

5 Repurposing Open Educational Resources: Creating Resources for Use and Re-use

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Abstract

This case study draws on work carried out as part of an Open University (OU) project on collaborative writing and peer review of open educational resources (OER). The article focuses on one teacher's experience of repurposing (i.e. re-using and adapting existing resources for different purposes) OER, examines how access to open repositories for OER can enhance teachers' own practice and reflection process and illustrates the processes involved in repurposing. Selecting suitable resources for repurposing can be based on image suitability, resource format, content suitability or on information gained from teacher's notes, descriptions or tags. It will also be demonstrated how resources can be designed for a particular teaching context and how resources can be made fit for re-use. The case study gives practical advice on how open images can be sourced and how using Creative Commons licences can assure that resources are shared in the way the author had intended. A checklist offers practitioners who are interested in using and designing OER guidance for the repurposing process.

Keywords: repurposing, reversioning, creative commons, task design, re-using, adapting, open educational resources, OER, teacher practice.

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1. Context

The case study was carried out as part of the general scholarship activity at the Open University (OU), UK, under the umbrella of ‘Scholarship of and for Teaching’. It was one of 9 projects in 2011-12 and focused on the integration of the OU language repository **LORO** into the professional development of Associate Lecturers (here referred to as teachers) at the Department of Languages in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies.

LORO, the online repository used by the Department of Languages at the OU came into being through a JISC funded project in 2009/10 to develop a repository for storing, sharing and accessing language teaching resources and was launched in January 2010. **LORO** holds OER for language teaching provided by the Department of Languages, teachers and external users. Languages taught at the OU comprise Chinese, English for Academic Purposes, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Welsh. All language courses range from beginners to upper intermediate, apart from Chinese and Welsh which can only be studied at beginners’ level, and Italian which can only be studied at beginners’ and lower intermediate. The resources held are used by teachers in tutorials, which can either take place face-to-face or via the **Elluminate** programme. **Elluminate** is a web conferencing programme used for delivery of online, synchronous tutorials. Many of the resources on **LORO** are specifically designed for this particular environment.

The current initiative arose from the need for an opportunity for teachers to engage in the design process of OER in collaboration with colleagues, while experiencing the benefits of peer review within the **LORO** environment.

The aim of the project was two-fold: firstly, to improve the functionality of **LORO** and secondly, to organise a series of staff development events with a focus on collaborative design of open educational resources and peer reviews.

Twelve teachers (teaching English for Academic Purposes, French, German, Italian and Spanish at various levels) participated in the project, led by a project

team involving seven course developers/coordinators and regional language coordinators.

Four groups were formed and over four meetings participants engaged in collaborative writing, either producing materials from scratch or, where a cross-curricular approach was taken, repurposing existing resources. The examples given in this article were created within the latter framework and aimed at beginners' level. Each group member produced resources, which were peer reviewed throughout the design process.

2. Intended outcomes: Understanding effective repurposing

The author was particularly interested in understanding how resources in the repository can be approached for repurposing. Her own particular aims for the activity were:

- exploring ways of searching for and selecting resources for repurposing;
- repurposing resources designed for use with interactive resources for online teaching;
- exploring how resources can be made fit for re-use.

In the following sections each of these aims are addressed in detail and some specific observations are outlined.

3. Nuts and bolts: Exploring ways of searching for and selecting resources for repurposing

Resources in **LORO** can be searched in a variety of ways: by course code, language, language level, author or tags ([browse view](#)). While it makes sense to

search for activities at the same level, it is also useful to consider other levels. It is a great way to see colleagues' approaches to materials design. It aids one's own professional development and can encourage reflection.

Once materials were selected for consideration for adaptation or repurposing, it became obvious that a more systematic approach in selecting suitable resources needed to be taken. The following approaches emerged:

- selection based on **image suitability**;
- selection based on **resource format**;
- selection based on **content suitability**;
- selection based on information gained from **metadata** and **teacher's notes/lesson plans**.

3.1. Suitability of images

Images are an ideal way of getting language learners to speak without having to resort to copious instructions and text. Therefore, the first search involved searching for images within resources and tasks that could either be used in the same way as in the original resource or could be reused in a different task design.

The advantage of using images from OER language resources in **LORO** is that a) they have already been selected on the grounds that they fit a language learning context, and b) many of them are used because they are copyright-free images or have sources acknowledged. However, this is not always the case and great care must be taken when selecting images for use and reuse.

Wikimedia commons is a good source of images. Here, images can be searched by categories and licensing information accompanies each image. Royalty-free images can also be found on **Flickr commons** and **Google images** but it

is important to check any licensing attached to them by running an advanced search. In all cases, sources must be acknowledged. This applies also to any use of clip art, e.g. Microsoft or clip art from sites such as [Open Clip Art Library](#).

3.2. Resource format

A large part of the resources held on [LORO](#) are designed for use with a web-conferencing programme. The system allows teaching resources to be uploaded as PowerPoint presentations, image files (png) or whiteboard files (wbd) amongst other formats. The advantage of using whiteboard files is that, unlike PowerPoint or image files, whiteboard slides can be designed with moveable objects, such as text boxes or images, which can be manipulated by teacher and learners. The majority of resources officially designed by the Open University are in whiteboard format, while resources from OU teachers or outside contributors may come in a range of formats. Therefore, in order to increase interactivity and to fully exploit the affordances of the tool, only resources that had been originally created as a whiteboard file were considered.

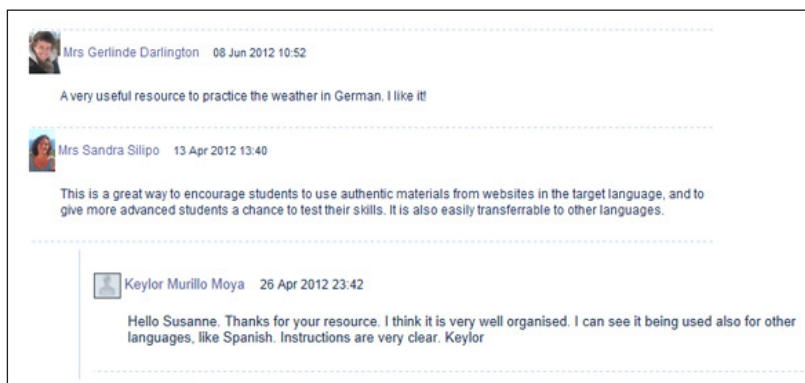
3.3. Content suitability

Browsing through a repository is more than just a search; it engages the practitioner with examples of resources created by peers and can thus develop one's own practice and open up new ways of approaching a topic. Therefore, where a repository does not hold any resources whose constituent parts can be re-used, searching through the resources can nevertheless inspire new creations purely based on an idea. In a distance learning environment where meeting fellow teachers face-to-face is a rare occasion, having the opportunity to see colleagues' work and teaching methods can be beneficial and inspiring but also reassuring.

One of the huge benefits of [LORO](#) is the technical facility that allows posting feedback and comments ([Figure 1](#)). Not only is this useful feedback for the creator of the resource but it is also a useful indicator for those who are considering

using the resource. In line with common practice elsewhere, resources can also be ‘liked’.

Figure 1. Comments on a resource

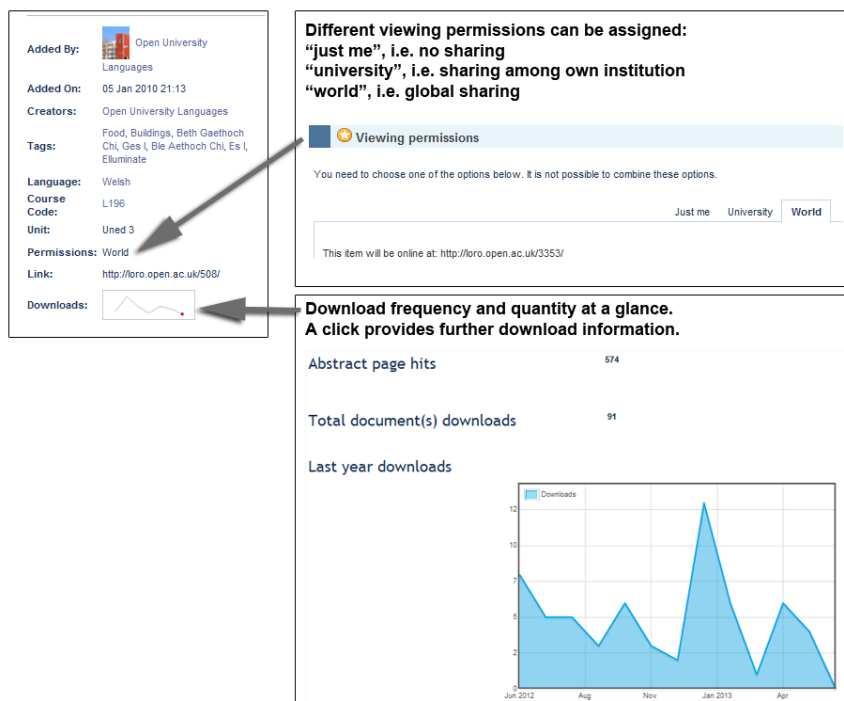


3.4. Value of metadata and teacher's notes

Many resources (especially those produced by the OU) include teachers' notes or lesson plans. These support documents are essential where materials themselves are not self-explanatory or where a resource was selected on the basis of its visual strength rather than language or level (e.g. by a teacher who is not proficient in the language). In those cases, any guidance relating to the teaching procedure is vital. In addition to teachers' notes which, if present, form part of the download package, metadata in the form of a description of the resource, tags, creator, permissions and download rate are all helpful criteria in the selection process (Figure 2). Tags are particularly important as these are searchable and therefore the more accurately they describe the resource, the more effective the search.

Having considered a variety of resources in LORO in this way, three resources were selected for repurposing.

Figure 2. Metadata attached to a resource



4. In practice: Repurposing resources

In the following section some specific examples are presented of how the repurposing process was approached.

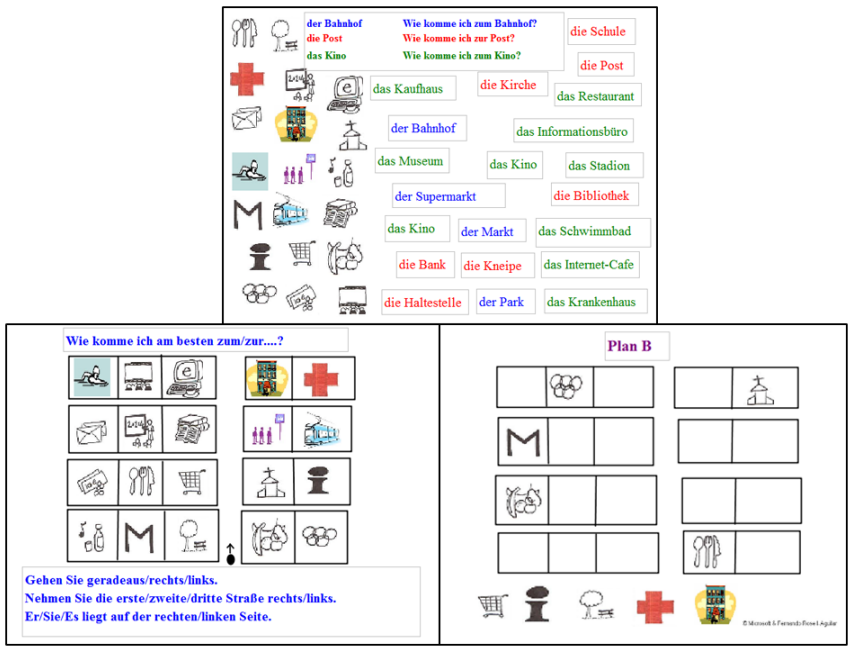
4.1. Repurposing images

In the example below an **Italian resource** for practising directions was selected. This resource had already been reversioned from a **Spanish resource** (all resources mentioned here can be found in **LORO**).

Figure 3. Original Italian resource for practising directions



Figure 4. German resource based on the Italian resource on directions



The selection decision was made on the basis of suitability of the visual content of the activity. The resource contained very little taught language but was

completely relevant to German, so therefore the images could be used while the language could be adapted. The resource consisted of three different slides, including a map with moveable image tiles for learners to use in an activity on directions (Figure 3).

For the first stage of the activity only images representing places in town were used. The activity was adapted to deal with a) gender (colour coded vocabulary) and b) the case endings in the question ‘Wie komme ich zum/zur...?’ (How do I get to the...?). The second original slide was used but here slightly more language scaffolding was provided to compensate for the particular difficulty of case endings and use of subject pronouns in German. The last stage of the original activity was reused without much further adaptation (Figure 4).

4.2. Repurposing content and ideas

In this example (Figure 5), the idea of using a weather map formed the basis of a weather resource. Here, too, further language scaffolding was provided for learners to make maximum use of the visual as a speaking stimulus. By including the web address the source was acknowledged but it also enabled future updating for anyone who wanted to repurpose this activity.

Figure 5. Original and reversioned weather activity

Il tempo in Italia

	°C	min	max
TO	14	25	
RI	15	25	
VE	14	24	
FI	12	25	
RH	15	27	
PE	16	23	
PH	20	22	

Martedì 25

Wie ist das Wetter in Deutschland?

Germany

Die Temperatur liegt bei 15 Grad.

Copyright: http://corporate.brexa.com/en/3/lessons/web_flashweather_america.asp

The next section of the original resource inspired another similar activity but one which incorporated a web search (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Original and reversioned table for weather activity

Le previsioni del tempo				Der aktuelle Wetterbericht			
Data: 5 aprile				Stadt	Tiefsttemperatur	Höchsttemperatur	Wie ist das Wetter im Moment?
Città	Temp.min	Temp.mass	Previsioni	Kiel			
Milano	18	25	Nuvoloso	Hamburg			
Venezia				Bremen			
Aosta				Hannover			
Bolzano				Düsseldorf			
Roma				Berlin			
Campobasso				Dresden			
Bari				Frankfurt			
Olbia				Stuttgart			
Palermo				München			

Gehen Sie auf diese Webseite:
<http://wetter.spiegel.de/spiegel/>, und suchen Sie die Tiefsttemperatur, Höchsttemperatur und das aktuelle Wetter.

4.3. Repurposing led by metadata and teachers’ notes

The third resource was selected on the basis of information gained from its metadata. Although the tags, containing phrases in Welsh, did not help, it was useful to have a description of the activity. As the images were clear and easy to re-use for an activity in German, the activity was divided into two parts, both, however, practising the past tense, just as in the original activity. In addition to the images, vocabulary was included to help with the decision whether to use the article or not when talking about what had been eaten and drunk the day before, using the Perfect tense (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Original and reversioned activity to practise the past tense

brechdan cwrw cyri cyw iâr gwin llysiau pysgod

tatws treiffi



Was haben Sie gestern gegessen und getrunken?

ein Glas Rotwein

ein Bier

Kartoffeln

Fisch

Gemüse

Pudding

ein Schinkenbrot

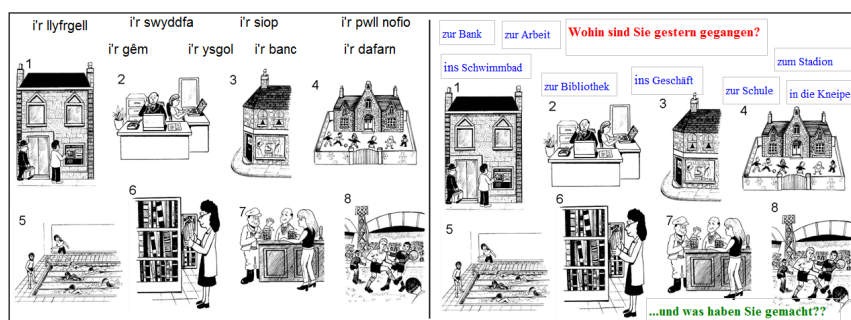
Suppe

Hähnchen



As the next original whiteboard slide contained practice for places in town with a preposition, the same could be replicated for German. Considering the stage of study and ability of learners, more language help was needed, so before launching into the main activity, a matching activity was designed because gender was important for knowing whether to use ‘zum’ (to the + masculine or neuter noun) or ‘zur’ (to the + feminine noun) (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Original and reversioned activity



4.4. Exploring how resources can be made fit for reuse

The project and resource design raised the question of whether resources should be created solely for one's own use, or whether any consideration should be given as to how the resource can be used beyond the creator's own purpose. If the resource is intended for maximum distribution, then it must be designed and 'packaged' appropriately so that it can be located, used and repurposed.

The following checklist aims to offer a practical approach to producing OER, which can easily be repurposed by others.

Packaging for repurposing - Checklist

- Are the images and other sources I use copyright free? Have I acknowledged all sources?

- Have I credited the original resource author?
- Is the resource format accessible by others? If not, how can I ensure that access is possible? (For example, if the repository has a preview function, ensure that files can be previewed) Can the resource be made available in other formats?
- Am I producing content that is sufficiently broad for it to be useful for others?
- Am I packaging my resource in such a way that I am providing sufficient information and metadata about it so that it can be found easily?
- With whom am I sharing my work? Sharing can either be purely on an institutional level or can be global. This will depend on the openness of the repository.
- How do I intend the resource to be used? How widely do I share my work and what do I allow users to do with my resource, i.e. how do I license my resource?

Creative Commons offers a range of licences that combine different aspects such as attribution, non-commercial use, no derivatives and share alike (derivative resources must be shared under the same license as the original). The **Creative Commons Licenses** page contains detailed information on all the available licenses.

5. Conclusion

Having access to a repository consisting of colleagues' work offers an invaluable insight into ways of approaching the same subject and thus provides an opportunity for reflection, personal and professional development.

At the same time, sharing our own resources means that we can extend their life-cycle. By sharing resources we can also make a contribution to the wider teaching community. If we share in a way that makes it possible for everyone to access our resources, we can help support colleagues, while enhancing our own practice through feedback and reflection.

Useful links

Creative Commons <http://creativecommons.org>

Creative Commons (licenses) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Elluminate http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elluminate_Live

Flickr commons <http://www.flickr.com/commons>

Google images <https://www.google.co.uk/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi>

Italian resource <http://loro.open.ac.uk/110>

LORO <http://loro.open.ac.uk/>

LORO (browse view) <http://loro.open.ac.uk/view/>

Open Clip Art Library <http://openclipart.org/browse>

Spanish resource <http://loro.open.ac.uk/3201>

Wikimedia commons (images) <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Images>



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