ASSESSMENT OF ONLINE TRAINING ON TECHNOLOGY EXPLOITATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

MOHAMED JAAFARI

Faculty of Arabic Language, Cadi Ayyad University, Morocco

ABSTRACT

In accordance with the advancement in technology, instructive institutions have propelled trainings on educational strategies to incorporate fitting technological assets and execute best practices in language teaching and learning situations. Iowa State University partnered with United States Department of State and launched a massive open online course (MOOC) in instructional technology for English language classrooms, and this has become a model for such an undertaking. This article studies the manner in which Iowa State's online course is conducted and the sort of assessments and feedback the course offers. Basing on my experience at Iowa five-week MOOC as a former trainee, I will address the significance of the course substance to my own teaching learning situation and examine its impact on my professional development. For the purpose of assessment, this paper covers on the Quality Online Course Activity (QOCI) Rubric as an outer online course evaluation instrument. This rubric expects to improve the responsibility of online courses content.

KEYWORDS: MOOCS, Monitor Course, Online Material, Rubrics, Evaluation Process

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between technology and English language education has recently become intertwined and mutually influential. That is, more progress in technology begets more resources for making language learning more available and easily accessible. Becoming a trending phenomenon in online education, the number of MOOCs, Massive Open Online Course platforms and the participants in them are increasing enormous. Coursera, Udacity, and edX are examples of the emerging platforms offering courses to the public. Generally speaking, MOOCs exhibit common inherent features: they use short videos, quizzes, self-assignments, and online forums. The choice of AE E-Teacher as focus online Program in this study is a result of training experience. Hence, the concern which rises is on the real value behind such experience with AE E-Teacher and its outcome.

With similar concern, studies and research have recently been launched to assess the effectiveness of MOOCs platforms and the courses they monitor; one of the overriding objectives of these inquiries is to test the matching of such services with the expectations of the participants. Moreover, inquiries arise as to whether MOOCs offer quality education. On this basis, the present paper discusses the different factors affecting the effectiveness of MOOCs. Drawing on Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI), rubrics are enlisted as evaluation system of course programs. Eventually, such success factors are applied to AE E-Teacher program offering online open course on educational technology monitored by Iowa University. And since Creelman, Ehlers and Ossiannilsson [1] claim that current debate has not yet been confirmed on a successfully operating model of MOOCs, the goal of this paper is to propose a quality MOOC framework on the basis of case study results. Hence, the importance of this paper is two fold; first, the study involves the feedback of alumni graduates; second, it applies a neutral third party learning quality metric.

IDENTIFYING MOOCS SUCCESS FACTORS

The main purpose of this part is to review the rubrics related to the dimensions assuring the effectiveness of MOOCs. Researchers have identified varying numbers of rubrics to assess the quality of learning MOOCs. The present analysis adopts criteria system external to the service platform or institution providing the online course. The quality scale adopted relate to QOCI Rubric [2]. Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI) is sponsored by Illinois Online Network (ION) affiliated to University of Illinois. QOCI Rubric works is to satisfy the needs of the target population, the learners.

Qoci Rubric

The objective of this facility is to increase the quality of the online courses offered by universities and institutions. The primary target of this utility are as expressed in three main points [2]. The first is to create a valuable assessment device (rubric) which can assist staff with creating quality online courses. The second is to define "best practices" in MOOCS. And the third option is to identify staff, projects, and organizations providing quality online courses. The index of rubrics is listed below in the order featured by the provider of evaluation tool.

Structure

In this rubric, three components are stated; sequence refers to the manner materials are structured which facilitates the achievement of the desired learning goals. Chunking is grouping of the content to enable learning. The purpose relates to the plain display of the purpose of the learning activities.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

The learner is introduced to the goals of both the larger course and modules which are lined together.

Program Information

All information needed for the trainee to follow the course adequately, timely and appropriately. The information provided includes a description of the course, namely lists of modules and practices as well as information on the performing instructor and personal contacts. Supplies of instructional materials necessary for the course are available; time amount spent on canvas is also counted; reviewing and grading strategies and scales are available. References to due dates are permanently scheduled. Finally, special technical and competencies are required on the part of the learner to proceed with the training.

Instructional Strategies

The instruction is multimodal; it means that instructions are varied and delivered through methods caring for differing learning styles. In the same line, the content is delivered through tools appropriate to the content itself. Equally important are the various ways available for the learner to exhibit acquired knowledge.

Academic Respectability

The content provided respects laws of copyright and code of conduct and netiquette.

Exploitation of Multimedia

Audio and video streams are oriented to reinforce the course goals.

Interaction

Technology and the course activities collaborate to create opportunities for sustained exchange between the learner, the trainer and content. Such interaction can take place as threaded discussions in separate forums where learners raise questions concerning assignments or contents. Group work is arranged on basis of rules of conduct and access where the goals and roles of learners and moderators are clearly stated. Due time of assignment delivery is stated and respected.

Learner Evaluation

The evaluation process aligned with learning outcomes tracks the learners' progress, achievement and the quality of performance with corresponding grades. To achieve this goal, various types of strategies, including on-going quizzes, essays and surveys are scheduled throughout the course. Purposefully designed grades and rationalized penalties are applicable, too. Feedback is another tool that is expected in specific time for explicit topic and in particular manner. The timing of availability of assessment, method of delivery, deadline of submission and possibility of retaking is openly and clearly expressed.

Learner Backup & Resources

To help appropriate acquisition of the knowledge provided in the course, the learner receives guidance and support in the form of technical and academic resources. The resources are as varied as the resources on the net such as tutorials, links to glossaries, institutional programs and grade-books.

Web Design

Web-pages, multimedia staff and graphics are managed by the course designer with the purpose of ease of accessibility on the part of the learner. Browsing is made easy through anchoring rather than scrolling. Consistency of page design, font size, colour and type, and pop-up windows enhances the surfer's orientation through the canvas and minimize browsing confusion. Audio and video files should meet quality standards. Written transcripts of video files should be provided as support. While images are of considerable size for effective loading, hyperlinks are clearly identifiable and functional.

Course Evaluation

Learners' feedback on the program is elicited for the purpose course progress. The feedback concerns several components related to course layout and structure. The learner is expected to offer evaluation of navigation mechanisms as well as inappropriateness of content and material. The purpose of this procedure is to capture the needs of the learners.

THE AE E-TEACHER PROGRAM

AE E-Teacher stands for American English E-teacher [3]. It is an online professional development program intending to meet global need for high-quality TESOL teacher training. The participants attend 5-week courses which are developed and delivered by academic partners. A noteworthy aspect of this MOOC is that it is not only available to anyone, but also facilitated and self-paced MOOC. It features free materials which can be legally shared and adapted for use in classrooms and/or local professional development contexts. I, the author of this article, benefited from this training on using educational technology in the English language classroom between April 16 and May 21, 2018.

Evaluation of AE E-Teacher program

Up to spring 2018, 10,799 participants are enrolled in educational technology training. 2,954 participants completed modules1- 5, and 2,427 participants get badged.

Preparation for the MOOC

In preparation for the training session, considerable measures are taken to foster the credibility of the training. First, 14 alumni facilitators with high-performing profile are trained before the MOOC. They are nominated by 8-week course instructors on the basis of solid criteria; they should have demonstrated literacy in online learning tools, clear communication skills, positive and productive peer interactions. They should be very active, very motivated and very responsive. In addition to the task of training the participants, the facilitators are trained to provide guidance such as explaining agreement / disagreement, responding with probing questions, referring back to the readings/videos, handling inappropriate behaviour, identifying key themes, dealing with technical issues, and maintaining unconditional positive regard.

Scheduling is equally of paramount importance at this preparation phase. Hence, a Google sheet is set up for scheduling facilitator presence online throughout the day/evening and among the five weeks of the course. Moreover, two discussion sessions are planned per a week, and the facilitators split time between the two.

During the MOOC

The Alumni instructors facilitate and respond to content questions in Instructor Support Discussion. The MOOC requires three to five hours workload. The newly-enrolled participants meet and get support from the training alumni in the discussion posts. They respond in discussion boards and compile repeated themes from discussion boards into a weekly report submitted to the lead facilitator (instructor). Based on the reports, a course-wide announcement is shared on the discussion board.

Figure 1: Sample Course Announcement.

Following is part of content of the course partitioned as lessons with specific timing [3].

Get Started

- Welcome to using Educational Technology in the English Language Classroom

- Welcome Survey

- Learner Support

- •Technical Support

- MOOC Orientation Module

- About the MOOC Orientation

- Lesson 1: The American English (AE) E-Teacher Program

- Lesson 2: MOOCs vs GOCs

- Lesson 3: Canvas User Orientation

- Lesson 4a: Online Success Strategies

- Lesson 4b: Avoiding Plagiarism

- Lesson 4c: Discussion Tips for MOOCs

- Lesson 5: Support during the MOOC

- Orientation Quiz 5 pts

- Instructor Support

- Instructor Support Discussion Board

Week2: Technology for Teaching Reading and Writing

- Unit 2: Overview

- Reading and Technology

- Unit 2: Introduction to Reading and Technology

- Unit 2: Introduction to Reading and Technology - Follow-on quiz Apr 30, 2018, 20 pts

- Unit 2: Text Readability Tools

- Unit 2: Text Readability Tools - Follow-on quiz Apr 30, 2018, 5 pts

- Unit 2 Discussion: Reflecting on How to Find Reading Texts

- Unit 2: Connecting Reading and Writing Using Fanfiction

- Unit 2: Connecting Reading and Writing Using Fanfiction - Follow-on quiz, Apr 30, 2018, 10 pts

- Writing and Technology

- Unit 2: What is the Technology-Writing Connection?

- Unit 2: What is the Technology-Writing Connection? - Follow-on quiz, Apr 30, 2018, 10 pts

- Unit 2: Why is Teaching Writing Important and How Can Technology Help?

- Unit 2: Why is Teaching Writing Important and How Can Technology Help?

- Unit 2: Why is Teaching Writing Important? - Follow-on quiz, Apr 30, 2018, 10 pts

- Unit 2: Learn more about useful Word Processing Features

- Unit 2 Discussion: Share How You use Technology for Teaching Writing

- Unit 2: Self-assessment, Apr 30, 2018, 10 pts

- Unit 2: Summary

Subsequent to each individual topic in the content is a quiz to give the participant an opportunity of self-assessment [3].
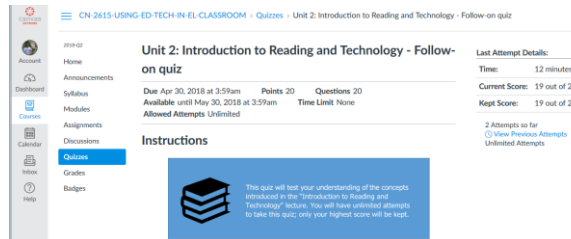

Figure 2: Results from the Follow-Quiz.

Next, the platform offers a functionality to inform the participant about the progress of his learning.
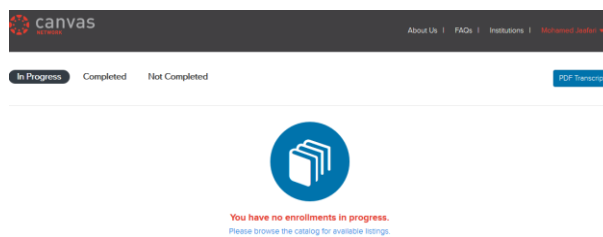

Figure 3: Canvas.

In one word, the previous excerpt attests to clarity, progress orientation of the course through gradation of knowledge and recapitulation. Assessment is another quality-oriented measure. This is illustrated in figure 2. Each time a participant logs back in; he or she may consult his personal canvas to track back his completed or unaccomplished tasks.

AFTER THE MOOC

After the MOOC, the participant has access to several records of his performance. The participant chooses to go back to the rubrics and exploit the in training colleagues and teaching students. The list is below:
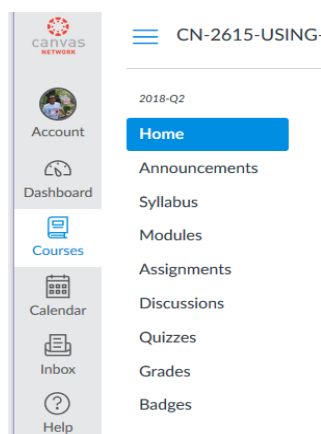

Figure 4: Link to courses.

The link 'Grades' leads to the list of different assignment performed by the participant and the score relevant to each ingredient of the course. On the basis of the general score obtained, the participant is granted a badge and certificate. The badge is awarded to participants who successfully completed all five (5) modules of the Spring 2018 Using Educational Technology in the English Language Classroom MOOC with a grade of 70% or higher.

Figure 5: Badge.

The final part asks the participant to provide the program providers with feedback on the whole experience. Examples of the questions are [3]:

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

The course materials (lectures, videos, documents) have a positive impact on my learning experience.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

How many hours a week are you spending on this course?

- Less than 1 hour
- Between 1 and 2 hours
- Between 2 and 4 hours
- Between 4 and 6 hours
- Between 6 and 8 hours
- More than 8 hours per week

The facilitators are also requested to reflect on their experience as e-instructors.
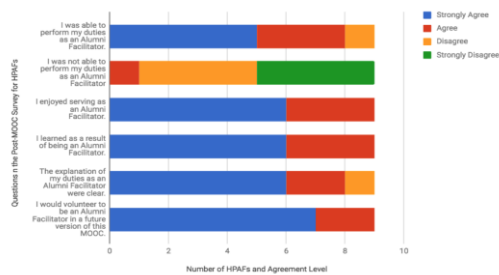
Figure 5: Results from Survey.

CONCLUSIONS

The present paper aims at evaluating an online training provided by Iowa University. The training focuses on the integration of technology in English language education. The evaluation is both empirical and experience based. In addition to the experience, the study applies an evaluation framework rubric which was created by Illinois University. The results of both the experience of benefiting from the training and the evaluation form shows that the AE E-Teacher course meets the criteria of credible training. The paper shows that the course is monitored in a way that matches the profile and needs of the modern English language learners. The course proceeds systematically starting by overviewing for the trainee to grasp the strategy of the course to the end of training survey and to trace the changes the course makes in the graduate professional development.

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