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## **International Conference MOOCs, Informal Language Learning, and Mobility 20 – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2016, Milton Keynes, UK**

*[IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY SURNAME]*

### **Keynote speaker**

#### **Professor Agnes Kukulska-Hulme (The Open University, UK)**

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme is Professor of Learning Technology and Communication in the Institute of Educational Technology at The Open University and Past-President of the International Association for Mobile Learning. She has been researching mobile learning since 2001, most recently as part of the MASELTOV project on personalized technologies for social inclusion, the British Council project on Mobile Pedagogy for English Language Teaching, and the SALSA project on mobile language learning in the next generation of smart cities. She has published widely on mobile learning and is the co-editor of three leading books in this field, the latest of which is *Mobile Learning: The Next Generation* (Routledge, 2016).

### **Mobile learning applications for newcomers to a city**

#### **Abstract**

Many cities attract visitors as well as people intending to work and settle there. The newcomers have diverse needs and desires that may include discovering what the city has to offer and learning the local language. Many are students from other countries hoping to immerse themselves in the target culture and meet new people. Can mobile technologies and the access they provide to information resources and social networks have a role in supporting their learning and making them feel welcome? There is a certain amount of experience relating to this question, but also a need for a great deal of further research. The Open University's Institute of Educational Technology has conducted related projects including MASELTOV, SALSA and Mobile Pedagogy for English Language Teaching. Drawing on an analysis of mobile applications for newcomers to a city as well as projects involving tourists, migrants, international students and others, the presentation will highlight the main lines of research enquiry and implications for mobile learning practice and design.

## **Keynote speaker**

### **Dr Jeremy Knox (Edinburgh University, UK)**

Jeremy Knox is a Lecturer in Digital Education at the University of Edinburgh, and a member of the Centre for Research in Digital Education. His research interests include critical posthumanism and new materialism, and the implications of such thinking for education and educational research, with a specific focus on the digital. His published work includes critical perspectives on Open Educational Resources (OER) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). He has recently published *Posthumanism and the Massive Open Online Course: Contaminating the Subject of Global Education* with Routledge (<https://www.routledge.com/products/9781138940826>).

### **Beyond the 'c-' and the 'x-': new paradigms for MOOC learning**

#### **Abstract**

Following the dramatic rise of MOOC platform organisations in 2012, over 4500 MOOCs have been offered to date, in increasingly diverse languages and subject areas, and with a growing requirement for fees. However, despite the claims of innovation, disruption and revolution that continue to drive MOOC hyperbole, the general understanding of learning in MOOCs remains somewhat conventional, and certainly under-theorised. Assumptions about MOOC learning remain polarised around the 'xMOOC' and 'cMOOC' designations, supposedly defining a centralised platform model, and a more distributed networked arrangement respectively. In this narrative the platform MOOC adopts a broadcast pedagogy, assuming a direct transmission of information to its largely passive audience, while the 'connectivist' model offers only a simplistic reversal of the hierarchy, posing students as highly motivated, self-directed learners. Thus the 'x' and 'c' formulations of the MOOC have tended to define educational possibilities according to either a centralised teacher (the video professor) or a network of autonomous learners (connectivism). In other words, the project of the MOOC, we are told, is either about teachers lecturing to greater numbers of students, or students teaching themselves and each other in large communities. This talk will highlight current MOOC offerings and organisational developments, with a view to approaching new understandings of teaching and learning in this high-profile educational space. This will focus on: the predominance of particular subject disciplines within MOOC offerings, and continued efforts to position the MOOC as providing universal and egalitarian access to education; a shift from 'massive' class enrolments towards 'small' and 'private' groupings, alongside more automated course delivery; and the developing relationship between MOOCs and learning analytics, indicative of an imminent and powerful mainstreaming of predictive and interventionist data science in education. Moving across these three themes, this talk will discuss the emerging figure of the 'MOOC learner', the function and responsibilities of teaching and the teacher, as well as the influence of technology on these roles and practices.

## **MOVE-ME Project Presenters**

**Andrea Villarini & Donatella Troncarelli (Università per Stranieri di Siena, Italy)**

### **Internationalization of higher education and the use of MOOCS to improve second language proficiency: the MOVE-ME project**

#### **Abstract**

Over the last few decades the international dimension of higher education has grown significantly and it is going to raise as internationalization has become a strategic goal for many governments. The students on the move worldwide reached 5 million in 2015 and their number is increasing at a rate of 10% each year. Many of these students, and especially those taking part to mobility programmes in Europe, need to develop proficiency in the language of the host country rapidly in order to carry out their studies successfully and benefit of their experience abroad on both personal and academic level. Technology has the potential to accommodate these needs since it can enhance the process of leaning offering flexible and self-paced paths that can complete conventional language courses and extending ways of learning and teaching second languages.

This paper presents a project, called MOVE-ME, funded under the Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ programme and based on the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to widen access to education resources for learning English and Italian for academic purposes. In particular the paper focuses on the challenges to face and the solutions to overcome in designing, developing, launching, running and certifying the learning paths the two MOOCs include.

## CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY SURNAME

### A PAPER PRESENTATIONS

#### **Challenges and opportunities of MOOCs in Iran and other developing countries**

Ardavani, Shahrzad

University of Aberdeen, UK

#### **Abstract**

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provide educational and professional development opportunities for people whose access to traditional learning resources is limited or beyond their means. However, MOOCs may not be as beneficial to students in developing countries as to students in developed countries due to infrastructure and technological problems e.g. technical infrastructure (lack of a high speed internet, modern computer systems ...).

Other problems may be rooted in the cultural and political institutions (e.g. Educational policy makers concerned with the international influence of MOOCs on the national educational system) can pose inherent barriers to learning. Notwithstanding such problems, research may reveal opportunities for MOOCs to provide developing countries with a better learning platform; through access to western universities and their resources, and improving collaboration and interaction between nations.

My research is investigating how MOOCs can evolve education through exploring the potential for inter-cultural and professional learning within the context of a MOOC to improve learning experiences for professionals and students in higher education. It will work from the assumption that different learners bring different expectations and assumptions to on-line learning. Participant observation of professional groups (English teachers) in higher education and semi-structured interview methods will be used to deduce and develop new solutions (as applicable).

This paper is concerned with common pedagogical grounds that would accommodate both EU/UK and international students in the virtual environment of MOOCs. In this presentation, I will consider how the theoretical framework of 'Cultural Historical Activity Theory' (CHAT) and 'Expansive Learning' will be used in my research to better understand both the commonalities and the divergences that arise between pedagogies of MOOCs and learners from different cultural and institutional backgrounds.

#### **Learning through MOOCs: a case of the very first international MOOC offered by University of Oslo in 2015**

Bahadur Singh, Ammar

University of Oslo, Norway

#### **Abstract**

I carried out a master's thesis research on the very first international MOOC that University of Oslo offered through FutureLearn platform in 2015. The study aimed at

exploring *the pedagogical practices and learners' experiences* in the MOOC, and their relevance in higher education context.

Mixed methods research using the web based surveys administered by the course provider and participant observation of learners' activities in the FutureLearn platform were used to generate an understanding about pedagogical practices, learners' experiences of engagement and their relevance in higher education context.

The data show that the pedagogical practices in the MOOC *are neither entirely new nor radically innovative*. By and large, the pedagogical practices resembled the characteristics of the xMOOCs as the teacher had the prime role in curating the whole educational process. Though FutureLearn is claimed to be promoting learner-centeredness, its pedagogical practices are mainly based on the tenets, of visible learning (Hattie, 2009, 2012) and the conversation framework (Laurillard, 2002a, 2012) which encourage a greater role of teachers in the process of teaching and learning. They seem to be rather the *reproduction of the tenets of behaviorist pedagogy*, which has long been criticized for failing to promoting learner-centeredness in teaching and learning process.

Concerning the experiences of learning in the MOOC, the data reveal that the *majority of the learners had overall good learning experience, found the course good, thought-provoking, challenging and liked the pedagogical practices*. However, some learners perceived the course contents as the dissemination of propaganda material, very occidental in nature, fuzzy and unclear. Out of about seven thousand course registrants, only less than a hundred remained till the end of the course. The discussion forums were the main tools for communication among participants. The forums also enhanced the idea of *community supported collaborative learning* in the MOOC.

## **How to design for transition: beyond MOOCs**

Boswood Nel and Hauck Mirjam  
The Open University, UK

### **Abstract**

Initially the hopes for MOOCs to function as a gateway for attracting learners onto fee-paying university programmes were high, however, data now available from MOOC providers seems to paint a different picture (BBC Active).

This reality was one of the many challenges we found ourselves confronted with when tasked with the design of a MOOC and a short course in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) for learners worldwide at IELTS level 5 - 5.5, (CEFR level B2). Two other key questions were:

- How to design a 4-6 week MOOC (18 hours study time overall) so that it leaves the participants motivated to learn more and leads them smoothly into a 12-15 week fee paying module?
- What to cover and how – themes, language, function and skills - so that sufficient momentum is created for retention and progression despite the fact that MOOCs “suffer” from high drop-out rates?

In our attempt to meet these challenges we introduced an element of choice but, more importantly, we built in a cyclical learning journey for the participants, involving an “input – transformation - output” process. In this process input is provided through a range of stimuli, (audio, video, text), transformation represents interaction with the input, (involving language and skills development), and output is the final product such as a summary, a short report or an oral presentation as required for academic study in English. While the MOOC can only cater for shortened versions of these cycles, the short course provides the space and time for more in-depth engagement with the cycle. Our main aims were to

- a. model and foreground the approach in the MOOC so that the learners became familiar with it and developed understanding of its relevance
- b. consolidate and build on it in the short course, culminating in showing learners a variety of ways in which they could use the assimilated approach for independent study and lifelong learning.

BBC Active (n.d.) MOOCs: Accessible education or are universities giving away too much for free? Available at

<http://www.bbcactive.com/BBCActiveIdeasandResources/MOOCsAccessibleeducation.aspx> Accessed 9th May 2016

## **How blended teaching model affects Uygur college students' English acquisition**

Cao, Hongmei

Minzu University of China, China

### **Abstract**

The application of blended learning approach in foreign language teaching has become quite prevalent in language classes all over the world. As opposed to 100% e-learning involving only electronic media in the learning process, blended learning supplements traditional face-to-face teaching and learning environment with different kinds of technology-based learning tools and resources. The study conducted by having an experimental group and a control group tries to investigate Uygur college students' attitudes towards blended learning and examine the effects of the blended learning method on Uygur college students in the context of English language acquisition. Research Data are collected from quantitative survey questionnaire, interview, test and qualitative teaching materials. The results of the survey indicate that Uygur college students had a positive attitude and affirmation toward the blended teaching model, especially those with better academic performance. Most of them believe that the blended teaching model can help enhance interactions between teachers and students and among peers, thus improving the effectiveness of learning. Comparison analysis results verify their view. After two semesters, students in experimental class get greater progress than those in control class. However, the study also finds that students with low English acquisition autonomy dislike blended teaching model and they perform worse in blended teaching model. Based on the above findings, the study has the following implications for college English teaching: exploring ways to foster students' language learning Autonomy and collaborative learning in online language learning environment.

## **Reports from students' actual use of a MOOC in an e-Health course given at a Swedish university**

Cerratto Pargman, Tessy and Latife, Aksoy  
Computer and Systems Sciences, Stockholm University, Sweden

### **Abstract**

Worldwide educational institutions have shown an increasing interest in MOOCs as they are seen as tools able to support and thereby democratize mass education today. However, few are so far the studies that have reported on students and teachers' everyday use of MOOCs functionalities in real course settings. This paper reports on findings from an explorative case study of the use of a MOOC platform in an e-Health course given at a medical university in Sweden. By means of a netnography research strategy, the study investigates the following research questions: How do students attending a MOOC perceive the course in general? What challenges and opportunities do students attending a MOOC experience in their interactions with and through the MOOC platform?

Adopting a mix methodological approach based on qualitative participant observation and an electronic questionnaire answered by 32 participants, the study shows a set of 5 communication and interaction challenges that reflect students' limited understanding of the MOOC platform. Specifically the challenges identified are: 1- tension between information embedded in the *e-Health* course design (interface and functionalities) and teaching team instruction, 2- students' misunderstanding of functionalities in the e-Health course, 3-low interactivity in terms of giving/providing feedback and maintaining discussion among students, 4-scant feedback provided by the teachers to students' during discussions, 5-functionalities in the platform that have never been used.

In particular, the data that were analyzed by means of both content and statistical analysis, reports on students' lacking understanding of the course functionality which in turn results in a confusing discussion forum contributing to a less interactive and communicative platform. The study elaborates on these findings and identifies 18 opportunities for improvement.

## **Gaining self-confidence by learning MOOCs autonomously: a one year journey of teachers and students in a Belgian secondary school**

De Waard, Inge  
The Open University, UK

### **Abstract**

This presentation will share the outcomes and methods of a one year high school project using Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and MOOCs embedded in K-12 classes. The project follows the Self-Regulated Learning journey of 42 secondary students enrolled in three 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes, who followed this pioneering MOOC-CLIL class for one year (2015 – 2016) at the GuldenSporencollege (GUSCO), a Belgian high school in Kortrijk. In this weekly, two-hour class the 16-17 year old students were increasingly guided towards autonomously choosing and learning from and with MOOCs in a non-native language. At the last phase of the project, the students

were asked to choose a MOOC of their own liking and follow that particular course by themselves. Running up to that final phase the teachers scaffolded the students online learning and language skills using a 3-step approach. One of the key learning outcomes was improving the informal, language use of the students: daring to speak and communicate with peers inside the classroom and inside MOOCs. The MOOCs used in this project were provided in French and English, while the mother tongue of the students is Belgian Dutch, i.e. Flemish. The project has two complementary approaches: firstly the practical teaching/learning approach which is rolled out by the teachers at GUSCO school, secondly a research approach which enables a step-by-step evaluation of self-regulated learning (focus on self-efficacy and motivation). This presentation describes the three main steps of the teaching/learning approach, and shares research instruments and methods to ensure evidence-based outcomes at the end of this ongoing K-12 project. Findings with regard to the teachers and their view on the project (challenges, opportunities, continued professional development), as well as learner outcomes from this project (motivation, skills, self-esteem) are shared.

### **Task design for speaking practice in a task based LMOOC: the challenge of foreign language anxiety reduction**

Fondo Garcia, Marta

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

#### **Abstract**

The more common and widespread ways to teach and learn a second language (L2) have usually not provided learners with enough opportunities to develop their oral skills and communicative competence. When such opportunities are available, as in e-tandem settings, there arise new challenges to overcome as providing a meaningful and profitable language practice or minimising the negative effects of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) on the learners' communication and learning processes.

This study aims to present a communicative task framework to better understand the relationship between self-disclosure, communicative tasks and FLA in e-Tandem settings with the purpose of enhancing the learners' autonomy and speaking practice. The communicative task framework is employed along the research process in different e-tandem settings and conditions in order to study the relation and effect of self-disclosure on learners' FLA. Four of the most commonly used communicative tasks are analysed and categorised by self-disclosure types and degree to concoct the framework. The first stage of the study is developed in the Tandem MOOC setting (Appel & Pujolà, 2015), a task-based LMOOC for online speaking practice through e-Tandem. Taking advantage of Web 2.0 tools such as Synchronous Computer Mediated Communication (SCMC) the Tandem MOOC pairs up native speakers and learners of English and Spanish. Built on a mixed methods approach, the present research explores the possibility of reducing FLA levels during speaking practice in e-tandem through task design regarding task types and required degree of self-disclosure.



## **MOOCs: the students, the institution and the platform - factors for consideration**

Forrester, Adam

English Language Centre, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

### **Abstract**

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become extremely popular in the last 5 years. Hundreds of new courses start each month, and providers such as edX, FutureLearn, Coursera and Udacity have millions of students enrolled on their platforms. This rapid expansion of this particular style of online education has brought with it some specific problems. In this presentation, experiences from running an Asian based MOOC on the edX platform are examined. The two-part MOOC, English@Work in Asia, is primarily about job application and job interview skills, but also covers the language needs of non-native English speakers. The MOOC has run in both late 2015 and mid-2016 and attracts students from all around the world, although participants are mainly from Asia including India, China and Hong Kong. The presentation will look at issues from three perspectives: the students, the institution and the platform. This presentation will elaborate on these issues that the project team encountered during the running of the MOOC and summarise some solutions that were put forward to alleviate these matters. The presentation will end with some thoughts about the future directions of online courses such as MOOCs. This presentation will be of interest to those who are interested in creating MOOCs, and those who want to know more about online courses such as MOOCs, especially from a non-European perspective.

## **Designing an intermediate level language coursebook for mobile access and learner autonomy**

Godwin-Jones, Robert

School of World Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, USA

### **Abstract**

The optimal teaching and learning environment for intermediate language learning provides a solid core of basic language resources, but also allows for sufficient flexibility to accommodate a variety of student abilities/backgrounds, learning goals, and personal/professional interests. This is difficult to accomplish using a traditional print textbook. What is needed is a modular approach, which combines content common to all students enrolled, with options to work in areas of need or interest. I have created a modular e-textbook for German to be shared as an OER textbook, combining a basic grammar reference and a reader. The content represents different disciplines so as to address individual student areas of study. Also included are modules on language self-study, which include annotated guides to online language resources, such as translating tools, language learning services, and target language media sources. The goal of these modules is to encourage students to learn the benefits of different language-learning tools and services. This should serve them in life-long language study, first with the language they are currently learning, and second with the ability to leverage the skills they have acquired for learning additional languages in the future. To optimize mobile access to the modules outside of the VLE used (Blackboard), I created a "mobile companion" web page. The page acts as a home base on mobile devices (saved as an icon on the home screen) and offers access to the course modules as well as to tools

and services that work well in a mobile environment (i.e. vocabulary drill, short media clips, readings). In addition to being used outside of class, the mobile companion was used in class as an alternative to clickers, using Google Forms. To further enhance mobile access, the modules are available alternatively as e-books, allowing for off-line access and incorporation of e-reader tools such as dual language dictionaries or bookmarking/annotating.

### **Using e-portfolio as an assessment tool for beginners of Chinese**

Guo, Zhiyan

University of Warwick, UK

#### **Abstract**

With the application of new technology to language teaching and learning, the ways in which language learners are assessed can be challenged. In the recent decade, e-portfolio has been used increasingly in various programmes such as teacher training, study abroad and language education, but its use seems still rare in teaching Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) in higher education. As a basic procedure, e-portfolio requires a student to collect a number of assignments and projects and present them on an electronic platform for their peer learners and teachers for collaborative learning or assessment purposes. After previously exploring into the use of e-portfolio for the teaching of advanced CFL classes, the author in this current study investigates how to implement e-portfolio as a form of formative assessment among CFL beginners. Instead of being assessed in strictly controlled test or examination conditions, students were offered the opportunities to personalise their learning, reflect their own strengths and weaknesses, analyse their learning strategies and plan their future directions of learning. As an innovative type of assessment, e-portfolio allows teachers and students to look into the process of learning in more depth. More importantly, e-portfolio empowers learners to reflect on their language learning process, so that they are actively engaged in and are responsible for their own learning. From the perspectives of lifelong learning, e-portfolio helps foster autonomous and reflective learners. Most students enjoyed making their e-portfolios as it developed both their linguistic competence and their digital literacy.

### **Reflecting on the creation of technology-based learning materials in a MOOLC**

Hoppe, Christelle

University of Nantes, France

#### **Abstract**

Foreign Language MOOCs can provide learners with authentic and engaging opportunities for learning by drawing on experiences across « spatial, temporal and cultural barriers ». Since learning occurs over a lifetime, designing platforms for future on line learning must take into account incidental learning, context-based learning and adaptive teaching. However technology has the advantage of increasing learners' exposure to the target foreign language, it also presents the drawback that students can easily get lost in the overwhelming assortment of choices of tools and resources, whose reliability may not be easily discerned without the guidance of a teacher. At the same time, the creation of technology-based learning materials without taking into account the ways that students learn languages, in particular their choices of technological tools and

devices, would not properly meet or serve their needs. In order to meet the long term goal of revamping and re-designing the virtual and personal learning environments for various foreign language programmes, it is first necessary to study students' patterns of use of technology to support their language learning, whether in class, outside class, or both. We consider this aspects as being crucial to designing MOOLCS as it would then lay useful and important groundwork in informing the optimal design of future technology-based materials and pedagogies. On November 2015 university of Nantes has developed and run a French language Massive open on line course which included 11000 participants. This experimental project contributes to provide vital pointers for the optimal design of MOOLCS, platforms and on line courses. The field based research in applied linguistics which is conducted on this project aim to identify how Massive on line language courses can be been used by learners and provide information on the usefulness of creating simple cognitive technology tools in support of language learning in such environments.

### **Integrating technology with problem-based learning: the use of mindtools**

Jaleniauskiėnė, Evelina and Valinevičienė, Gintarė  
Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

#### **Abstract**

In higher education, problem-based learning (PBL) has been and continues to be considered as an innovative approach in various subjects and disciplines, including foreign language education.

By working in groups, students are involved in solving ill-structured problems. Usually, PBL is conducted in a face-to-face setting. However, with education increasingly moving online, this approach or parts of it can be successfully implemented in an online environment with various digital tools facilitating the phases of PBL. Considering the fact that modern technologies can be employed as tools not to teach from but to learn with (Jonassen's (1995) concept of mindtools), new ways of their use might be taken into account to make activities more active, authentic, motivating, engaging, allowing new ways of learning, thinking and developing most essential twenty-first century skills entwined with problem solving – critical thinking, self-directed learning, and collaboration. Although there is already valuable research on technology-enhanced learning environments available for use with PBL, an extensive menu of technologies and their possible benefits is still missing, especially defining the usage of online tools in separate phases of PBL. Based on the literature review method, a comprehensive review was undertaken examining the empirical support of technologies used within PBL. The findings of the article offer potential resources for assisting those foreign language teaching professionals that are developing PBL-based educational environments in identifying different technologies that can support and enhance this approach.

## **Building professional knowledge: how educators learn to use open educational resources**

Littlejohn, Allison - Pulker, H  l  ne - Comas-Quinn, Anna  
The Open University, UK  
Hood, Nina  
University of Auckland, New Zealand

### **Abstract**

Continued professional learning is a critical component for ensuring ongoing improvement and innovation in education and the adoption of new practices (Fuller & Unwin, 2004). A recent study of how educators learn open educational practices identified that professionals engage in formal and informal learning activities to learn different types of knowledge. The intertwining of formal and informal learning activities with socio-cultural and socio-regulative knowledge in shaping the ways knowledge is being (re)generated and used by the educators as they learn new practices. This finding is consistent with Tynjala's (2005, 2007, 2008) model of integrated pedagogies for professional expertise and was used to guide the development of the open MOOC 'Learning to (Re)-Use Open Educational Resources'. This MOOC was an output of an Erasmus+ funded project (ExpLOERer) designed to foster sustainability of open educational resources (OER) in all sectors of education. This presentation illustrates how Tynjala's model was integrated into the design of the open MOOC and provides examples of how the MOOC participants learned to use OER. The presentation demonstrates that the practice of reusing OER in teaching can lead to new forms of professional practices and creativity. Practice development is effective when teachers have the autonomy to integrate formal learning into their professional practice. The integration of formal and informal (on-the-job) learning allows professionals to develop diverse types of knowledge useful for their future practice (Littlejohn & Hood, in press).

## **Dynamic and quick-return course design structure for MOOCs**

Liu, Hui  
Software School of Dalian University of Technology, China

### **Abstract**

The widespread interest in a broad range of MOOCs in China has given education providers a platform to promote higher education opportunities more generally. But the present situation in China concerning MOOCs development still leaves too much to be desired. Large part of the online courses becomes so "dead" that only a few students choose to learn them. Among the course takers, only 3%-4% can finish the whole learning process. The article attempts to offer a new dynamic, quick-return MOOCs design structure with proper degree of freedom so that learners can become more active throughout the whole learning process. The structure may be helpful to reduce the dropout rates of the online learning in China.

## **Thinking small with big data in Language MOOCs**

Martín-Monje, Elena – Castrillo, María Dolores

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain

### **Abstract**

Educational environments in the digital age offer the possibility of obtaining very precise data about language learners' progress, since the platforms that support them enable the monitoring and recording of all the activities performed by their users. In this sense, big data and Learning Analytics are increasing their popularity in the research of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning and Applied Linguistics in general. They provide a greater knowledge of progress, performance and possible hindrances which would be useful for language learners, teachers and researchers. Some authors have already made attempts to pave the way (Link & Li, 2015; Youngs, Moss-Horowitz & Snyder, 2015), but Learning Analytics in online Language Learning is still quite an unexplored field.

This paper shows the challenges that applied linguists face when attempting to implement Learning Analytics in their MOOC research: Are the data stored by analysts and IT technicians truly meaningful for language research? Should we ask for tailor-made data mining? We will look into the case of the MOOC "How to succeed in the English B1 Level exam", developed by UNED (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain) within the ECO Project<sup>1</sup>, and share some tips and proposals for a more efficient use of big data in Language MOOCs.

## **An exploration of the use of mobile applications to support the learning of Chinese characters employed by students of Chinese as a foreign language.**

Mason, Amanda

Liverpool John Moores University, UK

Zhang, Wenxin

Elite Technology and Education Ltd, UK

### **Abstract**

This presentation reports on the preliminary findings of a study which explores the use of mobile applications for learning Chinese characters employed by students of Chinese as a foreign language.

Learners' use of language learning strategies (including memorization strategies) has long been recognized as significant in understanding the relative success of language learners (Oxford, 1990), and the findings of research in this area have enabled language educators to help learners become more effective. The majority of this research, however, has been conducted on learners of English as a foreign language and other European languages (Sung and Wu, 2011). At present, there are very few

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<sup>1</sup>ECO Project (Elearning, Communication and Open-Data: Massive, Mobile, Ubiquitous and Open Learning). Project funded by the European Community's CIP (Programme under grant agreement N. 21127), <https://ecolearning.eu/>.

studies which explore the learning strategies employed by students of Chinese as a foreign language and none that focus specifically on mobile application use. Because of the orthographical nature of Chinese, it is considered to be one of the most difficult languages for learners whose native language script is alphabetic. Mobile applications have the potential to help learners develop visual processing skills which seem to be particularly well developed in native-speakers of Chinese and less so in speakers of languages with alphabetic scripts.

In order to explore both the use of learning strategies and mobile applications, the study adopted a mixed-methods research design. A questionnaire was used to identify if and how adult learners at different levels of proficiency and experience use mobile applications to support their study. Interviews, including think-aloud protocols, were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the cognitive and metacognitive processes involved in the learning of new Chinese characters.

This study provides insights into character memorisation strategies employed by different groups of adult learners and how mobile applications support them. Such insights should have implications for the teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign language.

### **The Moveme project: reflecting on xMOOC and cMOOC structure and pedagogical implementation**

McLoughlin, Laura - Magnoni, Francesca -  
National University of Ireland, Ireland

#### **Abstract**

The paper will present a range of activities developed for the Move-Me project, financed by the European Commission under the Erasmus+, Key Activity 2 programme.

The project aims to support university students who undertake mobility study programmes in Europe and are faced with the challenge of academic discourse. Whilst many students have already acquired a CEFR level B1-B2 before their mobility, this is often limited to standard vocabulary, syntax and discourse in general. This can hamper their efforts to interact fully in an academic context and ultimately undermine the long-term goal of training a highly qualified workforce and future researchers able to function at inter-European level. Given this context, our paper will focus on the importance and role of metacognitive activities and analyse the way in which certain types of activities strategically positioned within the structure of the Mooc can trigger cognitive mechanisms which enhance students' awareness of their learning process and help them to retain the information in their long-term memory. We will further describe the Mooc developed as part of the Moveme project, and suggest further developments from our initial xMooc to a cMooc in which the peer-to-peer assistance and evaluation will be given more relevance.

## **The Language Exchange Programme: a learning model between formal and informal learning**

Motzo, Anna – Beaven, Tita – Fuertes-Gutierrez, Mara

School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, The Open University, UK

### **Abstract**

In the context of distance learning of language, speaking is frequently perceived as the most challenging skill to exercise; with the aim of providing students with new ways of practising their oral abilities, the authors developed a 12 week summer language exchange programme in which students who have completed a beginners' module (Spanish or Italian to level A2) took part in regular language exchange sessions with a partner on the italki platform and studied the impact on this intervention in students' motivation, attainment and normalization.

This paper aims to present the first results of this project. The mixed methods research included a pre- and post- treatment questionnaire (based on the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory, Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, 1982) investigating the participants' motivation and self-determination. A task-specific questionnaire also investigated the motivation of participants whilst undertaking a specific language exchange session. Students' performance was measured through a short oral assignment. The data was used to evaluate the effects of online language exchange on student attainment and progression as well as their motivation and the normalization of the language exchange practice.

The authors will examine the theoretical underpinning of an emerging learning model which proposes a blend between formal and informal mode in distance language learning.

## **Blending informal learning into the formal curriculum: tacking the concept of autonomy in language learning and teaching through a MOOC**

Orsini-Jones, Marina

Coventry University, UK

### **Abstract**

This paper reports on the third phase of a joint staff-student action-research and threshold-concept-informed project that consists in the evaluation of the integration of a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) into an existing postgraduate curriculum: the MA in English Language Teaching at Coventry University. The Futurelearn MOOC *Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching* designed by the University of Southampton (UK) in collaboration with the British Council was embedded into the syllabus of *Theories and Methods of Language Learning and Teaching*, which was already delivered in blended learning mode (face-to-face and Moodle). The MOOC forums provided staff and trainee teachers an amplified opportunity for 'global metareflection' on teaching practice (with around 60,000 participants from all over the world).

The data that emerged from the first two phases of the project (Orsini-Jones *et.al.* 2015) made it apparent that the project also provided a unique opportunity to discuss the theme of autonomy in language learning and teaching that had previously been identified as a troublesome curricular area by the course leader (Orsini-Jones 2015).

The data was analysed through the lens of an 'expert student', in a role-reversal model of threshold concept pedagogy previously developed (Orsini-Jones 2014). The 'expert student' had experienced the MOOC herself in its second integration phase and carried out the third action research phase for her MA dissertation; this paper reflects her findings.

### **Language transfer: the case of teleconferencing teaching/learning in English language at the Ghana Technology University College**

Owusu Tabiri, Michael

Ghana Technology University College, Ghana

#### **Abstract**

This study discusses the impact of French language on teaching/learning of English language via teleconferencing teaching and learning in English. Language transfer has always been the face to face delivery of teaching and learning but this research sought to emphasize the results of learners' performance through Technology in didactics known as Teleconferencing Teaching and learning.

The study applies Cognitive and Socio-cognitive approaches to teaching/learning of languages via Teleconferencing as well as using contrastive analysis to assess common errors Francophone learners commit in English language (L3).

The paper analyzes learners' performance with the particular emphasis on errors committed (i.e. Faculty and Staff from a francophone country who pursued English Proficiency Programme via Teleconferencing/Videoconferencing Teaching/learning for 5 months) at the Ghana Technology University College.

It was discovered that the errors committed were due to ignorance or perception blind spot or due to their background as francophone learners who have English language as L3, as well as overgeneralization and wrong application of English structures.

The paper argued that to ensure all round accelerated development and growth of Africa, the ultimate panacea should be the promotion and patronage of African Bilingualism or Franglais-Bilingualism (Proficiency in African languages or proficiency in English and French simultaneously) via Teleconferencing or Videoconferencing Teaching and Learning. (Tabiri,2015)

### **MOOCs for Language learning: opportunities and challenges**

Proudfoot, Anna - Motzo, Anna

The Open University, UK

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are a fairly recent development in online education. They offer open access with no prerequisites for joining other than possession of a device connected to the internet. The educational content is generally



offered free but in many cases participants may purchase certificates of attendance or completion.

In MOOCs, the paradigm of the traditional teacher-led closed classroom is replaced by a more open and collaborative environment, with a strong element of support built in through the peer group and moderators, as well as through feedback on activities and through the content itself. Participants are self-regulated and can - in theory - complete the course in their own time and at their own pace, during the lifespan of the MOOC. In practice, if they do not complete the activities during the recommended period, they do not get the full benefit of the discussion, comments and feedback that follow each activity.

For learners, MOOCs offer an innovative and inexpensive alternative to formal and traditional learning. For course designers and developers, this emerging learning model raises important issues concerning the affordances of the new learning environment and the rationale for adopting a particular pedagogical approach to sustain the learning experience. Language MOOCs have recently been added to the ever-growing list of open courses offered by various providers, including FutureLearn. Their affordances for language learners are yet to be fully researched.

In this paper the authors will focus on some issues to bear in mind when developing language MOOCs and the implications in relation to formal-informal learning and online versus traditional classroom planning and management. They will do so by offering an insight on their experiences in designing and developing an Italian MOOC on Future Learn. They will discuss the opportunities and challenges they encountered in the learning design phase as well as the ways in which students' language learning experience differs from that on more traditional courses.

## **Evaluation of a language learning app by its users**

Rosell-Aguilar, Fernando  
The Open University, UK

### **Abstract**

Studies into the use of mobile applications (apps) for language learning have found many positive results about learner engagement with apps, but they mostly focused on small samples of learners using a specific app rather than using the apps they have selected for themselves. More data is required to understand the ways learners engage with apps for language learning (through profiles of app users, how apps are used, and user opinions of learning with apps) to create a realistic picture of users in their natural settings.

This paper presents the results of a study into how language learners use one of the most popular language learning apps in the market: the *busuu* mobile app (over 60 million registered users). Data was collected through an online questionnaire. The survey consisted of 30 items, most of which were multiple-choice, with some open questions. Two versions of the survey were written: one in English and one in Spanish. A link to the relevant survey asking potential participants to take part was sent as an in-

app message by *busuu* to their registered users. 4095 valid responses were collected. The results shed light on how language learners use the app, for how long, their reasons for using it and what they find most valuable about language learning through apps.

### **Critical reflections on MOOCs in India and China**

Sanzgiri, Janesh - Li, Chenxi - Wang, Cedric  
The Open University, UK  
Trehan, Sangeeta  
Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), India

#### **Abstract**

The current article tries to shed some light on the field for innovation happening in open online higher education through MOOCs in China and India, and how it is being managed. This discussion is timely, since MOOC discourse in the literature has swung between trumpeting the MOOCs as “disruptive” (Flynn, 2013; Conole, 2015) technologies to warning of the “MOOC delusion” (Sharma, 2013).

Besides “pure” MOOCs, other MOOC-variants also enter the discussion around MOOCs. We survey the various MOOC platforms available in India and China and attempt a rudimentary classification by utilizing Conole’s MOOC classification schema. Later in the article, we start using MOOCs/ SPOCs interchangeably.

Early research on MOOCs has shown that MOOCs have mostly been deepening access, rather than broadening access. Yet MOOCs have strengthened in 2015 (Shah, 2015). The governments in both China and India have been investing heavily on MOOC development. Hence after a historical account of MOOC development in China and India, we discuss the current issues and concerns and examine from the evidence available so far if and how far the global as well as local developments in the MOOC space in India and China address the current issues and concerns. We also report from our small-scale impact evaluation study. We propose a scheme of triple synthesis for MOOC *nirvana* – a win-win that would not just ensure success of learners and the ventures servicing them but also pull out the MOOC idea from the Trough of Disillusionment to the Slopes of Enlightenment on the Gartner Hype Cycle.

### **“I’m going to get online and I’m going to talk to people and learn English”: the informal language learning of a Sherlock fan**

Sauro, Shannon  
Malmö University, Sweden

#### **Abstract**

This study builds upon prior work in online media fandom for language learning which explored the identity and informal language learning of youth in online spaces through the writing of fanfiction (Black, 2006; Lepänen, 2008; Thorne & Black, 2011) or the creation of fansites (Lam, 2006). While such work has illuminated youth language and identity development in online media fandom spaces, less attention has been paid to the older language learners who comprise a less visible presence in online media

fandom yet who also represent a type of language learner engaged in informal language learning in the digital wilds (Thorne, 2010).

Accordingly, this paper reports on a case study of the informal L2 language and digital literacy development of an adult fan.

The focal participant for this case study, Steevee, is a female fan in her early 30s originally from a small city in eastern Germany who first entered online media fandom six years prior with the goal of developing her English in order to live and work in London. Data analyzed include semi-structured interviews, email correspondence, and analysis of Steevee's fan-based social media accounts on Tumblr and Twitter.

Findings reveal how Steevee's heavy involvement in the fan practice of spoiling, defined as the discovery and sharing of plot elements (Duffet, 2013), during filming of the television series Sherlock facilitated Steevee's English and digital literacy development for the purpose of living and working in an English-speaking context. This study, therefore, documents the process through which an adult L2 English user makes use of popular culture, technology, and online media fandom to engage in informal language learning.

### **Language, learning and mobile digital technology: not a flat, open space**

Traxler, John

University of Wolverhampton, UK

#### **Abstract**

Since the start of the century, learning with mobiles, both as research and as deployment, has grown out of earlier forms of institutional technology enhanced learning (TEL) and has had comparable theoretical discourses to other parts, and sometimes earlier parts, of TEL. This has given learning with mobiles a very specific legacy and trajectory, one that is increasingly at odds with the universal, informal and social nature of mobiles in our societies, where the dynamics between mobility, language and learning are changing profoundly but subtly.

The presentation do not address the totality of these changes but rather makes and illustrates four points, namely, that mobile technology is culturally and linguistically specific, not universal or culturally-neutral; that mobile technology does not merely store and transmit language(s) and literacy within communities, it disturbs and transforms them; that the digital literacy agenda that might underpin language learning with mobiles has not yet been developed and articulated; that language is embedded in social practices that are being transformed by the impact of mobiles.

## **Informal learning of English and Dutch: the perceptions of higher education students in Brussels**

Van Marsenille, Anne

Institut des Hautes Etudes des Communications Sociales (IHECS), Belgium

### **Abstract**

This presentation is based on a study on the informal learning of English and Dutch perceived by Higher Education students in Brussels. The informal learning of English was investigated for a Doctorate in Education achieved in August 2015. The informal learning of Dutch was studied in November 2015 and compared to the informal learning of English. The aim was to consider how students use informal learning activities to improve their language knowledge.

At the same time, their motivation and reflection on learning are examined and compared. The outcomes of this study highlight the importance of raising students' awareness of their informal learning and of raising teachers' awareness of what students do to enhance their language learning informally. Teachers may then encourage informal learning by suggesting appropriate materials and methods.

The learning of both English and Dutch is important in Belgium but the situation of each language is very different. English is learnt as an international language, whereas Dutch is learnt as a national language. There is much more material available for learning English as it is broadly studied all over the world, but there are more opportunities to find people speaking Dutch as their native language in Brussels. Therefore, resources, informal learning opportunities and motivation are different for English and for Dutch.

In this presentation, mobile learning will be considered as an important tool to learn English and Dutch. More resources are available for English but it is possible to find material, such as online newspapers or radio and television, for Dutch as well.

Different activities and material for learning English and Dutch informally, as they are perceived by Higher Education students are analysed in the presentation. It could be useful for language students as well as language teachers.

## **The MOOC 'Cultural Studies and Modern Languages: An Introduction'**

Visintini, Gloria

University of Bristol, UK

### **Abstract**

Over the past few years a range of UK Universities have started developing MOOCs (massive open online courses). The University of Bristol is one of them, and recently it has funded the development of a MOOC entitled *Cultural Studies and Modern Languages: An Introduction*, which is hosted on the FutureLearn platform.

This is a collaborative, multidisciplinary project involving over fifty people between

academics, professionals and managers. Its main purpose is to give people a flavour of how exciting studying Modern Languages can be, while pioneering a better awareness of what the study is about. A degree in Modern Languages is often perceived as just acquiring fluency in another language, whereas it is also about exploring different cultures and societies; something we wanted to emphasise through this MOOC.

Thanks to Routes into Languages South West, we have run *Cultural Studies* three times. Feedback so far shows that participants -- comprising thousands of people from many countries across the world -- particularly like one of the pedagogical risks we took when we developed the MOOC: the range of topics covered in the course and our original bite-sized format. Normally FutureLearn MOOCs have one linear story running through a course; but in *Cultural Studies* people have 12 mini-stories to engage with, which learners seem to have really appreciated.

Our learners also enjoyed our discussion activities. Indeed, our rate of 'fully participating learners' is higher than the average rate on a FutureLearn course. This and many other aspects of the course will be discussed in the presentation, unpacking our findings in detail and highlighting what makes our course different compared to other MOOCs.

### **A practice of the virtual classroom in the conventional university teaching setting**

Wang, Weiqun

University of Nottingham, UK

#### **Abstract**

Nottingham University it has 4 UK campuses, and Mandarin teachers and all university staff need to travel between two main campuses. As it takes 30 minutes to travel from door to door, students and teachers cannot have their next session of classes in the other campus. One hour has to be allocated in the timetable for students and staff's journey. Travelling between two campuses has caused many issues, not just timetabling but also health and safety. Virtual Classroom Teaching Technology can help to effectively reduce these problems. Many apps and software on distance learning and online teaching can be useful supplementary tools to facilitate our conventional classroom teaching.

This presentation will show what experiments have been done in using certain apps and software for realising the virtual classroom in order to facilitate the teaching delivery and learning. The virtual classroom is able to break down the geographical barrier, leaving time as the only factor for the timetabling office to concern. As long as students are online, they can have class anywhere they like.

This presentation will highlight the students' feedback. Both good points and shortcomings will be pointed out.

## **Balancing lecture, task and tutoring: design of a Chinese MOOC**

Wang -Szilas, Jue

Université de Genève and INALCO, Switzerland

Bellassen, Joël

HDR de l'équipe de recherche PLIDAM-INALCO, France

### **Abstract**

Since 2013, the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO, France) has launched an initiative project "Les MOOC de l'INALCO" based on the French MOOC platform *France université numérique* (FUN). Nine languages were involved in this project: Arabic, Berber, Burmese, Chinese, Mexican Mazatec (language not taught at INALCO), Mongolian, Persian, and Turkish. The authors of this presentation are the authors of the Chinese MOOC that will be open in November 2016. Launching such a project by INALCO (93 languages taught in this higher educational institute) has a great significance. The project could generate a snowball effect on "world language" education at INALCO and elsewhere in France in the digital age. For languages with low diffusion and strong didactic singularity, it is especially interesting to explore the benefits of the "lateral" learning through MOOC as an innovative pedagogy.

With "first contact with an oriental language" as the main objective, the Chinese MOOC was designed on the basis of sequence learning, with a series of short lecture videos and exercises. Three main design conceptions will be presented in this article: the teacher-centred knowledge-based lecture, the learner-centred tasks and tutoring.

One of the main ideas in **the lecture design** is that the instructional design should adapt to the unique nature of the Chinese language, especially its strong visual-graphic dimension as a non-alphabetic language. On one hand, the authors took Chinese "*sinograms*" (characters) as an entry, but of course not limited to it. Simple dialogues were introduced as support for learning. On the other hand, the French-speaking Chinese learners' learning difficulties have been taken care of in the lecture.

Three kinds of **tasks** were introduced: watching lecture videos and answering questions, practising phonetics and character writing with available tools and guiding videos, and participating in forum discussions. The design of these learning activities has implemented "progressive difficulty" so that every learner can attend the course to his/her own rhythm.

**Tutoring** plays various roles to ensure efficient learning: helping learners to accomplish learning activities, animating interactions among learners, supporting collaborative knowledge construction, and creating a learning culture. These roles could be realised through two forums.

## **Practical research on College English flipped classroom model – based on College English reading and writing class**

Zhang, Xinying

Shenzhen University, Shenzhen, China

### **Abstract**

There is obvious pressure for Higher Education institutions to undergo transformation now in China and the pressure is coming not only from society needs, but students themselves. Reflecting this, the computer and information technology give rise to the development of flipped classroom. Flipped classroom approaches remove the traditional transmissive lecture and replace it with active in-class and pre-/post-class work. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of relevant research about the emergence of the flipped classroom and the links to pedagogy and educational outcomes, followed by an analysis of the results of a one-year empirical study. The study involves 800 A-level students, who are the top 10% of all freshmen. The teaching materials used are one grade higher than B-level students. 11 Units of teaching materials have been selected and produced into MOOC. A-level students are required to do MOOC learning before class and 2 hours flipped classroom learning every week will be used to check understanding, facilitate learning, and further develop the theme of each unit. The questionnaire completed by 230 students at the end of second semester describes students' perception of the approach and investigate the effect of learning. Results reveal that majority of students preferred flipped method compared with traditional pedagogical strategies, and they had a statistically significant growth in domain knowledge. The paper constructs an argument that flipped approach has changed the role of teachers in the classroom, and it is conducive to the improvement of student active learning, autonomous learning and collaborative learning skills. It is the call for technology enhanced, student-centered learning environments, and the paper invites more specific types of research about the effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach.

## **B POSTER PRESENTATIONS**

### **The role of home environment in biliteracy development among Saudi bilingual school-age children**

Alghamdi, Fatimah

Modern Language, University of Southampton, UK

### **Abstract**

In recent years, the temporary migration of Saudi families with children who aged 6-8 years to UK is increased in the purpose of getting scholarship. These school-aged children are involved attending a formal educational system where English-based language is the focus of development and communication. Since they have different linguistic backgrounds, they need to learn English language and develop its skills in order to accomplish their schooling tasks successfully and interact with their peers confidently. However, the frequent exposure to English may affect practicing Arabic as a first language particularly if the children do not have a strong foundation of Arabic language system and they lack the intensive exposure of learning Arabic literacy at

home. Additionally, children may face some difficulties in later life if they lack developing their Arabic literacy at early ages. Thus, it is fascinating to discuss Saudi children's experiences as they start their schooling in UK and to explore how they practice their Arabic literacy at home and outside their English. Their practices of first language literacy will be based on family interaction without formal instruction according to sociocultural theory perspectives.

This study will adapt the framework of biliteracy continuum to investigate the holistic concept of biliteracy at home environment. Moreover, it aims to explore how children get an opportunity to practice bi-literacy informally according to the perspective of sociocultural learning theory. Besides, it will investigate parents' beliefs and contributions for their children to practice Arabic literacy at home while they are studying English in formal schools to reach a level of realizing both systems of Arabic and English. The data will be collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and note taking; furthermore, it will be analysed through qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis.

### **Investigating mobile language learning tools for supporting asylum seekers**

Spikol, Daniel; Ehrenberg, Nils & Vogel, Bahtijar

Department of Media Technology and Product Development, Malmö University, Sweden

Tomašević, Teresa; Vamling, Karina; Waern, Christina & Wiktorsson, Maria

Department of Language and Linguistics, Malmö University, Sweden

Håkansson, Gisela

Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Sweden/Faculty of Education, University College Halden, Norway

### **Abstract**

Societal background: Many societies today need to find better practices and solutions for early integration of refugees. The high number of refugees to Sweden has resulted in very delayed asylum application processes, leaving people waiting in asylum centres for more than a year. Access to Swedish language instruction is very limited during this period even though language skills are considered crucial for successful integration. Our project focuses on finding ways to extend language learning opportunities to this target group to facilitate the integration process. The diverse background and education of the current refugees pose challenges to the design of mobile learning tools that can accommodate these learners.

Main aim: Our project aims to develop and optimize research-based digital language tools for beginner level instruction in Swedish as a second language. The initiative is cross-disciplinary and combines second language learning theories and practices with mobile learning solutions using a participatory design framework.

Research question: Can mobile applications serve as a learning platform for effective individual language learning and if so how, in the context of asylum process?



Pienemann's (1998) processability theory explains the development of underlying processing mechanisms employed in learning a second language, and suggests that individual learning is only effective when input is of a complexity level suitable to the learner's processing capacity. By employing the theory's learning stages to tailor innovative learning solutions, we get an opportunity to explore the relationship between learning, theories, designed artefacts, and practice (Bjögvinsson et al., 2012; Collective, 2013; Hevner, 2007).

The poster presentation will outline the preliminaries of a pilot project that aims to develop and evaluate the language learning modules and mobile learning opportunities. The focus will be on prototype development and stakeholder involvement. The poster will present current progress on the iterative design cycles.

### **Fostering learner autonomy for listening development through podcasts- making a case of mobile learning**

Tewari, Shakul

The English and Foreign Language University, Hyderabad, India

#### **Abstract**

Mobile technologies allow learners to take control over their learning in a way that suits their learning styles and preferences among other things. This can especially be beneficial in a language learning environment where learners can extend their learning beyond the classroom as well. This research is an attempt to explore the effect learners listening ability can have when they are given control over the listening input.

Based on the results of earlier studies such as McBride (2007), Zhao (1997) , which stated that reduced rate of speech and giving learner control over the speech rate improves the comprehension levels in listening, the current research hypothesizes that giving learners control over the input will have a positive impact on learner performance in listening. Another hypothesis was that teaching reduced forms in connected speech will enable participants to understand native speaker accent and speed, which was reported to be a major source of roadblock in understanding. The participants were graduate students preparing to appear for proficiency exams such as IELTS and TOEFL, listened to podcasts outside the class and kept a journal making notes and also stating problem areas. For further corroboration, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a focus group both pre and post intervention. As a part of in-class activity, participants were given comprehension tasks that focused on top-down and bottom-up skills. Preliminary results suggest that participants find the medium of listening to podcasts outside the class interesting. Participants found repeated listening and control over the audio to be very beneficial as it boosted their level of confidence and understanding. Participants also reported to be more capable of recognizing reduced forms in connected speech and felt more equipped to understand native speaker accents and speed.