Exploring the Effectiveness of MOOCs in Language Learning:

A Comparative Study with Traditional Teaching Methods

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الملخص:

في السنوات الأخيرة، زادت الاهتمام بفعالية الدورات المفتوحة عبر الإنترنت (MOOCs) مقارنةً بأساليب التعليم التقليدية في تدريس اللغات. إن مشهد التعليم اللغوي يتطور تدريجياً، حيث تقدم الدورات عبر الإنترنت فوائد كبيرة، لا سيما تحسين الوصول إلى الموارد التعليمية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف العلاقة بين MOOCs وأساليب التدريس التقليدية، مسلطاً الضوء على مزاياها وتحدياتها.

تضع الأساليب التقليدية، مثل طريقة الترجمة النحوية(GTM) ، والطريقة المباشرة(DM) ، والطريقة السمعية الشفوية(ALM) ، واستجابة الحركة الكلية(TPR) ، والتعليم القائم على التواصل(CLT) ، الطالب في مركز عملية التعلم. تُستخدم هذه الأساليب في الغالب في المؤسسات التعليمية الرسمية مثل المدارس والجامعات، وغالباً ما تتطلب تكاليف مرتفعة من الطلاب، خاصة في التعليم العالي.

من ناحية أخرى، تمثل MOOCs تقدماً كبيراً في أنظمة التعليم المفتوح، حيث تطورت بسرعة في السنوات الأخيرة. تركز هذه الدورات على تقديم المحتوى وهي متاحة عبر الإنترنت، غالباً مجاناً. ومع ذلك، تتطلب بعض MOOCsدفع رسوم للحصول على شهادات معتمدة. تمثل MOOCs نموذجاً جديداً في تدريس اللغات، حيث تشمل تعليمًا من أفضل المعلمين في مؤسسات مرموقة مثل EdX و Coursera و MIT.

يسعى هذا البحث إلى مساعدة متعلمي اللغات في اختيار الطريقة التعليمية الأنسب لهم، مما يوضح في النهاية تعريفات وآثار MOOCs والأساليب التقليدية في التعليم.

Abstract:

An increased attention is now paid to the effectiveness of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and. traditional ways of teaching in relation to the process of teaching languages. The process of language teaching is slowly changing and evolving due to the help provided by online courses. Improved access is one of the most important benefits that are now offered. The relationship that bounds MOOC and traditional ways of teaching is controversial; hopefully it will be explained in details in this paper. This paper is an attempt to help learners of languages choose the way that suits them the most, in order to come to a conclusive results, what MOOC is? And what are the traditional ways of teaching these terms must be explained?

Traditional ways of teaching are those teaching methods (GTM, DM, ALM, TPR, CLT and others) in which the student is the center of those methods; most of the work is done by students , traditional ways of teaching take place in schools , colleges , universities, and institutions . those methods usually costs the students a fortune especially in higher educational systems (universities , colleges , high institutions) ; what is worth mentioning is that these ways or methods of teaching English language still applied in these days (2016)

MOOCs represent the final form in the evolution of open educational systems, it has been developing upwardly over the past few years. the concentrate is on course contents and then it is accessed online via the web to open online courses for free while some courses are not , if accredited certifications of the latter type of courses are needed, the course taker will have to pay an amount of money that varies from one course to another. MOOCs are more than just open online courses it is a new way of teaching English by the best teachers from the best universities provided by (EdX, CoursEra, MIT and others) .

1. Introduction

Learning English language nowadays is getting more attention than it has ever done in the past , the beginning of this attention was with the traditional ways of teaching English language, Teaching languages has started a long time ago , and has been developing continually to this day and age : so with the improvement of every technique, way and method, these ways are getting better and better through time, which eventually leads to a strong debate about the topic of traditional ways of teaching , these methods are very different , but one thing that those methods have in common is that they have their own advantages and disadvantages ,those methods have made a major undeniable contribution to the process of both teaching and learning languages. Some of the most famous methods and concepts are : Grammar translation method (GTM) , Direct Method (DM) , Audio-lingual method , TPR, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) . Those ways have and still in effect

in so many places around the globe, what are the main features of these methods must be discussed in a simple way for readers, in addition to who came up with these methods, mentioning at any time they first appeared, however a new born method of technology is having a vital role in learning a language. MOOCs, which stands for Massive Open Online Courses, aims to leave no barriers between educational experiences in colleges and anyone who wants to participate in MOOCs, with no limit on attendance (Pappano, 2013) .Subsequently" massively open " Refers to making the course materials (lectures, readings, discussions) " online . Access to open content, open educational recourses is attracting huge attention worldwide. According to The New York Times, 2012 was the" year of the MOOCs"(Massive Open Online Courses), while ' CourseEra ' , the largest 'MOOC' provider, reported registering 2.8 million students in March 2013, partnerships with 62 high prestige Universities and hundreds of courses in several languages (The New York Times, 2013) . Still MOOC has advantages and disadvantages, regarding the importance of MOOCs. This new born is very essential in teaching and learning , that is Teaching organizations and institutions began to use (adopt) the online teaching technology, this program in which online learning and teaching provides facilitators with new opportunities and recently discovered flexibility to both of contributors and facilitators personal development , This paper will present in details the above mentioned methods . Also this paper will discuss the history of MOOCs, The characteristics of MOOCs and advantages and challenges in details.

2. Traditional Ways of Teaching

The importance of teaching English first came to life at the ancient Greeks era , it was then when the basic standards were set ; at the second half of the 18th century, a dictionary of descriptions of how words are appropriately used accompanied by thousands of examples " Dictionary of the English language " (Johnson, 1755). Also a Short Introduction to English Grammar lowth, 1762 (Alaish, 2015 / 2016) .

3. Methods

3.1. Grammar Translation Method

1840s – 1940s language theory – Structuralism are connected to behaviorism.

This theory basically focuses on memorizing the structure of grammar , The original use of the theory is teaching a dead language where the classes are usually taught in L1 with little attention on the usage of the L2 .The vocabulary is taught as a list , while the mechanism used in grammar is providing rules where the students are forced   to apply those rules ; this method focuses on accuracy not fluency (reading and writing are stressed more than listening and speaking) , the spotlight is on practicing translation from the L1 to L2 . Also the teachers

are an authority figure in the classrooms , as well the teaching materials are text books and the communicative aspects are out of focus in this method .

3.2. The Direct Method (1900)

Language theory - structuralism, learning theory – behaviorism.

The direct method (DM) is a reaction against the grammar translation (GTM) method Its a communicative approach to teaching and It's a natural method . It only uses the target language inside the classrooms , it teaches vocabulary through visual and moving pictures , the theory is based on the concept that learners have to learn the L2 like they learned the L1 (back to the behaviorism theory and habit formation rule) ,it also highlights learning through discussions , conversations and reading in L2; an important factor of this theory is that there is no translation, also an oral teaching precedes reading and writing , besides the teaching methods are based on use not on the rule .

3.3. Audio-lingual methods: 1940s 1960s (Fries)

Learning Theory - Behaviorism

Audio-lingual method is based on teaching foreign language , it's the opposite of the communicative language teaching where the students are encouraged to produce and make errors , this theory does not focus on teaching vocabulary , there is no focus on grammar rules -but rather repeating and memorizing the form ;it is mainly about using a lot of repetition and drills , students practice until they can use the right answer .

3.4. TPR: James Asher (1977) Total Physical Response

According to Asher first and the second language acquisition are parallel processes , Build in on the premise that when children learn L1 they listen a lot and the listening is accompanied by physical responses, movement, grabbing, looking . and that is how they teach L2 , The TPR focuses on reducing learners anxiety , it stresses free method and learners are not required to response verbally .

Teaching relays on movement, stand up, close the door and based on stimulus and respond, Students listen and act in response which connect this teaching method with the behaviorism theory and it suits perfectly the beginners .

Link with the natural approach: (learning theory is innate) :

 Associated with Krashen's monitor model, It was originally formulated by Terrell 1977 and then Terrell worked with Krashen to develop this method in 1983, It shares many features of the direct method, as both believed that we need to acquire language in a natural way in

the classroom. The natural approach puts more emphasis on the exposure to language input and reducing learner's anxiety. They aim to give the learner communicative skills .

Learner benefits by delaying production until speech emerges , the Learner should be relaxed in the classroom , the Communication and acquisition focused , moreover the Silent period allows learners to wait until ready to speak ; the Language output is not forced . this method is Not concerned with correction and No conscious learning of grammar rules .

3.5. Communicative approach :

Based on the fact that learners should learn L2 like they learned L1, the learner learns the target language through discussions , conversations and reading in L2 , grammar is taught inductively, no translation , oral teaching precedes reading and writing . the theory Teaches language through actual use not just rules . Pronunciation is taught systematically in accordance with the principles of phonetics and phonology of L2 and the meaning of words and forms are taught by natural context .

The beginning of CLT in 1970s and early 1980s

The advent of the European Common Market led to widespread European migration, and consequently there was a large population of people who needed to learn a foreign language , either for English for specific purposes (ESP) or as general English . Learning happens when there are meaningful tasks and the learner is engaged in real communication (this alliance with the communicative competence term ; CC might be a knowledge that enables a person to communicate functionally and interactively) . Language learning is not only viewed as a predictable developmental process, but as the creation of meaning through interpersonal negotiation among learners (this alliance with the CC term as Hymes defined it ; the aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts) .

Communicative Language Teaching Materials main aspects are :

- Less emphasis on grammar .
- Teaches how language use can be influenced by situational variables .
- Activities that actually simulate performance are best .
- Focus on communicative skills rather than grammar patterns .
- Communicating effectively is the most important thing .
- It's student centered .

Classroom activities used in CLT can include the following:

Role-play, Interviews, Games, information gap , Language exchanges, Surveys and

Pair-work.

Critique of CLT:

- Often, the communicative approach is deemed a success if the teacher understands the student. But, if the teacher is from the same region as the student, the teacher will understand errors resulting from an influence from their first language. Native speakers of the target language may still have difficulty understanding them.
- Who says what communicative competence ?
  Is the teacher able to decide what is a communicative competence ? The teacher can be ethno-centric (seeing things right based on your own perspective ?

The Traditional Ways of Teaching a Language have played a major role in teaching languages , those methods were discussed briefly in the above section . from the traditional ways to the next section that is a new way of teaching and learning a language which is MOOCs .

4. MOOCs

 MOOCs consists of several factors that gave MOOC a very strong start and it has grown up sharply fast without noticing the great benefits that this new method is providing by mixing the old ways and the new ones inside a technological device such as : a Computer and a Smartphone , that anyone anywhere under the sun can get access to it .

 Characteristics have the most important role to draw the attention of language learners which includes : massiveness, openness, and connectivism those are some of the areas in which MOOCs have been mentioned as most beneficial ; this paper also includes enhancing the levels of accessibility, enhancing the students potential of engagement and expanding lifelong learning opportunities . Regarding the disadvantages, the main weakness in MOOCs is the lack of official recognition, to some extent these courses do not feed into a degree or other qualification, but are self-contained. Yet , an important disadvantage is that there are number of people who do not complete their massive courses. Only few students complete the courses, and the scarcity of students actually do all the assignments and the assessments to the end of the course. For instance, in Coursera the average of completion is 11 %, while in ALISON it is 18 % . (Ferrick, 9.10.2012) .

Breaking down the acronyms

M	Massive capacity (large numbers of attendance & courses)
O	Open access to all : learners have a variety of abilities and background : no price are charged for contribution
O	Online , from a distance
C	Course : a methodical series of learning activities

History of MOOCs

In April 04, 2001 Massachusetts institute of technology (MIT), was the first institution that brought the majority of its materials to release free online open accessed (The New York Times , 2001). In 2002 The 1st global forum on Open Courseware was organized by UNESCO and invented the term Open Educational Resources (OER) to enlarge and upgrade the quality of education and provide free and open access to high educational resources for all around the globe (UNESCO News, 2002)from 2002 to 2008 the idea of online open courses was adapted by many educational systems, the adaption of the idea in those years made the entire operation of the online open courses possible , in other words available. In 2008 an extend was presented by the university of Manitoba for Education and Learning Technologies Center launched at 12 weeks online course. "CCK08 : Connectivism And Connective Knowledge" facilitated by Dr. George Siemens. Followed in 2009 the second version of the "Connectivist "open online course was"CCK09: Connectivism and Connective Knowledge". In 2010 the open online course was offered as " personal learning environment, networks and knowledge   " by NRC institute for information technology, learning and collaborative technologies group researchers: George Siemens, Dave Cormier, Stephen Downes , and Rita Kop.Moved to 2011 the third version of the 'Connectvisit online course was "CCK11:Connectvisitm and collective knowledge ".

In 2012, Millions of students were augmented and accruable increased to MOOCs. More initiatives of online learning introduced an inclusive range of free open online courses through every disciplines. In February 2013an approval was announced in the United States from the American council of education (ACE) with the higher education association to Coursera platform five online courses for credit equivalency.

In June 1, 2013edX created the platforms source code via the open source license. In the same year, August 18, 2013 Oxford Dictionaries Online (ODO) added the term MOOCs to its book. In 2014 the astronomical momentum of the MOOCs progress stretched globally with many of new MOOC platform initiatives presenting various systems for higher

education organizations and institutions. In 2015, the movement on MOOCs has been continuing toward the dissemination of education.

5. MOOCs Characteristics in learning a language

MOOCs consist of three central parts which are: massiveness, openness, and Connectivism . These three factors give the learners the opportunity to learn the language in the best way there is. It uses different strategies depending on the network environment with additional profit of subject matter specialists to ease the content and to organize a huge amount of free online resources. There are opportunities for learners to engage with other learners (sub-groups) who have the same interests in learning a language throughout the world.

5.1. Massiveness

Massiveness in MOOC grants language learners an opportunity to learn languages at massive communities which absolutely helps learners to contact with each other through the target language, MOOCs easily provide accommodation to a large number of learners. More than two million people in the world have taken MOOCs in 2013 according to ALISON (Ferrick, 9.10.2012), nowadays this number has grown to reach about seven millions in ALISON itself according to ALISON's website. From a practical point of view, MOOCs offer access to a huge number of learners who may else be excluded for reasons like: Time management, official prerequisites, financial needs and geographic reasons.

Considering the time management , it offers videos for full lectures and comments of both contributors and facilitators that are available at any time , no time constrains are found for the course learners, while some providers of MOOCs do not grant contributors self-paced courses .

Official prerequisites are no longer a problem in learning English language. MOOC offers an open access via the web to all its contents and videos simply by an E-mail ID for free participations, contributors will not have to worry about all the official prerequisites anymore.

Financial needs are the most common problem any learner will face during his experience in learning a language, starts with the lack of scholarships, fees for the university, and ends with renting problems. This has been solved and replaced by free participation (without an accredited certificate) , on the other hand MOOC provides accredited certification with low cost for participating in a course .

Geographic locations are always a problem in learning languages, a learner in CHINA cannot travel to ENGLAND to learn English language due to the aforementioned or personal reasons. MOOCs has provided large communities to all learners from different places from all over the world joining together to learn a language.

5.2. Openness

Openness include several factors: software, registration, set of courses, and evaluation (assessments); communication including interaction, collaboration, and sharing plus learning environments. The software used is open-source, registration is open to anyone, and the curriculum is open (perhaps loosely structured and it can even change as the course evolves), the sources of information are open, the assessment processes (if they exist) are open, and the learners are open to a range of different learning environments.

5.2.1. Software

Software is any set of commands that directs a computer to perform a specific action. Computer software contain computer programs, libraries and associated data which cannot be executed (such as online documentation or digital media).

5.2.2. Registration

The act of entering a simple data (personal information). Registration in MOOC language courses requires simple data .to register all you have to have is an E-mail.

5.2.3. Set of courses

The set of course is usually takes from eight to twelve weeks, depending in what the course is about. From a variety of different fields such as: academic writing, listening strategies, speaking or any other language field.

5.2.4. Evaluation (assessments)

Evaluation or assessment is organized as an individual process. Each assignment has its due date and a timeframe, the evaluation itself is based on machine without the interaction of humans so MOOCs can skip the idea of subjectivity.

5.2.5. Communication and interaction

Communication is a specific form of interaction that engages an exchange of information. Yet again, we do not have the assist of human facilitators. It is easy to

describe it with two computer programs that are communicating with each other by exchanging information back and forth. (Stack exchange)

Interaction can explain any progression whereby the action of one contributor influences the action of another contributor. Those contributors do not have to be necessary human or even animate. (Stack exchange)

5.2.6. Collaboration and sharing

A **collaborator** is an individual who has been invited into a group. Collaboration brings a great way to share contents for long term projects. This allows the learner to invite other learners to his group.

A **shared link or sharing** is an URL that gives the recipient the access to a specific file or folder. The URL is easy to copy and paste, shared links can be used to send important content both internally and externally.

5.2.7. Learning environments

A learner will be able to find other learners with the same interests, which is an academic writing course participants will form something that is partly like a community to share and comment with different foreign learners. That is contributors will participate with something that relates to writing only if they are discussing how to write an essay, it would be the trending topic on that environment.

5.2.8. Connectivism

Connectivism grants rising online teaching methodology enthused by a Connectivist philosophy. The MOOC design is usually referred to as C_MOOCs (Connectivist Massive Open Online Courses). The Connectivism characteristic values self-sufficiency, variety, openness, and interactivity. Connectivism teaching strategies allow a lecturer to assume the role of facilitator with contributors dynamically interacting with each other. It is not an information transfer from lecturer to contributors in a particular learning environment; more importantly, the essence of MOOCs is on the engagement of learners who self-arranged their participation depending on learning objectives, prior background and skills, and mutual interests. As a result, interaction and active engagement are very important MOOC instructional methods.

5.3. Advantages

Although there has been a controversy about MOOCs, but the advantages are a lot stronger than the disadvantages. MOOC has covered several advantages including the increased options for accessibility, amplified the potential for learners' engagement, and stretched out lifelong learning opportunities.

5.3.1. Accessibility

Participants and instructors note benefits from the improved accessibility that MOOCs offer (De waard) . MOOCs, characteristically low cost or free, this creates an irresistible attraction for recruiting possible learners. The online format of MOOCs do offer a full access to open content and flexibility it also eradicate the need for fundamental and prerequisites. Leber (2013) stated that ," as online education platforms like Coursera, edX, and Udacity burst onto the scene over the past year backers have talked up their potential to democratize higher education in the countries that have had the least access" (Leber,J, 2013) . In addition, MOOCs have not placed any certain age or level under restriction, but on the opposite, MOOCs derestricted any constraints on the access, therefore this feature enables anyone from anywhere or at any age to sign up in MOOCs and experience a new educational system.

5.3.2. Learners Engagement

MOOCs are designed to improve learners engagement as enhancing learners results is one of the main objectives. Contributors' engagement is a shortcut to save both time and effort, for both contributors and their institutions planned to get the most out of the contributors experience, improve the learning results and the progress of contributors, the presentation and status of the institution. Contributors and facilitators' involvement, motivation and the technique of directions are all essential components in order to create an environment contributing to learning in MOOCs.

MOOC educators play a vital role in enhancing learners' engagement. Rodriguez (2012) highlighted eight important roles identified from an AI-Stanford course that included: amplifying, curetting, way (direction) finding, aggregating, filtering, modeling, and staying current. Learners' engagement can be developed once the instructors get used to the new ways of teaching (MOOCs) and adopt the strategies that will be used in teaching in the next years or decades.

5.3.3. Lifelong learning experience

Lifelong learning skills also can be developed for learners. In MOOC learners have to make their way up to the top by thinking of what suits their interest, MOOC forces the learners to follow an exact interest to develop their own learning needs.

Learners with special needs have no problems in learning due to distance learning. MOOCs distinguishes a number of challenges that exist in traditional institutions, problems like single parenting and rural inhabitancy are no more a problem, another central solution is specially for women, in most countries women are not as mobile as men, those are some of the most important problems that have been solved by MOOCs in less than 7 years.

6. Challenges of MOOCs

Even though most educators saw the bright side of MOOCs in its advantages, but on the other hand MOOCs have some disadvantages including: individual instructions, student performance evaluation and some semi-challenges.

6.1. Individual instructions

MOOCs cannot engage a large number of contributors with instructions according to their interest and needs, every contributor has his/her own interest due to the environment. A solution proposed by Carr in the year of 2012 is machine learning. Machine learning utilizes computers to collect and analyze data from a learning system to test hypotheses about how people teach (Carr, 2012).

6.2. Student performance evaluation

One of the major problems MOOCs facing is the cheating problem and plagiarism, how to recognize the authentic work from the none authentic work. Some institutions or organization are attempting to use plagiarism-detection program to avoid idea of cheating and plagiarism.

6.3. Semi-challenges

Other challenges could include digital literacy as an essential factor to make a good use of the online contents, relaying on contributors content may make disorganized learning environment, also the time and effort that contributors are asked to commit might go beyond a free online course.

7. Personal experiences

From pragmatic perspectives the researchers have experienced two different providers of MOOCs which are: ALISON and CoursEra . This personal experience have provided us with a lot of information that the researchers discussed previously in this research paper ; such as the incredible amount of language courses that ALISON provide , from one skill to another

the number of hours to finish a course differs . the webpage is providing an easy access to ALISON website , sign in and sign up to the website is easy and everyone can get to it by only having an E-mail address to register in the website , the homepage of ALISON's website is so simple and clear , Researchers have started a writing course where the contributors who joined this course were about 55.500 thousand which is a huge number for a general course , by getting in to the course everything was settle and the course has a good material using self-based learning which is a new technique to be used . While CoursEra is providing a program and a website, The program was so easy to use with a lot of courses, using self-based learning, giving videos for 4 minutes or less and the main idea was searching the internet and using the learners need to use their own knowledge and experience of using such programs to get through every assessment the course is providing. Each of the two experiences the researchers have been through are so beneficial for language learners. Therefore the researchers felt like it is a duty to advise any language learner to take a chance and contribute in language courses that they are interested in.

8. Conclusion

The tradition ways of teaching contributions to the world of teaching and learning a language are unquestionable, the methods that were applied on students for a period of time are a combination of good and poor thoughts that were provided for learners at a certain time in different environments, they have a variety of pedagogical systems from one method to another, the internal aspects differ, but the main goal is to provide students with the method that suits them, grammar translation method filled the gap for a while, even though it still applied in some regions in India but it is the poorest method in the aforementioned methods, from GTM to the DM, the methods gradually enhanced until the CLT which became undeniably the best method of the traditional ones, it contained in it an interesting combination of the pedagogical aspects, the CLT teaches different skills of the language which leads to better level of students. Those traditional ways in the basic form of schools, colleges, universities and institutions are expected to get weakened soon by a technological factor" MOOCs" that term eases the teaching and learning process; technology is undoubtedly the most powerful invention at least in this age, the world became a village, everything that is needed nowadays can be found online and the educational system is no exception. From one provider of MOOCs such as Coursera to others like ALISON and Udacity, the contributors in them are an estimated number of more than 10 million ; it is a fact that not all contributors are attending an English language course but it still a very powerful method, technology granted the world numerous number of opportunities by distance learning; MOOCs provide language learners from all over the world with courses that satisfy a language learner needs, for example in a case where a learner lacks speaking skills he/she can start a speaking course by a simple click, he/she can choose the facilitator

they like his/her CV, if it suits the learner, he/she will finish the course if not dropping out is an option .

Glossary (Key Words)

ALM : Audio-lingual Method

CC : Communicative Competence ; to communicate in a functional way that conveys the meaning properly and interactively .

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

Contributor: A learner who participate in a learning environment.

Coursera , ALISON , Edx , Udacity : companies or institutions that provides MOOCs

Digital Literacy: The ability to use technological tools such as computers.

DM: Direct Method

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

Ethno-Centric: Seeing things right based on your own perspective.

Facilitator: A lecturer who has the qualifications to guide contributors in MOOCs.

GTM: Grammar Translation Method

ID: Identification Card

Innate: Something that humans are born with.

L1: First language

L2: Second language

MIT: Massachusetts Institute of Technology (One of the providers of MOOCs)

MOOCs: Massive Open Online Courses

Platform: A stage place for MOOCs.

Sign in: Enter a computer program or a website.

Signup: A required Prerequisite to join a website.

TPR: Total Physical Response

URL: Universal / Uniform Recourse Locator (A URL to access the site) .

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