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*Yergaliyeva A.B. ,[1] * Shayakhmetova D.B. [2]*

[1]Suleyman Demirel University, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan
[2]Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University,
Almaty, Kazakhstan

STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING MOOCs IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES

Abstract
The present research aims to determine the perceptions of students and professors of Massive Online Open Courses in teaching English for Professional Purposes at several universities in Almaty. More specifically, we would like to find out the attitudes of professors and their students toward the use of the MOOC in teaching English for Professional Purposes and what key factors they would suggest to make the course successful. Quantitative data were collected from junior students and language teachers studying/teaching in the Faculty of Education and Humanities at three different universities. The results of the questionnaire revealed the positive attitude of both students and teachers toward using MOOCs in teaching English for professional purposes justifying it by the fact that it provides flexible teaching and learning environment.

Keywords: Massive online open course, digital education, e-learning, higher education, English for professional purposes.

А.Б. Ергалиева[1*,] *Д.Б. Шаяхметова*[2]
[1] *Сулейман Демирель университеті, Каскелен қ., Қазақстан Республикасы*
[2]*Абай атындағы Қазақ ұлттық педагогикалық университеті,*
Алматы қ., Қазақстан Республикасы

СТУДЕНТТЕР МЕН ОҚЫТУШЫЛАРДЫҢ ЖАППАЙ АШЫҚ ОНЛАЙН-КУРСТАРЫН ҚОЛДАНУҒА КӨЗҚАРАСТАРЫ

Аңдатпа

Жаппай ашық онлайн курстар – бұл барлық жастағы адамдарға бүкіл әлем бойынша білім алуға мүмкіндік беретін цифрлық білім беру бағыттарының бірі. Кәсіби мақсатта ағылшын тілін оқыту процесіне МООС интеграциясы болашақ мамандарды даярлау кезінде оқытудың дербестендірілген ортасын құруға ықпал етеді, сол арқылы жоғары білім беру жүйесінде білім берудің қолжетімділігі мен сапасын арттыруға ықпал етеді. Академиялық оқытудың бұл түрі алғаш рет 2016 жылы ғана Қазақстандағы ашық білім берудің ұлттық платформасы ретінде ұсынылған қазақстандық қоғам үшін жаңа болып табылады. Ағымдағы Зерттеудің мақсаты-Алматының бірнеше университеттерінде студенттердің де, оқытушылардың да кәсіби мақсатта ағылшын тілін оқыту бойынша жаппай ашық онлайн-курстарынан хабардарлығын және қабылдауын анықтау. Сауалнама нәтижелері бойынша, профессорлар мен студенттердің кәсіби мақсатта ағылшын тілінде сабақ өткізу кезінде жаппай ашық онлайн курс жүйесін қолдануға қатысты оң көзқарас білдіргені нақтыланды.

Түйін сөздер: жаппай ашық онлайн-курс, цифрлық білім, электрондық оқыту, жоғары білім, кәсіби мақсатта ағылшын тілі.

Ергалиева А.Б. [1] [*], *Шаяхметова Д.Б.* [2]
[1]*Университет имени Сулеймана Демиреля, г. Каскелен, Казахстан*
[2] *Казахский национальный педагогический университет имени Абая*
г. Алматы, Казахстан

ВОСПРИЯТИЕ СТУДЕНТАМИ И ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЯМИ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ МООК ПРИ ОБУЧЕНИИ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОГО АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Аннотация

Интеграция массовых открытых онлайн курсов в процессе преподавания английского языка в профессиональных целях способствует созданию персонализированной среды обучения при подготовке будущих специалистов, тем самым способствуя доступности и повышению качества образования в системе высшего образования. Этот тип академического обучения является новым для казахстанского общества, который впервые был представлен только в 2016 году Национальной платформой открытого образования в Казахстане. Цель текущего исследования – выяснить осведомленность и восприятие как студентами, так и преподавателями массовых открытых онлайн-курсов по преподаванию английского языка в профессиональных целях в нескольких университетах Алматы. По результатам опроса было выявлено положительное отношение как профессоров, так и студентов к применению системы массовых открырытх онлайн курсов при проведении занятий по английскому языку для профессиональных целей.

Ключевые слова: Массовый открытый онлайн-курс, цифровое образование, электронное обучение, высшее образование, английский язык для профессиональных целей.

Introduction. Due to the outbreak of the pandemic around the world, the first half of 2020 has created new prospects for the development of online education in Kazakhstan, both in the niche of secondary and higher education. Many educational institutions were forced to continue teaching using Internet technologies through various platforms, but as a result, higher education institutions, not to mention schools, performed poorly in the use of available modern online programs. Since then, professional development courses in distance education have been actively introduced to higher education teachers to improve the level of professional English teaching. The use of mass open online courses in the higher education system in Kazakhstan was introduced only in 2016, while the first MOOC course was introduced in Canada as early as 2008. Most of the recent studies conducted in the Kazakhstan context focus on the prospects of distance

education in general, mostly in the context of problems in the application of e-learning, arguing about the lack of teacher preparation, software, and inadequate provision of infrastructure at universities, etc. The current research is relevant because of the need to develop and implement MOOCs that meet the requirements of modernization of professional foreign language education and contribute to the formation of foreign language professional and communicative competence of bachelor graduates. The current research aims to find out the awareness and perception of students and professors of Massive Online Open Courses in teaching English for Professional Purposes at several universities in Almaty. An analysis shows that a comprehensive review of the author's Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) implementation in the field of teaching professional English to students of language pedagogy education has been insufficiently conducted. Before the in-depth study of the application of MOOCs in universities in Kazakhstan in the field of teaching a professional language, we first decided to determine the level of awareness among students and university teachers through a small survey. Distance learning first spread in the late XX – early XXI century when teachers in the UK sent study materials by post. The term MOOC was first coined by Dave Cormier of the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada (University of Prince Edward Island) to refer to the status of a distance learning program. What does the term MOOC mean? Mass - access for everyone, with no limits on the number of participants, Open - the materials are available to everyone free of charge. The online course is only available in distance learning mode. MOOCs are described as an innovative practice that is disrupting education [1, 2]. MOOCs can be seen as a turning point in higher education and can be interpreted in the light of the theory of 'disruptive innovation' [3, 41-53]. MOOCs have been developed to support university curricula, academic scholarship, community service, professional development, and corporate training [4]. They are also seen as a way to drive lifelong learning [5], a view shared by official European bodies who see them as a means to transform higher education (European Parliament, 2015; European Commission, 2013). Mass open online courses first became popular in 2011-2012, when thousands of people began enrolling en masse for courses in social, humanitarian, and other disciplines through various training platforms such as Udemy, Coursera and EDX, which proved to be the most in-demand. According to Class Central, the number of listeners registered on MOOC platforms exceeded 23 million people for the first time at the end of 2017, eventually growing to 81 million [6]. The development of mass open online courses has had a huge impact on the field of distance education, as the format of education itself allows for classes (including internships and lectures) to be interactive and engaging. Since those early years, MOOCs have often been touted for certain features, including offering content in technology-enriched learning environments, promoting easy access to learning content, allowing large numbers of learners to enroll, and being significantly less expensive than traditional education [7]. The first MOOCs and the name MOOC itself can be traced back to the work of Canadian academics Stephen Downes and George Siemens [8] Starting in 2008, Downes and Siemens ran a series of MOOCs including "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge" (CCK08), "Personal Learning Environments Networks and Knowledge" (PLENK2010) and "Change11" [4]. Connectivist MOOCs (MOOCs) are designed to create network effects for learning. Network effects can be defined as demand-side economies of scale, where the growing demand and use of a service or product contribute to its value [9, p. 228]. According to Marshal [10, 250], Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) represent a potentially exciting opportunity to use technology to realize many of the long-promised benefits of universal higher education. At the same time, some scholars say the courses are only for strong students. McGuire [11], и Ned Muhovich supports the idea that students who are behind in academics should take classes in a hybrid form because students must first learn how to learn and become comfortable with basic skills. Significantly, all students have recognized the potential of MOOCs, which offer students the opportunity to learn what they want, when they want. However, these basic principles of openness, reuse, and recombination (OECD, 2015) have been obscured by the fact that while MOOCs are initially free, providers can sometimes charge for additional services such as accreditation and certification [12]. Wiley (2012), who analyzed the MOOC, concluded that the name itself is wrong because 1. many MOOCs are massive but not open because they charge a fee 2. many MOOCs are open but not massive 3. many MOOCs lose the format of the courses. The only thing Wiley agrees with is that the MOOC is really online. Nonetheless, the use of MOOCs in the higher education system offers the opportunity to create online social and academic support that is normally found in a traditional classroom setting. [13, 15-24]. Despite the fact that some MOOCS are fee-based, thousands of people continue to take online courses because of the ability to control the pace of learning. Recently, the American Council on Education (ACE) proposed that universities count credits from completed online courses towards formal education. ACE, after completing a pilot project to adapt the existing service to MOOC, approved five MOOC courses for credit

recommendations. ACE received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to conduct work related to credit assessment, including pilot testing of a credit assessment of five Coursera courses (the initiative was later expanded to include other Coursera courses and some from Udacity) [14].

MOOC in Kazakhstan In December 2017, Kazakhstan adopted the state program "Digital Kazakhstan" by government decree, the aim of which is to reform digitalization in education. Educational institutions are to be equipped with high-quality software, e.g., information systems that allow access to educational resources, the results of modern scientific research and development, and to electronic scientific libraries in various languages of the world. First, however, educational institutions must be equipped with modern technology, i.e., computers that can connect to the Internet. The National Open Education Platform, established with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, has been providing opportunities for mass open online courses since 2016. One of the leading higher education institutions is Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, which offers more than 40 MOOCs in 15 academic fields. The next successfully developing educational platform "Open University of Kazakhstan" is OpenU.kz, which provides access to lectures by professors from the best universities in the country, especially in the technical field. There are also many other universities in the country that work closely with Kazakhstan's national open education platform, offering lectures on social, humanitarian, economic, and legal topics. These include Almaty Management University (Alma U), Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University (KAZNPU), L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University ENU, Satbayev University, Kazakh Ablai khan University of International Relations and World Languages.

Materials and methods. Motivation, which is part of perception, plays an important role in creating a context for teaching. Khan [15] and McCormack and Jones [16] have found that adding web-based elements to a course increases student motivation and participation in class discussions and projects. Motivation is crucial for effective learning, and as an educational tool, MOOCs can help maintain motivation through a personalized approach to learning. This is defined as instruction that is attuned to learning needs, tailored to learning preferences, and tailored to the specific interests of different learners [17]. Proper development of MOOCs encourages students to fully engage in the learning process so that they take new realities for granted. Students who are motivated to take online courses perceive them as a positive aspect. Since we are also interested in the extent to which both students and teachers are motivated to use Massive Open Online Courses in learning and teaching English for professional purposes, we would like to uncover the answers to the following question: 1. What are students' and language teachers' perceptions of using MOOCs in English language teaching for professional purposes? The researchers hypothesize that despite the transition to distance education, we are not yet sufficiently aware or ready to use online courses for teaching English for professional purposes through MOOCs. The main instrument chosen was a questionnaire distributed online as most students and teachers could not be easily reached. The questionnaire was adapted by Farleen Azrina Zamberi: Acceptance of Massive Online Open Course (MOOCs) Modules among Students: The case of Uitm Pulau Pinang (Published online: 30/11/2021). The questionnaire consisted of 10 closed-ended questions on students' views on the learning experience: course delivery, format, content, etc. The questionnaire used Likert scales from 1 to 5, with scale 1 representing "strongly disagree", scale 2 representing "strongly disagree", scale 3 representing "neutral", scale 4 representing "agree" and scale 5 representing "strongly agree". The survey questions, which were in the form of a five-point Likert scale, are listed in Table 2. Teachers were asked to share their ideas on the use of MOOCs by answering seven open-ended questions. The survey was conducted online through the Google Forms platform among 15 faculty (teachers, senior teachers, candidates of sciences, professors) and 32 junior students studying mainly in language departments. The teachers who participated in the survey and taught "English for professional purposes" have an average of 15.2 years of teaching experience. The survey consisted of two parts: In the first part, the questions aim to clarify the level of awareness and motivation of university teachers to use MOOCs in professional English teaching; the second part consists of questions about the main points that make MOOCs more effective according to university teachers' experiences.

Results and discussion. This section provides insights into how students and professors view the use of MOOCs in delivering English courses for professional purposes and what key factors they would suggest, based on their experiences, to make the course successful. The findings are presented in three parts: The first part shows the demographic data of the participating teachers (see Table 1), the second part contains the results of the questionnaire for the students, and the third part deals with the views and ideas of the university teachers about the use of МООС in teaching English for professional purposes. In the first part, the background information about the research participants should be described (see Table 1). The 15 male and

female teachers who participated in the study come from different backgrounds. 15.2% of the teachers are male and the remaining 84.8% are female. The average age is 28, which means that the majority of the participants are between 20 and 35 years old. The student participants did not have to provide information about their language level and age, as they are all junior and senior students with the same language skills.

Table 1. The demographics of teacher participants

Teaching experience (years)	1-3	4-5	6-10	11-20	21+
English for professional purposes	10.8%	23.7%	37.5%	25%	3%
Levels of English	B2 (upper-intermediate)		C1 (advanced)		
	68 %		32%		

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of teachers (37.5%) have taught English for professional purposes for six to ten years, which means that they all have sufficient knowledge and skills to contribute their views on the use of Massive Open Online Courses in learning and teaching English for professional purposes. Level C1 (advanced) is taught by 7 of the 15 teachers (32%), while 8 teachers (68%) teach level B2   (upper-intermediate).
In the next step of the research, the second part, the junior students were asked to fill in the questionnaire on the Likert scale according to Farleen Azrina Zamberi: Acceptance of Massive Online Open Course (MOOCs) Modules among Students: The case of Uitm Pulau Pinang, Published online: 30/11/2021. Respondents were asked about their learning experiences in implementing MOOCs for learning English for professional purposes.

Table 2. Student participant Likert Scale survey results

Number	Items for response	Mean	SD
1	The MOOCs learning module of the course 'English for Professional Purposes' was very effective.	4.16	0.63
2	The MOOCs learning module of the course 'English for Professional Purposes' helped me increase my understanding of a particular topic	4.03	0.62
3	The MOOCs learning module of the course 'English for Professional Purposes' provided the opportunity to think critically.	4.34	0.65
4	The MOOCs learning module of the course 'English for Professional Purposes' provided the opportunity to interact with friends from different backgrounds.	2.34	0.82
5	The MOOCs learning module of the course 'English for Professional Purposes' improved my language skills.	4.03	0.59
6	The MOOCs learning module of the course 'English for Professional Purposes'was user-friendly.	4.25	0.67
7	The MOOCs learning module of the course English for Professional Purposes had clear instructions for the various learning activities	3.47	0.67

8	The MOOCs learning module of the course English for Professional Purposes Allowed learning to take place outside of a fixed class location.	4.50	0.56
9	The MOOCs learning module of the course English for Professional Purposes Allowed me to study at my own pace	4.50	0.84
10	I would like to proceed with the course 'English for Professional Purposes my means of MOOC further	3.75	0.57

The results in Table 2 show that all the questions have a mean score of more than 3.00, which means that students perceived their language learning experience through the MOOC as positive and effective. The highest mean was given for the question about the format of the MOOC, stating that it allows students to learn at their own pace and that learning takes place outside of class; the lowest mean was given for question 4 (Q4) about contact with friends from different backgrounds. The responses indicate that the MOOC learning module of the 'English for Professional Purposes course was very useful for them (mean: 4.16) and helped to improve their language skills at the end of the course (mean: 4.03). Students' answers to the current question are consistent with the results of other studies focusing on the same problem which shows that the use of MOOCs increases students' motivation and promotes engagement. One of these studies was conducted by *Kai Wang and Chang Zhu who revealed* that students in their research clearly believed that the MOOCs system had positively contributed to their learning [18].

Students agreed that the learning module of the 'English for Professional Purposes' course provided the opportunity to think critically (mean: 4.34) and helped them to improve their understanding of a particular topic (mean: 4.03), as well as allowing them to learn at their own pace as it was more convenient (mean: 4.50). The high mean score on the questions about the MOOC learning module of the 'English for Professional Purposes course that allowed learning outside a fixed classroom (mean: 4.50) and the MOOC learning module of the 'English for Professional Purposes' course was user-friendly (mean: 4.25) proves that all junior and senior students find the implementation of MOOCs more practical and convenient today with the progress of online education. When using the MOOC learning module of the English for Professional Purposes course, the students surveyed agreed that the course provided clear instructions for the different learning activities (mean: 3.47). It can also be pointed out that the majority of the university students would like to continue with the 'English for Professional Purposes my means of MOOC (mean: 3.75) course as we believe that the flexible format of the course helps them a lot in their busy working style as we all know that both junior and senior students start working and earning money as early as semester 6. Baker supports the students' idea by saying that the flipped classroom model "provides students with more control over their learning", and "gives students a greater sense of their own responsibility for their learning" [19]. In another study about the effectiveness of MOOC, students in the experimental group indicated that they were overall satisfied with the experience, they expressed that it helped them get exposed to high-quality materials in the content area they were learning, and engage in more meaningful collaborative tasks, improved their proficiency in English, especially in listening and speaking [20]. As we can clearly see from the data, the item with the lowest score (mean: 2.34) is that the MOOC learning module of the course 'English for Professional Purposes' did not provide an opportunity to interact with friends from other fields, a reason to believe that this is due to the fact that these students belonged to the same faculty and the majority of the respondents were from the same university.

The third part of the research findings discusses higher education teachers' views and ideas about the use of MOOCs in English language teaching for professional purposes. The qualitative data were collected from university teachers who have been teaching English for professional purposes for 15 years. The majority of the teachers, 9 out of 15 (63%), admitted to teaching online courses in English for professional purposes to lower and upper-level students, and only 6 out of 15 teachers have delivered their courses using a Massive Open Online Course format. The aim of the survey was to find out whether university teachers are aware and motivated to use MOOCs in teaching English for professional purposes. A total of 15 teachers from the Faculty of Education and Humanities participated, out of which 8 were from Suleyman Demirel University and the remaining 7 were from various other higher education institutions such as Kazakh National Pedagogical University to Abay Kunanbayev, Kazakh National University (KazNu), Kazakh State University of International Relations and World Languages to Ablai khan. The distributed survey consisted

of seven open-ended questions: 1. are you still interested in incorporating the MOOC into English classes (including for professional purposes) and if so, what motivates you to use it? 2. apart from the above-mentioned advantages of using MOOCs in English teaching, can you name any disadvantages of MOOCs, especially when teaching English for professional purposes? 3) What do you think are the key factors for the success of teaching English for professional purposes using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)? List at least three factors: What were the specific reasons? 4. What about student outcomes? Has the use of MOOCs in the English classroom (including for professional purposes) had a positive impact on your students' learning outcomes? 5. What do you think are the main challenges in using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) for learning/teaching English for professional purposes? 6. what specific features of the MOOC format/structure make both learning and teaching more effective? 7. what is your general attitude towards the use of MOOC in teaching/learning English for professional purposes based on your experience? Rather positive or rather negative? Please give reasons

Based on the analysis and the survey results, we can say that the majority of university teachers are interested in using MOOCs in delivering class English for professional purposes because more than half of the participants (67%) answered positively. The vast majority of teachers (91%) all agree on the fact that the future of any university can not be imagined without the MOOC and moreover, implementing massive online open courses at universities would be a good step forward to digitized education. They admit (71%) that one of the main advantages of applying MOOC in Kazakhstan as well as abroad is sustaining equality in higher education since its open format helps masses of people gain knowledge free without limitations by being flexible. That answer of teachers agrees with the point of view of scholars Blake and Guillen (2014) that a foreign language MOOC also includes the four major benefits of online language learning for learners: (a) flexibility, (b) personalization, (c) autonomy, and (d) automation. Along with the mentioned advantages of using MOOCs in teaching English, there still can be disadvantages. To the fourth question: *In your opinion, what key factors will make teaching English for professional purposes successful by means of massive open online courses (MOOC)? Name at least three factors: what were the specific reasons for that? Two-thirds* of participants (65%) admitted that it increases the motivation of students by giving them a chance to study autonomously, thus increasing students' self-esteem and enhancing independent learning. It can also be very helpful for shy students in becoming more confident when practicing the language. Students' learning outcomes can also be positively influenced, if not much, but still, students get motivated in learning through online courses because they enjoy experiencing new methods of studying and do not get bored. When combined with multiple communication tools and tactics, such as group discussions in forums students get more engaged in the learning process.

The learning styles of students are supported by the MOOC design where the use of different class activities increases learner motivation and self-esteem. *The most specific challenges when using the massive open online courses (MOOC) for learning/teaching English for professional purposes according to teachers' responses were the following: a) unavailability because of internet connection, not enough feedback, time-consuming class preparation process,* (48,2 % of participants) mentioned problems specific to Kazakhstan by saying that people from the outskirts of the city have a poor internet connection which prevents them from using MOOCs normally. The cases when students couldn't open or download a 10-minute video lecture can be evidence. A significant proportion of respondents consisting of 61% of teachers mention lack of immediate feedback from instructors as another disadvantage of MOOC use by adding that sometimes it makes learners demotivated. The next reason that prevents teachers from applying to MOOCs (82%) is that recording video lecture is time-consuming. You can not just open the platform and start lecturing; all classes should have pre-recorded videos. Last but not least, the level of cheating mentioned by the teachers should be somehow addressed by university administrations as well. It is difficult to assure that cheating is not taking place in an online environment, especially if the course is accredited by the university. In that case, learning becomes joint and not personalized when students try to do tasks collaboratively which results in the same ideas and answers. It becomes impossible for the teacher to assess the gained knowledge objectively.

The research shows that more than half of teachers (57%) had the same limited answer to question number six (Q6) meaning that university language instructors apply the very basic format and type of MOOC: xMOOC where video lectures are presented first followed by tasks for individual study. However, there are modernized types that exist such as small private massive courses, abbreviated as SPOC; small massive online open courses adapted to learner specific needs in the form of short seminars (sMOOC), connectivist MOOC where there are seminars and colloquia, and blended MOOC (bMOOC) when traditional and distance learning is combined. The only specific feature making the use of MOOC

effective is it's being available anytime and anywhere and also that it allows students to study the course at a self-determined pace. As a matter of fact, we need to admit that teachers should know about other types of MOOC courses that can enhance both the teaching and learning process.

Conclusion. The current paper aimed at revealing the students' and professors' perceptions of using MOOCs in teaching and learning English for professional purposes. The positive results presented in this paper, on one hand, confirmed the relevance of integrating massive open online courses into the curriculum of teaching English for professional purposes in order to maximize the modernization of professional foreign language education, contributing to the formation of foreign language professional and communicative competence, and, on the other hand, the need to take the necessary measures as soon as possible for a more effective organization of training of bachelor students by means of online courses. It is also important to admit that experiencing a new learning environment is beneficial for both teachers and learners that would finally contribute to the increase in the Professional English level among students and university prestige as well.

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