

BLENDING MOOC AND ON-CAMPUS LSP COURSE

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ABSTRACT

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been challenging the traditional model of higher education since their appearance in 2008. Nowadays they draw a great deal of attention from all the parties involved: students, teachers, administrators and investors. Although such courses offer a wide range of possibilities and hold considerable potential, a number of issues have already emerged. In particular, the majority of MOOCs are criticized for being focused on knowledge transition without skills development. The objective of the action research described in this paper is to demonstrate that blending MOOC (Marketing Coursera course) and on-campus LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) course produces unexpected results from obtaining knowledge in the subject to acquiring skills of network collaboration and autonomous learners. The action research was carried out at Business School of Lomonosov Moscow State University, the participants were twenty three second-year bachelor students. The post-intervention questionnaire was used to collect the students' perceptions.

***Keywords:** LSP, MOOC, blended learning, connectivism, competence-based learning*

INTRODUCTION

MOOCs are transforming our perceptions of higher education, making it accessible to students all over the world. They also offer new opportunities for campus faculty to upgrade their traditional educational models. Engaging such courses, instructors create an authentic educational environment in which learners not only acquire knowledge from leading universities but also develop new skills. MOOCs contribute to increasing students' motivation by involving them in on-line discussions with the course participants.

One of the areas within language learning where MOOCs are effectively used is Language for Special Purposes (LSP). [3]. According to Godwin-Jones, MOOCs are "a convenient vehicle for reaching professionals or trainees who need specialized language skills". Many educators state [10], [1] that in spite of the fact that MOOCs have been evolving since 2008 and have drawn much attention from academic and public spheres, there is still a lack of empirical data and research to support the effectiveness of blending MOOCs and on-campus language courses.

The action research presented in this paper aims at analyzing the results of integrating MOOC (Marketing on Coursera platform) in the on-campus LSP course. The results confirm the feasibility of such a model and the practicality to implement it on a regular basis.

Following the frontrunners of distance education Russia has also entered the race for on-line courses and in 2013 the market started growing rapidly. However, according to the research carried out by the Higher School of economics in 2017 based on the survey of 101 Russian universities, the use of online learning technology is not massive and restricted to top universities where professors are actively involved in academic research. The authors found out that nearly three in every four students have never heard about MOOCs, 26 per cent know about their existence, 15 per cent have heard but never taken interest in them, 8 per cent have shown interest but never tried to complete a course. Only 2.3 per cent have tried learning in MOOCs, only 1 per cent have obtained the certificate [7]. Thus, the integration of MOOCs into the Russian higher education is very insignificant.

Many Russian [10] and foreign [4] researchers acknowledge, on the one hand, the benefits and considerable potential of MOOC platforms, but on the other hand, they point out a number of challenges they face assimilating the technology. In particular, the majority of MOOC platforms are criticized for concentrating on knowledge transition, not on skills development [1].

METHODOLOGY

This study relies on connectivism and competence-based learning approaches, MOOC theories. The instructional model includes an on-campus LSP course of Business English which is blended with a Marketing Coursera course where the MOOC serves as an additional learning resource. Such an educational model exposes the learners to a great variety of teaching content delivered in different forms and contributes to developing collaborative skills.

Connectivism approach

This action research considers learning as a result of social interaction, when students acquire skills and competences from the connections made with outside resources (such as blog and forum discussions with peers and tutors). The pedagogical model of Connectivism, suggested by Siemens in 2005, is the most adequate for the 21st century educational environment [8]. It can be used as a theoretical basis to create innovative pedagogical models for the digital age.

MOOC theories

In the framework of this action research we look at the instructional design model of cMOOCs (where c stands for connectivism) [2], [9]. This model relies on connectivist pedagogy and follows the principle of learner-centered approach, in contrast to the design of xMOOCs (or extended MOOC) which focuses mostly on content rather than social networking. The latter MOOCs are based on cognitive-behaviorist pedagogy where the focus is on the teacher [6]. However, today teacher is not the only source from which learners derive knowledge and competencies.

Competence-based learning approach

Integrating MOOCs into traditional classrooms, instructors enable students to engage in meaningful learning environments [5]. Competence-based learning approach helps to construct learners' own knowledge by interaction with their environment. There is a focus on outcomes (competencies), what learners know and are able to do. Here MOOCs serve as a great example of programmes that allow students to learn in a variety of formats, to develop skills outside classroom, at their own pace.

DATA COLLECTION

The second year bachelor students of Lomonosov Moscow State University Business School were offered the opportunity to enroll in one of Marketing courses on Coursera platform. They were given autonomy to regulate their learning journey. As it was the fourth semester of taking Business English classes, the language competence was adequate to complete the course successfully, which is B2 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference). The action research was carried out from February, 2019 to April 2019. The students were introduced to Coursera platform, the majority had never heard about the resource before. There were two months to complete the chosen course, and prepare a report in the form of an interactive presentation for the groupmates. Those who accepted the challenge got an excellent mark for the mid-term assessment (were extrinsically motivated). The choice of the topic Marketing was not random. It has always aroused much interest among the students. The Coursera platform offers more than 300 programmes in Marketing. The most popular choices were "Introduction to Marketing", "Digital marketing", "How to create a contagious content" and "Sports Marketing".

To collect the students' opinions about their MOOC experience we used a post-intervention questionnaire, which contained ten questions (See Appendix 1). There were eight questions in the format of a five-point Likert scale and two open-ended questions. Twenty three participants took part in the survey (56 per cent of the respondents were males, 44 per cent of females). The answers were given anonymously.

DISCUSSION

It is premature to talk about the large-scale use of MOOC in the Russian education system, but the results of this action research indicate that there is interest in such integration.

The findings of the survey demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of students (82 per cent) had a positive attitude to the MOOC integration. 83 per cent of the learners agreed that their digital literacy and collaborative skills improved as they took their network skills to the next quality level. The survey found that 78 per cent obtained new in-depth knowledge in Marketing, moreover, 93 per cent acquired new thematic vocabulary in the mentioned professional field.

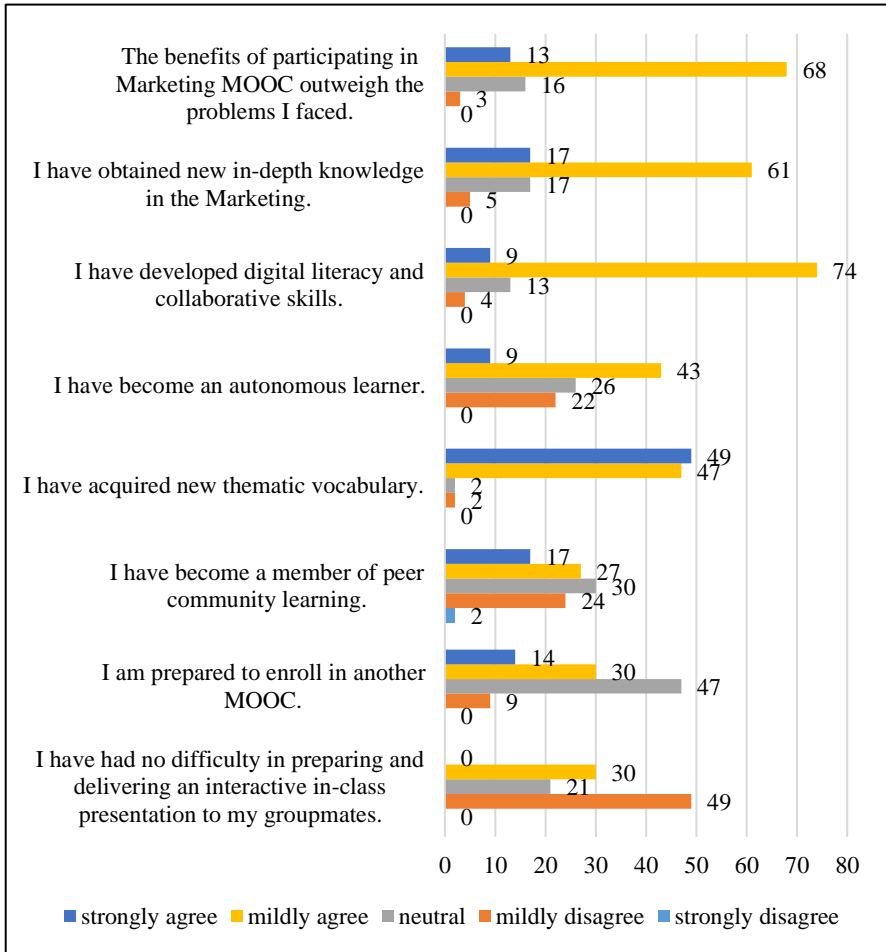
More than half of the respondents (52 per cent) developed the skills of autonomous learners, which meant understanding the purpose of their learning, the ability to set learning goals and plan the activities to achieve them, mastering a range of learning strategies and skills, etc. However, every fourth student did not indicate it as a positive outcome. It is worth mentioning that the participants were more engaged in the process of undertaking the course than in the process of setting goals, completing tasks and achieving results. This is evidenced by the fact that many learners (49 per cent) failed to articulate in a concise way the main points of the completed course in their final presentations. This finding suggests the students need the teachers' assistance in developing analytical and critical thinking skills.

Almost half of the respondents (namely 44 per cent) identified themselves as a member of peer community learning, while approximately a quarter perceived it as a problem. Answering the question about their readiness to enroll in another MOOC, 44 per cent responded positively which is another proof of their positive experience. See Figure 1.

The most frequent answers to the open-ended question "What tangible benefits of taking a MOOC can you point out?" included the possibility of self-paced learning thanks to flexible class schedules, the free access to educational material not depending whether the course was free of charge or not. Some respondents mentioned resume enhancement, further professional interest in Marketing, personal challenge and their first experience of studying in a foreign language. Such an aspect as "peer mentorship" was noticed as both an advantage and disadvantage.

The answers to the second open-ended question "Which expectations have not been met?" can be grouped in the following way: lack of opportunity to get immediate feedback from the on-line course tutor and the necessity to review the peers' works which they found time-consuming.

Figure 1. Results of the post-intervention questionnaire.



CONCLUSION

The comprehensive systemic approach of integrating MOOCs into traditional classes can contribute to improving the efficiency of traditional methods of language education. Blending a MOOC and on-campus LSP course should be viewed as a means of addressing the problems of learners' motivation by actualizing the possibility of knowledge and skills acquisition both in language learning and in the professional field. Integrating the advanced technologies of MOOCs into traditional language learning and teaching opens up to all the parties involved unlimited opportunities that are impossible to ignore.

The success of the introduction and implementation of mass open online courses in the educational process largely depends not only on the motivation of students, but also on the teachers, who should be ready to provide methodological assistance to

students and be able to include these courses in their curricula. In turn, it will allow more Russian universities to join this process of implementing the approaches of connectivism and competence-based learning.

The participants of this action research, including the instructors, have considerably changed their perceptions of online and blended learning. At the same time, however, the learning outcomes and the students' opinions of this integration require further studies.

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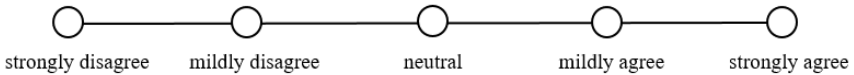
Appendix 1. Questionnaire to assess the students' perceptions of the MOOC experience.

Dear student,

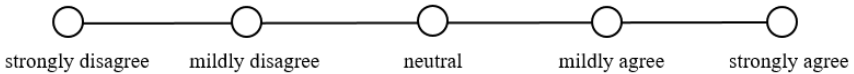
we kindly ask you to assess your experience of taking a Marketing Mass Open Online Course along with the course of Business English. Please, check the response that best expresses the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

Your opinion is very important to us and will be taken into consideration in our future work.

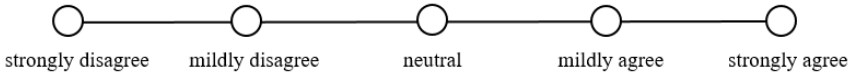
1. The benefits of integrating Marketing MOOC into on-campus course outweigh the problems I faced.



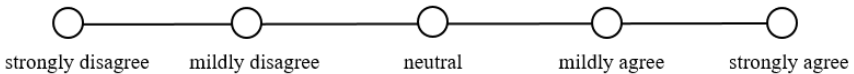
2. I have obtained new in-depth knowledge in Marketing.



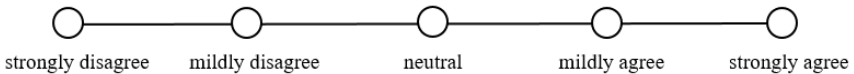
3. I have developed digital literacy and collaborative skills.



4. I have become an autonomous learner (I understand the purpose of the learning, I can set learning goals and plan activities to achieve them, I know a range of learning strategies and skills, etc.).

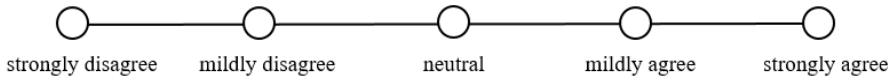


5. I have acquired new thematic vocabulary.

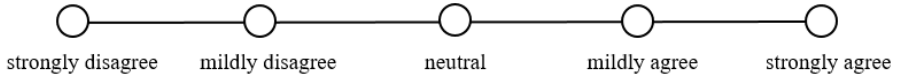


6. I have become a member of peer community learning (by exchanging opinions on forums and blogs).

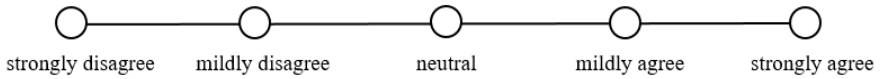
NORDSCI Conference



7. I am prepared to enroll in another MOOC (with no extrinsic reward).



8. I have had no difficulty in preparing and delivering an interactive in-class presentation to my groupmates.



Open-ended questions:

9. What tangible benefits of taking a MOOC can you point out?

10. Which expectations have not been met?
