Polytechnic ESL Lecturers’ Acceptance Of Using Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) For Teaching English As A Second Language (ESL)

Noorhafizah Rubaai, Harwati Hashim

Abstract: The implementation of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) in the educational field has become the way of learning in many educational institutions worldwide. MOOC is believed could help to promote active learning among language learners. In Malaysian polytechnic settings, MOOC has just recently implemented for the English course. Thus, this study aimed to investigate polytechnic ESL lecturers’ acceptance of using Massive Open Online Course for teaching ESL and the challenges they faced in using MOOC. The methodology used was the survey method where a set of questionnaires was developed and adapted from the Technology Acceptance Model. The respondents for this study were 34 ESL lecturers from different polytechnics in Malaysia. The findings revealed that polytechnic ESL lecturers have positive perceptions towards the ease of use and usefulness of MOOC for teaching ESL. The investigation also revealed the challenges faced by the lecturers in using MOOC for teaching ESL. The results would contribute positively to the policy makers, developers, and administrators to gain more insight on the lecturers' perceptions and challenges related to the use of technology for language teaching and learning in any higher learning institutions.

Index Terms: Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), acceptance, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), English as a Second Language (ESL).

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in education has been the current trend of teaching and learning where the opportunity for knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing have move beyond time, locations, and with free registration cost [1]. Interestingly, MOOCs have successfully attracted a large number of multi-background learners all around the world to enroll in online educa-tional platforms [2]. Knowing these facts, Malaysia has taken a great attempt in incorporating MOOCs in educational institutions since 2013 [3]. This step in implementing MOOC into its education system shows that Malaysia is ready to join the crowd in making education be accessible for all learners regardless of time, venues, and free enrollment.

The implementation of MOOC in Malaysia started in 2013 [3]. The Malaysia Education Blueprint for Higher Education (2015-2025) produced by the Ministry of Education Malaysia stated that the purpose of MOOC is to allow students to get access to world-class learning materials with minimal or no fees needed. Furthermore, the use of MOOC can also enhance students’ participation, in-crease the quality of instructions in a cost-effective manner. Besides, MOOC provides such an advantage where it allows the students to complete the online tasks unaffected by their geographical settings at any time [4]. Thus, following the Malaysia Education Blueprint, all higher learning education institutions have started their gears towards the implementation of MOOC in the teaching and learning process including Malaysian Polytechnics.

In Malaysian polytechnics, MOOC has been implemented in the teaching and learning to support the face-to-face learning environment [5] since 2016 to uphold the ninth agenda of Malaysia Education Blueprint for Higher Education 2015-2025 which is the Globalised Online Learning. In 2016, 19 MOOCs have been developed and 35 MOOCs have been conducted in 2017 and the implementation of MOOC lead to the increase in students’ intake in 2017 at 2.7 percent [6]. The MOOCs have allowed open access to the TVET programs con-ducted by the polytechnics in Malaysia. Besides, the implementation of MOOC has made possible the convergence of technology in Malaysian TVET education. This is to create quality TVET graduates that are well prepared with all the skills required in the era of 4.0th industrial revolution, in line with the Malaysian polytechnic’s mission [7], [8] & [9].

As the ESL lecturers were not involved in the development of MOOCs and many of them have no experience in using MOOC, the observations made found that the English lecturers in polytechnic were not adequately prepared in using MOOC for teaching ESL due to lack of exposure to MOOC. They relied heavily on the notes provided and the instructions which were given through emails, staff briefing, and information sharing from WhatsApp groups. They also had to conduct trials and errors in order to ensure students manage to register MOOC and guide them to be able to complete all tasks. This condition was found to be time-consuming and at the same time challenging for the ESL lecturers as well as the students. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the polytechnics ESL lecturers’ perceptions towards the use of MOOC for teaching English as a Second Language and the challenges they faced in implementing MOOC. For this, the study was conducted based on these objectives:

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To investigate the polytechnic ESL lecturers’ perceptions towards perceived ease of use with regard to using MOOC for teaching ESL.

To investigate the polytechnic ESL lecturers’ perceptions towards perceived usefulness with regard to using MOOC for teaching ESL.

To discover the challenges faced by the polytechnic ESL lecturers in using MOOC for teaching ESL.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Technology in Education

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) [10] has been widely accepted in order to understand the users’ perception of technology in language learning. It provides a prediction on the user’s acceptance and the usage of technology for the respective purposes [11]. [12] believes that the learner’s attitude towards technology is influenced greatly by its perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In addition, the design of a system will directly affect the user’s attitude towards the usage of technology in performing any task needed [12]. Thus, it is important to have a system or technology that is user-friendly to achieve its said purposes.

B. MOOC in Language Learning

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) has become a popular learning choice among learners and educators around the globe. Fascinatingly, MOOCs have also become a famous tool to deliver and discover new professional knowledge and skills [1]. Similarly, the second language learning has also implementing MOOCs including English for Second Language (ESL) students in the teaching of its four language skills. In [13], David Cormier of Prince Edward Island University was said to be the first to come out with the term MOOC in 2008, which then the term was adopted by the American Universities in order to create the online platforms. In recent year, MOOC has been defined as an Internet platform where users will enroll in a MOOC [14]. Comparably, [15] defined a MOOC as a free and open online course which publicly shared and produced flexible outcomes.

The main concept of a MOOC is divided into four, which are: Massive – the number of enrolment is big, Open – the enrolment fee is free and not limited by age or geographic location, Online – the course is fully conducted in online mode, Course – the materials prepared contain a course with the presence of instructor or instructional assistance [16]. Throughout time, MOOC has evolved and improved. Following that, there are two models of MOOC that have emerged such as cMOOC which focused on contents and xMOOC that focused on social networks [17]. Later, the term for MOOC specifically designed for second language learning is called Language MOOC or LMOOC [18]. Thus, MOOC has become among the best educational tools for language learning that may benefit the learners.

C. Benefits of MOOC in ESL Learning

MOOCs have potentials that are beneficial to ESL learners. In a study conducted by [19] agreed that MOOC allows learning flexibility among learners when they are allowed to not register to any institutions and at the same time learn according to their own pace and time. In addition, MOOC provides forums which allow learners to share ideas and practice their creative and critical thinking during discussions with other enrollers [20]. Thus, the specialty of MOOC has undoubtedly relied on its integration with social networking and the availability of online resources [15] [4]. This suits the learning setting for ESL learners where they are able to communicate with each other through online platforms. Importantly, MOOC helped to construct ESL learners’ commitment according to their learning objectives, existing knowledge, and skills, including mutual interests.

The studies based on the teaching and learning of four language skills through MOOC have become the current research spotlight for language researchers. A study by [21] on writing argue that MOOC could be an effective platform for language learning and that the learners could gain autonomous in learning. Similarly, another researcher found that MOOC allows learners to obtain autonomy and responsibility in language learning [22]. Therefore, the ESL learner autonomy in learning the language through MOOC is an advantage that can be exploited by the institutions [23]. In addition, a study by [5] suggested that MOOC provides a learning environment with two instructors that will be helpful to the learners [24]. They can learn face to face in the classroom with guidance from teachers, and doing exploring of the online resources themselves in MOOC.

MOOC is an online learning practice that has become the current trend for an e-learning strategy [25]. Interestingly, [17] argue that many MOOC learners are adult who owns secondary degrees. It is concurrent with another study by [26] where they agreed that the learners who enrolled in MOOCs are highly educated. In another study, the majority of participants possessed a good level of education and currently working at the time of taking part in the MOOC [27]. In addition, a different study conducted by [28] has complimented [17], where they found that learners who earned bachelor's degrees are more positive about the MOOCs than those with either more or less formal education. Thus, the findings implied that matured learners who received a higher level of education have better positive perceptions towards MOOCs in learning where they already have high motivation and determination to learn on their own using MOOC.

D. Challenges of MOOC in ESL Learning

Despite the fact that MOOC is now being widely used in higher learning institutions, the main reason for MOOC usage is still debatable among educators [17]. Studies have shown that besides the popularity of MOOC in language learning, there are challenges that need to be taken into considerations. Among the challenges is the ability to
ensure that student engagement, satisfaction, and effective learning happen when MOOC is being implemented in language learning [5]. Besides, [5] argued that language instructors may have to add their workloads in preparing for MOOCs. Another challenge is regarding the students’ assessment [4]. This is supported by a study from [29] where they argued that the students’ assessment relies heavily on multiple-choice quizzes or unstructured peer assessments. They suggested that the assessment should be constructed where MOOC contents can prove to have an impact on the learning.

Other challenges of MOOC include the students' attitude, human resource, time constraint, lecturer's self-efficacy, and the technical problem [30]. They argued that since that it is hard to monitor the students' learning quality, this has led to a higher drop-out rate. Besides, the lecturer's beliefs in his ability to fully utilize MOOC must be taken into considerations in order to ensure the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning. To add, the management must provide endless support to ensure that the development and utilization of MOOC for educational purposes can bring the desired impacts to the beneficiaries as a whole.

Other challenges that should be looked into when using MOOC are the redundancy, lack of facilities and exposure, lack of knowledge in MOOC, as well as the lack of programs that support the knowledge enhancement in terms of development and implementation of MOOC [31]. The redundancy happened when the same contents or assessments which were done in the classroom needed to be submitted again through MOOC. In addition, the teachers also had to spend extra time in order to ensure all students were able to access online materials. Not just that, the study also revealed that the teachers felt demotivated due to the poor Internet connection and the extra time they had to spend to assess the students' works. Besides, teachers also recognized that they were not competent when it came to the use of MOOC for teaching due to lack of training as well as references.

In contrary, this does not hinder the massive use of MOOC since the current digital age allows its users to stay connected through technology and social platforms [25]. In addition, large numbers of learners from all around the world have the chance to enroll in MOOCs in order to learn about anything they wanted to [17][32]. On the other hand, the teachers need to pack themselves with relevant knowledge related to MOOC in order to ensure that the in-corporation of MOOC could really benefit everyone involved.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) [10] has been widely accepted in order to understand the users’ perception of technology in language learning. It pro-vides a prediction on the user's acceptance and the usage of technology for the respective purposes [11][12]. TAM believes that the learner's attitude towards technology is influenced greatly by its perceived of usefulness and perceived ease of use. In addition, the design of a system will directly affect the user's attitude towards the usage of technology in performing any task needed [12] Thus, it is important to have a system or technology that is user-friendly to achieve its said purposes.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was survey design.

Questionnaire was developed by adopting the questionnaire from TAM [12] and from the extensive reading of previous related studies. This survey questionnaire was administered in order to collect the data needed to answer the research questions. The survey was administered through emails and mobile application by providing the link to the online questionnaire. Data were collected from 34 ESL lecturers from 14 polytechnics in Malaysia who volunteered to take part in the online survey. All lecturers who participated in the survey have experienced in using MOOC for ESL teaching. The sampling method of this study was purposive sampling.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections which included 20 items ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree) Likert-type scale. The first section was to collect the participants’ data. The items were on age, gender, teaching experience, mother tongue, experience in using MOOC, education level, the devices used to access the Internet, and the places they usually access the Internet. The second section consisted of 10 items related to the perceived of usefulness towards MOOC in ESL teaching. Next, the third section consisted of 10 items on the perceived ease of use of MOOC. The last section consisted of 1 short answer question on the challenges of using MOOC.

The questionnaire was developed using Google Form and was checked by two experts to ensure its face validity. The two experts were experienced ESL lecturers who taught English at polytechnic for a few years. The data were then analysed using percentages to examine the subjects’ responses towards the three aspects on their view of MOOC which are the perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and the challenges in using MOOC.

IV. RESULTS

A. Perceived Ease of Use

The ESL lecturers’ perceptions towards perceived ease of use with regard to using MOOC for teaching ESL are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. ESL Lecturers’ Perceptions towards Perceived Ease of Use in using MOOC for teaching ESL
Table 1 revealed that 61.8% of participants disagreed with the statement ‘I find MOOC difficult to use’. 23.5% chose ‘neutral’ with regards to the statement. Another 14.7% of participants agreed that ‘they find MOOC difficult to use’. The results for the second item show that 47.1% of participants agreed that ‘learning to operate MOOC is easy for them’. 17.6% of participants chose ‘neutral’ for an answer. Another 35.3% participants disagreed that ‘learning to operate MOOC is easy for them’. Based on the table, 41.1% of participants agreed that ‘it is easy for them to remember how to perform tasks using MOOC’. 29.4% of participants chose ‘neutral’ for an answer with regards to the statement. Another 26.5% of participants disagreed with the statement. Item seven shows that 38.2% of participants disagreed that ‘interacting using MOOC requires a lot of mental effort’. 35.3% of participants chose ‘neutral’ with regards to the statement. Another 29.4% of participants disagreed with the statement. For item eight, 58.9% participants agreed with the statement ‘My students can understand the instructions I gave regarding the use of MOOC’. 23.5% of participants chose ‘neutral’ with regards to the statement. Another 17.6% disagreed that ‘their students can understand the instructions they gave regarding the use of MOOC’. Next, results show that 35.3% participants agreed with the statement ‘I find it takes a lot of effort to become skillful at using MOOC’. 29.4% of participants chose ‘neutral’ with regards to the statement. Another 35.3% of participants disagreed with the statement. The last item shows that 53% of participants agreed to the statement ‘overall, I find MOOC is easy to use’. 35.3% of participants chose ‘neutral’ for an answer, and the rest, 11.8% disagreed with the statement.

**B. Perceived Usefulness**

The ESL lecturers’ perceptions towards perceived usefulness with regard to using MOOC for teaching ESL are presented in Table 2.
The research has further revealed the answer for challenges faced by the ESL lecturers with regard of using MOOC in ESL teaching. The findings could be seen in Table 3.

As for item number eight, the results show that 55.9% of participants agreed that ‘using MOOC enhances their effectiveness on the job in ESL teaching’. 26.5% of participants chose ‘neutral’ with regards to the statement. While another 17.6% of participants disagreed that ‘using MOOC enhances their effectiveness on the job in ESL teaching’. Next is item number nine, where 64.7% of the participants agreed that ‘using MOOC makes their ESL teaching interesting’. 14.7% chose ‘neutral’ with regards to the statement. Another 20.5% disagreed that ‘using MOOC makes their ESL teaching interesting’. The last item showed that 64.7% of participants agreed that ‘overall, they find MOOC is useful in their ESL teaching job’. Another 17.6% chose ‘neutral’ with regards to the statement. 17.6% of participants disagreed that ‘overall, they find MOOC is useful in their ESL teaching job’.

C. Challenges in Using MOOC

The research has further revealed the answer for challenges faced by the ESL lecturers with regard of using MOOC in ESL teaching. The findings could be seen in Table 3.

Table 2. ESL Lecturers’ Perceptions towards Perceived Usefulness in Using MOOC for Teaching ESL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Using MOOC improves the quality of my ESL teaching.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Using MOOC gives me greater control over my work in ESL teaching.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MOOC enables me to accomplish tasks more quickly in ESL teaching.</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MOOC supports critical aspects of my job in ESL teaching.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Using MOOC improves my job performance in ESL teaching.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Using MOOC increases my productivity in ESL teaching.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Using MOOC allows me to accomplish more work than would otherwise be possible.</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Using MOOC enhances my effectiveness on the job in ESL teaching.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Using MOOC makes my ESL teaching interesting.</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Overall, I find MOOC is useful in my ESL teaching job.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Strongly Agree, SA = Agree
Table 3 shows the challenges of using MOOC for ESL teaching. The survey revealed that there are five challenges faced by the participants. The first challenge recorded was slow/no Internet connection. The participants provided responses such as “poor internet connection” and “the WiFi connection in the polytechnic is poor. It discourages students to use it because there are some tasks that they have to redo a few times due to the poor connection…” “students have no access to internet.” “discourages students to use it because there are some tasks that they have to redo a few times due to the poor connection…”

Next, the challenge faced by the lecturers was related to the students’ attitude. The responses recorded revealed that “some students are not IT literate”, “staff to re-learn to adopt the technology”, and “understanding technology itself is a struggle”.

Finally, the challenge of using MOOC revealed that the unstable system was among the response provided by the participants. They wrote that “students can’t print their certificate” and “sometimes the students have completed the tasks but the progress indicator still says that it is not 100%”.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that the ESL lecturers found MOOC easy to operate as more than half of them did not think that MOOC was difficult to use, and their students could understand the instructions related with the use of MOOC. In addition, the findings also revealed that the majority of ESL lecturers agreed that it was easy for them to learn how to operate MOOC, it was easy to use MOOC for teaching purposes, MOOC was not rigid and inflexible to use, it was easy for them to remember how to perform tasks using MOOC, and MOOC did not require a lot of mental efforts. Somehow, the findings showed the same result over agreement and disagreement of perceived ease of use of MOOC, where the same number of ESL lecturers agreed and disagreed that interacting with MOOC often frustrated them and a lot of effort was needed to become skillful at using MOOC. This might happen due to the challenges they faced when using MOOC.

With regards to the ESL lecturers’ perceptions on perceived usefulness, the findings revealed that the majority of ESL lecturers positively perceived MOOC as useful for ESL teaching. More than half of the ESL lecturers agreed that MOOC enabled them to accomplish tasks more quickly, helped to increase their productivity, enhanced their teaching effectiveness, and made their teaching interesting in ESL teaching. The ESL lecturers also see that MOOC was useful in terms of helping to improve their quality of ESL teaching, gave them greater control over their work, supported critical aspects of their job, improved their job performance, and allowed them to complete more work. However, there were a few ESL lecturers perceived that MOOC did not help in terms of making them accomplished more tasks, increased their teaching productivity, to complete tasks quickly, and made their teaching interesting. These might be related to the challenges they faced when using MOOC.

Additionally, this study also revealed that there were five challenges faced by the ESL lecturers with regards to MOOC in ESL teaching. Many ESL lecturers responded that one of the challenges that faced actually due to slow or no Internet connection. Owing to this, the lecturers were demotivated because they knew that MOOC could not be accessed or the students could not perform the activities in MOOC as instructed, while the students also felt demotivated because they had to redo the tasks a few times or failed to complete the tasks. This finding was concurrent with the finding by [31] where they found that teachers, as well as learners, felt demotivated in learning due to the weak Internet connection. In order to
overcome this challenge, besides to file a report to the administrator for further action, the ESL lecturers could try to remind the students to check their Internet connection strength and find places which could provide them with good signal.

The second challenge was the extra time that the ESL lecturers had to spend in order to monitor the students’ progress. This was supported by the finding from a study conducted by [5] whereby the language instructors may have to add their workloads when MOOCs were implemented in the teaching and learning process. To decrease excessive workloads, ESL lecturers must be able to manage their time wisely. It is suggested that the ESL lecturers helped out each other to settle the workloads. It is advisable for the ESL lecturers to be motivated and keep track of their work to ensure all tasks could be completed efficiently and on time.

The third challenge recorded was related to the students’ attitude with regards to MOOC. The students were making excuses to not completing the tasks, did not show interest in doing the tasks, and some tend to copy their friends’ work. The same finding has also been identified from the study conducted by [30] were among the challenges they discovered was the students’ attitude. Obviously, the flexibility that MOOC offered in language learning [19] did not manage to catch some of the students’ attention and motivation in completing the tasks accordingly. Thus, ESL lecturers must be creative and helpful to ensure the students were able to do the tasks and at the same time develop their sense of responsibility in completing the tasks.

Next, the fourth challenge faced by the ESL lecturers was related to lack of application knowledge. They agreed that they did not possess enough skills when it comes to the usage of MOOC for ESL teaching on the grounds that they received a lack of information and training. This has caused the ESL lecturers to not able to provide effective assistance to the students who were using MOOC for the first time. This finding also confirmed the finding from a study conducted by [31] where the teachers agreed that they were not incompetent when it comes to the use of MOOC for teaching by cause of inadequate training as well as references. It is recommended that effective, practical, and enough training is given to the English language lecturers. When the staff understand and have proper knowledge, they would be able to utilize the technology for ESL teaching effectively.

Finally, the challenge faced by the ESL lecturers was related to the instability of the system that happened when using MOOC. Among the responses recorded with reference to it were, when the students managed to complete the tasks but could not print out the certificate, and when the students actually successfully completed the tasks and yet they had to redo the tasks again due to the glitch happened to the MOOC platform. When this happened, the English lecturer did not have solutions to it unless to inform the MOOC coordinator and wait for the problems to settle, which in fact was time-consuming and annoying to an extent. This finding was in concurrent with [30] in their study, they discovered one of the challenges in using MOOC was the technical problem. This situation was out of control and it frustrated the teachers as well as the students. This is where the MOOC developer has to think of something in order to improve the current platforms. The ESL lecturers must be able to expect that sometimes glitch happens. When this happens, the lecturers could provide positive feedback to the students to help them to stay motivated.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the ESL lecturers in polytechnic perceived MOOC as useful and the process of learning how to implement MOOC is somehow not difficult. Anyhow, the lecturers agreed that they need more training and exposure to effectively use MOOC for teaching ESL. Besides, there are a few challenges faced by lecturers when using MOOC. Those challenges are slow/no Internet connection, extra time have to be spent extra workloads, the students’ attitude, lack of application knowledge, and unstable system. These challenges are issues that need consideration from the lecturers, administrators, and MOOC developers as the possible interventions can be planned or carried out in order to curb the problems. From the findings, the researchers would like to provide a few recommendations for future research. Full-scale research could be conducted in the future targeting all ESL lecturers of Malaysian polytechnics. The findings could be analyzed in terms of making comparisons between the variables to get an in-depth analysis. To add, the interventions or improvements could be implemented to ensure that MOOC could really catch students’ attention and motivation towards their ESL learning process. The future study could also be conducted to find out the effectiveness of MOOC implementation in ESL teaching and learning based on the available syllabus in polytechnic.

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