To tweet or not to tweet: Integrating a hashtag as a voluntary activity in an Irish language MOOC

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The Irish language

- Spoken by approximately 500,000 fluently, with a larger group less proficient.

- First official language in the Republic of Ireland, official regional language in Northern Ireland and an EU official language.

- Large diaspora with a potential interest in learning.

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Problem – promoting L2 usage

- How to promote authentic speech in LMOOC environments?

- Lack of opportunities to practice, difficulties providing feedback and enabling dynamic, meaningful production of language all issues.

- Twitter a potential solution? (Borau et al, 2009)
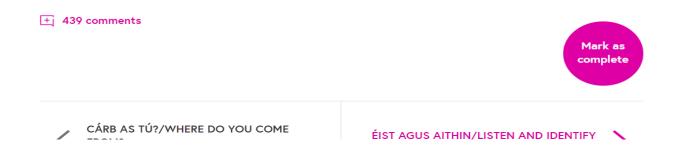
Analytical framework

- Interesting research question!

- Could we assess levels of engagement by embedding activities within course?

- What kind of responses would we receive to activities on an external website?

Embedding activities

Prompts included promoting engagement with twitter in activities and videos:

Show us where you come from and upload a picture to Twitter. Remember to put in #FLIrish101 in your Tweet. Ask another learner where they come from in the comments below.

439 comments

Mark as complete

CÁRB AS TÚ?/WHERE DO YOU COME

ÉIST AGUS AITHIN/LISTEN AND IDENTIFY

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Methodology

- Twitter dataset: all tweets **#FLIRISH101** downloaded following end of course.

- MOOC dataset: comments on MOOC specifically relating to 'tweet' or 'twitter'.

- Concurrently analysed as a form of triangulation.

Results and examples

What happens if you do not tweet or twitter or whatever it is called? The wording is encourage" but it looks like I will miss a whole portion of the course.

(Learner C, 2018)

An interesting mix of language and historical material, especially around Ogham and trees. I need more practice at talking - have set up a Twitter account @X and have met a couple of learners there.

(Learner D, 2018)

I use Facebook but not Twitter

(Learner E, 2018)

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Implications for integration

- Supports core of Veletsianos' (2017) contention regarding low engagement with twitter.

- Shallow engagement suggests a need to re-think the nature of linking social media to course design.

- Mindfulness of learner demographics is critical and warrants deeper exploration.

What have we learned?

Iterative approach to LMOOC re-design:

- More social media prompts will be embedded in subsequent runs to allow contrast with present paper.

- Acknowledge learner-led social media activity.

- Link to task-sentiment research, which has already commenced.

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Our website - https://www.failteonline.ie/

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References

Borau, Kerstin, Ullrich, Carsten, Feng, Jinjin and Shen, Ruimin. 2009. *Microblogging for Language Learning: Using Twitter to Train Communicative and Cultural Competence.* In 'ICWL 2009: Advances in Web-based learning'. PP 78-87.

Veletsianos, George. 2017. *Toward a Generalizable Understanding of Twitter and Social Media Use Across MOOCs: Who Participates on MOOC Hashtags and In What Ways?* In: The Journal of Computing in Higher Education Vol. 29, No.1. PP 65-80.

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