 3.60. This is

perceived as positive, as materials being used in instruction should respond to learning objectives, and should aid in providing the knowledge and developing the skills intended for the course. (Cuesta, 2010.) However, looking into the indicators that were ranked by the participants as lower in the spectrum, the appropriateness of materials in terms of level of difficulty fourth. Participants stated that often find certain concepts difficult to comprehend, or that they encounter unfamiliar words.

“The content were well-discussed yet sometimes it [sic] really hard and confusing to understand especially when you need to study it by yourself when you don't have enough access to ask questions.” – Participant 18

“The content is somehow accurate to the lessons. However, it cannot be comprehended easily” – Participant 22

These results suggest the need to provide opportunities to process the information gained from the OER. While, mastering EFL materials above the students’ level of competency can garner beneficial results, (Namanziadost, Estahani & Ahmadi, 2019) educators must always consider the skills level of students in teaching and in choice of materials to be used inside the classroom (Ghufron, et.al, 2016). Moreover, the participants also ranked the timeliness of the OER at bottom. This may be because some information in the materials is already outdated or irrelevant. It is for this

reason that faculty members of the Marinduque State College are advised to use references produced or published within the last five (5) years. Cuesta (2010) stated that materials should be of high quality by not only being responsive to the student’s learning goals but also by being timely.

Perception on Organization and Presentation of OER

The participants were also asked to state their perception on the organization and presentation of the OER used in their course. They rated their level of satisfaction with the materials in terms of ease of use, visual design, sensory experience, ease in navigation and aesthetic appeal.

Table 2. Perception on Organization and Presentation of OER

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	I can easily read/ hear/ view and understand the materials.	3.00	Satisfied
2.	The visual design of the materials is appealing.	3.39	Satisfied
3.	The materials are interactive and provide high quality sensory experiences for all users.	3.13	Satisfied
4.	I can easily and conveniently navigate through the materials without confusion.	2.82	Satisfied
5.	The materials are aesthetically pleasing to me.	3.30	Satisfied
Total		3.13	

Table 2 above shows that the participants more most satisfied with the visual design of the OER, ranking first with a weighted mean of 3.39. They were also satisfied with its aesthetic appeal (x = 3.30) and its interactiveness (x= 3.13). They also rated ease of use as satisfactory with a weighted mean of 3.0. The ease and convenience in the navigation of the OER was ranked last by the participants, with a weighted mean of 2.82.

The visual design of the OER was deemed the most positive aspect of the materials for English Phonology and Morphology. Participants mentioned that the materials being organized and clear appealed to them the most, which is in agreement with the findings of Nguyen (2021). They further stated that the organization and clarity of the materials help them understand the lesson better.

“Well-organized naman po ang bawat presentation at dahil doon mas madali Kong nakukuha ang bawat ideas piece by piece.”(Each presentation is well organized and because of that, I am able to understand each idea little by little). – Participant 16

However, the participants noted that there are situations where the OER is unclear or confusing.

“The OER that the teacher uses help us to understand the lesson. Sometimes po may nga di masyado maintindihan because of the noise in the background pero kapag binalikan and pinause again ok naman po.”(The OER that the teacher uses help us to understand the lesson. Sometimes, there

are parts that I do not understand because of the background noise, but when I pause to listen to it again, I eventually understand.). – Participant 6

The resources’ visual design is essential, as clarity, neatness, and aesthetics contribute greatly to the satisfaction of students with course materials. (Cuesta, 2010). This means therefore that materials should be presented in a logical manner, and must appeal to the sensory organs to make the learning experience much more effective. (Ikerionwu, 200 & Agina-Obu, 2005; as cited by Ajoke, 2017). Learning

resources’ effective visual design, therefore, influence students’ learning motivation (Rahamat et.al, 2012).

Perception on the Accessibility of OER

The participants also rated the accessibility of the OER utilized for their course in terms of ease in downloading, accessibility of the platform where the materials are published, accessibility when using different devices, accessibility of the materials without assistance and accessibility with limited or no internet connection.

Table 3. Perception on Accessibility of OER

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	I can readily access and download the materials 24/7.	2.43	Dissatisfied
2.	I can easily access the platform wherein the materials are posted.	2.70	Satisfied
3.	I can easily access the learning materials using any device	2.39	Dissatisfied
4.	I can access the materials without needing assistance.	2.91	Satisfied
5.	I can use the materials even with limited or no internet connection.	2.39	Dissatisfied
Total		2.56	

The table above shows the participants’ perception of OER in terms of accessibility. Based on the results, being able to use the OER without needing assistance was seen by the participants as its most positive attribute in terms of accessibility, with a weighted mean of 2.91. They are also satisfied with the accessibility of the platform in which the materials are published, with a weighted mean of 2.70.

However, the results reveal that the participants are dissatisfied with the downloadability of the materials, with a weighted mean of 2.43. The participants are also dissatisfied with the accessibility of the materials when using different devices and with its usability with limited or no internet connection, with a weighted mean of 2.39.

Based on the results, being able to use the OER without needing assistance was seen by the participants as the most positive attribute of the materials in terms of accessibility. The

participants were also satisfied with the resources’ accessibility to the platform wherein the materials were published. This finding is deemed significant as learning platforms play an important role towards students’ learning motivation and academic performance (Alameri et.al, 2020).

However, the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the materials in terms of being able to access and download it 24/7, its accessibility when using different devices and its usability with limited to no internet connection. Participants mentioned how the unstable internet connection in the province constantly seems to present itself as a challenge for learning in the new normal.

“Di ko po alam kung sakin lang to o nangyayari din sa iba.sakin po kasi d ako maka-pagdownload ng lesson sa cellphone kaya nanghihiram ako ng laptop para

makapagdownload. Minsan nauubos na po ung load ko d pa tapos yung nadownload ko.nangyayari po ito sa lahat ng subject hindi lang po dito.”(I don’t know if this happens to me or it happens to others as well. I am unable to download the materials on my cellphone so I have to borrow a laptop. There are times that all my data is used and the material still hasn’t finished downloading. This happens to all my subjects, not just this one). – Participant 3

Some of the participants expressed struggles with downloading materials with a larger file size.

“Struggle pag whole books ang pdf.”(It is a struggle when the PDF file to be downloaded is a whole book.). – Participant 10

Other participants, who reside in areas with poor to no internet connection, also stated experiencing immense difficulty to access the OER used in the subject.

“Since nasira po yung tower sa agumaymayan Wala po talagang signal. Para maka access po Kailangan pa pong umakyat ng bundok o pumabayan, kaya lamang po mahal ang pamasaha at minsan ay masama ay panahon. Kaya minsan po ay na de-delay yung pag access sa mga lessons gayon na rin po sa pag pasa ng activities.”(Since the failure of the signal tower in Agumaymayan, we have not had any signal at all. To access the materials, we would have to climb mountains or go to the mainland. However, the fare is expensive, or the weather is bad. This is why I experience delay in accessing the lessons, as well as in submitting activities). – Participant 17

The inability to access the OER online presents itself as a problem, as Odunlade (2017) states that effectiveness of learning relies on the how accessible learning materials are to the students. Therefore, students have a low level of satisfaction with materials that are difficult

to access or hard to control, making learning, as a whole, ineffective. (Magtibay, et. al., 2015). Despite printed materials being provided for students that struggle the most with internet connection, the interaction with the students is still mainly done through online means. Unfortunately, given the situation that the Philippines ranks among the bottom in Asia in terms of internet speed, and that Marinduque is a province where reception is a constant struggle, situations like this, with students struggling to watch lecture videos or to download apps or materials, are a common scenario (Barreiro, 2017). Internet connection in the Philippines has always been seen as one of the biggest barriers to online learning, which was amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. (Baticulon, et.al., 2020). Results imply the use of more student-friendly and distance learning-friendly materials (Guinto et. Al, 2021).

Conclusion

Participants generally positively perceive the OER used in terms of content, being particularly pleased with the alignment of the materials to course objectives. However, the participants seem to struggle most in terms of accessibility, particularly with accessing materials using different devices and during offline use.

It is suggested that, in terms of the students’ difficulty to process content that may be too advanced, teachers may provide more opportunities for in depth discussions, as participants have mentioned that they highly appreciate teachers exerting the effort to discuss the topic rather than just sending them the OER and leaving the responsibility of learning the topics on them alone. This also calls for the need to establish an open channel of communication between the learners and the teachers. Teachers could also ensure that the format of the OER they select for use would be compatible with the devices that the students own. This could mean going for alternatives that have a smaller file size, or is generally compatible with most devices. In terms of difficulty in access, the provision of printed materials should be continued as this seems to be the most reasonable solution to the unstable internet connection at present time.

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