

# Teaching German as a Foreign Language with Open Educational Resources (OER)

## Implementation in and Experiences from an Indonesian University

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**Abstract**—The focus of this research is to find and implement OER to be used in learning German as a foreign language levels A1 to B1 of the The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) standards and to implement in teaching at Universitas Negeri Malang (Indonesia). An overview of the OER will be given, which was categorized language learning level, themes, among others level and themes. From the implementation in university classes with about 19-21 years old, our interviews with five lecturers and their answers in an online questionnaire showed that the OER material in learning did provide many benefits for lecturers and students, including the variety of materials, the forms, and the economic aspect. However, the existing OER still have some downsides, like their suitability to the needs of lecturers and students, in terms of their themes, the technical requirements and levels of difficulty.

**Keywords**—OER, implementation, German as a foreign language (GFL)

## 1 Introduction

If educators want to use educational resources which are free to re-use, modify and re-publish, the copyright worldwide limits this option. Since about 15 years, “open” or “free” licenses were introduced to regulate such usages of materials for learning and teaching [1]. Now, the term and concept of open educational resources (in short OER) is world-wide known and internationally recommended by UNESCO [2] and The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [3]. Their usage is recommended as OER are seen as a base for a more inclusive, open, sustainable education and world [2]. Universities share for copyright issues in teaching, that OER gives new teaching opportunities, or that OER simply supports lifelong learning – and public relation [4]. Although there are many national and international initiatives and projects, one gets the impression that practical OER usages is still lagging behind in primary, secondary and tertiary education. For example, a research report

from the German Ministry of Education recommended strengthening activities in the OER field because of the missing usage [5]. Similar results are found in the Netherlands where the use of OER is limited [6] and Ireland [7]. This is a pity, because the use of OER is also linked to interesting side-effects: Another research proved that OER has the potential to be a beneficial tool in professional development, lecturer collaboration, and to increase their technological knowledge in language pedagogy [8]. Learning with OER has transformed interactions among lecturers, building virtual practice communities that aim to share ideas and practices for better qualities in teaching/learning [9] and helping them to be agents of change [10]. OER can contribute to a broader perception of the value of OER and its relevance to major challenges faced by higher education today [11].

If we want to promote the dissemination of OER, many recent contributions therefore come to similar conclusions to Mishra's [12]: "Teachers and students are the most important stakeholders in the OER ecosystem. It is important to sensitise them on a regular basis in the use and creation of OER, including ways for remixing and integrating OER in teaching and learning."

In Indonesia, where our study is located, there have also been initiatives around OER for several years. In 2012, an international study national OER policies state „Indonesia notes that it is developing OER“ [13]. An Indonesian OER initiative (I-OER) was described by Selviandro and Septiana [14] and OER literacy of vocational high school teachers in Indonesia were done [15].

An exciting area for the use of OER is language learning. First of all, it is possible to use authentic material [16]. Then, the open licensing of OER ensures that materials can also be translated and are more widely disseminated worldwide through their digital and online availability. Improvements in speech recognition provide further opportunities for OER use [17]. Nevertheless, OER seems not to be very widespread in language learning. This might due to the fact that complete textbooks or collections for a certain course are rarely available. In Austria, for example, a study was carried out in 2018 to find out what materials are available at all for a specific school level for English as a foreign language and whether they are sufficient [18]. The case study shows that this is quite problematic on closer inspection: for example, many materials for learning English that are available as OER are written for native speakers who are much younger and do not fit well with the much older Austrian children when they start to learn English. Additionally, the needs of learning language as a second, non-native language are different to those who learn it as language natives.

The use of OER in language learning in Indonesia is rather small, despite the efforts to introduce OER of the MOOC type have been frequently done in teachers' seminars and workshops [19]. A report on community service activities concluded that the majority of their participants were teachers from various subjects; they did not know and have not used any OER material [20]. In Indonesia, learning German as a foreign language, currently still widely use of classical media, namely handbooks in the form of textbooks and worksheets. In the Department of German Literature, Universitas Negeri Malang (UM) - Indonesia, German as foreign language learning from levels A1 to B1 of the CEFR standard is also the case. Although there are printed

textbooks and also digital ones, most students cannot have their digital versions because it is too expensive for them to afford.

The OER-based learning process for lecturers will be more complex [7], but in terms of its efficiency this is a good option. Considering the advantages of OER in general and for language learning as described above, research on the practical availability and usage in classroom is urgent. In our study, we therefore explore the following research questions:

1. What OER can be found for learning German as foreign language levels A1 - B1?
2. How is the implementation of OER in German as foreign language learning levels A1 to B1 at the University of Malang, Indonesia?

## 2 Research method

The descriptive research method was used for this study, which sought to map the OER material for GFL learning levels A1-B1 which were published on Internet pages, and describes the implementation of OER in GFL learning in the Department of German Literature at Universitas Negeri Malang (UM). The data were collected using observation techniques to map OER material, questionnaires distributed to lecturers using a Google form, and interviews with lecturers to dig up information about the implementation of OER material in teaching. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to summarize the OER material and faculty member responses and to measure their overall perceptions of implementation OER material. Figure 1 shows the overview of our implementation of OER within the German as a foreign language courses at Universitas Negeri Malang as well as the research steps. There were about 138 students in sum and they are aged 19 to 21 years.

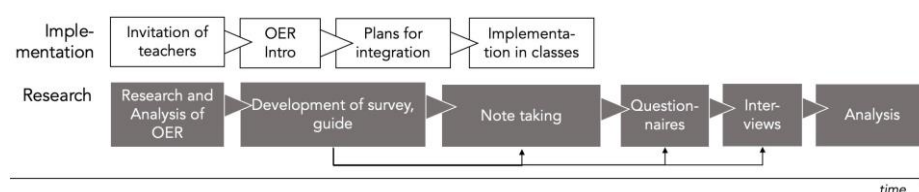


Fig. 1. Overview of OER implementation and parallel research

## 3 Results

Within the following, we give an overview about our analysis of OER and experiences of five lecturers who used OER for teaching GFL in courses of the Universitas Negeri Malang. In the second aspect, we present answers to the written questionnaire with the statements made in the interview, arranged by topic.

### 3.1 Finding fitting OER for GFL

To answer the first problem, the researchers have searched, read, sorted and selected websites containing the materials with OER license, and can be used for GFL at A1 to B1 levels of CEFR standards. The materials were then categorized into groups, based on the skills, learning themes, material descriptions, CC license, and URL. Collaborated with GFL lecturers, the researchers selected the materials to be implemented in the classes. These tables are published online (see <https://zenodo.org/record/4655087#.YGUPo68zbIU>).

**Table 1.** Findings of OER for GFL A1 to B1 concerning the topics and format

Topics	Sum of Findings	Description (e. g. format or OER, variant of assignment, completeness)	Format
Reading	2	Verständnis eines Textes, Texte, Schule	Text, Assignment
Vocabulary	7	Essen und Trinken, Körperteile, Feste: Weihnachten, Schule: Gegenstände in der Schule, Tiere	Videos, assignment
Grammar	6	Satzglieder (Subjekt, Prädikat, Objekt & Fallergänzung), Dass-Regel, Zeitformen: Perfekt, Imperativ, Artikel,	Videos, assignment, text
Listening	2	Wohnung, Sich vorstellen	Text, assignment
Speaking	3	Essen und Trinken, Sich vorstellen, Einkaufen	Text, Assignment: Dialog
Writing	5	Reise, Verfassung eines Textes, Rechtschreibung, Essen und Trinken	Text, Assignment

The implementation of OER in German learning is, for instance, in course “Deutsch 3”. The materials in the form of text and grammar exercises from OER are needed for the usage stage, which are linked in the quizzes and Padlet applications. Texts taken from OER are edited, shortened, and the vocabulary and structure simplified according to the student's level. Thus, students can complete assignments online, both for synchronous and asynchronous learning. For speaking course, the material or theme from OER can be as a basis for gaining insight into Germany's context, which is different from the situation in Indonesia.

In synchronous and asynchronous online learning, lecturers and students discuss together about the OER materials. In synchronous online learning, the lecturers provide links of the OER material for students as assignments. Thus, both lecturers and students use laptops or smartphones to access OER materials. In asynchronous learning, the lecturers use the university's learning management system to link the OER material or downloaded materials.

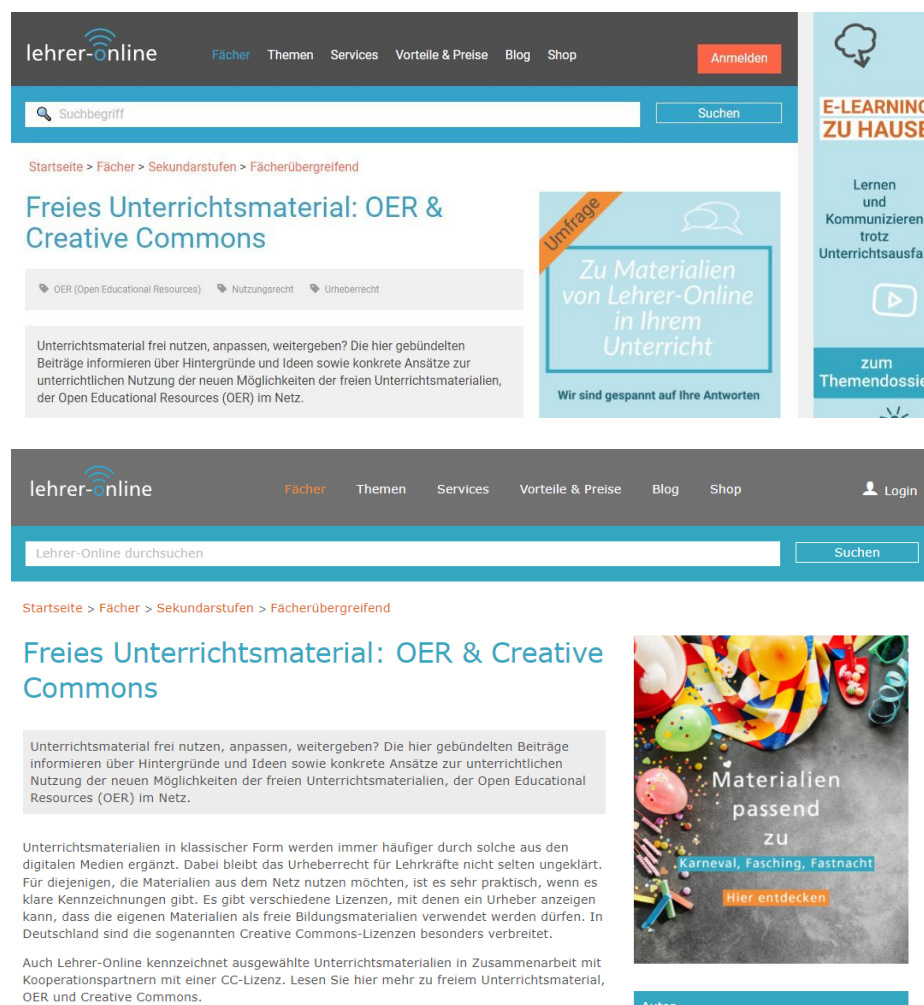


Fig. 2. A screenshot of OER website (Source: <https://www.lehrer-online.de>)

The mapped OER material does not always match the lecturers' needs in teaching. For example, these discrepancies relate to topics, variations in exercises, vocabulary levels, or text length. Therefore, lecturers still have to use other suitable materials that are not considered OER, but free accessed. The OER licence found are quite various as seen in Table 2.

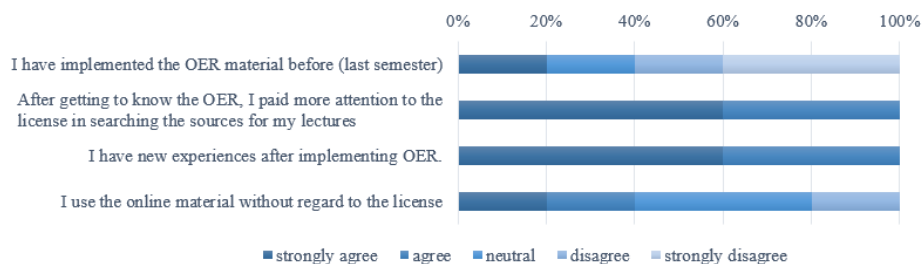
**Table 2.** Findings of OER for GFL A1 to B1 concerning the used license

License	Sum of findings with this license	Description (variance of materials)
CC BY	10	Grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary (Level A1, A2, B1)
CC BY-SA	21	Grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking (Level A1, A2, B1)
Other CC licenses	8	Reading (Level A2, B1)
No license	1	Teaching units for Level A1, A2 and B1.

### 3.2 Effects of the OER introduction to the lecturers OER usage

The meeting with the introduction of OER for GFL has inspired new insights to all five lecturers, as well as a vigilant attitude in using material from the Internet. The following is information obtained from the online questionnaire results. When asked after the implementation phase, all 5 lecturers answered that they were not familiar with OER and creative commons licenses before the first workshops.

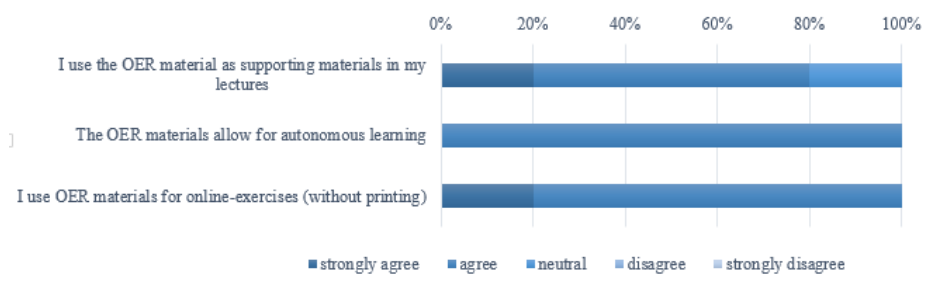
As shown in Figure 3, the first meeting already had effects: Already before the trial semester 2 lecturers (40%) used OER. In general, the lecturers’ attention concerning OER and Internet materials changed: All of them paid more attention concerning the open license, and all stated that they got new experiences through the OER implementation. Nevertheless, still two (40%) use online material without any regard to the license.



**Fig. 3.** OER usage after the introductory meeting (N=5)

### 3.3 Different teaching methods and GFL topics where OER was used

As shown in Figure 4, four of five (80%) of the lecturers use OER as supporting material and all of them used OER for online learning, so without printing. All lecturers agreed to the statement that the used OER allow for autonomous learning.

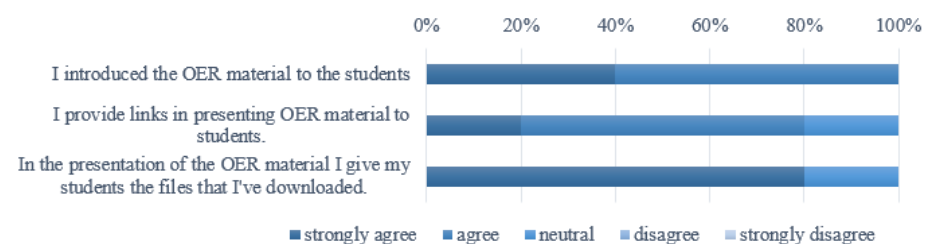


**Fig. 4.** How the lecturers used the OER in teaching (N=5)

The most frequently usage of OER was for reading (all lecturers agreed, 100%), three of five lecturers (60%) used OER additionally for grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

### 3.4 How OER were introduced to the students

As shown in Figure 5, all lecturers introduced the OER to the students, four of five (80%) provided the URL to the sources, the same amount (80%) gave the OER as files to the students.



**Fig. 5.** How the lecturers introduced and referred to OER within their trial lectures (N=5)

### 3.5 Used OER for GFL

From the provided list of the pages of GFL materials with an OER license, all the respondents have accessed [mein.deutschbuch.de](http://mein.deutschbuch.de); [www.schule-bw.de](http://www.schule-bw.de); [www.lehrer-online.de](http://www.lehrer-online.de); [unterrichten.zum.de](http://unterrichten.zum.de), [de.islcollective.com](http://de.islcollective.com), [techblog-schule.de](http://techblog-schule.de), [lernedeutschmitdani.de](http://lernedeutschmitdani.de) and [deutsch.info](http://deutsch.info). Few have accessed [deutsch-lernen.zum](http://deutsch-lernen.zum), [teachsam.de](http://teachsam.de) and [epale.ec.europa.eu](http://epale.ec.europa.eu).

### 3.6 Challenges

Besides the overall positive feedback and experiences, however, three of five lecturers (60%) had the following difficulties with OER (see Table 3): finding right materials to adapt with the students' competence level, identifying the license of the

material, even though it is mentioned in the imprint section, and adjusting the materials based on the needs in learning. Finding OER for a certain topic was only a difficulty for one lecturer (20%).

**Table 3.** Difficulties when searching for OER (N=5)

I found the following difficulties when searching the OER:	Percentage
editing the required part of OER materials	60%
determining the OER materials which are suitable with the student's level	60%
sorting the appropriate material from OER	60%
determining the license (I need to read imprint)	60%
determining the OER materials which are suitable with the theme discussed	20%

The interview showed that two lecturers focussed on the problem, where they hardly found suitable OER materials for the level and theme they were discussing. It was stated by the lecturers, "it was difficult to find the suitable material for the level and theme." (*SL-LLS-001*); "There are many obstacles, one of which is the material of which level does not match to what is being taught." (*SL-RSD-001*); "Sometimes there is no material on my topic. In the end, I looked for something similar. To find a really matched material to the one I need is very difficult" (*SL-RSD-002*; *SL-DW-001*).

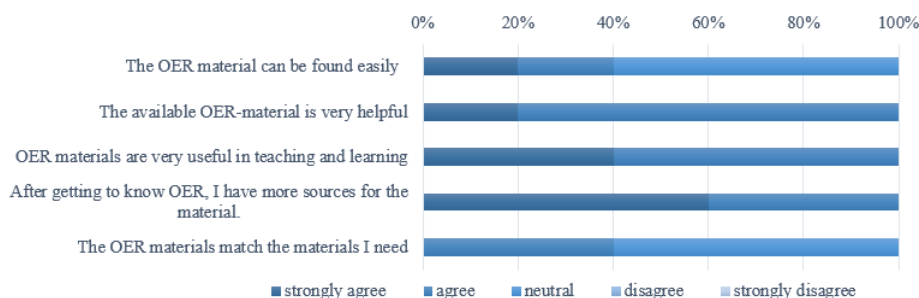
The gap between the available OER material and the material in need requires them to do some process on a text and adjust it to the required theme. One of them shared this point: "I had to think over for some times before I started to modify a text I found on a page, then adjusted to my topic." (*SL-RSD-003*).

In addition, the OER on many internet pages have various themes and levels of difficulty and sometimes the gaps are too big. They are often not suitable to the needs of the lecturers. Two mentioned this as an issue: "Many materials are not well classified in the distribution, for example it does not separate fictions and nonfictions" (*SL-LLS-002*); "The material on the pages, like on *mein.deutschbuch.de*, has a big gap between basic and intermediate level." (*SL-SWT-001*).

### 3.7 Benefits of OER for teaching

Concerning the OER they found, the lecturers made no negative experience (see Figure 6): All find the OER "very helpful" as well "useful in teaching and learning" and agreed to have more sources after the OER introduction. 2 lecturers found OER easy to find (40%). 3 lecturers stayed "neutral" concerning "the OER material match the materials I need", so only 2 (40%) agreed to this statement.





**Fig. 6.** Overall judgments on OER within the trial classes by lecturers (N=5)

As presented in Table 4, nearly all lecturers see a benefit of OER that are available for teaching. Three of five teaches see a benefit in new learning techniques used in some OER and that they have clear instructions for online exercises.

**Table 4.** Benefits of OER for German as a foreign language (N=5)

I use OER materials because ...	Percentage
they are available for learning	80%
there are some new learning techniques	60%
they have clear steps/instructions for online exercises	60%

The second question in the interview was as well on the benefits the lecturers seen from the available GFL OER. It is shown that the OER have made it easier for them to process and modify, revise, and adapt to the material they need, as the materials on the Internet has been clear in their status and openness: “It makes it easy in finding the materials because they are available online, and they are ready to use with no copyright issue” (*UTG-LLS-001*); “I feel safe in using the materials, though they are still limited and some are not as I have expected” (*UTG-SWT-001*).

### 3.8 Ideas and wishes

To complement the existing OER, the respondents suggested that the department should have a material bank and a question bank. This way will facilitate all the lecturers in preparing the lessons. This idea comes from some lecturers: “My dream is that we can have a lot of question banks (formative tests) and also material banks (additional materials and exercises), do you think it is too impossible? It is far away too big, isn’t it?” (*SRN-RSD-001*; *SRN-DW-001*). Therefore, it is necessary to develop material and questions from the text on the OER page through development research activities. This is one of the ways to realize the dream mentioned above. This is a practical advice communicated by one of the interviewees. “I am really interested in developing questions because it is part of my lecture needs” (*KBG-SWT-001*).

From the results of questionnaires and interviews, it can be seen that the GFL material available as OER can help lecturers in completing their lecture materials. How-

ever, they are still far from sufficient, because not all the required materials are available in terms of themes, skills or competence and levels.

#### **4 Discussion of results: OER availability, quality and usage for teaching German as foreign language**

Concerning our question on what OER can be found for learning GFL levels A1 to B1 we have found, that there are abundances of OER for German language learning on the Internet; they are available the levels of A1, A2, and B1. These materials are very suitable for independent study and additional material for German language courses. However, if they are related to lectures that have certain achievement goals in accordance with the curriculum at the Department of German Literature, Universitas Negeri Malang, only some of the available GFL OER can be used.

Concerning our research question on the implementation of OER in GFL learning levels A1 to B1 at the Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia we found: From the results of questionnaires and interviews, it can be seen that the GFL material available on the OER pages can help lecturers in completing their lecture materials. However, they are still far from sufficient, because not all the required materials are available in terms of themes, skills or competence and levels. These materials still need to be modified and adjusted in terms of topics, levels of language skills, and vocabulary. The lecturers suggest to develop a bank of materials from the OER pages. The bank can be made by each lecturer to accord to his/her needs.

Our results are in line with the argument stated by [21] and [22] that many researchers have discussed the quality of OER as a learning resource. Resource-based learning creates a better platform for changing the culture of open learning and teaching in many education systems to offer a better quality for a greater number of learners [23], [24]. Sandayanake promotes the use of OER as mixed learning [25]. This research is considered important because nowadays it is no longer relevant for lecturers to spend time developing material, reviewing lecture notes, anticipating questions or preparing for exams. This supports the finding in this study, showing that special OER for learning German levels A1 to B1 have been found and collected. The lecturers and the students can use them for classroom and independent learning purposes.

Lecturers can use the materials and it is recommended as a cost-effective investment in learning. The result shows that OER is quite new for lecturers and students. The online materials really help lecturers and students to find the lesson material so that the learning becomes more effective. OER are good for their flexibility in learning; they can be revised and mixed with existing materials.

There are several disadvantages faced by lecturers as they applied them. They could not use it instantly. They still have to consider the suitability of the materials found with the needs of their students in the classroom. Thus, it is necessary to modify them before they are used in the learning. For this, the lecturers are required to master some technical skills in the material modification. This echoes what D'Antoni [26] said that there are several obstacles in using OER, namely (1) technical aspects, namely the lack of broadband access; (2) economical, that is, insufficient resources to

invest in the required software and hardware; (3) social, namely the lack of skills needed to use technology; (4) policy-oriented, namely lack of academic recognition of OER development by teaching staff; and (5) legal, namely the time and costs associated with obtaining permission to use copyrighted material belonging to a third party or removing it from the material.

The introduction of the OER has brought new knowledge and new experiences for the lecturers in the department. This has nevertheless a positive impact on their awareness about licenses as they utilize the materials contained on internet pages. Using GFL OER provides a sense of security and eliminates the anxiety about copyright violation, as stated by Smith [27] that the benefit of OER is to eliminate the burden of worrying about copyright infringement.

## **5 Conclusions for learning foreign languages with OER**

This research has succeeded in finding OER for GFL learning. All the materials have been categorized into groups, namely for what skills, learning themes, material descriptions, and types of OER licenses, and their web for access OER can be used in many skills and at various levels. The implementation of OER material in learning does provide many advantages for lecturers and students, including economic reason, the variety of materials, and their various form, as well as a sense of security from infringing any copyright. However, the OER also have some weakness, i. e. they are not instantly ready to use because they are not suitable to the needs of lecturers and students, both in terms of themes and levels of difficulty. Lecturers can use the materials and it is recommended as a cost-effective investment in learning. The result shows that OER is quite new for lecturers and students. The online materials really help lecturers and students to find the lesson material so that the learning becomes more effective. OER are good for their flexibility in learning; they can be revised and mixed with existing materials. And they brought it some new learning techniques as well. The OER's rapid growth provides new opportunities for teaching and learning. At the same time, they surely challenge the established views of teaching and learning practices in higher education. According to our results and experiences, there are many strands we should be aware of: The development of OER to have something to use at all and the quality of OER to have satisfying OER [28]. Nevertheless, intense awareness rising, further education, OER introduction within lecturer training or even OER certifications [29] are needed as well to establish vivid OER usage, co-production and OER community – for language learning in Indonesia [30,31,32], and all above.

## **6 Acknowledgment**

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