

Exploring Students' Perceptions toward MOOCs-Mediated Online Discussion Task among Indonesian University Students

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ABSTRACT

This article was designed as a case study surveyed twenty-nine students with master's degrees from the English Education Department who have participated in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on the topic of Academic Writing by Canvas Network to investigate students' perceptions toward MOOCs-Mediated specifically on Online Discussion Task. A questionnaire comprised five questions answering general information about participants and ten close-ended questions measuring perception of MOOCs-Mediated in an Online Discussion Task, and a semi-structured interview was conducted for collecting the data. Seventy-six percent of total students have never known of the MOOCs phenomenon nor did MOOCs mediated-online discussion tasks before participating in this lecturer's task-based course while their reasons for participating in this course are for gaining knowledge, getting badges certificates, and following the lecturer's assignment. The findings then denote that the participants have positive perceptions toward Online Discussion Tasks in MOOCs and regarded this activity as a future learning tool for their teaching and learning practice. This research has implications of being an example of having teaching and learning tools for blended learning way.

Keywords: Online learning platform Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs); Academic Writing; online discussion task; Case Study; blended learning

INTRODUCTION

Higher education nowadays highlights one importance of academic writing, which prepares students for further academic study. Actually, this will be a rigorous step toward enhancing national scientific work publication according to Scimago Lab, Indonesia still placed 57 the total country rank producing only around 39.719 documents with 155 H Indexed which is lower compared to other neighbouring countries in ASEAN such as Singapore which ranked on 32 produced 215.553 documents with 392 H Indexed (Scimago, 2016). Therefore, since 2012 Indonesian Higher Education Department supposed students in higher education to minimally publish the manuscript of their academic writing once their graduate. This finally becomes a challenge to what academics do with the words toward their web of

professionalism and their academic associations because their writing, therefore, displays a professional competence in discipline-approved practice (Hyland, 2004).

Academic writing courses are organized among colleges or universities may become a reasonable solution to overcome students' journal publication problems. This academic course concentrates on empowering students' academic writing skills by write-practising in the early semester. However, this could be hurdled by some students who come from various colleges or universities and have different writing skills (see Table 1). Moreover, writing is an intricate and complex task; it is the most difficult of all the language abilities to acquire (Adas & Bakir, 2013). As an effect, additional courses should be inserted to generalize the idea of academic writing before real-practising academic writing (Drajati, 2017). However, the second problem comes to the surface as an effect of the first aforementioned problem. One semester comprised of 4-6 months of face-to-face learning is not enough for complete academic learning material and writing practising. Thus, online learning aside from face-to-face learning may be one of the choices to be conducted on the density of academic courses in the way of blended learning (Sandoval, 2014).

Indeed, the advancement of technology in the 21st century has many impacts in all areas, including education. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are a widespread phenomenon used in current online learning platforms standing as a result of this advancement. This plethora of courses is available at the furious pace of the internet presented by some providers across the world known popularly in 2011 (Afsari-Mamagani, 2014). Shanley (2009) in (Camahalan & Ruley, 2014) student retention in online courses research noticed that, regardless of the learning mode, students have an opportunity to experiment with technology, and tools are importantly required for the class before the class critical elements are introduced. These could be seen as a challenge abreast of the advancement of various teaching and learning tools.

MOOC is usually credit-less, free, and massive, while the traditional online courses, on the other hand, carry credit, charge tuition and to ensure interaction with instructors, it must limit enrollment to a few dozen (Papano, 2012). It is well said to name MOOCs that represent their characteristics in general. Historically, MOOC is a term that was first coined in 2008 by a small group of people consisting of George Siemens, Stephen Downes and colleagues who seem most unlikely to be attempting to disrupt the business model of higher education by bringing a different online learning model, which refers to the connectivism theory. Connectivism theory affords the connectivity between information and people, which supports the possibility of the internet as a nutritious learning tool by learning and sharing information among people and World Wide Web boundaries. (Grimmelmann, 2014; Siemens, 2004) defines further about learning in this case (defined as actionable knowledge) can exist outside of ourselves (within an organization or a database), is focused on linking information specialized sets, and the connections, which permit us to learn more are more important than our recent state of knowing.

Thus, Stanford Professors Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig recorded and put videos online of the lectures from the artificial intelligence course in 2011. These hints created antecedence after the elite universities in the world, such as Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology create a non-profit online course, edX, which attracted a hundred thousand students for its first official courses. Later, Silvia (2015) noticed that edX's first courses are eventually countless rather than Coursera which achieves 4,5 million and more students, spreading faster than phenomenal social media, Facebook. MOOCs are an extremely sophisticated form of distance learning (generally at the undergraduate and graduate levels of education) (Fini, 2009). Regarding MOOCs' recent opportunity and popularity nowadays, MOOCs are expected to grow rapidly and lead to the education of millions of students around the world. Further, many other colleges are considering plans to award credit for MOOCs.

Some related previous studies have investigated the general knowledge and perception of MOOCs among teachers. Ospina-Delgado et al. (2016) & Wong (2016) concluded that the overall opinion of educators is positive because mainly participants, count as 80%, consider it useful in the learning process. And they then highlight new opportunities for innovation in accounting education. Further, Wong (2016) used descriptive meta-analysis to find factors leading to effective teaching of MOOCs which revolve around six areas according to the stages of course delivery, namely, preparation, attraction, participation, interaction, consolidation and post-course support.

MOOCs provide various tasks in several weeks to finish the course. Canvas Network, for example, it provides the reading material, video to be watched, and quizzes until online discussion. For the past few decades, advancements in technologies have developed to facilitate the proliferation of online courses. This development derived the way to the online discussion forum. Online discussion is usually considered a powerful tool for the development of pedagogical skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and reflection. It is well known that online discussion has been increasing both in colleges and distance education.

Regarding the pedagogical skill value for education, researchers continue to investigate the students' participation in online discussions. Weltzer-Ward (2009), for example, pins on the assessing process, structure and quality of critical thought in an online discussion, which show successful use and high reliability. In a similar theme, Adas & Bakir (2013) highlight the potential learning environment for open distance learning and determine the effectiveness of online forums to the blended learning pedagogies. Further, Deng et al. (2017) widen the research scope by having a collaborative project on fostering cross-cultural online discussion, with different cultural backgrounds and separated regions to review students' perceptions and also experiences, which denotes that the participants feel motivated to improve their language ability through online discussion.

While many researchers investigate the general part of MOOCs, this present study aims at exploring students' perceptions toward MOOCs on academic writing in a

single case study which could complement students' need to face academic writing courses provided by a university or college in a blended learning way.

METHOD

Research Method

This study used a qualitative research approach in a case study which principally involved the study of an issue, MOOCs by Canvas Network, in exploration through one case within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). It was categorized as an instrumental case study based on Ary (2010) because the case which represents some other issues is selected by the researchers under investigation and the researchers believe that this particular case could help provide to understand or help provide insights into those issues.

Instruments

This research used a questionnaire and semi-structured interview adapted from (Ospina-Delgado et al., 2016). The data are gathered between March and May 2022 to fill the questionnaire by using the Google Document questionnaire spreadsheet for answering:

1. What is the importance of the internet for academic Writing?
2. What are participants' perceptions toward MOOC-mediated online discussion?

Participants

The sample is obtained from twenty-nine master's degree Students consisting of 67,7 % female and 32,3% male with the higher occupation proportion going to solely students (90,3%), then only 9,7% also being a teacher (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Distribution

Gender	Response	%	Total	% Total
Male	9	31,03%	29	100%
Female	20	68,97%		
Age				
19-24 years old	20	68,96%	29	100%
25-34 years old	8	27,59%		
35-44 years old	1	3,45%		
Occupation				
Student	27	93,1%	29	100%
Teacher	2	6,9%		
University Origin				
State University	24	82,76%	29	100%
Private University	5	17,24%		
City origin				
Java	17	58,62%	29	

Sumatra	10	34,48%	100%
Borneo	2	6,9%	

Data collection technique and analysis

For working this research, a questionnaire comprised of five questions answering general information about participants, ten close-ended questions measuring perception of MOOCs-Mediated in an Online Discussion Task, and a semi-structured interview were distributed to twenty-nine master's degree Students of the English Education Department. Previously, the research participants enrolled in the MOOCs by Canvas Network two weeks before this course is begun. The students have four modules to be finished in four weeks completion, a week on each, which is done by them outside of face-to-face learning in the classroom to get badges or certificates. After completing four modules, students were asked to fill out the questionnaire, submit the process and progress of MOOCs' in a report, and then be interviewed to scrutinize data collection. The data were gathered using a systematic process of qualitative data analysis based on Ary (2010). The following processes are (1) selecting a problem; (2) reviewing the literature; (3) selecting a research strategy and developing instruments; (4) collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; and (5) communicating the findings by reporting the results of the study. These aimed at exploring students' perceptions toward MOOCs-Mediated in Online Discussion Tasks on academic writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Importance of the internet for academic use

The descriptive statistics (Table 2) show that the participants' personal uses of the internet are varied which the highest portion belonging to the Educational related or Information search (64,5%), second place for Social networking (16,1%), entertainment (3,2%) and the rest is using for all of them. The participants' spending time using the internet also varied, starting from the lowest proportion to high; 1-2 hours (3,45%), more than 5 hours (10,34%), 2-3 hours (17,24%), 4-5 hours (31,03%) and 3-4 hours (37,93%). Seeing this percentage result denotes that teaching and learning using the internet is having a good chance in this case.

Table 2. Priority for personal use and time spent on the internet

	Variables	Response	%	Total	% Total
Priority for the personal use of the internet	Educational-related or information search	19	65,52%	29	100%
	Social Networks	5	17,24%		
	Entertainment	1	3,45%		
	All of them	4	13,79%		
	1-2 hours	1	3,45%	29	100%
	2-3 hours	5	17,24%		

Spending time on the internet in a day	3-4 hours	11	37,93%
	4-5 hours	9	31,03%
	More than 5 hours	3	10,34%

Participants' Perception toward MOOCs-mediated Online Discussion Task

According to Table 3, only eight students, or 25, 8% of the total sample know about the MOOCs phenomenon before participating in an academic writing course. The rest, 23 students or 74, 2 % just know after participating academic course. Students' main reason for participating is more dominant gaining knowledge (65,52%), then going to instructor assignment (17,24%), 13,79% for getting badges or certificates, and the last is getting all of them (3,45%). When doing the MOOCs task, approximately three hours are spent in general and only one participant thought that Online Discussion Task-MOOCs mediated is not useful while the rest (twenty-eight students), or 96,55% of total participants thought the contrary.

Table 3. Frequencies and perception of MOOCs

Already knew the MOOCs phenomenon	Response	%	Total	Total %	
Yes	8	27,59%	29	100%	
No	21	72,41%			
The main reason for participating in MOOCs					
Gaining knowledge	19	65,52%	29	100%	
Instructor assignment	5	17,24%			
Certificate or badges	4	13,79%			
Other	1	3,45%			
Spending time on the internet in a day	1-2 hours	2	6,90%	29	100%
	2-3 hours	11	37,93%		
	3-4 hours	11	37,93%		
	4-5 hours	3	10,34%		
	More than 5 hours	2	6,90%		
Usefulness of MOOCs	Yes	%	No	%	
Online discussions and quiz give a positive impact on academic writing	29	96,55%	1	3,2%	

As aforementioned in Table 3, almost total participants agree that Online Discussion Task in MOOCs was "a good idea to be done". And during the interviews, the participants acknowledged that Online Discussion brings a positive impact on their academic writing process, comes from discussion across the country which leads them to develop critical thinking skills. It happened because when the participants were done with their discussion and submitting a task, another

participant across the country will comment or give feed on the participants' work. And it would be really useful in correcting the participants' mistakes in the writing session. Participants then noticed the interaction in an online discussion which was built in online discussion could bring a different atmosphere that engaged their interest or motivation in the learning process. Besides that, one participant said, "I could know other people's points of view from reading their online discussion task tract".

On the other hand, some students noticed that there are some obstacles to doing their online discussion task. That was about the internet connection. They claimed that their area sometimes got difficulty catching the internet network, and it made them redo or resubmit their work or task. Another obstacle came from other participants. Such in giving feedback or correcting the task, one participant may have a different opinion than another. Then it created confusion for the participant who got the feedback or comment because there was no reflection from the online discussion instructors.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at investigating students' perceptions toward MOOCs-Mediated specifically on Online Discussion Tasks. As the result, seventy-six percent of total students have never known the MOOCs phenomenon nor did MOOCs mediated-online discussion tasks before participating in this lecturer's task-based course while their reasons for participating in this course are for gaining knowledge, getting badges or certificates, and following lecturer's assignment. The findings then denote that the participants have positive perceptions toward Online Discussion Tasks in MOOCs. Those are leading their critical thinking, bringing a good learning environment, and giving other participants' points of view. This research has implications of being an example of having teaching and learning tools for blended learning way.

LIMITATION

The major limitation of this research is that the participants are mandated to join the course by the lecturer, not because of their willingness to participate. So, in the process of having an online course, the participants felt it was just student's master's degree obligation

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