

Bolormaa Batmunkh

Master of Applied Linguistics, the University of Melbourne, Australia

English language lecturer, Mongolian National University of Education

English, German languages

School of Social Sciences and Humanities

Mongolian National University of Education

Khoroo 8, Sukhbaatar District

Ulaanbaatar 14 191, Mongolia

Phone: 9914 8770 (mobile)

EFFECTS OF MOOC ON STUDENT MOTIVATION

Bolormaa Batmunkh

Master of Applied Linguistics, the University of Melbourne, Australia

English language lecturer, Mongolian National University of Education

Abstract

This paper discusses the effects of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on student motivation and engagement in developing English listening skills course for the fourth year students at the Mongolian National University of Education. MOOCs may be regarded as contributing to the democratisation of knowledge as they are offered for free to any number of people, anywhere and anytime and let students learn at their own pace. Observation, interviews and questionnaires reveal that most students find MOOC interesting and it helps them set up better study habits, discipline and it pushes their self-study. In the future, more participatory action research into the relations between student intrinsic motivation and MOOCs is needed in order to improve learning outcomes and explore and enable knowledge democracy in this specific context.

Key words: Massive Open Online Courses, motivation, engagement, self-paced learning, knowledge democracy

Introduction

This paper outlines the MOOC effects on student motivation and engagement in the 64-hour developing English listening skills course for 75 fourth year students in pre-service English education program at the Mongolian National University of Education (MNUE). It is offered twice a week for 4 academic hours/180 minutes for 16 weeks. (January 23, 2017- May 9, 2017). The completion of two asynchMOOCs such as Inside IELTS by the Cambridge English Language Assessment on Futurelearn and Understanding IELTS by the British Council on Futurelearn is a part of the formative assessment of this course in the second semester of the academic year 2016-2017.

Purpose

This study was conducted to discover the MOOC effect on student motivation and engagement

Literature review

A motivation is a desire to do something. There are two types of motivation such as extrinsic which comes from outside the learner and intrinsic motivation comes from the task itself and exists because learner the learner has a drive to learn. Differences also have been drawn between integrative motivation (where a language learner wishes somehow to integrate into the target language culture) and instrumental motivation (where a language learner is studying because with English they will get a better job – or for some other more materialistic reason). It has been suggested that integrative motivation has a more positive effect on student success than instrumental motivation, but perhaps it is more sensible to say that the strength of a student's motivation is what matters, wherever it comes from and whatever kind it is (Harmer, 2012).

Nothing succeeds like success, and students who succeed in language learning are far more likely to remain motivated than students who constantly fail. However it is important that students' achievement should be the result of some effort. If everything is either too easy or

difficult, achievement will be either meaningless or impossible. Good teachers set an appropriate level of challenge so that individual students can experience appropriate success. They set achievable goals at every stage of the language learning process. Students will always stay more motivated if we involve them in enjoyable and challenging activities. However, not all students enjoy or respond to the same things in the same way. It is important for teachers to keep a record of what works and what doesn't (for the class and for individual students). Reflective teachers do this anyway, and it helps them to decide what to do next (Harmer, 2012, p.99).

Regarding MOOC, the OpenCourseWare programme, launched in 2002 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), has triggered a global movement in favour of opening up education, embodied by the development and adoption of open educational resources (OER). Online learning has expanded massively since 2012, known as the “year of the MOOC,” attracting millions of students. MOOCs are online courses designed for large numbers of participants, that can be accessed by anyone anywhere as long as they have an Internet connection, are open to everyone without entry qualifications and offer a full/complete course experience online for free (Mulder & Jansen, 2015).

MOOCs are a very rapidly developing field, and they are inspiring innovations in assessments and credentialing. However, the rapid rise of MOOCs has mainly taken place in the global North. As courses offered free-of-charge to any number of people, anywhere and anytime, MOOCs enable access to higher education and beyond for people who cannot afford a formal education and are disadvantaged. In this respect, MOOCs may be regarded as contributing to the democratisation of higher education (UNESCO, 2016, p.5).

MOOCs emerged from the open education movement. As such, they enable free access to high-quality content and resources, which might be too costly for higher education institutions in developing countries to produce. Use and reuse of MOOCs is therefore an important consideration in developing a national strategy. However, it is crucial to adapt such resources to various contexts.

In this study, two asynchMOOCs, Inside IELTS by the Cambridge Language Assessment and Understanding IELTS by the British Council were used as a challenge to improve learners' English listening comprehension.

Method

Participants

75 pre-intermediate and intermediate level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) fourth year students, 10 males, 65 females, aged 21-26, participated in the study. Their first language (L1) is Mongolian and they are majoring in English teaching at the School Social Sciences and Humanities (SSSAH), Mongolian National University of Education (MNUE).

Setting

Learners are from every corner in the country. They have to sit the entrance examination on English or Russian languages to be enrolled in university. Most of students studied English in Years 5-12 while very few of them studied it only in Years 9-12 as they had studied Russian before it. Students have a compulsory 64-hour Developing English listening skills course twice a week for 2 academic hours/ 90 minutes each. (January 23, 2017- May 9, 2017).

Instruments and Procedures

In this study, qualitative or self-report methods such as questionnaires, interviews and observation have been employed to obtain qualitative data on student motivation.

i. Questionnaires for students

Anonymous questionnaires with 37 questions are completed by 37 out of 75 senior students. Questionnaires are cheaper and more cost-efficient than interviews. The sample questionnaire was completed before conversational and focused interviews.

ii. Conversational and focused interviews with students

Randomly selected 10 students were interviewed to clarify some answers. A sample of topics in the focused interview was developed.

iii. Unstructured observation of MOOC

Classroom observation in the Developing English Listening Skills Course was the direct “first-hand” description. The samples of questions in interviews and questionnaire are the first

attempts so there might be questions which would contaminate evaluation findings. Thus they need proper piloting.

Data Analysis

(i) Questionnaires for learners (n=37)

Open ended questions in the questionnaire were coded according to categories which were developed on the basis of responses. Some important parts of the analysis of the anonymous questionnaires completed by randomly chosen 37 respondents are the following:

36 out of 37 students (Ss) answered the Question 18 “How often do you understand the content of MOOCs you study?”

Question 18		Learners (n=36)	Percentage
1	never	1	2.77%
2	occasionally	5	13.8%
3	sometimes	14	38.8%
4	very often	12	33.3%
5	always	4	11.1%
	No response (36 out of 37 Ss)	1	2.8%

Q20. How often do you need an instructor’s assistance in the MOOC?

Question 20		Learners (n=34)	Percentage
1	never	3	8.82%
2	occasionally	6	17.6%
3	sometimes	18	52.9%
4	very often	7	20.58%
5	always	0	0
	No response (34 out of 37 Ss)	3	8.1%

Q22. Would you like to continue studying the MOOCs in the future?

Question 4		Learners (n=36)	Percentage
1	yes	33	91.6%
2	no	0	0
3	unsure	3	8.3%
	No response (36 out of 37 Ss)	1	2.8%

Q23. If yes/ no/ not sure, why?

- Yes, because MOOCs are free and they are from prestigious universities
- Yes, I understand MOOC instructors’ talks

- Yes, I liked to complete these two MOOCs and I enjoyed them.
- Yes, it is useful
- Yes, it seems to be helpful
- Yes, it is totally free and you can do it wherever and whenever you want. The things they teach are quite helpful to some extent
- Yes, it is the most effective way to improve my English. It is very interesting and also I can study MOOCs whenever I want
- Yes, it is very useful and it can develop my English speaking and listening skills very well
- Yes, it is useful to improve my English and gives me a lot of information about learning English
- Yes, I can broaden my knowledge apart from only one skill
- Yes, it helps me learn English and gives information on exams such as IELTS
- It is an effective way to improve my English
- Yes, everything is in English which creates environment to read and listen in English
- Yes. If I continue it my English knowledge improve step by step
- Yes, because I will improve my language skills.
- Yes, because my future plan is to continue my studies.
- Yes, it is helpful and I did not waste time finding/ searching it.
- Yes, sure. It is more effective than simple program.
- Yes. When I study MOOCs, I learn things fast and easily.
- Yes. It helps me a lot learn. From MOOCs I learn some points I did not learn or understand before.
- Yes. I did not listen it fully. I think it is useful so I will listen to it again in the future because I want to improve my English. But it is a little bit boring.

Unsure:

- I am not sure because I haven't found/ felt results yet.
- Because I am not sure I will study English in the future

Q24. Did MOOCs improve your self-study?

Question 4		Learners (n=36)	Percentage
1	yes	30	83.3%
2	no	1	5.5%

3	unsure	5	11.1%
	No response (36 out of 37 Ss)	1	2.8%

(ii) Conversational and focused interviews with students (n=10)

A discovery oriented informal interview was conducted and all the interviewees said they found the MOOCs interesting and engaging due to the provision of comments. During the focus group interviews, they mentioned that it was a sort of self-paced learning and they needed to improve their time management and study habits. Most interviewees confirmed that MOOC listening sections or tasks were easiest and MOOC reading and writing parts were the most difficult. Interestingly, most learners liked the second MOOC “Understanding IELTS” more than the first MOOC “Inside IELTS” as the former course provided more comments or feedback on tasks. Regarding the technological constraints, some of them do not have access to the internet at home or Wi-Fi connection is slow on campus. In order to overcome the linguistic barrier, they slowed down video tutors’ talk when needed and it enabled them to understand the lessons better.

(iii) Unstructured observation of MOOCs

Generally, it can be said that most learners in four groups were busy watching MOOC videos when some of them were shown in class. They also expressed their opinions on them and clarified some questions they interested. For most of them, it was the first time they took the MOOC thus they discovered something new when they completed steps online. They exchanged their opinions with each other and some of the learners, who completed MOOC tasks first, shared their experience or answered the questions when needed. After completing the first few weeks of each course, they felt more confident to finish the remaining parts of the MOOCs.

Discussion

Given the data above, most respondents considered that the two MOOCs were useful and it helped them improve their English. But it should be noted that questionnaires were completed by 37 out of 75 students due to time constraint needed for qualitative data analysis. 92% of participants said they would continue to study other MOOCs in the future mainly in order to improve their English or increase their proficiency levels. 8% of those 36 respondents answered “unsure” due to the possible change in their career or being unsure of MOOC

effects on their language proficiency. Moreover, 83% of students considered that the MOOCs improved their self-study.

Conclusion

Nowadays open and online education is an innovation driver for improving education quality and a basis for transforming secondary and higher education systems. In this respect, MOOCs are excellent for promoting lifelong learning. Knowledge democracy are supported by MOOCs as they are offered at no cost to any number of people, anywhere and anytime and they enable access to higher education and beyond for people who cannot afford a formal education and are disadvantaged.

Taking account of these MOOC benefits in the 64-hour developing English listening skills course, the instructor used two MOOCs- Inside IELTS and Understanding IELTS to motivate and engage students in order to improve learning outcomes. Based on the qualitative data, most undergraduates found this program interesting due to the use of the two MOOCs along with on campus teaching. In these MOOCs, video tutors discuss techniques to take IELTS and build up four language skills and give feedback on the comments and this is something different from some of our on campus teaching. The instructor recorded each and every student's completion of these MOOCs on their mobile devices as a part of the formative assessment of the course. This way, all students have been pushed to complete all MOOC tasks or steps.

On the one hand, based on the questionnaires, unstructured observation, conversational and focused interviews, it can be concluded that the majority of learners are motivated to take more MOOCs in the future to improve their English language proficiency. Most importantly, questionnaires and informal interviews revealed that the MOOCs helped the learners improve their self-study which can be an important aspect of becoming a lifelong learner in the continuous professional development of soon-to-be English language teachers in the country. In other words, learners were engaged in learning and they had some control over their learning.

On the other hand, evaluation of motivation would be very subjective in its nature that means hard to measure it exactly. Probably, some students completed those two MOOCs only to meet the requirements of the formative assessment. In order to improve students' intrinsic motivation, learner autonomy and provide knowledge democracy, more ways of effective teaching and learning have to be explored in future studies. In other words, more participatory action research on the relations between student intrinsic motivation and MOOCs is needed in order to improve learning outcomes and explore knowledge democracy in this specific context.

References

British Council. (2017). Understanding IELTS. Retrieved from

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/understanding-ielts/6/todo/10410>

Cambridge English Language Assessment. Inside IELTS. Writing in IELTS and writing at university. Retrieved from <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/cambridge-english-ielts/1/todo/5203>

Harmer, J. (2012). *Teacher knowledge: Core concepts in English language teaching*. Essex, England, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Mulder, F., & Jansen, D. (2015). MOOCs for opening up education and the OpenupEd initiative. In C. J. Bonk, M. M. Lee, T. C. Reeves, & T. H. Reynolds (Eds.), *MOOCs and open education around the world*. New York, NY: Routledge. Retrieved from http://www.eadtu.eu/documents/Publications/OEenM/OpenupEd_-_MOOCs_for_opening_up_education.pdf

UNESCO and Commonwealth of Learning. (2016). Making sense of MOOCs. A Guide for Policy-Makers in Developing Countries. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002451/245122E.pdf>