

***Language MOOCs: Providing Learning, Transcending Boundaries.* Elena Martín-Monje and Elena Bárcena (eds.), (2014). Berlin: De Gruyter. ISBN: 9783110422504, 175 pages**

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The book, *Language MOOCs: Providing Learning, Transcending Boundaries*, edited by Elena Martín-Monje and Elena Bárcena, consists of 10 chapters, each written by a relevant researcher or a team of researchers that are trying to highlight the recently emerging potential of LMOOCs (Language Massive Open Online Courses). To this end, this volume supplies different opinions about LMOOC research, and proposes future possibilities for LMOOCs in language teaching and learning. This book offers the reader an introductory analysis of some methodological and theoretical considerations of LMOOCs and offers empirical proof of their didactic advantages in order to develop language communicative competences. It gives considerations related to the use of LMOOCs, including the relevant pedagogic and linguistic factors, considering aspects of philosophy, MOOC diversity, architectonics, accessibility, research results, tool sets and more peripheral topics such as sociological and ethical considerations.

Chapter 1, by the editors, E. Bárcena and E. Martín-Monje, commences by introducing LMOOCs. They build upon Nunan's research (1992) related to collaborative learning, constructing strategies, connections and the sharing of new knowledge. Due to the large amount of students participating in MOOCs, the editors question whether peer feedback is suitable or not. Considering the pioneering nature of the field addressed by this book, a literature review is undertaken giving special attention to effective language learning elements and specifications on Language MOOCs. The authors go on to explore the most relevant MOOC and LMOOC platforms. They also refer to the variety of languages offered as well as to the availability of specialized conferences and symposiums about LMOOCs.

Chapter 2, by M. Sokolik, focusses on the ideologies underlying MOOCs, and discusses critically different kinds of MOOCs, focusing on aspects such as engagement, community, membership, communication and creativity, and how to design an effective Language MOOC. The author makes a clear distinction between Connectivist MOOCs (cMOOCs) and xMOOCs (a concept based upon the idea of MOOCs as an eXtension). Both the different categories of MOOCs and evaluation methods in each platform leads the author to a relevant discussion about each platform, comparing both their strengths and weaknesses. Some introductory concepts such as how MOOCs are managed, their success' criteria, and suggestions about effective feedback and interaction are offered. The readers will be able to read a useful "Rubric for Self-assessment of Writing" in the appendix.

Chapter 3, by A.M. Teixeira and J. Mota, put forward an attractive design model for creating collaborative LMOOCs, based upon a definition of the characteristics of innovative, integrated and international MOOCs (iMOOCs). The authors rightly criticize the traditional metrics of higher education and propose an interesting innovative learning method which is based on a large number of institutional models. These authors explain the technical environment of iMOOCs, as well as some aspects such as "bank of challenges", facilitators and required tool sets, including some strategies for managing their technical aspects. This chapter is related to chapter six (by T. Read), which covers the architectonics of MOOC design.

Chapter 4, by T. Beaven, T. Codreanu and A. Creuzé, deals with participant motivation in Language MOOCs, making it a particularly innovative chapter. This chapter contains new material, and by covering statistics on MOOC tasks, the self-assessment questionnaire, and a summary of the results, connected with previous theories, this chapter is more interactive and practical in its

fulfilment. This excellent essay is based upon Self-Determination Theory while, at the same time, fits the intrinsic motivation inventory to the context. This study critically analyses the results of the questionnaires, and tries to explain the diverse design methods that are used with MOOCs. Nevertheless, the data visualization of a Twitter account (p. 56) is rather confusing and could include an original visualization instrument for a MOOC.

Chapter 5, by M.D. Castrillo de Larreta-Azelain, pays special attention to the key characteristics of the instructor's role in LMOOCs, by identifying his/her main roles and competence, both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. The author of this chapter is the creator of the first German LMOOC to obtain a reward in Spain. This chapter includes research on case studies and essays on the instructor's role, focusing on both teacher qualifications and on the quality of transmission of learning, at the same time a comparison of theories attempts to criticize and suggests frameworks related to the field of language teaching MOOCs. According to the author, Language MOOCs have their origins in learning theories that are based upon findings from neuroscience and connectivism (Siemens, 2005). It is worth underlining the section “Designing and Structuring Communication Tools” in which the instruments based on the new suggested model (p. 79) are defined by the author.

Chapter 6, by T. Read, highlights the purpose of various MOOC models and the diverse kinds of instruments that can be utilized. The author goes on to question the nature of MOOC and VLE platforms and gives the reader a selection of the most effective tool sets, with proposals about using them, for diverse LMOOCs objectives. Read emphasizes the architectural aspects of LMOOCs by explaining what constitutes an appropriate platform or container for this kind of course together with the associated tool set, tasks and resources, and its overall robustness and scalability. Some suggestions are proposed by the author about how this type of language courses should be designed from a technological perspective.

Chapter 7, by C. Rodrigo, concentrates on the aspects of LMOOCs that are of most benefit for people with disabilities that can affect the learning process. This chapter is directly related to redesigning alternative technologies, accessibility, social and digital skills, and learner requirements. The author deeply questions whether the design and characteristics of new educational forms are effective for language learning. According to Rodrigo, there are particular kinds of assessment of future opportunities for students with disabilities such as making a conclusion of the results of research on the ICT task and its employment by disabled language learners. A brief introduction to ICT tools and relevant specifications for technology-based development for the creation of adaptive user interfaces is given, making the reader become aware of what constitutes open content and access features.

Chapter 8, by I. Álvarez, focuses on the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of LMOOCs, which is an original theme, when discussing these courses. The author covers aspects such as learners' moral values, security in eLearning contexts, content and agent roles. The author specifically questions the current computer-assisted language learning (CALL) setting, the concrete linguistic needs of language learners, with special attention given to the characteristics of a variety of languages, and the skill-based requirements of the learners participating in a such a course. The author tries to explain how language learning platforms have had a great impact on the ethics and aesthetics of language teaching in general. In addition, the author presents questions for analysis, as well as further suggestions on how to react in a diversity of online community and cultural settings.

Chapter 9, written by F. Rubio, analyses the topic of comprehensibility by contrasting a second language pronunciation MOOC and a traditional face-to-face course. This chapter shows the strengths, weaknesses and the results of comparative research on teaching pronunciation which is connected with the concept of corrective feedback and its major role in acquisition (Krashen, 1981;

Truscott, 1999). This chapter also discusses the results of research on "Teaching pronunciation and Comprehensibility in Language MOOC", that covers peer feedback being part of an LMOOC Spanish course, and underlines the needs for further research. The author undertakes an analysis of potential correlations between kinds of feedback and pronunciation benefits. A relevant key aspect is argued to be "frequent peer-generated feedback" (p. 157), whilst many challenges remain. The results lead to a debate about the various affordances of both learning formats and proposals for further research and assessment. The need for establishing a collaborative community of people participating within an LMOOC is a relevant and major aspect throughout the entire volume.

The **concluding** chapter, written by J. Colpaert, presents the key strengths and weaknesses of Language MOOCs. The author focuses on present and possible future LMOOCs by giving a description of the ontological specifications. This chapter underlines the future challenges of LMOOCs and, by extension, the inherent nature of the MOOCs with their vague ontologies that require explanation and design clarity. This author gives a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of the relevant characteristics explained by the other contributors to this book. This chapter mentions concrete terminologies and issues, proposes references and forms of conceptualizing Language MOOCs. The author critically questions current MOOC design; however he notes great expectations for the potential of LMOOCs in forthcoming second language acquisition (SLA) efforts.

To conclude, the following strengths of this volume can be highlighted. Firstly, a cohesive and coherent framework which causes the content to be understood easily, e.g. through the frequent references to peer interactions and high drop-out rates. Secondly, the practical suggestions given in chapters 2, 4 and 7 are considered as pedagogical analyses whilst chapter 5 underlines the integral task of the instructor as well as important pedagogies including many useful references, instruments and ideas for further reading and assessment. Thirdly and finally, from different perspectives, each of the author's collaborations as well as their own proposals for further development are to be noted.

References

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