MOOCs, Blended Learning and Language Learning

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Abstract

As an amalgam of points in two presentations on a common topic, this paper discusses the utility of MOOCs for language learning, with specific reference to English as second or other language. Commencing with the broader Education field, real-world distinctions between actual Learning and Teaching are made, and the nature of Blended Learning discussed in the same vein. Here is where MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are introduced, described and discussed and findings from a small-scale qualitative and observation research project reported. MOOCs, as one online learning mode available for language learning, are considered viable if learners perceive intrinsic or extrinsic purpose or learning goals. Further, bipartisan learner and institutional proactivity is required; ideally there should be at least one stakeholder with technical skill to support MOOC use; and there should be a dedicated, complimentary or supplementary role for MOOCs in any blended learning situation.

本稿では、筆者がこれまで行った２つのプレゼンテーションの内容を基に、言語学習のためのMOOC（Massive Open Online Courses）使用の有用性に関して論じる。その際特に、第二言語もしくは外国語としての英語に焦点を当てる。まず教育の分野における学習と教授の違いや、ブレンド型学習の特徴について考察する。さらにMOOCについて論じ、小規模質的研究プロジェクトと観察研究プロジェクトの結果について報告する。結論として、学習者が内発的もしくは外発的目的や学習目標を認識することで、MOOCは有用性のあるオンラインの学習モードであり得ると主張する。さらにそのようなブレンド型学習における各教育機関でのMOOC使用のための技術的な支援等の必要性について述べる。

Key words: MOOCs, cMOOCs, Blended Learning, Language Learning, Discussion-boards, Learning, Teaching, Education.

Introduction

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are a relatively recent development in the education field in response to the communicative and pedagogical utility of online and other electronic media and natural participatory and democratic leanings of such media. In order to explain the MOOC phenomenon in popular learning, it is necessary to understand the nature of learning *vis a vis* education and indeed teaching. These latter two concepts are traditional in as far as education is customarily viewed as institutionally-sourced or

ordered learning, and teaching is normally seen in the first instance as being done by teachers who equally are linked with institutions.

MOOCs on the other hand – at least the ones considered in this paper - may have had their origins in educational institutions but their operation necessarily is done by participants who, in a sense, choose and sign up for them. The eventual scope of this paper is foreign- or second-language learning with focus on English. There are MOOCs specifically for this, though commonly with some special orientation or purpose coming up behind, say, the English.

The paper is an amalgamation of points and research findings presented from the perspectives of the utility of MOOCs as a tool for language advising; and also, applicability of MOOCs as one type of blended learning option for language learning. In the first instance, MOOCs were seen as both competitor and complimenting tool for language advising but greatest utility coming from MOOCs as resources for content and providing different ways to learn. In the second instance, an outcome was consideration of ways MOOCs could be utilized by learners and by teachers of English in and out of class. These are summed up in the end. However first an orientation of Education, Learning and Teaching is provided to place Blended Learning – MOOCs are a kind of blended learning – in the proper typological context. From this point, MOOCs are introduced, categorised, described and discussed. Findings from a small-scale study of students' attention to and attitudes to MOOCs used in an ostensible language-learning scenario, are presented too. Finally use of MOOCs within an institutional framework is examined before limitations are considered.

Orientation of MOOCs for Language Learning

i.　Education, Teaching and Learning

People are learning all the time, essentially until they die. Learning involves sense and experience, some reflection, often more a mix of these the older learners are. Examples range from babies noticing their arms moving before their faces and registering the connection between this and their own sentient motor-control, to you learning and practising reading to the point where you are reading this, processing it and reflectively analysing it and hopefully learning something about Learning. You learning to read is likely to have happened in school as part of your education. Both of these outcomes of learning – by the baby and the adult – stem from experiences identified as primary input by education theorists John Dewey (1916, 1938) and Lev Vygotsky (2012) nearly a century ago.

Whatever Education is, primarily it is seen as having learning occur within it. Further, it is normally presumed to be oriented around some kind of planning or viewed through evident outcomes. Whatever Education is, it is not articulated by the person getting educated but by someone else: an extra person involved in the (your) education process; an institution (such as a school or government); or someone on the outside of the education process – say in the same culture or society, like politicians, priests or parents, in which the education and education institutions are situated.

Are Teaching and Learning essentially the same? No, essentially not: Teaching is just one way to assist Learning, even if a common and popular one. Teaching is so pervasive that frequently it is mistaken as Learning, even by education researchers and theorists.

In this sense, are MOOCs Learning *per se*? Common sense says that they are not: they are just provision of things that might be learned, in the same way as a school textbook or a teacher talking in a classroom.

Learners learning autonomously – without teachers - is also part of discussion in this paper. To this extent are learners responsible for their own learning? Clearly, mostly they are, as firstly learners process what is learned as sentient and reflective individuals, and secondly because often there is some choice involved in what is to be learned. Relevance of this secondary point is discussed more when participation levels in MOOCs is examined later. But many learners (and their parents) would disagree, especially if there were a teacher involved, placing responsibility on teachers (or schools or whole community-provided education infrastructure) involved. From there, issues like trust, credibility, credit and blame become involved.

Table 1: *Typologies of Learning and Teaching*

Learning: types		**Teaching:** types
Top-down	Bottom-up	*Lecture-style*
Facilitiated	Rote	(a textbook or manual can be like this too)
Interactive	Collaborative	*Inductive* – giving learners something stimulating such as something to think about and they come to own conclusions (eg. make a rule about a language point by themselves)
Independent	Autonomous	
Reflective	Subliminal	*Deductive* – feeding frames and points as questions, like Socrates who used to just pose questions half to himself (his own learning catalysed by discussion) and in the process to hangers-on like Plato who, in a sense were being 'taught'
Experiential	Conditioning	
Work-related	Vocational	
Content-based	Context-based	(practice books or online exercises can be like both of these)
Institutional	Non-Institutional	
Traditional	'e' as in Electronic	Anyway, it is easier to find types of Learning than types of Teaching
Online	Digital	
Flexible	Blended	Whatever Teaching is there is a *'More Knowing Other'* person involved:
Synchronous	Asynchronous	- closely & directly, as with, say, a classroom teacher, or on Skype, or an adviser, ever peers; OR
by discipline fields, such as '*Language learning*'		- distantly, indirectly, as with, say, someone monitoring a language lab or an online course (and even then maybe not so much actual teaching)
(OR you can choose your own adjectives – lots of people do)		

To highlight pre-eminence of Learning over Teaching as such, a search across academic and professional literature and commentary for lexicon of both Teaching and Learning was undertaken, the results of which are shown in Table 1.

The essential point is that it is easier to qualify Learning than Teaching. The popularly misplaced synonymosity of Teaching and Learning notwithstanding, far more various modes and orientations for Learning exist in common discourse than do for Teaching. In other words, frequently people talk about Teaching, but they could actually be conceptualising Learning.

It has already been stated that MOOCs themselves are not Learning but in a sense can be a type of Teaching. However, this emphasis on Learning so far is relevant to MOOCs in the way that Learners can and do interact with them or participate with them. This is explained next.

ii. Blending - Learners being Taught and Learning themselves

In the last section, the point was made that Teaching is not Learning, it is just one way to provide matter for learning. As well, despite popular perceptions, people are far more apt to qualify types of Learning than types of Teaching. Further, regarding Blending, literature searches came up with no models of nor even references to Blended 'Teaching'. But for Blended 'Learning' they were copious. Even diagrams of different top-down modes of providing content were called Blended Learning.

Blending just means mixing – no need for a precise definition. Among models found online, the two in Figure 1 show a clear place for MOOCs. The first, the (learning) Station Rotation Model (www.dreambox.com) shows three generic types of learning: teacher-led, collaboration with other learners; and online. Highlights are that learners move from one to the next to the next like progression from one style of learning to another providing different types of learning experience resembling Kolb's styles of learning model (discussed later). Of interest is that learners can move back and forth between online and collaborative but cannot do so with teacher-led. The second model (www.formation-en-langues) is conceptual, like a theorem. 'Face to face' presumes interpersonal interactivity, which could include learner/s-plus-teacher as well as learner/s-plus-learner/s. Online should not be presumed to be individual, as nowadays it is just as likely to be interactivity (as with cMOOCs - explained later). Rather this model seems to presume digital and non-digital learning. No matter, as it demonstrates blending on various levels.

Some limitations on blended learning include a popular fixation with particular styles and ways to learn, not matching content and so on. For instance lots of thinking about blended learning stops at online. As well decisions affecting blended learning regimes frequently are sourced institutionally, top down. This all makes it seem less than flexible.
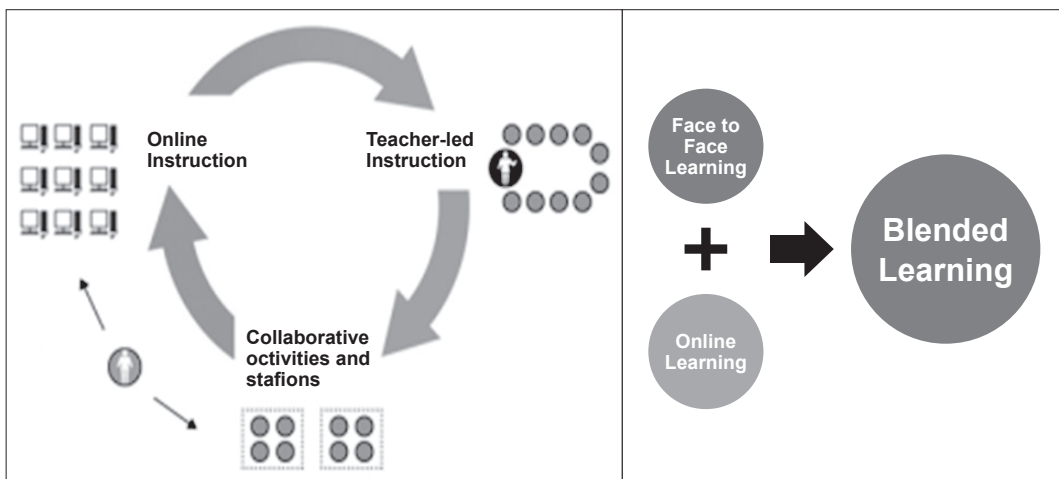

Figure 1: *Generic Models of Blended Learning: (learning) Station Rotation model and the basic and commonly presumed Blended Learning rubric.* (Sources: http://www.dreambox. com/blog/thoughts-implementing-blended-learning-model; *http://www.formation-en-langues.fr/blended-learning/)*

Flexibility in learning is optimised when there is space for input from learners. Yet if learners need, say, to learn a whole set of literacies just to be able to engage with blended learning it is likely they may prefer not to engage with it. For instance, if online and other digital modes are required, and learners do not have sufficient computer skills, then simply there is extra stuff beside the content that needs to be learned. Blended learning policies often focus more on how to learn than appropriateness of modes of learning to what is to be learned. For instance, learning spoken English using increasingly sophisticated interactive software able to produce types of speaking including dialect forms and prosody (eg. Apple iPhone's Siri voice system, and digital learning systems like Blackboard and Moodle) are so far insufficient as the programs are insufficiently sentient to context and other pragmatics. Pragmatic nuance cannot yet be properly transferred in comparison with real time interaction with a person such as a teacher or another learner. Ideally both should be available but normally are not. In the process, blended learning can be expensive, beyond available physical and other resources such as time. Learning mode options presented explicitly can be intimidating, more intimidating than any content.

In short, blended learning often is less flexible than is made out, can neglect lots of other stuff that can be or needs to be learned, and has higher potential for clutter. Blended learning is usually expensive, requiring spaces like special learning centres, scheduled and allocated time, properly and highly-trained and skilled staff in institutions, computer centres and electronic hardware. To an extent, distance-learning options circumvent this, but dislocation from or insufficient interaction with learning providers often result. Then there are the associated political and utilitarian issues. Ideally, flexible delivery – as flexible as possible – is optimal. MOOCs are relevant here because essentially they are packaged blended-learning systems but have some features permitting them to avoid these limitations. In the next sections, MOOCs are explained and their utility for learning is discussed.

iii.   Features of MOOCs

To reiterate, MOOCs are Massive Open Online Courses. As courses, they are often confused with the platforms offering them. Examples are Coarsera, EDX and Udacity based in the United States, and FutureLearn in Britain. In principle, MOOCs should be free, but some platforms require nominal payments for access to their courses. One reason for this is that the courses are parts of the source institution's official academic programs. The first MOOC-type programs occurred in the late 1990s when early Web 2 digital systems developed (Bergman 2015). More recent Web 3 enables online users to interact in real time with a flexible online interface, such as chat, some online games and many commercial and other login-type websites. Web 2 is similar except that it cannot be done simultaneously, rather like messages queuing up one at a time (eg. email, discussion-boards, older video games that users needed to download first).

Statistics-wise, there were 17 million people using MOOCs in 2014 and up to 35 million in 2015; 550 universities in the world were providing one or more MOOCs in 2016; and typical enrolment can be from 25,000 to 230,000 users (www.ispringsolutions.com), depending on discipline of the MOOC and its platform.

MOOCs may have massively low completion rates – down to 91% - if students have no clear stake, purpose or tangible goals. But completion rates can be 85% or more if they do have a stake or purpose (Onah et al. 2014a). This being said, learners of course often can select what parts of a MOOC they do as much as they can choose a MOOC in the first place. Thus, the flexibility of MOOCs as a delivery vehicle for content to learn is not just in the range from which MOOC to choose, but also their particular content itself.

Subject domain and discipline-wise, business and science are more popular though there seems to be no great variation in data presented in some 2016 data represented in Figure 2 (*Why are MOOCs a trend: Facts and figures* 2016). Language courses do not figure, though MOOC platforms described below do have substantial offerings.

Course Distribution by Subjects

- Science 11.3%
- Business & Management 16.8%
- Social Sciences 10.8%
- Mathematics 4.09%
- Engineering 6.11%
- Computer Science 9.74%
- Art & Design 6.73%
- Humanities 9.41%
- Programming 7.44%
- Education & Teaching 9.36%
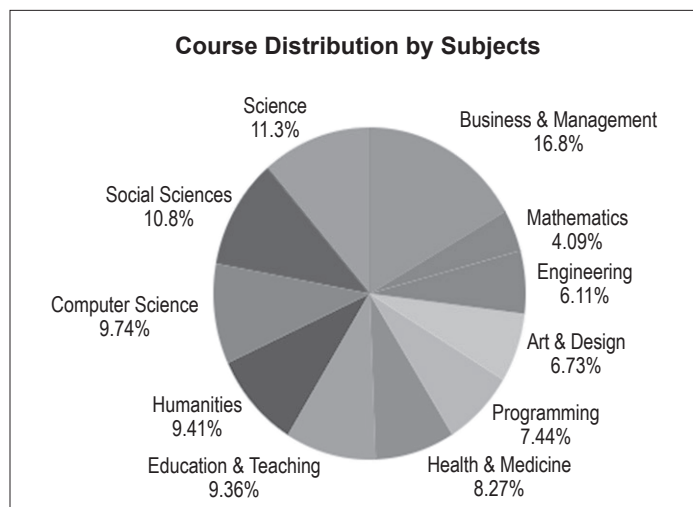- Health & Medicine 8.27%

Figure 2: *MOOC Distribution by Subjects* (Source: *Why are MOOCs a trend: Facts and figures* 2016)

MOOCs can also be categorised by the nature of their interactivity: there are xMOOCs and cMOOCs *(What is the Difference Between xMOOCs and cMOOCs?* 2013). cMOOCs are connectivitst – that means that users can connect with functions and tasks, and socially, in real time, as is possible with Web 2 and certainly with Web 3 programs. This kind is the main focus in this paper. The other kind, xMOOCs, just present material online like many fixed-text websites or attached PDf files – like traditional print media simply transposed online.

xMOOCs disappear from this discussion because their interface tends to be static. Dynamic cMOOCs possess more utility for learning as they offer greater potential for a range of experiences and cognitive interfaces for learning. Generally, they consist of input content, interactive tasks and discussion- or forum-boards operating as comments/chatrooms for communications among learners and any teachers, tutors or supervisers. The case of FutureLearn is briefly described and discussed in this regard.
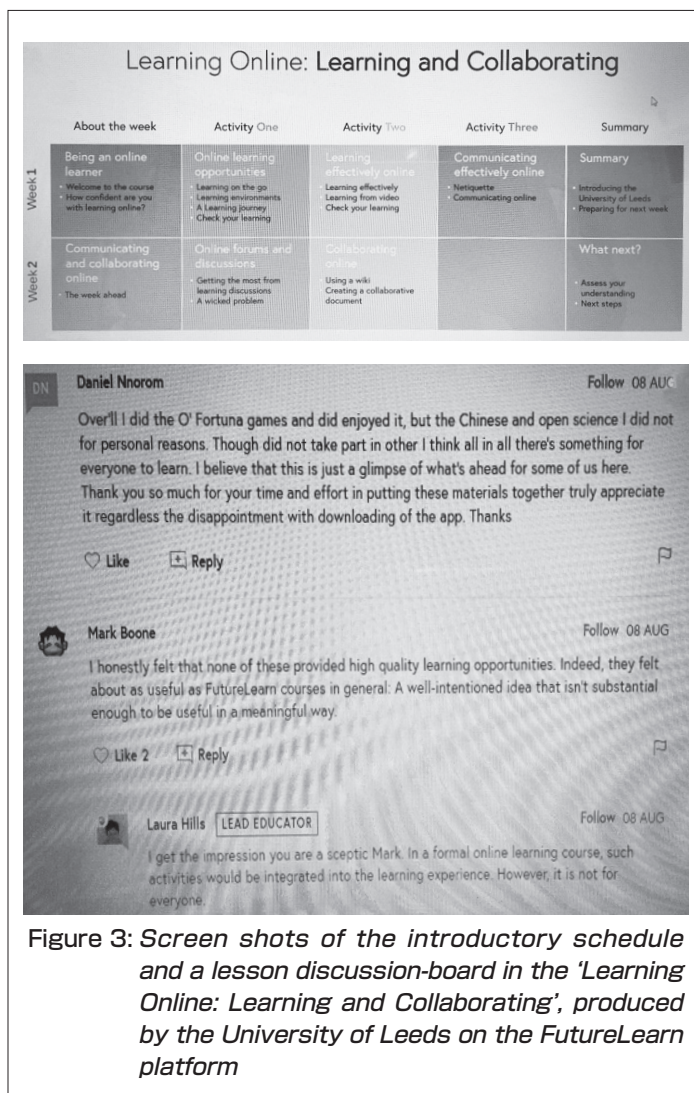
Figure 3: *Screen shots of the introductory schedule and a lesson discussion-board in the 'Learning Online: Learning and Collaborating', produced by the University of Leeds on the FutureLearn platform*

iv. The Case of cMOOC Platform, FutureLearn

Designed as an alternative to the pedagogical model of US xMOOCs, FutureLearn demonstratively places more emphasis on social constructivist learning. The main driver had been Britain's Open University, which had been set up post-war as an egalitarian public distance education provider offering correspondence course programs and public broadcasting. In February 2017 there were 110 universities and other academic institutions providing courses and 5,599,294 users (www. futurelearn.com). By 2011 when FutureLearn was founded, the Open University had a deep reservoir of courses, course design and delivery experience. In contrast to the typical MOOC structure, content in FutureLearn is connected directly (i.e. on the same webpage) with user discussion of that content and follow-up interactive tasks. The system also encourages learners to "follow" (as in Twitter) other learners in an effort to build community. FutureLearn is reported to stress the importance of storytelling as both a learning strategy and as a means of making these personal connections. (Godwin Jones 2014 p6). Figure 3 shows two screen interfaces with a FutureLearn course which is the subject of qualitative primary research reported later. The top shot shows units in each part of the course, with different interactive programs for mos t of them, but each one having discussion-board functions as shown in the second shot.

v. Discussion-Board / Comments-Chat

A significant point to cMOOCs is the discussion-board capability, which in language-learning programs is of significance for the chances of authentic real time inter-learner communications and language practice. One case study by Onah, et al (2014b), examined a free MOOC set up for the express purpose of teachers

upskilling professional development (PD) for a new computer skills curriculum in schools, in which discussion-board/comments-chat were a primary feature. The researchers' analysis found:

- distinction between peer-to-peer & tutor-led interaction
- both peer-to-peer and tutor-involvement spiked predictably at problematic points in the course.
- learner numbers soon outstripped tutors' ability to interact with everyone and learners being dissatisfied from receiving no tutor help.
- on the one hand, forums may be thought to encourage peer discussion and to promote engagement and active learning
- on the other hand (and particularly in "technical" subjects) learners may be hoping simply to get a rapid and trustworthy response to a specific question.

With these findings in hindsight, I took part in the MOOC shown in Figure 3 myself, to experience it working from the learner's perspective. Why this

Figure 4: Discussion-board text from FutureLearn's *Learning Online: Learning and collaborating* MOOC from the University of Leeds University of Leeds (UL)

MOOC specifically? The course is a basic digital literacy program normally done by international students at the University of Leeds but freely offered online to outside learners. Not an English language course, rather one incorporating specific academic English literacy practices required for participating in normal university programs. This participatory research was in order to explore dynamics of environmental interaction (Dewey 1938) including the social, which exist in a virtual, cyber interface.

Figure 4 is an example of discussion-board text (about constructing glossaries online) provided from learners in undisclosed locations all over the world[1]. Different levels of interaction are apparent:

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[1]   Anonymity of these learners is provided through the FutureLearn platform, in which users are encouraged to use a handle (ie. name) different from their own. As my analysis is for research and educational purposes I have done what I also can to protect these people's anonymity.

- Simple Environmental Interaction
  i. taking in, sensing, noticing, reflecting ONLY
      - learning points considered as sufficient, OR as irrelevant
- Social Interaction - as member of learning community
  ii. autonomously contributing
      - can be as much part of internalised reflection as social medium communication (eg. *Katya i, Marne, Preeti*)
  iii. responding to comments   (*eg. Miha*)
  iv. continuing discussion   (*eg. Katya ii*)

In a sense, i to iv resemble an interactivity continuum, reflecting varying extents of interactivity and necessary involvement. On other levels, different perspectives on learning are evident:

- elements of Vygotskian (1978 2012) learning constructs, Zones of Proximal Learning (ZPD) and Actual Learning (ZAD)
- situated learning is apparent, as in a Community of Practice (CoP. ie. MOOC-learner community as CoP with learning as a goal and interacting with each other acting to sustain the community and this goal. See Lave & Wenger 1991). Such a CoP would be defined by the learning point or domain or as articulated within moves in group discussion discourse.
- ranges of ways to learn (or styles of learning) available to the extent that learners may pick and choose. Kolb's (1984. Also see Clark 2014) model of styles of learning in which various passive and active involvement in learning matched by distinct approaches (ie. Concrete Experience – feeling; Reflective Observation – watching; Abstract Conceptualization – thinking; and Active Experimentation – doing) may blend or compliment/supplement each other as learning processes while learners are engaged with a cMOOC. Discussion and chat interaction just reinforces this.
- learning may appear to work also in terms of Bloom's taxonomy of learning (see www.algonquincollege.com for an updated version), which sets cognitive domains of learning listed in ascending depth and applicability: from basic 'Remembering' up to 'Applying', 'Analysing', and critically 'Evaluating' knowledge (though the top level, 'Creating' new knowledge, is the stuff for PhD research students and not short-term MOOC subscribers)

Up to now within the broader context of education, learning, generic functions and a typology of MOOCs have been overviewed and discussed in this paper. MOOCs for learning languages, especially cMOOCs, are available. Some of these courses approach language as an entity or discreet set of knowledge and skills, while in other MOOCs language is either incidental or bound together with specific content or purpose. Specifically, MOOCs on the FutureLearn platform have been selected for observation because of their attention to various types of learning which embody principles of styles and depth of learning discussed earlier. Details and findings of this research are reported next.

cMOOCs and Language Learning

This section moves onto the narrower field of utility of MOOCs for language learning. It commences with a small-scale research project report that eventually points to directions for further investigation. Subsequently, suggestions are made for bringing in MOOCs to more mainstream foreign or second language education from the perspective of a language learning institution and also from learners themselves.

i.   cMOOC Participation: Research and findings

The pretext for this research project was to explore take-up of MOOCs by learners (presented in Doyle 2016). In October 2016, pre-questionnaires were given to Japanese university Humanities undergraduates - 9 subjects from my own 'Types of Writing and Writing' class and my research seminar. Participation was optional on top of their normal study load. The questionnaire solicited information about whether learners had heard of MOOCs and feelings about doing content-based tasks for the purpose of learning English. At the end of the questionnaire, they were given a choice from two similar two-week FutureLearn MOOCs introducing online literacies from two British institutional providers which I had trialled and completed myself in the preceding months: *Learning Online: Learning and collaborating*, University of Leeds (UL); and *Get Started with Online Learning*, The Open University (OU). Both these courses advertised participation of 2 hours each week (https://www.futurelearn.com/courses). However, each one took me around 3 to 5 hours per week.

I participated in a supporting role, helping each student to make a FutureLearn Account, register for their choice of MOOC and later as facilitator/advisor on a needs basis. I also joined both courses myself as 'learner' again to take advantage of 'following' other learners, namely the subjects of this research allowing me to monitor their interaction online. This was inconsequential as one student completed her MOOC before students were scheduled to start; then only two of the others interacted by clicking 'like' to a reply by another learner; and only one made a comment (though she reported getting a 'like' back). Six out of the original 9 subjects actually commenced a MOOC, to whom post-questionnaires were distributed. Just 5 questionnaires were returned. There was no opportunity for the planned post-MOOC focus group discussion.

Results	Speculative Findings
2 subjects chose OU, 1 chose UL, 1 an unrelated MOOC (about anthropology) and one 'no response'	Mixed results except that fewer than 60% did the intended MOOCs at all; and 89% (!) did not complete them
1 subject completed the UL MOOC, evidence from questionnaires and my monitoring that 5 subjects completed 5 units or fewer (out of more than 30)	Correlates somewhat with low completion-rate statistics quoted earlier (85% if no clear stake or purpose) Both these suggest utility of greater intrinsic purpose or guidance than I provided
All subjects spend total 2 to 3 hours on their MOOC	Not surprising given that participation was by choice and not coerced
All subjects find *'many people's comments' / 'conversations with other countries people'* useful & interesting	Not surprising with novelty value and curiosity, even if subjects were just passively monitoring

All subjects 'Never'/'Almost never' make, *'LIKE'* or Reply to *Discussion-board comments*	This is not surprising given the low amounts of time spent, and also could be explained by low levels of involvement and interest, or even technical application of MOOC user-functions – as if just reading is easy but writing interactions is embarrassing and time-consuming
All subjects *do MOOCs on smartphones only*	The most surprising finding: the utility of a larger screen on tablets and notebook computers was mis-placed for the portability of and students' familiarity with their own smartphones.
All subjects mentioned *flexibility and social aspects* as 'Positive'	This suggests that subjects could and did understand something of what could be done with MOOCs even if they could not or found no time do it themselves
All subjects mentioned *MOOC technical aspects* as 'Negative'	
3 out of 5 subjects say they *'learn' No 'English'*	Whatever the explanations, this suggests assumptions of what learning (or learning English) involves differing, say, from what is discussed in the first sections of this paper; or, actual 'English' content needs to be given explicitly.

Table 2: *Usable Results and Speculative Findings from MOOC Participation Research*

With such a small sample number and low response rates, in no way can results be generalizable. The value of this study lies only in response-findings common to all subjects in their post-questionnaire responses, as way to gauge unpredicted findings and possible avenues for further research. Table 2 summarises research results and speculative findings.

ii. Discussion

To sum up, the research suggests that in cMOOCs there are:

- potential for Discussion-board comments/chat as discourse to monitor and therein learn from the content as well as take in language from comprehensible input in context
- potential to interact socially in Discussion-board
- possession of and custom to use smartphones common
- learners may take up MOOCs if they can see utility in them for their purpose and can fit them in (ie. convenience).

Yet, MOOCs have increasing provision, applicability and discipline ranges to match user preference but by themselves remain detached from language learning provisions and institutions.

The downside of learning with MOOCs in this context is that they were not part of learners' mainstream institutionalised learning. In fact MOOC take-up was in clear competition with the students' normal courses and lessons for time and application not to mention familiarity with and preference for them. In short MOOCs were new, a very new way to do learning and with the time and the stakes involved students seemed to see little or no value in them. MOOCs were not (yet) a part of their learning culture, for language learning or for anything else.

Yet MOOCs remain potentially as supplements to learning – they can be taken up autonomously by learners or even set by teachers like me – and even just as an available resource. At this point this is all they are in the institutional and cultural contexts of the research.

iii. cMOOCs for language learning

In the present research context, the learning culture (bottom-up as well as top-down) is dominated by traditional views and presumptions regarding learning, how to do it at the bottom and how to implement it from the top. This involves emphases on teaching and listening, testing and attendant study, homework and highly controlled practical training, all accommodating passive learning rather than students actively engaging with teachers, the content and decision-making. The extent that students even prefer this, might be true in as far as these modes of learning are all that they have experienced since the start of school education. The same would be the case for teachers and education planners who by and large are a generation or two older.

However, shortly after the research reported above, I left Japan to present on the utility of MOOCs at an English language college in Cairns in Australia in March 2017. Table 3 shows concluding points from the presentation. Later, in August I accompanied a study tour including some of my own students to the same college. Staying there for a month, I saw highly active language use and participation in lessons. But no evidence of MOOCs, though the curriculum made use of core published teaching materials available for use in lessons online. This was all top-down from teachers, decisions evidently not made on a collaborative or compromise level by or with students.

Yet, the study tour students did all come away back to the same kinds of language lessons they had left in Japan. Unsurprisingly these individual learners were more active, interactive and quite comfortable participating like that. This was in stark contrast to learning behaviour of students who had not cone outside the local learning culture and experienced immersion in another way to engage with learning. The study tour students' consciousness had expanded or shifted. This was suggested by their noticeable knowledge and skills up-take for language and attendant literacies, obvious confidence and willingness to ask questions, give comments and suggestions and take risks.

MOOCs had had nothing to do with this, and I had been there to witness it. The point here rather is greater than MOOCs: that these students had engaged with a different culture of language learning and had brought back with them to Japan familiarity with other ways to 'do' language learning that apparently worked.

Conclusions

Preceding discussion points to MOOCs not being able to solve any learning or learners' problems on their own, except in exceptional autonomous-learning cases. Instead these three conditions are conducive to MOOCs' viability:
- bipartisan learner and institutional proactivity is required

Why MOOCs for English Language Learning?

For an institution and its personnel

- MOOC as easily-available resource
- Little or no cost.
- Portable
- Can offer expanded range and repertoire of services and learning options (eg. Blended Learning)
- Can be part of Blended Learning with minimum support and facilities needed
- Various learning modes available online
- Selectivity – part of or whole program
- Learner-choice (autonomous, or linked to other learning agendas/programs)
- Can be scheduled
- Scope for language advising (in lieu of any lack of oversight in courses) – individualised counselling for students
- MOOCs as supplement or as independent resource – for learning and for teaching as well
- Require minimal digital literacy skill to adopt and use
- Scope for institution's staff professional development

For learners

- Real-world, authentic use of English with meaningful purpose
- Content across wide range of discipline areas
- Language content can be matched to genre or language field according to content
- Scope for interaction with learning communities (ie. in cMOOCs) in or outside of institution who have similar interests and issues
- Potential for being part of wider community using English as lingua franca (ELF)
- Pre-packaged
- Can match learners with courses containing their interest and preferred learning styles
- Range of learning styles, including traditional, packaged interactive activities, discussionboard/chat.
- Normally minimal digital literacy required for use
- Option for independent learning or getting help from 'more knowing other'
- Scope for qualification and other recognition of learning
- Access to significant learning institutions in the world

MOOCs for learning English: limitations

- English rarely scaffolded sufficiently for English learners
- Content rarely focuses on English
- MOOC-provider account needed
- Frequently scheduled, limiting anytime-access
- Use dependent on good internet connection, digital literacy skills and compatible devices
- Detachment from site of learner/s limits integration with learning program
- Daunting range of MOOCs affects teachers, advisers and learners becoming familiar
- Non-MOOC resources dedicated to and more compatible with learning English available online

So, who are MOOCs best suited for?

- Individual, autonomous learners, preferably with 'more knowing other' (eg. language adviser, available teachers, proximal learner community)
- Learners needing English in context, or with literacy purpose (eg. ESP)
- People with interest or proper skills for online learning
- Sites or institutions with facilities for online support (eg. available Wi-Fi)
- Teachers & institutions interested in blended learning

Table 3: *Concluding Points relating to Utility of MOOC for English Language Learning* (Source: *Doyle 2017*)

- at least one stakeholder with technical skill to support MOOC use
- a dedicated, complimentary or supplementary role for MOOCs

This leads onto a concluding recommendation about MOOCs. They are inexpensive, flexible, various and a relatively easy mode of learning taking advantage of digital technology. For learning English, other languages and many other things besides, MOOCs certainly can extend blended learning options into a truer, more flexible learning regime.

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