

Language MOOCs in China: The Perspectives of Teachers and Learners

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Abstract

Language Massive Online Open Courses (LMOOCs) have developed fast and attracted increasing research attention worldwide. However, little is known about the reasons that motivated instructors and learners to engage in LMOOCs and their perceptions of the features of good-quality LMOOCs in English as a foreign language (EFL) context. To address these gaps, this study used a questionnaire to elicit data from 51 instructors and 723 learners of LMOOCs in China. The results showed that many instructors and learners reported that their involvement in LMOOCs was largely related to departmental or university requirements. Many instructors endorsed intrinsic reasons such as keeping pace with the time and the new trend of teaching and providing learning resources to more people, while many learners admitted intrinsic reasons such as improving their English proficiency and acquiring more knowledge. This study identified three conspicuous aspects regarding the features of good-quality LMOOCs: instructors and course design, language assistance, and reinforcement and interaction activities. Implications for university administrators, designers, and instructors of LMOOCs are finally presented.

Keywords: Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs); Language MOOCs (LMOOCs); reasons; features of good-quality LMOOCs, EFL contexts

INTRODUCTION

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which were considered an innovative form of online education (Bárcena et al., 2014), have rapidly developed into a distinct research area. Facilitated by technological advancement, MOOCs have demonstrated many benefits, such as making education accessible to a large number of people, transcending spatial and temporal constraints, and offering massive and diverse courses exceeding what can be expected from a disciplinary curriculum in university (Bárcena & Martín-Monje, 2014; Peng & Jiang, 2022). The role of MOOCs has been ramped up during the outbreak of COVID-19, in which face-to-face courses were mostly forced to shift to online teaching or be substituted with ready-made MOOCs.

While research into MOOCs has proliferated (Deng et al., 2017; Hew & Cheung, 2014; Wen et al., 2014), language MOOCs (LMOOCs) as a domain-specific type has received relatively less spotlight. LMOOCs are “dedicated Web-based online courses for second languages with unrestricted access and potentially unlimited participation” (Bárcena & Martín-Monje, 2014, p. 1). Unlike subject content learning in general which is primarily knowledge-based, language learning is considered both knowledge-based involving cognitive processing, and skill-based entailing social interaction that promotes language use (Bárcena et al., 2014). To wit, success in learning

through LMOOCs may not just hinge on learners' cognitive capacities but also on other factors such as their motives for taking LMOOCs and opportunities for engaging in negotiation for meaning and obtaining feedback, which are factors commonly documented in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (Mitchell et al., 2019). However, different from traditional offline classrooms, the LMOOC setting, which typically features pre-recorded teaching videos coupled with other learning materials, assignments, and assessments (Hew & Cheung, 2014), is inherently disadvantageous at promoting synchronous interaction among instructors and learners that are otherwise conveniently carried out in face-to-face teaching. Concerns about challenges facing LMOOCs, such as high dropout rates and insufficient interaction, have been raised (Fridriksdóttir, 2018; Motzo & Proudfoot, 2017).

Hitherto amongst the surging amount of research on LMOOCs, most has concentrated on exploring learners' opinions based on their posts in discussion forums (Ding, 2019; Ding & Shen, 2020; Peng & Jiang, 2022), discussing quality criteria for LMOOCs (Ding, 2019; Luo & Ye, 2021), and tracking learners' learning behavior in the LMOOC setting (Fridriksdóttir, 2018; Jiang & Peng, 2023; Martín-Monje et al., 2018). However, few studies have explored the reasons that in the first place motivate instructors to teach LMOOCs and students to undertake LMOOCs. Hence, more research into LMOOCs is needed to shed light on these issues, which may inform the development and improvement of LMOOCs. This line of inquiry is particularly significant for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) who can take advantage of LMOOCs to expand their language learning beyond the classroom walls.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

LMOOCs AS A BURGEONING RESEARCH FIELD

LMOOCs have been accorded increased research attention in the past decade. While early studies were scattered in conference proceedings, a rising number of research papers on LMOOCs have been published in academic journals (Chong et al., 2022; Sallam et al., 2022). MOOCs are generally viewed to fall into two types: cMOOCs and xMOOCs (Downes, 2012; Teixeira & Mota, 2014). cMOOCs follow a connectivist approach, viewing that "knowledge consists of connections between humans and their artifacts" (Downes, 2012, p. 9). Hence, in cMOOCs, there is often no "fixed body of content to be learned" and the production of artifacts resulting from participants' interaction and reflections constitute the major source of learning content (Teixeira & Mota, 2014, p. 34). In contrast, xMOOCs adopt an instructivist approach whereby course content is structured according to pre-described syllabi, which reflect traditional pedagogical approach (Motzo & Proudfoot, 2017). xMOOCs often consist of "readings, discussion forums, assignments (e.g., quizzes and projects), and pre-recorded instructor lecture videos" (Hew et al., 2018, p. 72). It can be inferred that, compared with cMOOCs, xMOOCs do not assign much weight to promote interaction during the learning process. LMOOCs offered by universities usually follow the principles of xMOOCs (Chong et al., 2022).

Several strands of research have emerged in terms of research foci and data elicitation. The first strand concerns the collection and analysis of learners' posts or reviews in the forums of LMOOCs to understand learners' perceptions, concerns, or sentiments toward LMOOCs. Ding and Shen (2020) analyzed 3510 learner reviews on 41 LMOOCs in China and identified three categories that were most important to learners: content design of course videos, presentation

design of videos, and MOOC program instructors. They pointed out that learners' perceptions reflected in their reviews were mainly associated with their course engagement, expected teacher roles, LMOOC design, and preference for the traditional way of foreign language teaching and learning. Peng and Jiang (2022) analyzed 22,368 learner comments on 60 LMOOCs in China using sentiment analysis and content analysis. Their results showed that while learners' comments were overwhelmingly positive, concerns were raised surrounding course content (e.g., too difficult or too simple), lecture videos (e.g., lack of bilingual captions), assignments and tests (e.g., too many assignments), and instructors (e.g., accented English or insufficient oral English skills). Their study also discerned that since leaving comments in discussion forums was sometimes mandatory, some learners may tactically circumvent negative comments.

Notably, a common issue reported in previous studies is the lack of interaction in the LMOOC environment (Bárcena et al., 2014; Ding & Shen, 2020; Martín-Monje et al., 2017; Peng & Jiang, 2022). Ding and Shen's (2020) study showed that many learners expected more teacher-student interaction but showed less awareness of interaction among students. Similarly, Martín-Monje et al.'s (2017) study of one English LMOOC also reported that learners' online interaction was generally low, and those who were active in discussion forums succeeded in that course. Chong et al. (2022) pointed out that a salient design limitation of LMOOCs is the lack of instructor-learner and learner-learner interaction since in their systematic review of 100 LMOOCs on edX and Coursera, only 48 LMOOCs included interactive tasks.

A second research strand is tracking learners' learning analytics to analyze their engagement patterns (Martín-Monje et al., 2018) or clickstream data to discern learners' allocation of attention (Zeng et al., 2022) in LMOOC contexts. For instance, Martín-Monje et al.'s (2018) analysis of learners' task submission, assessment submission, peer feedback submission, and forum message comments revealed that the majority of the learners were 'viewers' who accessed learning materials but did not submit any tasks. Zeng et al. (2022) modeled an open-network of collective attention and found that high-performing learners tended to excel in maintaining their attention and circulating attention into other learning units. In Jiang and Peng's (2023) recent study of an LMOOC in China, tracking data of 3673 learners from the learning management system of the LMOOC platform were collected and three types of activities, namely videos watched, assignments submitted, and posts written, were analyzed and used as indicators of learners' online task engagement. The results showed that the three indicators of online task engagement significantly predicted learners' academic performance.

Another common approach is using surveys or in tandem with other data sources to explore learners' experiences and perceptions of LMOOCs (Fridriksdóttir, 2021a, 2021b). For instance, Fridriksdóttir (2021a) surveyed learners' perceptions of the content-specific factors that influence learners' motivation to carry on learning in LMOOCs. It was found that gradual and scaffolded input presentation was most important for student retention. Mac Lochlainn et al. (2021) surveyed how learners from ab initio Irish LMOOC participated in 14 activities. The results showed that the activities learners mostly engaged in were solitary and exploratory in nature (e.g., listening to course audio files), while activities involving interaction with others (e.g., writing comments to other learners) were least engaged. Surveys have also been conducted to investigate learner autonomy in LMOOCs (Mısır et al., 2018) and learners' attitudes toward and perceived benefits of a flipped classroom model in which an LMOOC was embedded (Zhang, 2017). However, few studies have directly inquired why language teachers and students undertake teaching or learning in LMOOCs, a topic presented in the next section.

REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING TEACHING OR LEARNING IN LMOOCs

Amongst the rapidly emerging literature on LMOOCs (Chong et al., 2022; Ding & Shen, 2020; Hsu, 2021; Martín-Monje & Borthwick, 2021; Zeng et al., 2022), few studies have examined the reasons that in the first place motivate teachers or students to undertake teaching or learning in LMOOCs. Given the scant evidence, related findings from MOOC research are first presented here, followed by findings from LMOOC research. According to Hew and Cheung's (2014) review of 25 published articles on MOOCs, there are three main reasons motivating teachers to offer MOOCs: a sense of intrigue (e.g., a desire to teach and reach out to a large and diverse audience throughout the world), gaining personal rewards such as fame or reputation, or a sense of altruism (e.g., a desire to make higher education accessible to more learners). In Kolowich's (2013) survey among 103 professors who have taught MOOCs, the most reported reason was altruism, while some professors also indicated their intention to catch up with the trend of online education and increase their visibility among colleagues or with the media or general public.

In the domain of LMOOCs, scanty studies have directly inquired about teachers' reasons for offering LMOOCs. In a recent study, Jiang et al. (2021) investigated 166 university-based English teachers in China about their intention to use flipped teaching. Flipped teaching, also known as the flipped classroom, refers to the form of instruction in which students prepare for the class by watching videos or reading materials outside the class, and the inside class time is devoted to students' active learning and interaction (Jiang et al., 2021). LMOOCs are often embedded in flipped teaching (see Zhang, 2017). Jiang et al. (2021) reported that the surveyed teachers were generally willing to use flipped teaching, and such an intention was significantly stronger among teachers from key universities than from regular ones. They attributed this finding to the fact that the LMOOCs utilized in flipped teaching are mainly developed by teachers in key universities. Jiang et al. (2021) also found that the satisfaction of teachers' needs for competency and autonomy functioned to strengthen their identified regulation, which then motivated their intention to use flipping teaching.

As for students, the reasons for signing up MOOCs are more diverse. In the general domain, Hew and Cheung (2014) summarized four main reasons for learners to take MOOCs: learning about a new topic or to extend current knowledge, curiosity about MOOCs, personal challenges, and collecting completion certificates. Williams et al. (2018) delineated six major goals of students for registering MOOCs: personal interest and lifelong learning, knowing more about MOOCs, preparing for a credit or placement exam, one's study or career, a specific professor(s) or university, and connecting with others. Personal interest and lifelong learning were found to rank as the top reason for the 15,655 edX users across eight UT AustinX courses in their study. Apart from the above reasons, meeting new people in the course, taking courses relevant to one's degree program, academic research or job, and improving one's English were also revealed by Kizilcec and Schneider (2015) as the reasons for learners to take MOOCs.

Regarding reasons for registering LMOOCs, Bárkányi (2021) found that the majority of learners of six courses of Spanish for Beginners on FutureLearn, a popular website offering online courses and degrees from world-renowned universities, reported that they joined the courses for pleasure and intellectual satisfaction. The second and third reasons were related to personal well-being and complementing personal hobbies or voluntary activities. In their recent study on learner autonomy in an EFL MOOC in China, Ding and Shen (2022) interviewed 38 participants and delineated five types of the learners' external motivation (for career, for MOOC certificates, for examinations, for academic reasons, and for social connection) and three types of internal

motivation (for competence and knowledge, for curiosity, and for stimulation). Most of these participants exhibited internal motivation for competence and knowledge ($n = 27$) and external motivation for examinations ($n = 16$). Apart from this limited number of studies, there is still little research that directly explores LMOOC learners' motives that have driven them to register LMOOCs. Besides, while Jiang et al. (2021) reported that teachers from different institutions differed in their attitudes toward using flipped instruction, it remains unknown whether LMOOC instructors and learners from different types of institutions differ in their motivation to undertake teaching or learning in LMOOCs.

PERCEPTIONS OF GOOD-QUALITY LMOOCS

What constitutes an effective or good-quality LMOOC is a pressing issue pertinent to the development of LMOOCs. In the domain of MOOCs, researchers have explored the instructional design quality of MOOCs with reference to the First Principles of Instruction (Margaryan et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021; Watson et al., 2017). The First Principles of Instruction were summarized by Merrill (2002) based on major instructional theories and models. These principles include problem-centered instruction, activation, demonstration, application, and integration principles. In the same vein, exploring the quality criteria for LMOOCs is a worthy question since the target language of an LMOOC is often the medium of instruction for that course, which can impose challenges on learners. In addition, the skill-based features of language learning require meaningful interaction among instructors and learners, which is often insufficient in LMOOCs that follow the practices of xMOOCs (Chong et al., 2022). Such uniqueness of LMOOCs has prompted researchers to explore what features should be present in good-quality LMOOCs.

Frameworks for conceiving design features of good-quality LMOOCs have been explored recently. Adopting Hall et al.'s (2003) framework of web-based instruction, Chong et al. (2022) identified among 100 LMOOCs three strengths of the LMOOCs: being suitable for beginning learners, remaining consistent in format and features, and using multimodal materials. Three limitations of these LMOOCs were also pinpointed: providing few opportunities for interaction, providing few formative assessments, and following a fixed learning sequence (Chong et al., 2022). Chong et al. (2022) argued for redefining LMOOCs as cMOOCs that prioritize interactivity and collaboration. Luo and Ye (2021) employed the grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2006) to analyze students' evaluative comments on ten LMOOCs in China. Their analysis showed five aspects regarding the quality criteria of LMOOCs: instructor, teaching content, pedagogy, technology, and teaching management, based on which they proposed a quality criteria framework for LMOOCs. They reported that the most decisive quality indicator of LMOOCs is "the effectiveness of teaching content" (Luo & Ye, 2021, p. 189), while teachers' oral language proficiency is considered a key factor universal to the quality of LMOOCs. Luo and Ye's (2021) study has contributed a novel blueprint for evaluating and designing LMOOCs, particularly in EFL contexts such as China. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these quality criteria were interpreted from students' comments rather than directly expressed by students based on prompts about their opinions about good-quality LMOOCs. In other words, learners' opinions about good-quality LMOOCs can be directly elicited by using other methods such as surveys or interviews. Also, it remains unknown whether and how instructors' and learners' perceptions of good-quality LMOOCs converge or diverge.

LMOOCs have gained exponential development in China. Given the prominent status of English as a global language, English is a required school subject starting in Grade Three in most primary schools and is learned all the way through the first two years in colleges and universities

in China. A natural collateral consequence is that LMOOCs are developed and applauded to provide accessibility to English learning resources to a large population of learners. As shown in Sallam et al.'s (2022) systematic review, China ranked second, following Spain, in terms of the number of published papers on LMOOCs. According to Luo and Ye (2021), there are more than 500 LMOOCs provided by 20 platforms in China. The three major LMOOC platforms, iCourse, UMOOCs, and XuetangX, have been offering 380, 228, 182 LMOOCs, respectively (Luo & Ye, 2021). In 2017, the Ministry of Education (MOE) of China officially accredited 490 MOOCs as the first batch of high-quality MOOCs (Ministry of Education, 2017b), of which 29 are LMOOCs. Based on the research gap reviewed above, this paper reports on a survey that explored teachers' and students' perspectives regarding the reasons for their undertaking LMOOCs and the features of good-quality LMOOCs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was part of a larger research project investigating the implementation of LMOOCs in China. The research questions guiding this study are as follows.

- RQ1. What are the reasons for the instructors to teach LMOOCs? Is there a significant relationship between institution type and reasons for teaching LMOOCs?
- RQ2. What are the reasons for the learners to sign up LMOOCs? Is there a significant relationship between institution type and reasons for signing up LMOOCs?
- RQ3. What are the factors underlying the items describing features of good-quality LMOOCs?
- RQ4. Is there a significant difference between LMOOC instructors and learners in terms of their agreement with the features of good-quality LMOOCs?

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

Initially, a total of 58 instructors and 789 learners who had taken at least one English-related MOOC (e.g., MOOCs on English for general purposes or specific/academic purposes, linguistics, literature, and translation) participated in this survey. The data were first scrutinized and for the purpose of staying aligned to Bárcena and Martín-Monje's (2014) definition of LMOOCs, only the data of the respondents whose LMOOC experience was related to English for general purposes or specific/academic purposes were retained. This resulted in 51 copies of the questionnaire from LMOOC instructors and 723 copies from learners, which were further analyzed. Tables 1 and 2 present the demographic information about these participants. Regarding school type in the tables, Double-World-Class Universities refer to the higher education institutions (HEIs) that have been included in China's "Double-World-Class Project", an initiative to develop world-class universities and first-class disciplines (Ministry of Education, 2017a)

Category	Subgroup	Frequency (n)	%
Gender	Male	16	31.37
	Female	35	68.63
Range of Age	20–29 years	3	5.88
	30–39 years	21	41.18
	40–49 years	21	41.18

	50–59 years	6	11.76
Degree	Doctoral	22	43.14
	Master	29	56.86
School type	Double-First-Class universities	22	43.14
	Non-Double-First-Class universities	29	56.86
	Universities affiliated with ministries	3	5.88
	Provincial key universities	12	23.53
	Other higher education institutions	14	27.45

Table 1. Summary of demographic information about the instructors ($N = 51$).

Category	Subgroup	Frequency (n)	%
Gender	Male	296	40.94
	Female	427	59.06
Learner profile	Freshmen	80	11.07
	Sophomores	320	44.26
	Juniors	184	25.45
	Seniors	33	4.56
	Master's students	102	14.11
	Doctoral students	4	0.55
Major type	English/English-related	118	16.32
	Non-English	605	83.68
School type	Double-World-Class universities	156	21.58
	Non-Double-World-Class universities	567	78.42
	Universities affiliated with ministries	13	1.80
	Provincial key universities	366	50.62
	Other higher education institutions	188	26.00

Table 2. Summary of demographic information about the learners ($N = 723$).

INSTRUMENT

The survey aimed to explore the main reasons for the instructors and learners to teach or learn LMOOCs and their perceptions of the features a good-quality LMOOC should possess. Therefore, two questionnaires, one for instructors and the other for learners, were developed based on the findings of this research project in the first phase (Peng & Jiang, 2022) and previous studies (Ding & Shen, 2020; Luo & Ye, 2021). LMOOC learners' comments and suggestions posted on the forums analyzed in Peng and Jiang (2022) provided the basis for crafting the items in the questionnaire. In the questionnaires, the respondents' demographic information (for instructors: gender, age, academic degree, professional title, university type; for learners: gender, age, grade, major, university type) was first elicited. The instructors' questionnaire also elicited information about the number and types of LMOOCs they have offered and the reasons motivating them to offer LMOOCs, the features of LMOOCs compared to traditional face-to-face teaching, and the features of good-quality LMOOCs. The questionnaire for learners includes items asking for the number and types of LMOOCs they have taken, the reasons motivating them to enroll in LMOOCs, and the features of good-quality LMOOCs in their perceptions. The items related to the features of good-quality LMOOCs were identical in the two questionnaires.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The questionnaire was administered in November 2021 through Wenjuanxing which is a professional questionnaire platform widely used in China. However, to minimize random or careless responses, the survey was set to be irretrievable to search engines. Before the administration of the questionnaire, messages were sent to teachers in colleges and universities who were also asked to pass on the message to their colleagues and invite their students to participate. Instructions were given at the beginning of the questionnaires, which explained the purpose of this anonymous research and the confidentiality of the data collected. For the convenience of the prospective and willing respondents, the first question in the instructor's questionnaire was "Have you ever offered an LMOOC or participated in teaching through LMOOCs?" and in the learner's questionnaire was "Have you studied any LMOOC in an online platform?" Those who chose 'yes' would proceed to answer the questionnaire, whereas those who chose 'no' were directed to exit the survey.

To explore the reasons for instructors and learners to undertake teaching or learning in LMOOC, which answered the first two research questions, multiple response analysis was applied to analyze the participants' responses to the related items, which were crafted in the form of multiple answers. The SPSSAU, a statistical software platform employed in China, was used to perform the multiple response analysis. In addition, to discern the relationship between institution type and reasons for offering or registering LMOOCs, a Chi-square test was conducted with the instructors' and the students' datasets, respectively, using IBM SPSS Version 22. When a significant result was obtained, a z -test was performed to compare column proportions which adjust p values using the Bonferroni method. To meet the prerequisite of a Chi-square test that "no more than 20% of expected counts should be less than 5" (Field, 2009, p. 695), two broad types of institutions were considered in this study: the Double-World-Class and non-Double-World-Class (see Tables 1 and 2).

To address the third research question, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on the students' dataset in order to extract the major factors underlying the items capturing features of good-quality LMOOCs; however, this was not performed on the instructors' dataset due to the small size of this group. As for the last research question, Chi-square tests were performed on each item to detect whether the LMOOC instructors and learners differed in their agreement on each feature of good-quality LMOOCs described in the survey.

RESULTS

REASONS FOR TEACHING OR SIGNING UP LMOOCS

This section presents the reasons for the participating instructors and learners to teach or enroll in LMOOCs. Table 3 shows the response rate and popularity rate for the instructors' responses returned by the SPSSAU. Response rate refers to the percentage of each response out of total responses from the dataset, and the total of the response rate is 100%. Popularity rate refers to the portion of the respondents who give an affirmative answer to the specified option. For instance, as shown in Table 3, 64.71% of the instructors endorsed that they offered an LMOOC because this was required by their department or university (TR1).

Categories	Response		Popularity rate (N = 51)
	n	Response rate	
TR1. since this is required by the department or university	33	26.40%	64.71%
TR2. for promotion to higher professional titles	7	5.60%	13.73%
TR3. to supplement offline courses (such as flipped classroom teaching)	21	16.80%	41.18%
TR4. to provide learning resources to more people	19	15.20%	37.25%
TR5. to keep pace with the time and the new trend of teaching	27	21.60%	52.94%
TR6. since I like this new education model	17	13.60%	33.33%
TR7. for other reasons	1	0.80%	1.96%
Total	104	100%	

Table 3. Results of multiple response analysis of instructors’ reasons for teaching LMOOCs.

As seen in Table 3, many instructors reported that offering an LMOOC was a requirement from their institutions (TR1, 64.71%), was for keeping pace with the time and the new trend of teaching (TR5, 52.94%), and was for supplementing offline courses (TR3, 41.18%). More than one-third of the instructors (37.25%) also admitted that they offered LMOOCs to provide learning resources to more people (TR4). Figure 1 shows the Pareto chart for the instructors’ reasons for offering LMOOCs. As illustrated in this chart, these four major reasons accounted for 80% of the responses in the dataset.

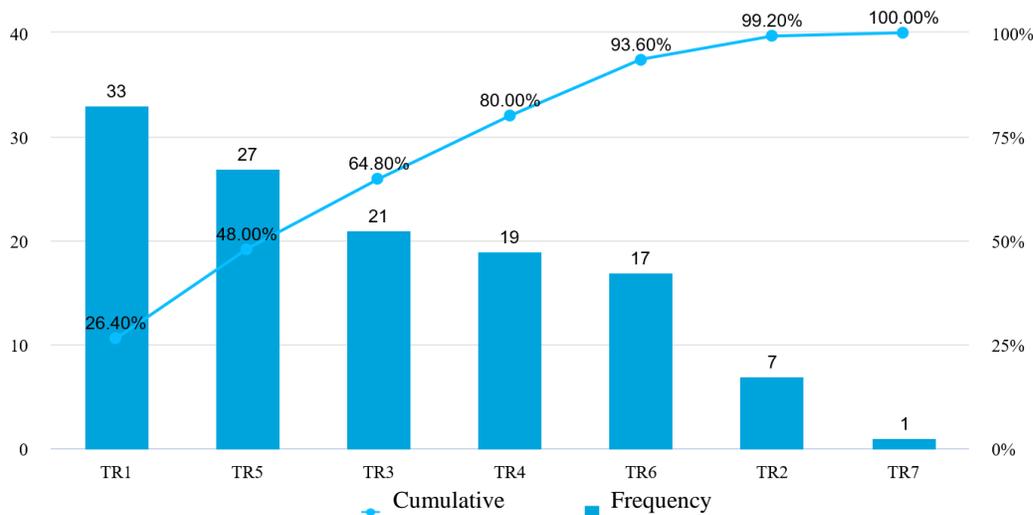


Figure 1. Pareto chart for instructors’ reasons for teaching LMOOCs.

A Chi-square test was conducted, and the category of TR7 (“For other reasons”) was removed due to its small number of cases, the inclusion of which would result in not meeting the prerequisite for less than 20% expected count lower than 5 (Field, 2009). The result showed no significant association between institution type and the instructors’ reasons for offering LMOOCs, $\chi^2(5) = 3.452, p > .05$.

Table 4 shows the results of the multiple response analysis of the learners’ data. As seen in this table, the learners overwhelmingly admitted that they took LMOOCs due to requirements from their department or university (SR1, 80.50%). The reason ranking second place is to improve their English skills (SR6, 48.41%), which was closely followed by the reason for learning more (SR5,

40.80%). Figure 2 shows the Pareto chart for the learners’ reasons for undertaking LMOOCs. The three above types of reasons accounted for more than 80% of the responses in the dataset.

Categories	Response		Popularity rate (<i>N</i> = 723)
	<i>n</i>	Response rate	
SR1. since this is required by the department or university	582	38.21%	80.50%
SR2. since I like the teacher who teaches this course	95	6.24%	13.14%
SR3. to gain course credits	132	8.67%	18.26%
SR4. to obtain a course certificate	58	3.81%	8.02%
SR5. to learn more knowledge	295	19.37%	40.80%
SR6. to improve my English	350	22.98%	48.41%
SR7. for other reasons	11	0.72%	1.52%
Total	1523	100%	

Table 4. Results of multiple response analysis of learners’ reasons for enrolling in LMOOCs.

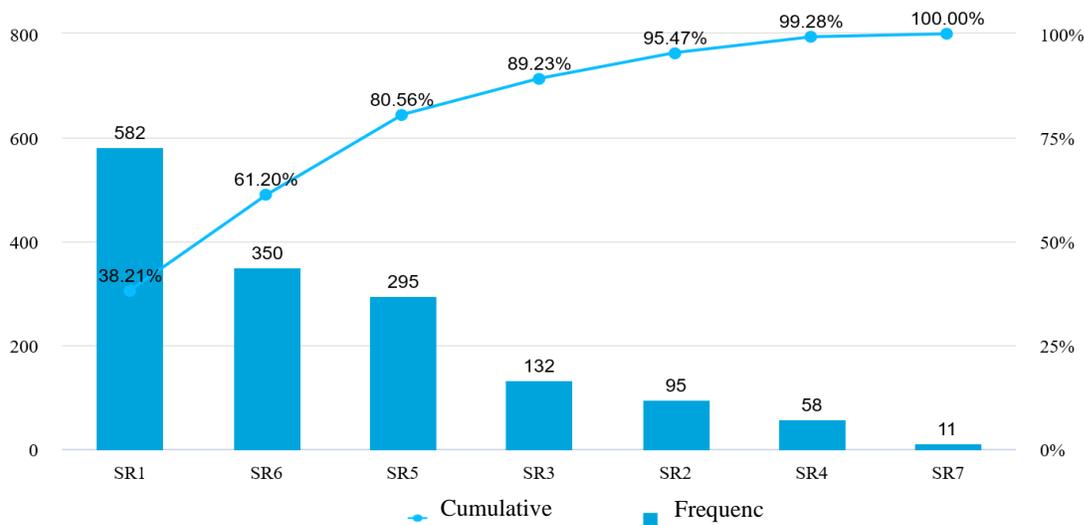


Figure 2. Pareto chart for learners’ reasons for enrolling in LMOOCs.

Similarly, a Chi-square test was performed, and the category of SR7 (“For other reasons”) was removed. There was a significant association between institution type and learners’ reasons for enrolling in LMOOCs, $\chi^2(5) = 22.97, p < .01$. The results of the *z*-test using Bonferroni correction showed that significant differences at the .05 level existed in two categories: SR1 (“since this is required by the department or university”) and SR4 (“to obtain a course certificate”). The students from non-Double-World-Class institutions more endorsed SR1 than the students from Double-World-Class institutions, whereas the latter group tended to embrace SR4.

FACTORS UNDERLYING FEATURES OF GOOD-QUALITY LMOOCs

An EFA was conducted to identify the main factors underlying the items used to elicit the participants’ perceptions of the feature of good-quality LMOOCs. The assumptions for conducting an EFA were met since the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy was acceptable (i.e., 0.946), the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant (Field, 2009). The extraction method of

principal components was used, and Direct Oblimin was chosen to rotate factors. Table 6 shows the factor loadings, the eigenvalues, and the reliability coefficients. Factor loadings higher than 0.40 are shown in bold.

No.	Item	Factors		
		1	2	3
Q11	The teacher is fluent in oral English.	0.90	0.10	0.13
Q2	The course structure is reasonable, and the course content is comprehensive.	0.87	0.20	0.22
Q7	Lecture videos are smooth and clear.	0.85	0.03	0.12
Q12	The teacher teaches at a moderate pace.	0.84	0.06	0.19
Q4	English subtitles are provided in lecture videos.	0.83	0.15	0.24
Q9	The teacher uses multimodal materials such as pictures, animation, audios, and videos to assist teaching.	0.83	0.04	0.15
Q10	The teacher's English pronunciation is standard.	0.83	0.03	0.15
Q8	The teacher teaches in full or near full English.	0.81	0.30	0.17
Q1	The course is practical and meets the needs of students' learning or work.	0.81	0.27	0.21
Q3	The course provides rich extracurricular learning resources.	0.79	0.26	0.18
Q14	The teacher's explanations are thorough and rich in examples.	0.69	0.13	0.25
Q13	The teacher's teaching style is lively and interesting.	0.60	0.24	0.27
Q5	Chinese and English subtitles are provided in lecture videos.	0.00	0.84	0.14
Q6	The course provides links to online dictionaries to facilitate students to check the meaning of new words at any time.	0.12	0.79	0.14
Q17	Assessments are provided after completing each unit or chapter.	0.19	0.21	0.72
Q16	Homework is assigned after each class.	0.14	0.23	0.72
Q15	The teacher mobilizes interactions between the teacher and students and between students by using discussion forums or setting up a WeChat group.	0.29	0.43	0.45
Eigenvalue		11.06	1.22	1.07
Cronbach α		.96	.85	.88

Table 5. Factor loadings of learners' perceived features of good-quality LMOOCs.

Factor 1 includes 12 items concerning LMOOC instructors, course design (e.g., course content, lecture videos), and learning resources. The items with the highest loadings are Items Q11 and Q2. Hence, this factor was labeled as Instructors and course design. The second factor contains two items (Q5 and Q6). A close inspection of these two items suggested that they were related to learners' concerns about not being able to comprehend course content. Hence, Chinese-English bilingual subtitles (Q5) and links to online dictionaries (Q6) were desired, which could assist learners in comprehending the course content delivered in English. Therefore, this factor was labeled as Language assistance. The third factor consists of three items, two of which are related to after-class assessments (Q16) and assignments (Q17). The remainder is about interactions (Q15) which, as seen in Table 6, also had a loading higher than 0.4 on the second factor. This cross-loading might be because instructor-learner and learner-learner interactions may mainly take place in discussion forums of LMOOCs or social media platforms (e.g., WeChat), but can also happen during the 'teaching' of an LMOOC. For instance, a certain amount of video time could be set aside for students to leave instant comments or messages in the forum or the WeChat group. Given this consideration, Item Q15 was retained and designated to the third factor, which was labeled as Reinforcement and interaction activities. The three factors accounted for 78.53% of the variance, each of which explained 65.07%, 7.19%, and 6.27% of the variance.

PERCEIVED FEATURES OF GOOD-QUALITY LMOOCS

In this section, the instructors' and learners' responses to the items describing features of good-quality LMOOCs in the questionnaire are presented. To accentuate the perceptions of the two groups, the initial responses of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were collapsed into the category of 'agree,' and the responses of 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were combined into 'disagree'. Table 6 shows the distribution of the participants' responses and the results of the Chi-square tests.

	Instructors (<i>N</i> = 51)			Students (<i>N</i> = 723)			$\chi^2(2)$
	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	
Factor 1: Instructors and course design							
Q1	49 (96.08)	2 (3.92)	0 (0)	600 (82.99)	94 (13.00)	29 (4.01)	6.186*
Q2	50 (98.04)	1 (1.96)	0 (0)	611 (84.51)	81 (11.20)	31 (4.29)	7.049*
Q3	48 (94.12)	3 (5.88)	0 (0)	606 (83.82)	81 (11.20)	36 (4.98)	4.380
Q4	44 (86.28)	5 (9.80)	2 (3.92)	621 (85.89)	61 (8.44)	41 (5.67)	0.368
Q7	50 (98.04)	1 (1.96)	0 (0)	656 (90.73)	49 (6.78)	18 (2.49)	3.259
Q8	40 (78.43)	9 (17.65)	2 (3.92)	611 (84.51)	78 (10.79)	34 (7.70)	2.265
Q9	48 (94.12)	2 (3.92)	1 (1.96)	646 (89.35)	59 (8.16)	18 (2.49)	1.261
Q10	45 (88.24)	4 (7.84)	2 (3.92)	634 (87.69)	67 (9.27)	22 (3.04)	0.226
Q11	47 (92.16)	3 (5.88)	1 (1.96)	660 (91.29)	44 (6.08)	19 (2.63)	0.089
Q12	50 (98.04)	1 (1.96)	0 (0)	656 (90.73)	50 (6.92)	17 (2.35)	3.253
Q13	49 (96.08)	2 (3.92)	0 (0)	599 (82.85)	91 (12.59)	33 (4.56)	6.300*
Q14	50 (98.04)	1 (1.96)	0 (0)	620 (87.75)	79 (10.93)	24 (3.32)	6.229*
Factor 2: Language assistance							
Q5	27 (52.94)	14 (27.45)	10 (19.61)	520 (71.92)	89 (12.31)	114 (15.77)	11.074**
Q6	35 (68.63)	11 (21.57)	5 (9.80)	509 (70.40)	100 (13.83)	114 (15.77)	3.112
Factor 3: Reinforcement and interaction activities							
Q15	46 (90.20)	5 (9.80)	0 (0)	552 (76.35)	118 (16.32)	53 (7.33)	6.194*
Q16	39 (76.47)	11 (21.57)	1 (1.96)	514 (71.09)	151 (20.89)	58 (8.02)	2.500
Q17	46 (90.20)	5 (9.80)	0 (0)	545 (75.38)	133 (18.40)	45 (6.22)	6.516*

Table 6. Distribution of participants' perceptions and results of Chi-square tests.

Table 6 shows that most of the LMOOC instructors ($n = 50$) agreed to four statements: Q2 (course structure being reasonable and course content being comprehensive), Q7 (lecture videos being smooth and clear), Q12 (teaching at a moderate pace), and Q14 (teachers' explanations being thorough and rich in examples). In comparison, the learners mostly endorsed three items: Q11 (teachers being fluent in oral English), Q7, and Q12. In other words, it seems that the learners highly valued the manner instructors deliver the teaching and the quality of lecture videos, whereas the instructors also highlighted the quality of course content.

As shown in Table 6, the instructors and learners differed significantly in their responses to seven items (Q1, Q2, Q5, Q13, Q14, Q15, and Q17). The inspection of the z -tests showed that compared to the learners, a larger proportion of the instructors agreed to Q1 (courses being practical and meeting students), Q13 (teaching style being lively and interesting), Q15 (mobilizing interactions), and Q17 (providing assessments), and showed agreement or neutral attitude to Q2 (course structure being reasonable and content being comprehensive) and Q14 (teacher's explanations being thorough and rich in examples). In contrast, a notable difference was that a higher ratio of the learners, than that of the instructors, agreed that Chinese and English subtitles should be provided in lecture videos (Q5).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Against the backdrop of the fast advancement of LMOOCs, this study has explored the reasons that motivated instructors and learners to undertake teaching or learning in LMOOCs and their perceptions of good-quality LMOOCs. A salient finding is that institution requirement was the reason most frequently endorsed by both the instructors and learners. This reason reflects the influence of top-down policies from educational administration to promote this mode of education. Opening up LMOOCs can certainly satisfy the rising needs for English skills of the public in a heavily populated country like China. In addition, LMOOCs are often embedded to flipped teaching, which has been highly promoted by the governments and universities in China (Jiang et al., 2021). This was manifested in the finding that 41.18% of the instructors reported that LMOOCs were used to supplement offline teaching. Apart from this pedagogy-related reason, more than half of the instructors indicated their motive to catch up with the new trend of teaching, a finding consistent with Kolowich's (2013) study. A sense of altruism reported in Hew and Cheung's (2014) was also observed in this study as a motive for teaching LMOOCs. These findings suggested that in the Chinese EFL contexts, both top-down policies and individual initiatives appeared to motivate the instructors to embark on teaching LMOOCs. The Chi-square test showed that there was no significant association between institution type and instructors' reasons for teaching LMOOCs, which seemed incompatible with Jiang et al.'s (2021) study that found teachers working in key universities reported significantly higher levels of use intention for flipped teaching. This discrepancy may be attributed to different foci in the two surveys. Jiang et al.'s (2021) study targeted teachers' intention to use flipped teaching whereas this study explored the motives of the instructors who have taught LMOOCs. Also, the small number of the current participating instructors may not be able to reflect institution differences in teachers' motives to teach LMOOCs.

As to learners' reasons for signing up LMOOCs, as expected, most of the learners alluded to requirements from their department or university. The good news is that many of them reported purposes of improving English skills ($n = 350$) and learning more knowledge ($n = 295$), which echoed the findings of previous MOOC studies (Hew & Cheung, 2014; Kizilcec & Schneider, 2015; Williams et al., 2018). This result was also consistent with Ding and Shen's (2022) study in which most of the LMOOC participants reported internal motivation for competence and knowledge. These findings imply that regardless of external factors nudging them to take LMOOCs, many learners harbored intrinsic reasons to engage in learning in LMOOCs. This is of paramount importance in sustaining learners' efforts and perseverance when they are learning in LMOOCs, a "highly individual and isolated learning mode" (Ding & Shen, 2020, p. 18). Interestingly, this study found that students from non-Double-World-Class universities tended to take LMOOCs to fulfill mandatory tasks while those from Double-World-Class universities were more inclined to obtain course certificates. These significant differences indicate that students from more prestigious universities may have higher expectations of themselves and thus enroll in LMOOCs to sharpen their skills.

The second aim of this study is to investigate instructors' and learners' perceptions of the features of good-quality LMOOCs. These elicited perceptions seemed to fall into three aspects: instructors and course design, language assistance, and reinforcement and interaction activities. These three aspects somewhat correspond to the quality criteria proposed by Luo and Ye (2021). Specifically, instructors and course design are related to Luo and Ye's (2021) criteria of teacher/instructor, teaching content, and pedagogy. Reinforcement and interaction activities are

associated with the teaching management criteria, and language assistance can be deemed to reflect the technological criteria (Luo & Ye, 2021). What is worth attention is that the item having the highest loading on the factor of instructors and course design is instructors' being fluent in oral English (Q11), suggesting that this was considered the primary feature of good-quality LMOOCs. This finding corresponded to Peng and Jiang's (2022) study, which also identified that expectations of fluent English and good or standard pronunciation were commonly expressed in students' comments posted in discussion forums of LMOOCs. These results are understandable given that the target language is first and foremost the learning object of LMOOCs, and instructors' mastery of this language may directly influence learners' attitudes toward and evaluation of the LMOOCs.

The comparison of instructors' and learners' perceptions yielded three salient findings. First, compared to the learners, the instructors seemed to attach more importance to the practicality of LMOOCs, comprehensiveness of the content, lively teaching style, and thorough explanations. This may be because the instructors, as professional in-service teachers, had the relevant professional expertise and thus naturally perceived these features as essential to good-quality LMOOCs. However, they did not perceive the supply of Chinese and English subtitles as an important feature as did the learners. It may be argued that since learners are the ultimate recipients of LMOOCs, the high endorsement of this item reflects learners' need of tackling language difficulties when learning in LMOOCs. This result corroborates Peng and Jiang's (2022) finding that many learners complained about the lack of English-Chinese bilingual subtitles in some lecture videos of LMOOCs. Assisting learners' comprehension by offering subtitles in different languages was also emphasized by Ding (2019) and Fontana and Leffa (2018). These findings jointly point to the importance of considering learners' needs when designing lecture videos. In addition, instructors were more inclined to agree that assessments should be implemented after the completion of each unit and that instructor-learner and learner-learner interactions should be triggered. The former result is understandable given that assessment may arouse test anxiety and thus was not highly welcomed by the learners. As for the latter result, the explanation may be that the instructors were more apt at language teaching and were aware of the importance of interaction in L2 learning. In other words, their responses were guided by their professional knowledge or training. However, this result should not be taken to mean that the learners believed interaction unimportant since 76.35% of them (see Table 6) agreed that interaction mobilized in discussion forums or WeChat groups (Q15) is a feature of good-quality LMOOCs. This corresponds to Peng and Jiang's (2022) finding that students suggested organizing more interaction in LMOOCs. Chong et al. (2022) even argued for creating a 'social space' on platforms such as Microsoft Teams to promote collaborative learning. Hence, it is fair to propose that promoting interaction among instructors and learners is an important feature of good-quality LMOOCs.

This study has its limitations that warrant consideration. Despite its novel attempt to explore and compare instructors' and learners' perceptions, the small number of participating instructors restricted the representativeness of this cohort. In addition, the questionnaire items were crafted based on findings obtained from learners' comments posted in discussion forums. While these items could approximate learners' thoughts, they may not cover all aspects of the features of good-quality LMOOCs. Future research may accrue items more systematically with reference to relevant literature such as Luo and Ye's (2021) framework or Chong et al.'s (2022) findings based on Hall's (2003) framework.

Despite its limitations, this study can provide implications for university administrators, designers, and instructors of LMOOCs. First, given the external demands and internal reasons

underlying instructors' initiative in teaching LMOOCs, university administrators need to provide instructors with institutional support to sustain their motivation. For instance, technological assistance and training in LMOOC design and delivery should be supplied to prospective instructors. Since LMOOCs often follow xMOOC practices and the content and teaching sequence are prescribed and pre-recorded, LMOOC designers and instructors need to consider the features of good-quality LMOOCs, particularly from learners' perspectives. In particular, they need to evaluate possible difficulties and challenges facing learners in a specific LMOOC. For instance, if the lecture videos contain excessive new words or complicated sentences, language assistance by means of supplying bilingual subtitles (Ding, 2019; Peng & Jiang, 2022) or links to online dictionaries (Gimeno-Sanz, 2017) will be needed to promote learner engagement in the LMOOC. In addition, given the importance of interaction voiced by the current participants and LMOOC researchers (Bárcena & Martín-Monje, 2014; Chong et al., 2022; Motzo & Proudfoot, 2017), group tasks such as discussions or mini-projects can be assigned to learners who are to work with group members via social media or conferencing video tools. These tasks can help establish what Chong et al. (2022) called a 'social space' to promote collaborative interaction.

CONCLUSION

Given the rising prominence of LMOOCs in this era where online and computer-assisted language learning are ubiquitous, this study has investigated the reasons that motivated instructors and learners to engage in teaching or learning in LMOOCs and their perceptions of the features of good-quality LMOOCs. The findings contributed to the ongoing discussion about how to improve the quality of LMOOCs, which may be beneficial to addressing many concerns about LMOOCs. This study found that while many instructors and learners reported that their involvement in LMOOCs was largely related to departmental or university requirements, they also expressed intrinsic reasons such as providing learning resources to more people or improving one's English proficiency and acquiring more knowledge. This study also identified three conspicuous aspects regarding the features of good-quality LMOOCs: instructors and course design, language assistance, and reinforcement and interaction activities. Since this study was conducted in the Chinese EFL context, continued research is needed to accrue much more empirical data for the purposes of optimizing the effectiveness of LMOOCs and better engaging learners in learning through LMOOCs.

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ENDNOTES

¹Although the zero count in one cell in some items resulted in 16.7% ($1/6 \approx 16.7\%$) of cells having an expected count of less than 5, this was lower than the threshold value of no more than 20% for contingency tables larger than 2×2 (Field, 2009).

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