

Language OERs in Open Repositories

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Abstract

Learning foreign languages is important in the new internationalized environment. Language Open Educations Resources (OERs) can enhance international collaboration and equal access to language learning. This paper pictures the state of OERs for learning English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish in major OERs' Repositories. OERs for learning the English as a foreign language predominate in most Repositories. Next, the paper describes several problems occurred while searching for language OERs in these Repositories. Further manual analysis of the search results identifies weaknesses and shortcomings of the resulting OERs. Finally, the paper provides suggestions to interested stakeholders for improving the OERs' Repositories.

1 Introduction

As our world is increasingly becoming interconnected, the need to communicate in multiple languages becomes imperative. In European Union (EU), European Commission (2020) strongly promotes multilingualism and the harmonious co-existence of 24 official languages. Multilingualism is “the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives” (European Commission, 2007). The EU's multilingualism policy aims at enabling every EU citizen to learn at least two foreign languages (in addition to their mother tongue). According to the European Parliament (2017), the most widely spoken foreign languages in the EU are English (38%), French (12%), German (11%), and Spanish (7%). Also, the two most useful foreign languages in the EU are English (67%), German (17%), French (16%), Spanish (14%), Chinese (6%), and Italian (5%).

In parallel, European Commission is committed to Opening up Education (2020) supporting Open Education Resources (OERs). According to Creative Commons (2020), OERs are educational materials that are either in the public domain or licensed in such a way that everyone is free to Retain, Reuse, Revise, Remix, and Redistribute them. Recently, Economides & Perifanou (2019) proposed the Open FASUCICESA – CPT framework that describes OERs as educational resources that anyone freely and openly can Find, Access, Store, Use, Create, Interact, Collaborate, Evaluate, Share, Abandon without any Cost, at any Place and any Time.

Previous studies found that OERs could both improve student learning and reduce the cost of educational resources (e.g., Bliss et al., 2013; Colvard, Watson & Park, 2018; Fischer, Hilton, Robinson, & Wiley, 2015; Hilton, 2016, 2019; Lovett, Meyer, & Thille, 2008; Martin et al., 2017).

OERs for language teaching and learning enable international collaboration (Blyth, 2012; Rossomondo, 2011; Sabadie et al., 2014) and equal access to learning irrespectively of economic situation. However, it seems that the English language occupies a predominant role in OERs (Karakaya & Karakaya, 2020; Rets et al., 2020; Wang & Towey, 2017). Therefore, more research is needed so that less dominant languages to become more visible (Berti, 2018). This paper tries to picture the landscape of dominant European languages OERs in major OERs' Repositories.

2 Language OERs in Open Repositories

According to Ethnologue (2020), the European languages that are spoken by the most people worldwide are as follows: English (1,268 million), Spanish (538 million), French (277 million), Portuguese (252 million), German (132 million), and Italian (68 million).

Next, the full paper describes major Open Repositories for language OERs.

<i>OERs Repositories</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Italian</i>	<i>Portuguese</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
COERLL https://www.coerll.utexas.edu/	-	7+5	4+4	1+2	7+1	16+4
Curriki https://library.curriki.org/	811	7	3	3	1	35
Directory of Open Educational Resources (DOER) http://doer.col.org/	1,176	30	17	8	3	12
MERLOT https://www.merlot.org/merlot/	647 (475)	509 (295)	178 (107)	51 (34)	181 (56)	487 (252)
MIT OpenCourseware https://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm	7	15 (19)	9 (17)	1	5 (7)	13 (12)
OASIS https://oasis.geneseo.edu/	44	3	5	5	2	9
OERCOMMONS https://www.oercommons.org/	292 (190)	169 (14)	126 (32)	8 (1)	12	302 (8)
Open Textbook Library https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/	3	7	2	3	2	3
Open Learn https://www.open.edu/openlearn	22	10	8	3	-	9

Table 1: Language OERs in Open Repositories

For some Repositories, there are two numbers for the OERs of a specific language because we searched for that language OERs via two alternative ways and received two different results. Also, some Repositories provided the language OERs but not their number, so we counted them manually.

Next, the paper describes several problems occurred while searching for language OERs in these Repositories. Further manual analysis of the search results identified inefficiencies of the resulting OERs. In addition, the paper provides suggestions to interested stakeholders for improving the OERs' Repositories and their OER' skills (Perifanou & Economides, 2021). Finally, the paper concludes and propose directions for future research.

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