

The Turkish Language MOOC: Türkçe Öğreniyorum (Learn Turkish)

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Abstract

In this study the Turkish Language MOOC: “Türkçe Öğreniyorum” is presented. Firstly, the language MOOC phenomenon is introduced, and the trend and issues about language MOOCs are addressed briefly. Secondly, the case of “Türkçe Öğreniyorum” will be shared with related statistical research data of 6254 participants. Thirdly and finally, conclusion and a few final remarks on the foreseeable research directions within the field of MOOLCs is shared.

Keywords: MOOC, MOOLCs, Massive Open Online Courses, Türkçe Öğreniyorum, Learner Profile

Introduction

Large-scale teaching traces back to first implementations of distance education in the 18th century. It takes its roots from teaching machines, computer-assisted instruction, learning management systems, open education and open educational resources movement and continues to evolve with the emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCs) (Sanchez-Gordon & Luján-Mora, 2018). MOOCs are freely accessible learning materials and media used for learning, teaching and assessment (Bárcena & Martín-monje, 2015). The term MASSIVE implies that a MOOC should allow the access to a very large number of students such as from 1,000 to 100,000 students, without leading to a significant problem for its functioning (Sanchez-Gordon & Luján-Mora, 2014). The term OPEN has several meanings such as open enrolment, open content, open learning platform and being free of charge. Open enrolment means that course should be open to students outside the university that organizes it, and it should not require any prerequisites, such as previous studies or a degree possession. Open content implies that the content generated by the course should also be published with an open license so that the new content could be reused by others. Open learning platform indicates that the course contents are spread in different places such as websites, blogs, wikis or multimedia repositories. In addition, an open learning platform can also mean that the technology or the platform on which the course is offered is also open. Finally, the course should be free of charge. The term ONLINE implies that the course is done remotely via the Internet, and it does not require physical attendance at a classroom (Gaebel, 2013).

The first MOOC - Connectivism and Connective Knowledge organized by George Siemens and Stephen Downes- was offered in 2008 for free. Approximately 2,300 students enrolled in that course. A big increase occurred in the number of both courses and students in a decade. According to the report of MOOC search engine Class Central (2017), over 7.000 of MOOCs delivered by single university platforms and 33 big MOOC providers from all over the world as of 2017. The number of students is over 50 million (Sanchez-Gordon & Luján-Mora, 2018) as of June 2017, Table 1.

Table 1. Statistics for Main MOOC Providers as of June 2017.

Provider	Country	Students(millions)	Courses	Partners
Coursera	United States	25+	2,000+	150+
edX	United States	10+	1,500+	100+
XuetangX	China	7+	400+	N/A
Futurelearn	UK	6+	400+	100+
Udacity	United States	4+	170+	N/A
MiriadaX	Spain	3+	600+	100+
FUN	France	1+	270+	90+
MexicoX	Mexico	1+	60+	40+

Resource: Sanchez-Gordon & Luja'n-Mora, 2018

MOOLCs: Massive Open Online Language Courses

In the current context of a globalized and technologically connected but still linguistically diverse world, the knowledge of one or several languages is an indispensable skill to live, work or connect technologically and socially (Perifanou, 2015; Perifanou and Economides, 2014). It also must be combined with digital ones in the contexts of work, personal and social life at the local, regional and global levels (Pegrum, 2016). Open access to language courses and resources is needed more than ever before in order to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse learners who live and work in a global society (Perifanou, 2015). This justifies requires to create, measure and evaluate second language teaching initiatives in new formats such as MOOC since they have a great potential to present a genuine, free and collaborative learning environment which is open to different geographical, temporal or social situations (Cuevas, 2017). Nowadays, the number of MOOCs and Open Educational Resources (OERs) connected to foreign language learning have increased, and there is a growing interest for them. However, it is scarce in comparison with other disciplines such as economics, technology or science. While Perifanou (2016) reported 29 MOOLCs from 67 different MOOC platforms/providers in total as of 2015, MOOC search engine Class Central reports 191 foreign language MOOCs with 106.5k followers as of October 2018 (Class central, 2018). In addition to providers listed in Class Central Mixxer, Instreamia, OpenLearning and TandemMOOC platforms provide MOOLCs with a connectivist way of learning and by emphasizing the role of social and cultural context (Perifanou, 2016).

Although a considerable amount of research has been conducted in the last decades with regard to digitally enhanced language teaching and learning that has shown the tremendous possibilities technology can offer (Perifanou & Economides, 2014), there is a limited research on MOOLCs since it is an emerging technological platform and it is still considered as "neonatal" (Sokolik, 2014). From a methodological point of view, MOOLCs appear to have great potential for self-directed language learning as: (a) there is a possibility for the use of audiovisual materials; (b) the use of the Internet allows oral and written interaction between language learners at the same proficiency levels; (c) MOOLCs favor collaborative learning; (d) allow language learners to proceed at their own pace, (e) they promote learner autonomy; (f) encourage the sharing of Internet-based resources; (g) favor empathy and cooperation between students sharing the same interests. (Chacón-Beltrán, 2017). On the other hand, in reality, the professor who designs a MOOLC has a restricted freedom when creating the communication and evaluation activities and tools (Read, 2014), since it does not you can always choose the platform in which you will implement your course or the type of resources and activities that this platform allows you to implement.

Linguistic communication should be the backbone of these courses (Sokolik, 2014) as second language acquisition theory indicates learners not only needs comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) (i.e. activities to practice their reading and listening skills) but also opportunities for output (Swain, 1995) (i.e. activities to practice their oral and discourse skills). However, many of the existing MOOLCs have continued the tradition of online language courses that focused on grammar, written writing or vocabulary, avoiding the complications of oral practice in a foreign language and the interaction between the participants (Martín-Monje, Bárcena & Read, 2014). Input activities can be provided easily in MOOLCs but output ones can not basically due to unbalanced teacher-student ratio. One of the distinctive features of MOOLCs is unbalanced teacher-student ratio unlike a traditional distance language learning platforms with a balanced teacher-student ratio and a wide variety of communication, feedback and assessment tools (synchronous & asynchronous). Most of the existing MOOLCs are essentially self-paced

language learning materials with low interactivity and feedback. On the other hand, many of the design proposals for MOOLC tend towards a new model of personalized (Zapata-Ros, 2013) or adaptive (Godwin-Jones, 2014) learning since adaptation to the profile and the individual interests of the participants causes better involvement in the course, which requires the development of more sophisticated tools by educators, designers and programmers.

The Turkish Language MOOC: Türkçe Öğreniyorum (Learn Turkish)

There are two traditional distance education programs to teach Turkish as a foreign language, and a comprehensive, well-structured, non-profit MOOLC. Distance education programs are provided by Anadolu University and Yunus Emre Institute, where the MOOLC is provided by Yasar University under the name of "Türkçe Öğreniyorum (I learn Turkish)".

The objective of "Türkçe Öğreniyorum" Project is to develop a worldwide distance learning platform to teach Turkish as a foreign language, which is sensitive to individual differences and can differentiate the content according to the needs of the learner. The primary goal of "Türkçe Öğreniyorum" is to provide continuous global access to qualified self-paced learning materials for the Turkish language learning as well as to make them accessible to people at risk of social or professional exclusion such as irregular immigrants and refugees. It was developed under "the Differentiated Distance Education of Turkish as a Foreign Language" project, supported by TÜBİTAK with the project code of 115K270. It is limited by level A1, which is referenced in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

There are 53 chapters in "Türkçe Öğreniyorum". Each chapter bearing 5-minute lecture videos, 2-minute real-life drama videos, reading-listening-writing-pronunciation activities, approximately 40 games. The course contains forum, virtual meeting tool, one A1 level dictionary with 1.500 vocabulary and one glossary for grammar rules. There are approximately 6000 questions to practice in total in the course. Approximately 40.000 words of text in Turkish translated into English, Arabic, Russian and French language to offer support to learners in the development process. "Türkçe Öğreniyorum" runs on Sakai LMS, which is integrated with Kaltura Video Platform and Google Analytics. Learning analytics data is gathered from the Diagnostics tool, Motivational Beliefs and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies Questionnaire (MLSQ), Logs of exercises, LMS Statistics, and Google Analytics. Diagnostics tool covers demographic information of learners, their primary and secondary languages, prior knowledge of Turkish, and home country. The aim of this tool is to collect data about learner profile in terms of the region they live in and the language they speak. MLSQ is used to detect cognitive and affective readiness of the learner in terms of intrinsic value, test anxiety, cognitive strategy use, and self-regulation (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Logs of exercises record activity events of the learner (number of tries, given responses etc). Sakai CLE collects site usage statistics regarding learner visits, tool activity, and resource activity. Google analytics provides a rich source of data such as learner preferences (demographics, interest, age, geo, etc.), time spent on modules, page statistics (page view, page exits, behavior flow, etc.), preferred technology (device, browser, operating system, screen resolution, screen colors, etc.), video events (video view duration, numbers of play, pause and skip attempts, etc.).

Project team contains 2 instructional designers, 4 subject matter experts, 1 graphic designer, 1 video developer, 1 multimedia developer, 1 photographer, 1 system administrator, 1 software developer, 4 translators, 7 actors, 6 voice actors, 3 cameramen, 2 production specialists, 2 post-production specialists, 1 cinema director, 1 scriptwriter, 1 assessment and evaluation specialist and 2 consultants.

Structure of content of "Türkçe Öğreniyorum" was based on five theoretical approaches (Ozan, et al., 2018). First one is the theory of transactional distance, which establishes a relationship between dialog, structure, and learner autonomy (Moore, 2007). Second one is theory of self-regulatory learning, which is critical especially in distance education because of the absence of the very active role of the instructor and the requirement for high-autonomy (Hsu et al., 2009), goal setting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, use of task strategies time planning and management (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2005). The third one is the Theory of Multimedia Learning (ToML). Forth one is Tomlinson's (2001) approach for differentiation of instruction. The final one is Notional-Functional Approach (Ellis, 2005; Halliday, 1986; Hymes, 1971) as second language teaching theory. Learners can follow the content according to his/her interest, pace and needs. They can follow the content in any order, they don't need to follow it in a linear sequence. There is no time limitation to complete the course. Self-assessment tests and feedback in each

activity were placed in each module. Learners can take those self-assessment tests multiple times, there is no limitation in the number of trials in tests as well.

6254 learners from 136 different nationalities and 104 different countries enrolled in the course as of June 2018. 31.68% of them were female and 65.80% of them were male. 158 (2.52%) people did not want to indicate their gender. 26,16% of those who want to learn Turkish as a foreign language is between 18-24, 40,87% are between 25-34 years of age, and rest of them (28,61%) is above 34. 54.28% of learners learn Turkish because of academic purposes. 44,42% of them listed business as a reason.

50,98% of the learners are Syrian. However, only 2.13% of the them stated that they were lived in Syria. The majority of the registered learners (66.49%) live in Turkey. The mother tongue of 81% of learners is Arabic. Arabic is followed by English (2.94%) and Persian (1.58%) respectively. 60.70% (n = 3796) of the learners do not know any other foreign language. 32,08% (n = 2006) currently speaks one foreign language.

11% of the learners have primary or secondary education, 31% of them have high school or equivalent degree, 44% of them bachelor degree, 11% of them have a masters degree and 3% have Ph.D. degree,

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between residency and education level. The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 237,104$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = ,20$. Learners, who live in Turkey, less likely have a graduate degree.

44% of learners work. 29% of them are students. 15% of them stated that they were not working. 74% of them do not have an online course experience. 68% of them uses social media. Men are more interested in "Business", "Developments in the World", "Science and Technology" and "Sports" than women while women are more interested in "Fun and Life", "Language and Culture" and "Literature" than men.

Conclusion

In this study, language MOOCs discussed briefly and the Turkish Language MOOC: "Türkçe Öğreniyorum" was presented a case. A satisfactory model for designing language MOOCs has not been found, yet. It is an emerging field. However, there is a consensus on that courses must be accessible in different devices, including mobile devices, and be integrated into the real life of the participants, taking into account the different special learning needs that may arise and the people at risk of exclusion (Morgado, Teixeira and Jansen, 2015). Integration of social networks and peer review activities into this large-scale teaching platforms, which has an unbalanced teacher-learner ratio, might transform participants from individual learners to social agents who have communicative competence. Self-regulation is also critical especially in MOOCs because of the absence of the role of the instructor and the requirement for high-autonomy. Learners in MOOCs are responsible for their own learning by arranging the time, pace and strategies. "Türkçe öğreniyorum" has low learner-instructor dialog. Therefore, it was designed in a less structured context to reduce transactional distance.

Resources

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