ESL Undergraduates' Perception towards MOOC Embedded in Flipped Classroom

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The rapid advancement in technology has given rise to the development of the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). Thus, the usage of MOOC is seen as among the preferred method, which is embedded in a flipped-classroom approach. This study investigated English as a second language (ESL) and undergraduates' perceptions towards the use of MOOC embedded in a flipped classroom in Teaching Writing in an ESL Context course. A quantitative research design was employed in this study where a questionnaire was the instrument used. Data were collected among ESL undergraduates at a faculty in one of the public universities in Malaysia. Data were analysed using percentages. The findings of this study showed that a majority of respondents give positive feedback towards the use of MOOC embedded in a flipped classroom. It implied that the use of MOOC should be highlighted and prioritised in the current teaching pedagogy.

Keywords: *Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), technology, TESL, teaching writing.*

Introduction

As an international language, English is recognised globally. With the fourth industrial revolution, the demand of the English language is increasing, especially in professional fields (Jebunnesa & Abdullah, 2013). The acceptance of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Malaysia puts a very high pressure on all Malaysians to acquire English equally to the national language (Rasalingam & Embi, 2018). In school, the old way of teaching English to students has been a debate since the education process entered a whole new world where technology came in

(Mustafa, Nordin, & Embi, 2017). Educators are urged to step along with these changes and implement a new way of teaching in the classroom. Traditional methods of teaching are encouraged to be assisted with various technological tools and applications that can be used in reinforcing lessons in the school (Ghani & Daud, 2018; Hashim, 2018; Rafiq & Hashim, 2018; Yunus, 2018). Technological tools and applications have been invented to help this generation get the best learning experiences. The Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) is a new type of online class that allows anyone, anywhere, to participate via video lectures, computer-graded tests, and discussion forums (McGreal, 2017; Rafiq et al., 2019).

MOOC has been spreading widely as a tool that could cater to learning to learners worldwide (Anders, 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2014). This is because MOOC can provide to a diverse background of learners (Morris, Hotchkiss, & Swinnerton, 2015). Since its introduction, MOOC has been getting more learners enrolled in the courses available (Hashim & Yunus, 2019; McGreal, 2017). Proponents insist that MOOC will usher a new welcoming era for higher education, with increased access, lower costs, and more options for learners (Godwin-Jones, 2014; Hashim, Yunus, & Hashim, 2018; Nobre, Mallmann, Nobre, & Mazzardo, 2018; Petronzi & Hadi, 2016). Plus, social interaction in technologies has excellent benefits for a lifelong education environment (Louis, Yunus, & Hashim, 2018). With a variety of available courses in MOOC, it is crucial to ensure that learners accept MOOC as a learning platform in enhancing their face-to-face class (Baharudin, Murad, & Mat, 2013). One of the courses available in the Teaching of Writing course in MOOC is aimed for ESL learners. However, MOOC does not have a direct assessment for writing, which might not be favourable to learners. Due to that, getting to know the thoughts of learners enrolled in the course is vital as it helps educators to identify the effectiveness of the Teaching Writing course. Therefore, this paper aimed to look into the perceptions of learners towards using MOOC in the Teaching Writing course.

Literature Review

MOOC as a Beneficial Platform for Developing Writing Skills

MOOC could be one of the leading platforms for students to develop their skills in writing. However, in using MOOC, there are a few challenges to overcome for students to benefit from the implementation (Hashim et al., 2018; Louis et al., 2018). The effectiveness of MOOCs lies in various aspects such as benefits from the usefulness of MOOCs, easy access, and motivation (Hashim et al., 2018; McGreal, 2017; Schwerer & Egloffstein, 2016). As MOOC is driving, the learning becomes effective as learners can accept the use of MOOCs in aiding their education. MOOC allows students to apply new skills in different contexts and use media and electronic applications in their learning (Comer & White, 2016). Learning through videos and texts can produce a better understanding compared to the conventional

method which is face-to-face teaching and learning approach, because online learning is accepted by learners to be more relaxed, as it is considered to be informal learning (Maitland & Obeysekare, 2015; Olayinka, Jumoke, & Oyebamiji, 2018; Reyes & Oreste, 2017). Plus, the role of MOOCs in higher education is deemed beneficial in various studies as it is an open learning platform and free to be accessed, which attracted many learners. (Castaño Muñoz et al., 2016; Karnouskos, 2017; Nobre et al., 2018; Olsson, 2016).

Challenges in MOOC to Develop Writing Skills

There are still challenges faced with students in writing and the capacity of MOOC regardless of the various benefits mentioned. These affordances are based on theoretical considerations of online course design for language and writing instruction more generally, as well as implications for students. In terms of course design, the difficult task is to ensure the course in MOOC is well-designed and could cater to learners globally (Nordin et al., 2015; Rafiq et al., 2019). To ensure a course in MOOC is capable of catering to learners' needs, the proper instructional design should be used, and careful planning of the objectives are essential (Aldoobie, 2015; Ghani & Daud, 2018; Rafiq et al., 2019), which is one of the difficulties faced when preparing a MOOC.

Aside from that, in terms of assessment, MOOC does not offer direct assessment for learners, especially in the four skills in English, which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. An essential aspect of higher education assessment is the peer review assessment. Peer review assessment is critical as it allows learners to evaluate their peers and learn from it as well, which could benefit both parties. But, MOOC does not offer a stable platform for learners to assess their peers as the openness of MOOC causes a considerable number of learners to enrol in one course (Bloch, 2016; Gilliland et al., 2018). Plus, some MOOCs do not cater to the learning objectives of teaching writing, whereby instead of teaching writing, the skills of writing are much emphasised, in which grammar components are the main lessons (Kwak, 2017). This shows that despite many benefits, MOOC also has disadvantages, which is why MOOC should be used in a flipped classroom context so that MOOC acts as a complement to face-to-face lectures (Ziegenfuss, 2016) and not merely replacing the addresses.

Perceptions towards MOOC in flipped learning

In reverse learning, to ensure the effectiveness of MOOC, it is vital to find out the attitudes of learners towards using MOOC. This is because if learners are not interested in using MOOCs, the integration of MOOCs to bring out a flipped classroom learning environment will not be active (Aharony & Bar-Ilan, 2016). Findings from previous studies showed that learners have different intentions to use MOOCs. Learners with the goal of lifelong learning, such as to improve their skills for employability in the future will have a positive attitude

towards MOOC (Loizzo, Ertmer, Watson, & Watson, 2017; Mee, Sui, & Salam, 2018). Some learners also enrol in MOOCs because they want credits for their university courses (Cole & Timmerman, 2015).

Regardless of the reasons for learners' enrolment in MOOC, the factors which keep learners learning in MOOC are more critical. Factors such as easy to use and useful are usually the crucial reasons (Aharony & Bar-Ilan, 2016), other than being reliable, accessible and providing a comfortable learning environment (Cole & Timmerman, 2015). Plus, learners who are positive towards learning through MOOC tend to have a higher completion rate of the online course (Huang & Hew, 2017) and learners are more attracted to MOOC if they have their autonomy in choosing what they want to learn first (Zhang, Yin, Luo, & Yan, 2017). However, a study reported findings that showed that learners would only prefer MOOC to be used as an addition to their traditional face-to-face instruction because the learners are unexposed to the proper ways in accessing materials effectively (Sukhbaatar, Choimaa, & Usagawa, 2018).

Hence, to identify learners' thoughts towards MOOC, the technology acceptance model (TAM) is used as the framework, whereby variables of perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), and attitude towards using (ATU) MOOC are identified. This is because, despite being in the 21st-century era, the challenges of using technology such as low computer literacy, insufficient resources, and inaccessible online materials were a barrier back then (Yunus, 2007) and are still the barriers now.

Methods

Research Design

The design of this research was based on a quantitative method through the distribution questionnaires via the WhatsApp application. This research was mainly focused on 45 years, three students from Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program who are enrolled in the Teaching Writing course. The respondents were able to access the questionnaire at any time and any place through their mobile or computers. The TESL students were chosen in this study because they had a better understanding or experience of using MOOC and learning the Teaching Writing course.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was in the form of a Likert-scale with five points of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Fourteen items aimed to investigate TESL year three learners' perceptions of the use of MOOC in the Teaching Writing course. The questions were on the Usefulness of MOOC, Ease of Use of MOOC and their Attitudes and Behaviour towards using MOOC.

Data Collection Procedure

For the data collection procedure, the researchers uploaded the questionnaire. They distributed it to the TESL year, three students, via WhatsApp, and the respondents were requested to respond within two weeks. After two weeks, the data were analysed and interpreted in the form of percentages.

Results and discussion

The results were categorised into three sections; section A for The Usefulness of MOOC followed by section B for Ease of Use and section C for Attitude and Behaviour. Based on the data, the tables were plotted and discussed.

Usefulness of MOOC

Table 1. Usefulness of MOOC

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	MOOC helps me to understand Teaching Writing efficiently.	0% (0)	2.2% (1)	15.6% (7)	73.3% (33)	8.9% (4)
2	MOOC provides clear and understandable explanations regarding the topics in Teaching Writing.	0% (0)	2.2% (1)	11.1% (5)	71.1% (32)	15.6% (7)
3	MOOC exposes me to a range of vocabulary.	0% (0)	6.5% (3)	23.9% (11)	47.8% (22)	21.7% (10)
4	MOOC influences me in increasing my academic productivity in Teaching Writing.	0% (0)	6.5% (3)	13% (6)	73.9% (34)	6.5% (3)
5	MOOC allows me to do any discussion or inquiries.	2.2% (1)	4.4% (2)	6.7% (3)	68.9% (31)	17.8% (8)

The data for the Usefulness of MOOC is shown in Table 1. Based on the data shown in Table 1, 73.3% or 33 respondents agreed that MOOC helps them to understand the Teaching Writing Course efficiently. This statement was also supported by 8.9% or four respondents who strongly agreed that MOOC helps them to understand the Teaching Writing Course better. 15.6% or seven respondents were neutral, while 2.2% or only one respondent disagreed with the statement. This item proved that MOOC does assist learners in learning the teaching writing courses.

For the second item, it showed that 71.1% or 32 respondents agreed that MOOC provides them with clear and understandable explanations regarding the topics in Teaching Writing. This statement was also supported by 15.6% or seven respondents who strongly agreed that MOOC provides clear and logical answers regarding the issues in Teaching Writing. 11.1% or five respondents were neutral, while 2.2% or only one respondent disagreed with the statement. This result showed that MOOC does provide clear and understandable explanations regarding the topics in Teaching Writing.

For the next item, 47.8% or 22 respondents agreed, and 21.7% or 10 respondents strongly agreed that MOOC exposes them to a range of vocabulary. 23.9% or 11 were neutral about the statement, while only 6.5% or three respondents disagreed with it. It showed that MOOC helps to enhance learners' vocabulary learning.

The fourth item showed that 73.9% or 34 respondents agreed that MOOC influences them in increasing their academic productivity in Teaching Writing. 6.5% or three respondents strongly agreed with the statement. However, 13% or six respondents were neutral about it. Meanwhile, only 6.5% or three respondents were against the report by disagreeing with it. Overall, the result proves that MOOC influences learners in increasing their academic productivity in Teaching Writing.

The last item for the usefulness of MOOC showed that 68.9% or 31 respondents agreed, and 17.8% or eight respondents strongly agreed that MOOC allows them to do any discussion or inquiries. 6.7% or three respondents were neutral about it. But, 4.4% or two respondents disagreed, and 2.2% or one respondent was firmly against the statement. However, a majority had agreed that MOOC allowed them to do discussion conveniently.

Ease of Use of MOOC

Table 2. Ease of Use

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	MOOC is easy to use.	2.2% (1)	2.2% (1)	6.5% (3)	37% (17)	52.2% (24)
2	MOOC can be accessed everywhere.	0% (0)	4.3% (2)	8.7% (4)	37% (17)	50% (23)
3	MOOC eases us to get materials Regarding Teaching Writing subjects.	0% (0)	2.2% (1)	6.7% (3)	55.6% (25)	35.6% (16)
4	It is easy to interact in MOOCs for Teaching Writing learning.	0% (0)	8.7% (4)	10.9% (5)	54.3% (25)	26.1% (12)
5	I can express my curiosity regarding Teaching Writing subjects freely in MOOC.	0% (0)	4.3% (2)	17.4% (8)	50% (23)	28.3% (13)

Table 2 displayed the results for leaners' perceptions in terms of ease of use of MOOCs. Based on Table 2 it showed that 37% or 17 respondents agreed that MOOC is easy to use. This statement was also supported by 52.2% or 24 respondents who strongly agreed with it. 6.5% or three respondents were neutral, while 2.2% or only one respondent disagreed with the statement. 2.2% or one respondent strongly disagreed with the report. Regardless of inevitable disagreements, most of the learners agreed that MOOC is easy to use and convenient.

For the second item, it showed that 37% or 17 respondents agreed that MOOC could be easily accessed everywhere. This statement was also supported by 50% or 23 respondents who strongly agreed with the report. 8.7% or four respondents were neutral, while only 4.3% or two respondents disagreed with the statement. This result showed that the majority agreed that MOOC is easy to be accessed everywhere and undoubtedly convenient.

For the third item, 55.6% or 25 respondents agreed, and 35.6% or 16 respondents strongly agreed that MOOC eases them to get materials about the Teaching Writing course. 6.7% or three respondents were neutral about the statement, while 2.2% or only one respondent disagreed with it. Showed that MOOC provides easy access to get materials regarding the Teaching Writing course.

The fourth item showed that 54.3% or 25 respondents agreed that it is easy to interact in MOOC for the Teaching Writing course. 26.1% or 12 respondents strongly agreed with the statement. However, 10.9% or five respondents were neutral about it, and only 8.7% or four

respondents were against the report and disagreed with it. Overall, the result has shown that it is easy to interact in MOOCs for the Teaching Writing course.

Last but not least, 50% or 23 respondents agreed, and 28.3% or 13 respondents strongly agreed that they could express their curiosity regarding the Teaching Writing course freely in MOOC. 17.4% or eight respondents were neutral about it. However, 4.3% or two respondents were against the statement. However, the majority had agreed that they could express their curiosity regarding the Teaching Writing course freely in MOOC.

Attitude and Behaviour towards using MOOC

Table 3. Attitude and Behaviour

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	MOOC is an exciting platform to learn Teaching Writing.	0% (0)	8.9% (4)	11.1% (5)	46.7% (21)	33.3% (15)
2	MOOC produces excitement for students to learn Teaching Writing.	2.2% (1)	17.4% (8)	15.2% (7)	50% (23)	15.2% (7)
3	MOOC makes me engages in the content of Teaching Writing subjects.	0% (0)	10.9% (5)	10.9% (5)	60.9% (28)	17.4% (8)
4	MOOC is one of the good examples of a blended learning approach.	0% (0)	0% (0)	4.3% (2)	43.5% (20)	52.2% (24)

The results for mood and behaviour towards using MOOC were shown in Table 3. Based on Table 3, it showed that 46.7% or 21 respondents agreed that MOOC is an exciting platform to learn Teaching Writing. This statement is supported by 33.3% or 15 respondents who strongly agreed with it. 11.1% or five respondents were neutral, while 8.9% or four respondents disagreed with the statement. This result has shown that MOOC is an exciting platform to learn Teaching Writing.

Next, for the second item, it showed that 50% or 23 respondents agreed that MOOC produces excitement for students to learn Teaching Writing. This statement was also supported by 15.2% or seven respondents who strongly agreed with the report. 15.2% or seven respondents were neutral, while only 17.4% or eight respondents disagreed, and 2.2% or one respondent strongly disagreed with the statement. This result showed that the majority agreed that MOOC could produce excitement for students to learn Teaching Writing.

For the third item, 60.9% or 28 respondents agreed, and 17.4% or eight respondents strongly agreed that MOOC engages learners with the content of the Teaching Writing course. 10.9% or five respondents were neutral about the statement, while 10.9% or five respondents disagreed. It is showed that MOOC is an engaging tool for learning Teaching Writing.

Finally, Table 3 showed that 43.5% or 20 respondents agreed, and 52.2% or 24 respondents strongly agreed that MOOC is one of the good examples of a blended learning approach. 4.3% or two respondents were neutral about it, and none of the respondents was against the statement. Thus, MOOC is one of the good examples of a blended learning approach, which can be used in assisting educators.

Based on the results, the usage of MOOC is positively accepted among learners enrolled in the Teaching Writing course. Some of the reasons for this positive attitude lie in the usefulness and easy to use nature of MOOC. As supported by previous studies, learners are more prone to keep using an online tool if they find it useful and easy to use (Loizzo et al., 2017; Mee et al., 2018; Rafiq et al., 2019). Due to that, it is essential to maintain the positive attitude of learners towards using MOOC so that learners can maximise their learning (Aharony & Bar-Ilan, 2016). Plus, learners who are interested in using MOOC due to its usefulness and easiness will have more motivation to carry out the tasks prepared (H. U. Hashim et al., 2018). With a high amount of motivation, lifelong learning will take place, whereby learners will learn for the greater good in the future rather than learning for credits (Cole & Timmerman, 2015; Schwerer & Egloffstein, 2016).

Conclusion

This study aimed at looking into the perceptions of learners towards using MOOC in a flipped classroom environment, which involves opinions of the usefulness, ease of use, attitude, and behaviour towards using MOOC. A majority of respondents gave positive feedback as they perceived MOOC as useful, easy to use, and positively to help them in the Teaching Writing course. Following that, this paper implied that to achieve a better improvement in the writing component, the usage of MOOC should be highlighted and prioritised in this current pedagogy to produce a betterment in writing proficiency in an ESL context.

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