

Motivations, attitudes and challenges of non-native participants in English-taught MOOCs

Survey design and validation

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Background

- Supposed accessibility of MOOCs
 - But c.75% of MOOCs are in English, and most participants are non-native speakers
 - Language- and culture-related barriers, e.g.:
 - Difficulties to understand video content without supporting visual aids
 - Reduced participation due to limited language confidence
 - Varied cultural norms and expectations affecting engagement
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- Need to understand:
 - What **motivates** non-native speakers to follow MOOCs in English
 - What are non-native speakers’ **attitudes** towards MOOCs in English
 - What **challenges** non-native speakers face when following MOOCs in English

Overarching aims

- Understand the motivations, attitudes and challenges of non-native participants in English-taught MOOCs
- Understand the extent to which those aspects vary in function of the English proficiency level of participants

Aims of the pilot study

- Validate a survey on the motivations, attitudes and challenges of non-native participants in English-taught MOOCs
- Identify an effective distribution method for the survey

Methodology

Design of the survey: Measuring motivations, attitudes & challenges

- Questions from the literature
 - Questions from a pre-survey on MOOCs (MOOCResearch2.0, UCLouvain)
 - Questions created by the researchers
- 5-point likert-scale questions**, e.g.:
- “I take MOOCs in English to improve my English skills” [Motivations]
 - “I believe MOOCs in English are of better quality than MOOCs in my first language” [Attitudes]
 - “It find it easy to understand the content of videos of MOOCs in English” [Challenges]
- Open-ended questions**, e.g.:
- “Are there other reasons for you to take MOOCs in English?” [Motivations]
- + **Questions on proficiency, prior MOOC experience, and demographic information**

Distribution of the survey

- 87 participants, Prolific
- Criteria for participant selection: (1) non-native speakers of English, (2) enrolled in an English-taught MOOC in the past 12 months, (3) ~ equal proportion of B, C1, C2

Validation of the survey

- Initial questionnaire: 7 theoretical dimensions for ‘Motivations’ (19 likert-scale items), 3 theoretical dimensions for ‘Attitudes’ (11 likert-scale), 3 theoretical dimensions for ‘Challenges’ (13 likert-scale items), 5 open-ended questions
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- Scores assigned to each answer: totally disagree = 1, somewhat disagree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, somewhat agree = 4, totally agree = 5
 - Exploratory Factor Analysis:
 - Identification of underlying dimensions
 - Reduction of dimensionality
 - Cronbach’s alphas:
 - Assessment of the internal consistency of each factor

Preliminary conclusions



Conclusions from the Exploratory Factor Analysis (+ Cronbach’s alphas):

- **Need to remove some items and merge some dimensions**, e.g.:
 - “Meet people and have geographic mobility for professional reasons” merged with “Meet people and have geographic mobility for non-professional reasons” => “Meet people and have geographic mobility”
- **Factors (= dimensions) distinguished** (Cronbach alphas > 0.75):
 - Motivations: 5 factors (e.g. “Meet people and have geographic mobility”) (16 likert-scale items)
 - Attitudes: 3 factors (e.g. “Course quality”) (11 likert-scale items)
 - Challenges: 2 factors (e.g. “Understanding/expression of English”) (7 likert-scale items)



Preliminary results of the survey:

- The unavailability of similar courses in other languages as a notable driver, pointing to **a gap in non-English language online educational resources**
- Particularly **high English proficiency self-efficacy**
- **Few (reported) difficulties understanding and expressing oneself in English**
- **Minimal need to resort to tools/strategies** (dictionaries, Google Translate, DeepL, ChatGPT, etc.)

Validation of the survey with some modifications

Need to tap into other populations?

References

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