

Examining Second-Year Elt Students' Learner Autonomy Through The Use Of Open Educational Resources (Oer) At The University Of Danang – University Of Foreign Language Studies

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Abstract: *In tertiary education, students are required to develop self-learning skills due to the extensive workload and limited classroom time. Open Educational Resources (OER) are increasingly being recommended to enhance learner autonomy, particularly in second-year English Language Teaching (ELT) courses. This study aimed to investigate the impact of using OER on the learner autonomy of second-year ELT students at the University of Danang – University of Foreign Language Studies (UD – UFLS), while also exploring the benefits and drawbacks associated with using OER for this purpose. The study utilised a mixed-methods design, with 44 second-year ELT students participating in the Research Method class. During the course, students were introduced to and used OER to promote their learner autonomy. To meet the study's objectives, the researchers employed three data collection instruments: a questionnaire, interviews, and participant observation. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were processed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data from the interviews and participant observation were analysed thematically. The results indicated that using OER generally improved the learner autonomy of students. Additionally, the study identified several benefits and drawbacks associated with using OER to promote learner autonomy. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the use of OER to enhance learner autonomy, particularly in ELT courses. Future research could investigate how OER can be utilised in other contexts to promote learner autonomy and identify additional benefits and drawbacks associated with their use.*

Keywords: *autonomous learning, ELT students, learner autonomy, OER, Open Educational Resources.*

I. Introduction

Learner autonomy has long been stated to be an ultimate goal of education (Waterhouse, 1990; Benson, 2001, 2009; Dang, 2010). In tertiary education where the workload is immense, requires a deep understanding of subjects, and the time allotted for each lesson at school is not enough for teachers to convey the full ideas, students are expected to continue immersing themselves into the subjects by their self-learning ability. Using technology for enhancing learner autonomy is highly needed (Lam & Lawrence, 2002). However, in Vietnam, it was not until the outbreak of COVID-19 that technology formed a strong bond with tertiary students' life: students are forced to perform learner autonomy with the integration of technological assistance.

Besides, humanity is constantly confronted with interconnected concerns, from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change and food and water insufficiency. In order to address these, we must accelerate the discovery of advances, broaden transdisciplinary knowledge, while enhancing the progress of converting

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research findings to action. This will necessitate a major change away from just sharing results in scientific journals and toward open collaboration, consistent publications, with complete inclusion and openness (Gentemann, 2023). In the context where 2023 is declared as the Year of Open Science, the importance of OER is now more universally recognised than ever (The White House, 2023).

However, observing that the term was not familiar between our fellow peers, we decided to carry out this study in a particular course that recently implemented OER - Research Method course. According to feedback from previous students, the class was challenging and at times unengaging due to its theoretical nature. The use of traditional textbooks hindered students from exploring the subject matter on their own, while the condensed, novel, and demanding content of the course made it insufficient to rely solely on teacher lectures. The above-mentioned reasons motivated us to carry out the research project and decide to investigate their impact on students' learner autonomy, recognizing that there is limited research on this topic despite its potential to improve the academic outcomes of both students and faculty.

This research aims at investigating the effects of OER on learner autonomy. The overarching questions, which ought to be addressed as a prerequisite for this study, are as follows:

1. What is the extent of learner autonomy among second- year ELT students through the use of OER?
2. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using OER to enhance learner autonomy of second-year ELT students?

II. Literature Review

2.1. Learner Autonomy

Since the early 1980s, the concept of learner autonomy has been variously defined by many scholars and practitioners. According to Holec (1981, p.3), learner autonomy is assumed as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning”. To elaborate, he explains that to “take charge” means “to have and to hold the responsibility for determining the learning objective, defining contents and progression, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition, and evaluating what has been acquired”. It agrees with Little’s (1991, p.4) viewpoint that learner autonomy refers to the capacity to detach, engage oneself in critical thinking, make decisions, and take independent actions. It assumes and also involves the learner developing a specific psychological relation with the process and content of the learning. This approach lays a strong emphasis on the psychological aspect of the notion. Learner autonomy is stated to comprise two cyclically interrelated elements, namely “behavioural” and “metacognitive” (Horváth, 2005; Rivers, 2001), which allow individuals to initiate, monitor, and regularly evaluate their learning processes (Little, 2003) with clear objectives and goals set in advance (Purdie et al., 1996). Since this psychological approach predicates the learner’s beliefs, attitudes on self-determination, which generate behavioural intentions and subsequent behaviours, it is claimed to play a major role in the development of autonomous learning and to be sufficient to explain the term learner autonomy (Long, 1998). Autonomous learners are those who exhibit shared characteristics as follows.

Table 1: Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

Characteristics of autonomous learners	Source examples
Taking the responsibility in decision-making and selecting the learning methods, learning contents and learning materials.	Guglielmino (1978); Holec (1981); Candy (1991); Benson (2001); Chickering (2015)
Being receptive to dealing with new activities.	Candy (1991); Chickering (2015)
Exhibiting high motivation, a positive attitude and strong perseverance in self-learning.	Candy (1991); Chickering (2015)
Having a strong sense of self-confidence.	Guglielmino (1978); Candy (1991); Chickering (2015)

Planning time for their learning and keeping track of their work.	Guglielmino (1978); Dam (1995)
Showing a low level of procrastination.	Guglielmino (1978); Dam (1995)
Enjoying lone learning and working.	Little (1991)

Measuring learner autonomy is not a simple matter due to its multidimensional construct (Murase, 2015). Various researchers have proposed measurement models using self-report questionnaires, such as the Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale (Guglielmino, 1978) and the Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale for Nursing Education SDLRS-40 (Fisher et al., 2001). However, problems have been reported regarding the construct validity of Guglielmino's scale (Candy, 1991; Straka & Hinz, 1996) while the measurement by Fisher et al. (2001) is considered to be fairly long and tailored to a specific group of students. Concerning these matters, this study utilised the self-assessment questionnaire by Macaskill and Taylor (2010) due to its concision, applicability to various educational contexts, and alignment with the aforementioned traits of autonomous learners. This instrument consists of two subscales, namely "independence of learning" and "study habits", which would acquire students to describe their characteristics, behaviours and attitudes that correspond to the construct of learner autonomy in a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). This brief measure has already been validated in a diverse student group. Besides, its concurrent validity with the correlations >0.4 was found to be satisfactory, indicating that this measure proves useful to educational researchers.

Table 2: Index of Learner Autonomy Categories Adapted from Autonomous Measure Scale by Macaskill and Taylor (2010)

Subscales	Categories
Independence of learning	- responsibility for learning - openness to experience - intrinsic motivation - self-confidence in tackling new activities
Study habits	- time management - procrastination - attitude to lone working

2.2. Open Educational Resources (OER)

The term "Open Educational Resources" made its very first appearance in the Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries as "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). Along with Massive Open Online Course, OER is the primary topic of interest for open education. In its most recent document, UNESCO redefined OER as: "OER are learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open licence, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others." (UNESCO, 2019, p.3).

Wiley (n.d.)'s stated "5R activities" in which OER allows people to engage:

- Retain: make, own, and control a copy of the resource (e.g., download and keep your own copy)
- Revise: edit, adapt, and modify your copy of the resource (e.g., translate into another language)
- Remix: combine your original or revised copy of the resource with other existing material to create something new (e.g., make a mashup)
- Reuse: use your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource publicly (e.g., on a website, in a presentation, in a class)
- Redistribute: share copies of your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource with others (e.g., post a copy online or give one to a friend)

The educational advantages of open educational resources were documented previously by varied researchers (Wiley et al., 2013; Weller et al., 2015; Hilton, 2016; Lin, 2019).

Table 3: Impacts of OER on Teaching and Learning Practice by Weller et al. (2015)

Hypothesis	Result
Performance	Use of OER leads to improvement in student performance and satisfaction
Openness	The Open Aspect of OER creates different usage and adoption patterns than other online resources
Access	Open Education models lead to more equitable access to education, serving a broader base of learners than traditional education
Reflection	Use of OER leads to critical reflection by educators, with evidence of improvement in their practice
Finance	OER adoption at an institutional level leads to financial benefits for students and/or institutions

The findings of other investigations appeared to fit into these groups as well. OER is well renowned for its ability to save students money. (Wiley et al., 2013; Hilton, 2016; Morning Consult, 2018). A study conducted by Morning Consult (2018) shows that 85% of 1,651 students claimed that textbooks are one of their main financial worries beside Tuition (88%), even more nerve-wracking than Housing (73%), Healthcare (69%), Meals and Food (63%). Wiley et al. (2013) also pointed out that OER benefitted students by drastically lowering educational expenses while retaining the quality of instructional resources.

According to The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (2015), aside from cost, OER poses various solutions to pedagogy-related issues. OER can help to support and provide faculty with unlimited amounts of materials (Access) and also the academic freedom to alter the materials to their specific group of students' needs without any worries about copyrights issues, etc; allowing them to be more flexible and creative in their courses contents and teaching approaches (Openness). As a result, students also showed more engagement in those innovative activities. Both students' learning experiences and teachers' teaching experiences are also enhanced (Performance) (Hilton et al., 2013; Pittt et al., 2013; Magro & Tabaei, 2020). Weller et al. (2015) agreed but argued that OER-based courses may not boost performance but rather raise student satisfaction and engagement, as only 38.9% students claimed that using OER helped them get higher exam results. Besides, by making changes and alterations to the open materials, teachers may help to improve the material itself by making suggestions to the content as well as their original authors (Reflection).

The implementation of OER in educational contexts came across difficulties as well. These were clearly outlined in Lin (2019)'s research, from students' perspectives.

Table 4: Challenges of Using OER compared to Textbooks by Lin (2019)

Challenge	Description
Lacking the tactile sense	OER are not tangible and cannot be physically annotated; there is nothing to read in hand to prepare for quizzes.
Slow Internet connection	Some students cannot study at home because they do not have high-speed Internet connections off campus.
Unclear instruction and guidance	Need clearer and/or additional instructions on assignments; need extra guidance when using OER.
Insufficient self-regulation skills	Can easily stray from the required OER and browse other sites; need time management and self-monitoring skills to stay on tasks.

With its enormous database and complicated copyright licences, students were also struggling with the evaluation of OER quality and credibility as well as including those in their group projects, assignments, and conversations (Conole, 2013; Hegarty, 2015). It was highly suggested that students should be taught how to

browse OER information and how to use OER to improve collaborative thinking, viewpoints, and mentorship (Bonk & Lee, 2017).

The case is even worse in developing countries where very few studies were conducted on the topic of OER utilisation (Hu et al., 2015). Inequality in learning chances is a common problem in developing countries, especially in higher education contexts. Students were either conscious of and were able to use these educational resources or simply didn't have neither awareness nor access to them at all (Dutta, 2016). It was mentioned by prior researchers that OER implementation was also hindered by linguistic and cultural issues; since most OERs are based and established in English and within the West backgrounds (Ngimwa & Wilson, 2012). This made the content difficult for students to understand, notably those whose native language is not English (Ngimwa & Wilson, 2012), thus requiring these materials to be modified in order to fit in target settings (Wilson, 2008).

2.3. Previous Studies on the Relationship between OER and Learner Autonomy

There have been some studies conducted in order to explore the learner autonomy through the adoption of OER in different learning contexts which are in Japan (Hori et al., 2015), Italy (Cappellini, 2013), America (Horn et al., 2018) and Ecuador (Chicaiza et al., 2015).

With an aim to review the benefits and drawbacks of using Social Network Services and Multimedia E-textbooks to foster learner autonomy through the adoption of OER, Hori et al. (2015) conducted research to study use of the platform Creative Higher Education with Learning Objects (CHiLO). CHiLO used e-textbooks in EPUB3 format allowing interactive content such as animations, videos, and various learning resources as OER. The result shows that CHiLO brings many benefits for many learners to study at their own pace; for learners who joined the course later can review the first lessons on their own; for proficient ones to study in advance the newer materials they were notified about by the counterparts. On the other hand, this also has some downsides as Google Play and iTunes are not accessible in some countries and regions, or not all learners are familiar with using e-books.

In the context of Italy, the study by Cappellini (2013) was carried out to prove a possible use of OER in a self-learning environment and highlights some of the conditions in which OER enhances learner autonomy. The researcher held the notion that learner autonomy refers to a learner's capacity to take responsibility for their learning, as opposed to heteronomy. They set up a course for postgraduate students in Lille 3 University to learn foreign languages, which included students of ELT and other languages such as French, Spanish and Italian. Although the target languages are different, the learning courses provide the same learning stages in their structure for every student. The study's results revealed that the same type of OER can be reused in different ways according to learners' needs and profiles; therefore, to make the most of OER, it is important to be aware of and open to different ways of using them. It also pointed out that the process of autonomous learning is initiated when students notice a lack of effectiveness, thereby seeking and discovering new educational materials and approaches.

Later, in the US, Horn et al. (2018) identified barriers encountered, solutions developed on implementing OER-focused curricula for self-directed learners. They indicated that as for the barriers, the use of OER was entirely new for some faculties. While others had used them to supplement traditional textbooks, they had not developed an entire course solely with OER. Some teachers allowed students to choose materials themselves, but this approach quickly became overwhelming as students spent a great deal of time determining which they should interact first. This ultimately slowed down their progress. The researchers also proposed a solution with a Learning Resources Curation Tool to gather reliable sources of information and annotate the pros and cons of using particular OER for students. Moreover, an evaluation checklist was also included to help students evaluate OER's quality and relevance. The results confirm that large-scale adoption of OER as primary learning materials can be successful.

The final study, which is by Chicaiza et al. (2015), is conducted in Ecuador, aiming to show how an approach based on linked data and technologies of the Semantic web enhances the use of OER by self-learners. The results showed that the successful adoption of OER in processes of informal or self-learning depends largely on what the learner is able to reach without a guide or a tutor. However, the OER quality and their particular features can positively influence the motivation of the self-learner to achieve their goals.

From the above studies, it is noticed that there are two main differences. The first one is that some studies have carried out the analysis in the promotion of learner autonomy by the combination of OER and other technological tools (Social Network Services, Semantic technologies, etc.). The others focus on the effects of OER itself on the development of learner autonomy. The second distinction is with the research contexts. All

resources. The aforementioned studies were conducted in foreign background. Little has been done in the Vietnamese EFL environment. For these reasons, it is necessary to conduct more research which investigates the use of OER to foster learner autonomy in Vietnam.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The study employed the mixed methods, which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, to enable the examination of complex issues and achieve reliable results (Creswell, 2021). This approach balances the limitations of one method with the strengths of others, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic than either approach by itself (Creswell & Plano, 2018).

3.2. Participants

The population of the study consists of second-year ELT students who have enrolled in the Research Method course at UD-UFLS. During the course, the students utilised OER as one of the primary resources, in addition to the textbook for their learning. Moreover, to promote learner autonomy through the use of OER, several additional classroom activities were implemented such as a peer review workshop or group discussions where students had to share what they have read at home about the topic given and receive feedback from their classmates. As a final assessment, students have to conduct research and write a report based on their academic skill and knowledge from teacher's instruction and learner autonomy.

Due to the small size of the population and the fact that all members of the population have participated in the Research Method class, the research employed the total population sampling technique, which treats all members of the population as samples (Laerd Dissertation, 2012). This technique ensures the accuracy of the survey and saves research time. The total number of participants was 44.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

The study acquired data collection through methodological triangulation combining questionnaire, interview and class observation. This approach provides a more holistic understanding of the research questions under discussion and enhances the reliability and validity of the research findings (Bhandari, 2023). The questionnaire adapted from Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) research intends to explore the extent of learner autonomy through the use of OER. After the questionnaire, 6 participants were selected randomly to engage in a semi-structured interview. The content of the interview is predetermined based on the theoretical framework and the result of the questionnaire; moreover, during the interview process, the interviewers can flexibly ask extra questions to investigate different facets of the topic (George, 2022). The interview was conducted as a focus group interview with the division of 6 students into 2 groups to clarify how their learner autonomy has improved throughout the use of OER and give information about the benefits and drawbacks of using OER to enhance learner autonomy. The information was initially audio-recorded with the interviewees' permission and transcribed into the Google Docs. The study also utilised participant observation as a means to complement the findings derived from the interview and questionnaire. The researchers engaged themselves in the Research Method class, observed how the research participants learned with OER, and took notes, which enabled the researchers to have a closer viewpoint towards the participants' perspectives and experiences.

3.4. Data Analysis

To analyse the quantitative data yielded from the questionnaire. The research's main statistical analysis tool was Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Considering the scale and purpose of the study, the average can be interpreted as follows: A rating of 1.00-1.80 signifies a considerably negative response, 1.81-2.60 indicates a negative response, 2.61-3.40 indicates neutral response, 3.41-4.20 indicates a positive response, and 4.21-5.00 indicates a considerably positive response.

Regarding the qualitative data gathered from the interview and class observation, thematic analysis was employed, following the three-step process proposed by Cresswell (2021). The first step is to read the transcripts to familiarise with the entire data corpus. Then, initial codes were generated with a systematic organisation of

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data segments. Next, the codes were classified into broader themes that are related to research questions. The themes and codes were reviewed before the analysis was written. The interviewees were labelled from I1 to I6.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. The Extent of Second-year ELT Students' Learner Autonomy through the Use of OER

The descriptive data (Mean score, Standard Deviation, Frequency) generally suggested that the learner autonomy of participants can be categorised as a positive level with an average mean of 3.66 out of 5.00.

4.1.1.1. Independence of learning

Table 5: The Independence of Learning of Second-year ELT Students through the Use of OER

During Research Methods class, using OER... N = 44							
	M	SD	Frequency				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I enjoy new learning experiences.	4.14	.668	0	1 (2.3%)	4 (9.1%)	27 (61.4%)	12 (27.3%)
2. Even when tasks are difficult I try to stick with them.	3.66	.805	0	3 (6.8%)	15 (34.1%)	20 (45.5%)	6 (13.6%)
3. I enjoy finding information about new topics on my own.	3.91	.830	0	2 (4.5%)	11 (25.0%)	20 (45.5%)	11 (25.0%)
4. I am open to new ways of doing familiar things.	3.61	.784	0	2 (4.5%)	19 (43.2%)	17 (38.6%)	6 (13.6%)
5. I take responsibility for my learning experiences.	4.09	.910	1 (2.3%)	1 (2.3%)	7 (15.9%)	19 (43.2%)	16 (36.4%)
6. I enjoy being set a challenge.	3.68	1.006	0	6 (13.6%)	13 (29.5%)	14 (31.8%)	11 (25.0%)
7. I tend to be motivated to work by assessment deadlines.	3.64	1.203	2 (4.5%)	6 (13.6%)	12 (27.3%)	10 (22.7%)	14 (31.8%)

Table 5 shows that most of the items in the aspect of independence of learning have positive responses. 27 (61.4%) students agreed and 12 (27.3%) students strongly agreed that they enjoy new learning experiences proposed by OER (item 1: M = 4.14; SD = .668). The qualitative results gained from the interview further confirm that OER provides students with more learning experiences considering various types of information such as video, audio, text, etc. Also, OER allows students to have more interaction with learning materials.

I2: I usually find information about Research Methods on the Scribbr website. It offers different resources, ranging from articles, videos to illustrations, making it easier to understand the knowledge.

I3: Article on Scribbr inserts hyperlink into terms and concepts, so whenever I read the article but don't understand the terms I can click to read the definition. It's more convenient and a novel experience.

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Besides, 20 students (45.5%) showed an agreement with the idea that despite the challenging tasks, they try to complete them (item 2: $M = 3.66$, $SD = .805$). The same number of students admitted that they enjoy finding information about new topics on their own (item 3: $M = 3.91$; $SD = 0.83$). However, many investigated participants could not decide whether the use of OER helps them become open to new ways of doing familiar things (item 4: 43.2% Neutral). The qualitative data has shown the explanation.

I2: Whether I would be willing to use one new platform to learn depends on the fact it is easy to use or not. It is not really the matter of the OER.

Meanwhile, a majority of participants assumed that through the use of OER, they can take responsibility for their learning experiences (item 5: 43.2% Agree; 36.4% Strongly Agree). Some interviewees reflected that:

I4: In order to do the final report, I have used OER as the main resource. Initially, I set goals, establish a study schedule, and choose learning materials to study. I also monitor my weekly workload to keep track of my progress. Occasionally, I reflect on my learning journey to see if there are any effective ways to improve.

I5: When I study with OER at home, there are no teachers to decide what or how the lessons will be and no one evaluates my process. I learn to do it on my own.

Notably, the participants' ideas about "enjoy being set a challenge" (item 6) and "tend to be motivated to work by assessment deadlines" (item 7) were relatively varied, with the standard deviation of 1.006 and 1.203, respectively. The sixth item was strongly agreed by 11 students (25.0%) and agreed by 14 students (31.8%); yet, there were still 13 students (29.5%) who maintained a neutral response. One interviewee assumed that:

I1: Challenges can be fun, but it is easier to make mistakes.

The seventh item also shares the same pattern with 14 students strongly agreeing, 10 students agreeing and 12 students staying neutral. It is explained in the interview that:

I2: The nearer the deadlines go, the more productive I become.

I3: Most of my motivation comes from the outside like teachers' deadlines, friends' reminders. I think to study with OER, I need to be more self-disciplined and should identify the purpose of learning that is for myself.

I5: Sometimes I am exhausted and don't want to do anything, but because of the deadline, I still study and do the tasks.

I6: It depends on the deadline, whether it's self-set or set by the teacher. If it's self-set, then if I'm tired, I won't study. Therefore, I think it's cool that some friends are self-studying with OER and following their own personal deadlines.

The researchers' observation also noted that:

Students usually go to class just on time. But when they have deadlines, students become more active and urgent. They come to school early to meet their teammates and work together. After class, they also stay to continue working on the project.

4.1.1.2. Study habits

Table 6: The study habits among second-year ELT students through the use of OER

During Research Methods class, using OER...	N = 44						
	M	SD	Frequency				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
8. I frequently find excuses for not getting down to work.	2.77	1.008	4 (9.1%)	14 (31.8%)	16 (36.4%)	8 (18.2%)	2 (4.5%)
9. I plan my time for studying effectively.	3.52	.821	0	5 (11.4%)	15 (34.1%)	20 (45.5%)	4 (9.1%)

10. I am good at meeting deadlines.	4.07	.818	0	3 (6.8%)	4 (9.1%)	24 (54.5%)	13 (29.5%)
11. My time management is good.	3.11	.970	1 (2.3%)	12 (27.3%)	15 (34.1%)	13 (29.5%)	3 (6.8%)
12. I am happy working on my own.	3.73	.872	0	2 (4.5%)	18 (40.9%)	14 (31.8%)	10 (22.7%)

There were some noticeable responses to the subscale related to students' study habits. The data showed that most participants' study habits were at a positive level, except for item 8 and item 11. Precisely, the descriptive data revealed that students generally do not find excuses for not getting down to work (item 8: $M = 2.77$). Their answers to this statement also varied a lot ($SD = 1.008$). Some interviewees shared:

I2: Studying is still my priority.

I6: On some occasions, my friends at the English club ask me to hang out. But I say no if I have my studying tasks to complete.

I1: Actually I don't do that. But most of my friends are yes. They usually find excuses from their household chores ("I need to cook, clean my room...").

Additionally, participants generally indicated that during the use of OER they plan their time for studying effectively (Item 9: 45.5% Agree) although there are still some students expressing neutral ideas about this.

I1: I usually divide a big task into smaller ones and assign time for each.

I3: I also have a schedule for studying. However, I sometimes cannot follow it because the tasks take me longer than expected. There are many OER on the topic I want to search for, so sometimes I get overwhelmed and spend a lot of time on a small idea without finishing the task.

Furthermore, most students also stated that they are better at meeting deadlines (Item 10: 54.5% Agree; 29.5% Strongly Agree). One interviewees explained

I3: Although I struggled finding resources at first, after identifying what is relevant and necessary, it's much faster. OER has most of what I need, so I don't have to look anywhere.

Participants also showed a positive attitude towards working individually (item 12) with a mean score of 3.73. Meanwhile, the good time management ability was considered to vary in answers (item 11: $M = 3.11$; $SD = 0.97$). 29.5% students expressed their agreement while 34.1% students showed a neutral attitude and 27.3% students had a negative response to the statement.

I1: Most of the time, I plan my time to learn. I use Google Calendar and Notion to make my timetable for a week.

I5: Using OER makes me struggle managing my time. As the material is various, I can't decide which is the most suitable material. So it takes time to read and decide.

4.1.2. Benefits and Drawbacks of Using OER to Enhance Learner Autonomy

4.1.2.1. Benefits

During the semi-structured interview, the interviewees provided some insights into the advantages of adopting OER to promote their learner autonomy. First and foremost, OER was praised to offer students flexibility in when and where they can study.

I1: Being a university student, I realise I have more freetime than in highschool. This enables me to pick up new knowledge on my own. It's impossible to learn everything we need in just 50 minutes.

In addition, OER promoted students' active autonomous activities, learning experiences and study motivations in many ways possible.

I6: OER provides a wide range of educational materials that were hardly covered in textbooks. Therefore, I'm more excited to learn them, especially the topics that were not taught in class.

The resources were also said to be attractive and diverse concerning types, purposes, approaches, methods, etc. so that students can choose what's most suitable for themselves.

I3: Personally, I'm a visual learner, which means that I learn better with images. Textbooks are usually full of text and their illustrations are in monochrome, unless you pay more money for a

coloured version. With OER, I can search for visual materials, with colourful illustrations and at no cost!

I4: Because of my physical traits, I can't look at books for a long time without feeling dizzy. But I found listening to lessons made it easier for me to understand and remember. And the fact that I can rest my eyes or multitask while still being able to study by solely listening to the lecturers surprised me.

They can self-monitor and freely reflect on their study progress according to their personal study traits.

I4: I feel that textbooks are not suitable for me, as they are made for the majority of students. Sometimes, it's too easy; other times it's too complicated. I can't seem to find my right pace with the textbooks. But with OER, there are so many materials that match my level. If you had a hard time understanding the lesson, you can search for Youtube videos that may explain it more simply. Or if you want to further comprehend the topic, there are always experts' articles on the Internet that you can read for free. No matter what your level or learning pace is, OER fits right into it!

As interviewees grew older, the frequency of using OER in in-class teaching and learning also accelerated. In the universities, students engaged in more learning activities, some of which were OER-based activities, where they are required to be the principal user of OER. Therefore, interviewees expressed that knowing how to utilise OER may help them become more confident in tackling new learning activities.

I2: Teacher's in-class activities require us to work and assess materials on our own, so I think comprehending OER is a must-have skill.

I5: When we gave a presentation, I noticed some other groups' content was solely based on Wikipedia which is clearly not a reliable source. Many of them probably did not know how to find and choose materials from valid websites. Compared to them, I think people who are aware of OER and know how to make use of it are more advantageous.

Moreover, ever since using OER to self-study, interviewees admitted that they slowly came to learn which sources are trust-worthy and which are not; and gain more responsibility in choosing and studying from OER.

I3: I feel more responsible choosing OER to self-study. At school, we are provided with textbooks and teachers' instructions. But now, I'm the only one who decides what to learn, and I have to be careful and selective when it comes to my own knowledge.

I1: I once found an article that was well-written but their citations were questionable. Despite my previous efforts to cite that article and use it for my research, I had no other options but to disown it as I cannot ensure its validity. It taught me a lesson to always carefully read and assess any material before using it.

Students' material assessment skills were also improved through the process of utilising OER. This was empowered due to the characteristics of OER that it allows people to edit, adapt and modify the original materials.

I5: In my research process, I found out that there were so many ways to approach a problem. It's interesting since we are usually taught one finite way at school. However, because you don't know whether the author's credibility is confirmed, it requires your own comprehension and assessment skills.

I6: OER might not always be right but with its features, we are able to alter, adapt and even make advice and suggestions to authors on their original works. I once came across a controversial topic online. The author's argument was good but they lacked valid references so I commented to let them know. A few days later, I rechecked and saw that they had adjusted to my opinion and the argument was absolutely convincing. It was a great experience to be able to contribute and share knowledge in a learning community like that!

4.1.2.2. Drawbacks

Besides the benefits, the survey participants also reported that they encounter numerous hindrances as well while advancing their learner autonomy using OER. Students all agreed that utilising OER is time-consuming and can sometimes be confusing.

I1: The amount of OER is endless, and not every material is worth reading and using. In about 10 to 20 articles, only 3 to 5 articles are exactly what I'm looking for. The progress is slow and deteriorating.

I6: Every phase of finding, reading and evaluating OER is time-consuming. It is indeed breathless and exhausting.

I5: It feels like I was diving into a vast ocean of materials without any instructions. They may be diverse, but that's also a downside because you will find a lot of articles contradicting each other and

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claiming themselves right instead. You may learn new things, but it takes time to decide which sources are reliable. .

I5: Since OER is free, I often doubt its validity and reliability. There are many times I come across articles with wrong information or incorrect data. It makes me wonder if I had not known it was false back then, would I take it for granted and believe in it. I made a mental note that we should always believe only half of the truth and try to be rational ourselves in order to own our knowledge.

Perhaps, those were the reasons why students often found reasons to not read the materials assigned to them by lecturers.

I3: I studiously read all of them at first but as time went by, the list of articles to read got longer and longer and eventually I gave up. Even when I read it beforehand, I hardly understood it without having the teacher explain it. It was incomprehensible and time-consuming as well. I'll learn it thoroughly in class next period, anyway.

On the other hand, OER was also reported to affect the possibilities of students procrastinating and being distracted while self-studying, with 6 out of 6 interviewees agreeing and only one of them claimed to be able to restrict themselves (I5).

I6: Whenever I use my computer to do research, I always stumble over new phrases and knowledge I'm not familiar with. And by trying to understand and clarify my questions, multiple new tabs are opened and eventually, I find myself straying from my original path of doing research.

I4: I was distracted by the amount of materials on the Internet. It was too easy to find new interests online: there was always a link to another website, or a suggested video on Youtube to click on.

I5: I'd be lying if I said I was never distracted when using OER for my study. But I can lessen those actions by using apps and tools that restrict certain apps/websites that may be disturbing in the process.

In addition, learner autonomy plays an important role in students' determination to not be sidetracked when using OER.

I1: I think it doesn't matter if they're using OER or not, what matters is their intrinsic motivations. Even when teachers attempt to implement OER into the course, if students don't want to study, they won't pay attention to it.

They also acknowledged deadlines as one of the motivations for them to finish their task while self-studying.

I2: Deadlines are always a good motivation for students. Even if they don't want to study, they still have to deal with it to keep their scores in check.

I3: It's a common scene for students to rush things at the end of the semester. Maybe it's only then did they have the motivation to study since the exam is coming up.

However, all interviewees reported that their deadlines are not impactful enough.

I6: Deadlines only make sense if they are given by the teachers. If I set the deadline myself, it's most likely that I keep extending it until I finish the task.

Linguistic issues may also discourage interviewees from self-directed learning with OER.

I3: OER mostly comes in English, very few are in my native language, Vietnamese. The language barriers not only block us from understanding the materials, but also finding them as well.

4.2. Discussion

The utilisation of OER generally led to some improvements in the learner autonomy of second-year ELT students in terms of their ability to learn independently and their study habits.

OER is generally believed to enhance students' independence of learning. Most students believe that they are exposed to diverse new learning experiences by the use of OER. These findings were aligned with those from the studies by Hori et al. (2015) on the platform of CHiLO allowing interactive content such as audios, animations, videos and various learning resources. Besides, the study's findings are also consistent with those of Hori et al. (2015) in that OER enhances the students' enjoyment in acquiring new information on their own. Additionally, the use of OER has led to an increase in students' sense of responsibility. They became more aware and took responsibility for their learning process, including determining learning objectives, defining contents and progression, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring the acquisition process, and evaluating their learning outcomes. These findings are in agreement with Cappellini's (2013) research. Furthermore, the

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study found that students enjoyed being challenged, which supports Guglielmino's (1978) assertion that autonomous learners tend to view problems as challenges to overcome rather than obstacles. Notably, the research also discovered the individuals' intrinsic motivation improved when utilising OER. Some students have recognised the adoption of OER required a strong intrinsic motivation. In order to effectively utilise OER, they need to have strong discipline and realign their learning purposes.

Nevertheless, participants have expressed that their openness to new ways of doing familiar things remained unchanged as it is not the use of OER that has influenced their openness, but the platforms' ease of use. The results were not at variance with the study of Lai et al. (2017), which highlighted that the ease of use was only a secondary driving force for technology adoption. Likewise, Chicaiza et al. (2015) also proposed that in order to fully utilise OER, it is crucial for students to be aware of and receptive to different ways of implementing them.

Regarding study habits, OER was found to have a significant effect. Students reported that they needed to plan their time effectively while using OER. However, their time management abilities did not show any significant progress after the use of OER. In some cases, it was difficult for them to manage the specific time for each task, as the learning materials required more time to investigate than expected. The research by Horn et al. (2018) also reported the similar findings. Despite this, most students affirmed that they were better at meeting deadlines and showed a low tendency to procrastinate. Their attitude towards working independently was also positive, as they generally accepted learning by themselves without close or direct supervision from teachers.

On the other hand, this study finds out that OER's recognition level in Vietnam is still poor, which is in line with the findings of the earlier studies by Do (2013) and Truong et al. (2021). This may indicate that although OER is steadily acknowledged in Vietnam, more initiatives and campaigns should be launched to raise students' awareness towards OER in particular and Open Science in general so they can comprehend thoroughly and make great use of OER.

The implementation of OER as new learning materials received favourable opinions from ELT students at UD-UFLS. The findings of this study, which are consistent with those of Johnson et al. (2015) and Morning Consult (2018), demonstrated that OER goes beyond the knowledge that can be presented in a textbook and improves the learning experiences of students. With the diversity of OER regarding types, purposes, approaches, methods, etc.; it benefits different types of learners and makes sure everyone can pursue their own style of learning. For example, learning with OER can help boost students' performances by practising with their suitable pace and level (Butcher, 2011). This makes the course more attractive to students, enriching their learning experiences (Lin, 2019).

Students' learner autonomy can be enhanced through using OER since they can monitor and reflect on themselves throughout the process of self-directed learning. Furthermore, in order to perform better than their peers, students' understanding and utilising OER was necessary (Weller et al., 2015; Morning Consult, 2018; Magro & Tabaei, 2020). Therefore, enhancing OER searching and evaluating skills also enhances learner's autonomy as well. Additionally, being able to modify OER themselves and offer comments increases students' motivation to contribute to materials and thereby benefit from a variety of learning experiences. Previous studies have pointed out that these OER elements are beneficial to teachers as well as students (Weller et al., 2015; Morning Consult, 2018).

Apart from benefits, this study also found out several drawbacks of OER that students encountered as well. The most common downside was that OER took too much time and energy. Since there are too many opinions on just one matter, students may be confused when learning without a teacher. It is believed that not all materials are suitable for self-learning but needs teachers' lectures. Other researchers also confirmed lecturers' impact on students' self-study process (Yan et al., 2013; Doan & Dao, 2020).

On the other hand, a lot of students did not know much about copyright issues; many still could not differentiate between OER and cracked/illicit educational materials, which may turn them into illegal OER users unconsciously. This urged lecturers and instructors to assist students in analysing OER and comprehending the importance of copyright in order for them to select the appropriate materials and use them appropriately. These results lined up with those of Onaifo (2016) and Lin (2019).

Another finding was that students feel more motivated with deadlines. However, despite claiming that their study motivation was intrinsic, students expressed that their learner autonomy was weak when it came to self-regulation issues such as distractions and procrastination. They often had to rely on friends' support,

teachers' reminders and assistant apps/tools to make themselves focus on their tasks. Conole (2014) agreed, saying that not all pupils possessed the self-monitoring skills required for a pedagogy that solely uses OER.

Other hindrances included language barriers as well. Since most OER are based and established in English, Vietnamese students find it hard to work with them; finding, reading and evaluating took more time since the material was not written in their mother language, not to mention that the mistranslation may occur. Other researchers agreed upon this view as well, especially those who conducted their study in countries where English was not the dominant language (Ngimwa & Wilson, 2012; Do, 2013).

V. CONCLUSION

The study yielded a variety of intriguing findings. The results revealed OER generally enhances learner autonomy among second-year ELT students at UD - UFLS regarding independence of learning and study habits. However, it was reported to be little improvement in the time management skill. The study also discovered some benefits and drawbacks of utilising OER to enhance learner autonomy. The adoption of OER brings up various benefits such as plentiful and attractive resources, flexibility in time and place to study so as to perfectly match individuals' learning pace, level, health and personal preferences. Moreover, it also promoted learner's autonomy by enhancing students' responsibility, OER finding and evaluating skills while encouraging students in tackling new activities and enriching learning activities in general. On the other hand, there are many difficulties that students encounter when adopting OER in learner autonomy with time-consumption, confusion, procrastination, distraction and linguistic barriers are mentioned as the most common hindrances.

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