Chapter 74
Chinese English Teachers' Perspectives on "Distributed Flip MOOC Blends":
From BMELTT to BMELTE

Marina Orsini-Jones
Coventry University, UK

Bin Zou
Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China

Yuanyan Hu
Nanjing Agricultural University, China

Li Wei
Nanjing Agricultural University, China

ABSTRACT

This article reports on a study involving experienced university lecturers from mainland China reflecting on how to blend FutureLearn MOOCs into their existing English Language Teaching (ELT) curricula while on an 'upskilling' teacher education summer course in the UK in academic year 2016-2017. Linked to a British Council ELTRA (English Language Teaching Research Award) project, the study involved: a. the administration of a pre-MOOC survey relating to teachers' beliefs towards online learning in general and MOOCs in particular; b. 'learning by doing': taking part in a FutureLearn MOOC; c. reflecting on the experience both face-to-face in workshops, in online forums and in a post-MOOC survey. The outcomes of this article highlight that the understanding of what a MOOC is might differ between the UK and China. The article concludes by presenting the perceived pros and cons of adopting a 'distributed flip MOOC blend' as previously discussed in related work.

INTRODUCTION

A Metareflective Approach to MOOC Integration

This paper discusses the reflections on the adoption and implementation of a flipped-MOOC curricular integration approach by experienced teachers of English from a university in mainland China who were attending a teacher education 'upskilling' course at Coventry University (CU) in the UK. The study is mainly qualitative – even if it includes some quantitative data - and adheres to action-research principles (see Burns & Kurtoğlu-Hooton, 2016 on this point). Twelve teachers (all female) were involved in it: in the summer of academic year 2016-2017. The use of the expression "teacher education" as opposed to "teacher training" is deliberate here and aims to stress the value put on the development of an autonomous and reflective approach to teaching practice, in line with Dewey's educational philosophy (1933) and its more recent applications to ELT (English Language Teaching) (Mann & Walsh, 2017).

It is generally recognised that teachers' beliefs exert a strong influence on teachers' practice (e.g. Klapper 2006, p. 18; Borg 2001). These beliefs are often based on teachers' prior experience as both learners and teachers (Donaghue 2003), which may shape the teachers' "own world of thought and action'" (Pennington 1996, p. 340). Borg argues the teachers' individual perceptions can be strengthened and extended through their education (2011) and, as reported by Mann and Walsh (2017, p.7) reflection is "fundamental to individual education and personal growth". Schön introduced the concepts of "reflection-in-action" (while carrying out the educational experience) and "on- action" after the educational event has taken place (1983) which can support teachers' active learning. Killion and Todnem coined "reflection-for-action" (1991 in Mann & Walsh 2017, p. 8), a future-oriented action which implies a certain level of prediction. For this project a reflective approach underpinned by action research "in-action" - while experiencing a MOOC -, "on action" - after having carried out tasks on the MOOC -, and "for action" - thinking how a MOOC could be integrated into future curricula - was adopted. Participants actively engaged in metareflective practice (Flavell, 1979; Efkledis, 2006), recording their thoughts on their teaching perceptions, beliefs and practice while engaging with MOOCs and reflecting on how they could integrate them into their curricula in the future. There is evidence that the utilisation of Web 2.0 tools like MOOCs can foster learner autonomy (Cappellini, Lewis, & Mompean, 2017) and, as a consequence to this, in the context of the BMELTE (Blending MOOCs into English Teacher Education) project, teachers' agency.

Further details on the methodology followed for this study are provided below in the relevant section.

MOOC Selection

At CU various action research studies have been carried out to investigate English teachers' and MA in English Language Teaching students' reflections on the integration of MOOCs into existing curricula (Orsini-Jones, 2015; Orsini-Jones *et al.* 2015; Orsini-Jones, Altamimi & Conde 2017; Orsini-Jones et al., 2017). In the ongoing BMELTT (Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training) project - now renamed BMELTE, - discussed here, the content of a FutureLearn MOOC becomes an integral part of an existing curriculum in an institution that is not involved in the development of the MOOC itself. This MOOC blend is relatively new in the UK Higher Education sector, but there are numerous precedents

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