Chapter 8
Chinese English Teachers' Perspectives on "hMOOC Flipped Blends":
Project BMELTE (Blending MOOCs Into ELT Education)

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reports two related studies involving experienced university teachers of English language and literature from China, who engaged in reflection on how to blend FutureLearn MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) into their existing English Language Teaching (ELT) curricula while attending courses at Coventry University (UK). The first study relates to 12 lecturers who enrolled on an 'upskilling' English for Academic Purposes (EAP) summer course in academic year 2016-2017. The second one relates to the experience of 5 visiting scholars who attended classes on module Theories, Methods, and Approaches to Language Learning and Teaching on a postgraduate course (Master's of Art) in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics in academic years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The MA integrates 'off-the-shelf' MOOCs into its curriculum. The chapter investigates the Chinese teachers' perspectives on the adoption of 'hMOOC' distributed flip blends in a Chinese ELT context.

INTRODUCTION: A METAREFLECTIVE APPROACH TO MOOC INTEGRATION

This chapter discusses the reflections on the adoption and implementation of a flipped-MOOC curricular integration approach by two groups of experienced teachers of English language and literature from different universities in mainland China. The first group of lecturers (twelve in total) came from Nanjing Agricultural University (NAU) and were attending a teacher education 'upskilling' English for Academic Purposes (EAP) summer course at Coventry University (CU) in the UK in the summer of academic year 2016-2017. The second group consisted of five English and College English[1] tutors attending classes on the MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, also at Coventry University, in academic years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. These tutors were from, respectively: Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Dalian Maritime University, Guangzhou University, Fuzhou University and Xiamen University and participated in the classes for module *Theories and Methods of Language Learning and Teaching*, where a MOOC had been integrated.

The two studies are mainly qualitative – even if they include some quantitative data. They both stemmed from a British Council ELTRA (English Language Teaching Research Award) project: B-MELTT (Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training) (Orsini-Jones, Conde, Bothwick, Zou & Ma, 2018).

The choice of renaming the project 'BMELTE' (Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Education) was deliberate (also refer to the video by Orsini-Jones 2018 on this). The replacement of "teacher training" with "teacher education" 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 (Mann & Walsh, 2017).

Borg argues that English language teachers' individual perceptions and beliefs 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 the two studies discussed here 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 digital learning platforms like MOOCs can foster learner autonomy (Cappellini, Lewis & Mompean, 2017) and, as a consequence to this, in the context of the BMELTE project, teachers' agency. As discussed in Orsini-Jones et al. (2018, p.6), the blended MOOC BMELTE approach aims to address the marginalisation of technology in the professional development of English teachers. Most key texts on ELT used in teacher education (e.g. Richards & Rodgers, 2014) do not appear to fully address the online dimension, its affordances and how transformative effective engagement with technology can prove to be for teachers' agency. Active learning supported by a distributed MOOC blend, can be empowering for ELT practitioners, can help them develop critical digital literacy and encourage them to approach the integration of technology into teaching in a holistic way though experiential learning.

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