B-MELTT: Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training

Marina Orsini-Jones, Barbara Conde, Kate Borthwick, Bin Zou and Wulin Ma

B-MELTT: Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training

Marina Orsini-Jones, Barbara Conde, Kate Borthwick,
Bin Zou and Wulin Ma

About the authors

Marina Orsini-Jones

m.orsini@coventry.ac.uk

Professor Marina Orsini-Jones is Associate Head of School (International) and Course Director for the MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics in the School of Humanities at Coventry University, UK. Marina is a Principal Fellow and National Teaching Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and has been involved in teacher education since 1999. She has contributed to over 100 conferences and has published work on action-research-led curricular innovation, MOOCs, telecollaboration and digital literacies.

Barbara Conde

ac4741@coventry.ac.uk

Barbara Conde is a lecturer in Spanish language at Coventry University and is also studying for her PhD on MOOCs at the Open University. She graduated from the MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics at Coventry University with distinction in 2017. This report is based on data she collected for her MA dissertation. She has published articles based on her work and presented at national and international conferences.

Wulin Ma

mawulin@foxmail.com

Wulin Ma is Professor of English in the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at Sichuan International Studies University (SISU) in China. His research interests includes Technology Enhanced Language Learning, corpus linguistics, MOOCs and lexicography. He has published extensively on his areas of interest. He is in charge of a National Philosophy and Social Science Planning Project in China: Study of the Construction Paradigm of Massive Open Online Courses in China for College English.

Kate Borthwick

K.Borthwick@soton.ac.uk

Kate Borthwick is a Principal Enterprise Fellow (Technology Enhanced Learning) in Modern Languages and Linguistics. She leads on Curriculum Innovation in the Faculty of Humanities and is Director of Programme Development (online learning) in the University's Digital Learning team at the University of Southampton (UK). She is the course designer for four FutureLearn/University of Southampton MOOCs. Kate received a Vice-Chancellor's Award (individual) for internationalisation in 2016 for her work on the MOOC 'Understanding Language'.

Bin Zou

Bin.Zou@xjtlu.edu.cn

Dr Bin Zou has taught EAP to undergraduate and postgraduate students in a variety of disciplines at the Language Centre, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University since 2008. He is a fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy and the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching,* published by IGI Global, USA. He is currently an executive committee member of the China EAP Association and a committee member of China CALL Association.

Contents

Abstract

B-MELTT: Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training

Teachers' beliefs exert a strong influence on their practice. Therefore it is essential that students undertaking teacher education develop an ability to critically assess their own beliefs in relation to practice. The B-MELTT (Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training) project explores how the integration of an existing MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) into ELT programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level can impact on students' beliefs, while at the same time providing them with the opportunity to engage in reflection with a global community of practice. The participants were students on ELT programmes in the UK, the Netherlands and China, some were experienced teachers and some were new to teacher education. B-MELTT involved reflecting on ELT themes in three ways: face-to-face in class; through a virtual exchange with the project partners; and with all the participants on the MOOC (around 40,000). To the authors' knowledge, there are no other research studies of this nature available, where a MOOC blend is used in conjunction with a Virtual Exchange to support the reflection on professional development in ELT. Another distinctive feature of B-MELTT is that the action research cycle reported here was driven by an 'expert student', which enabled staff to see their practice from a novel perspective.

The results illustrate that B-MELTT stimulated a reflection on what it means to be an autonomous learner and an autonomous teacher in the digital age. It is hoped that these results can provide the ELT community with an innovative model of professional development.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the staff and students who participated in this B-MELTT ELTRA-funded project, in particular Shani Evuort, Myrthe Kassing, Rachel Collins, Dr Tobey Nelson and Jenny du Plessis at the Hogeschool Utrecht, for their useful insights on how they used the MOOC, the hospitality provided during our post-project visit and the MOOC symposium in Utrecht. We also thank Ma Wulin's students at Sichuan International Studies University (SISU) for the information relating to the MOOC blend at SISU. Finally, we would like to thank Professor Mike Sharples from the Open University for giving us permission to use his table representing the conversational framework in the FutureLearn MOOCs.

Abbreviations

B-MELTT	Blending MOOCs into English Language Teacher Training
CH	China/Chinese participant
CU	Coventry University
ECUST	East China University of Science and Technology
ELT	English language teaching
ELTAL	English language teaching and applied linguistics
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HE	Higher education
HU	Hogeschool Utrecht/participant(s) from HU
MOOC	Massive open online course
RQ	Research question
SISU	Sichuan International Studies University/participant(s) from
TESOL	Teaching English to speakers of other languages
VE	Virtual exchange
VLE	Virtual learning environment/code for discussion on Moodle
XJTLU	Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

1

Introduction

This B-MELTT (Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training) project stemmed from the need to further explore teachers' beliefs and reflections both in relation to learner autonomy and to online and blended learning in ELT. The phase of the project discussed here ran between September and December 2016 and involved 154 participants from different higher education contexts: Coventry University (CU), UK; Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), China; Sichuan International Studies University (SISU), China; East China University of Science and Technology (ECUST), China; and the Hogeschool Utrecht (HU), the Netherlands. Some of the participants were experienced ELT teachers, while others had not taught at all.

The FutureLearn MOOC 'Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching', created by the University of Southampton, UK in collaboration with the British Council, was blended into the English language teaching courses of the above-mentioned universities.

Different patterns of 'blended MOOC' were adopted by each institution. For instance, the participants from CU engaged with the MOOC as part of their core module called 'Theories, Approaches and Methods of Language Learning and Teaching' in which some content in the MOOC was covered in a synchronous manner with related content in the face-to-face instruction. The engagement with B-MELTT was integrated into the assessment of the module at CU as an optional reflective essay question in the mandatory in-class reflective essay (See Section 5).

The tutor from HU integrated the MOOC within an introductory applied linguistics research methods module in which students had to carry out a reflective assignment that could be completed by including some of the content of the MOOC. Participants from the sample from ECUST held discussion sessions of 30 minutes related to the MOOC content within the two-hour module called 'Theories and Practice in ESL/EFL Testing', which is

an optional module on their course. In addition, some of the MOOC content was included in the assessment component that trainee teachers from SISU have to do as part of their BA TESOL programme.

One of the distinctive features of the MOOC blend discussed in this project lies in the fact that it was carried out with the support of a virtual exchange (VE) aimed at encouraging a targeted telecollaborative reflection on ELT theory and practice amongst the students in the partner universities involved. The VE was supported by a tailor-made course website within a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) ('Open' Moodle).

It was hoped that this novel MOOC/VE blend would offer the ELT students involved in the project a unique collaborative learning opportunity, which would enable them to discuss their local ELT contexts while at the same time engaging with a wider, global community of practice.

The first aim of the project was to ascertain how teachers' beliefs could be affected by a reflection on their knowledge and practice, carried out in four ways:

1. individually, while completing the steps in the MOOC

2. collaboratively, in weekly face-to-face meetings in class, with peers from their home institution

3. collaboratively, in online asynchronous discussion forums and Skype synchronous exchanges through the VE with students and staff from the partner universities participating in the project

4. collaboratively, with the rest of the participants from all over the world on the MOOC forums.

The second aim was to encourage ELT students to 'metareflect' on how engaging with ELT topics online was affecting their understanding of both learner and teacher autonomy and of how new technologies could be integrated into the learning process.

Another distinctive feature of the project was that an 'expert student' replicated the previous cycle of MOOC blend action research carried out by staff at CU (Orsini-Jones, 2015; Orsini-Jones et al., 2015b) and was appointed as research assistant for it. Like another MA student before her – Altamimi – (Orsini-Jones et al., 2017a), she applied the action-research-informed threshold concepts framework used at CU in previous cycles of this study to identify troublesome knowledge in ELT. This enabled all staff involved in the project discussed here – both at CU and in the other countries involved in B-MELTT – to see their practice through the student/research assistant's 'looking glass', in a role-reversal pedagogical model.

Overall the study aimed to address the following research questions (RQs):

1. Can a blended learning curricular intervention project, based on integrating a MOOC into the curriculum, support the identification of ELT students' beliefs, with particular reference to learner autonomy, across five higher education institutions from three different countries?

2. Can the project lead to a transformation in the ELT students' beliefs about ELT?

3. What recommendations on how to integrate MOOCs into existing ELT courses could be made, based on the results of the project?

4. Can the use of blended learning help students on English language teacher education courses in Higher Education to acquire a holistic approach to the integration of technology into their learning and teaching?

Question four above aims to address the marginalisation of technology in the professional development of English teachers. Most key theoretical texts on ELT used in teacher education do not appear to address the online dimension, its affordances and how transformative effective engagement with technology can prove to be for teachers' agency. This work aims to illustrate that teachers' cognition, triggered by active learning with a MOOC/VE blend, can be empowering for ELT practitioners, can help them develop critical digital literacy and thus support them in the troublesome journey across the uncertain terrain of autonomy in language learning and teaching. [1]

2

Context and background

2.1 ELT students' beliefs

It had been previously ascertained, through action research cycles that took place in the academic year 2015–16, that students registered on the MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics at CU held strong beliefs regarding both autonomy in language learning and teaching and the integration of technology into English teaching (Orsini-Jones, 2015). Students engaging in teacher education are not always aware of the impact that their beliefs can have on their teaching practice. This lack of awareness raises two areas of concern. The first one is that beliefs can act as a barrier or filter when these teachers (or future teachers) are attempting to further their own professional knowledge and pedagogy (Klapper, 2006). Therefore they need to be made aware of their own beliefs and perceptions, while they are still undergoing teacher training and education, in order to explicitly develop their own pedagogical beliefs and assumptions with the underpinning of relevant research, and to develop professionally as a result.

The second concern is that teachers' personal learning experience is likely to influence what their teaching is going to be like (Klapper, 2006). This includes factors such as the teachers they had and the pedagogical practices implemented by them, the context in which they learned the language, how frequently they were exposed to the language in their context and the type of materials used to facilitate and support their learning. This is not to suggest that all teaching based on personally experienced models is bad or ineffective; students on teacher education programmes might have had good role models who have influenced their beliefs and perceptions in a positive way. However, arbitrary and random transfer might yield problematic results when teachers adopt methods and practices unsuited to a certain group of learners or context (Klapper, 2006). As argued by Kumaravadivelu (2012), teaching requires the flexibility needed to know what approach to adopt for a certain group of learners in a specific curricular circumstance and in a particular cultural setting.

Borg (2011) proposes that the teachers' (or future teachers') individual perceptions can be strengthened and extended through their education. Reflective practice can support the development of ELT students' awareness of their beliefs and, as reported by Mann and Walsh (2017: 7), reflection is 'fundamental to individual education and personal growth'. For this reason, the work reported here was carried out within a reflective action-research framework (Burns, 2010; Burns and Kurtoğlu-Hooton, 2016). Schön (1983) introduced the concepts of 'reflection-in-action' (while carrying out the educational experience) and 'on-action' (after the educational event has taken place) which can support teachers' active learning. Killion and Todnem coined 'reflection-for-action' (1991, in Mann and Walsh, 2017: 8), a future-oriented action which implies a certain level of prediction. For this project, a reflective approach underpinned by action research 'in-action' – while experiencing a MOOC in a blended learning setting – 'on action' – after having carried out tasks on the MOOC – and 'for action' – thinking how a MOOC could be integrated into future curricula via both VE and face-to-face discussion – was adopted. Participants were thus actively engaged in metareflective practice (Flavell, 1979; Efklidis, 2006), recording their thoughts on their teaching perceptions, beliefs and practice while engaging with both the selected MOOC and a related VE with the partners in a blended learning curricular setting.

2.2 A 'flipped' MOOC/VE/VLE blend

Blended learning can be interpreted in many ways and take many forms (Orsini-Jones et al., 2017b). As discussed by Bonk and Graham (2006), it used to be associated with a blend of face-to-face delivery with online delivery in variable percentages, with the occasional links to external open educational resources (OERs). Web 2.0 platforms have 'disrupted' this understanding of blended learning and opened up new pedagogical horizons. Godwin-Jones (2012) and Bruff et al. (2013) discuss how open education platforms are fostering a reconceptualisation of e-learning design and pedagogy.

MOOCs are relatively new technology and, according to Bax (2018), they are not 'normalised' yet. He defines 'normalised technology' as technology that has reached 'the stage when the technology becomes invisible, embedded in everyday practice'; 'the stage when a technology is […] hardly even recognised as a technology, taken for granted in everyday life' (Bax 2003: 23), like mobile phones for example. In Bax's opinion, more research is needed to investigate how MOOCs can become 'normalised'. This project illustrates how this could be fostered through the blending of an ELT MOOC into existing ELT curricula in three different higher education contexts.

As previously discussed (Borthwick, 2017; 2018), research into the development of MOOCs from essentially standalone educational experiences towards their use more widely, as part of a broader approach to education, has been under way for some years. In 2014, a CETIS[2] white paper identified MOOCs as an opportunity for institutions to think more strategically about online education given their potential for '… enhancing existing classroom teaching practices, promoting institutional reputation and developing new revenue models' (2014: 3). Since that time, MOOCs have been incorporated into the digital strategies of many universities in the UK.

There is also a growing body of work being developed on how MOOCs might contribute to campus-based teaching through blended learning scenarios (e.g. Israel, 2015; Orsini-Jones, 2015). In this journey towards 'normalisation', the open-access nature of MOOCs presents a more complicated picture, as some universities, like the Open University and CU in the UK and Deakin University in Australia, have started offering paid courses fully online through the FutureLearn MOOC platform. Short open online courses are often still offered as 'tasters' for these courses and work as an adjunct to the main course. Also, since 2017, participants have had to pay for a subscription if they want continuous access to the FutureLearn MOOC they have been engaged with after their course – which normally lasts between

three and six weeks – terminates. This major change put under discussion the initial conceptualisation of FutureLearn MOOCs as 'disruptive' open access technologies, as they used to be OERs on a massive scale. Despite this, MOOCs still provide sufficient value-added and 'flipped mode' potential to be an interesting way of enhancing an existing curriculum, as reiterated by Zhang (2017), who used a MOOC blend at Shenzen University in China to support the teaching of College English.[3] Quoting Abeysekera and Dawson (2014), Zhang lists the key features of a flipped approach facilitated by the integration of a MOOC (2017: 17): most information-transmission teaching happens out of class; classroom time can be used for active learning and social-collaborative tasks; students are required to complete pre- and/or post-class activities to fully benefit from in-class work.

The type of MOOC and VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)-supported VE blend described here is rather novel, even if there are previous examples of design and use of MOOCs for teacher CPD (continuous professional development) (Laurillard, 2014; Cavey, 2016). There are also examples of MOOC blends, where the content of a MOOC becomes an integral part of an existing curriculum in institutions that are not involved in the development of the MOOC itself (Kim, 2015; Sandeen, 2013; Joseph-Israel, 2013). Sandeen (2013) calls this type of blend 'MOOC 3.0' or 'distributed flip' model, as the content of the MOOC is repurposed and used by participants in ways that suit their local educational contexts while, at the same time, enabling users to become part of a global community of practice.

To our knowledge, the blended combination discussed here, where a MOOC is used in conjunction with a VE with overseas partners and repurposed for existing curricula in different countries to stimulate reflective practice for English teachers' professional development is unique, as well as complex (see Figure 1).

---

2   Centre for Educational Technology, Interoperability and Standards, UK. www.cetis.org.uk
3   'College English' refers to the preparation for the main English test taken by Chinese students – the College English Test (CET) – that is also required by many employers as proof of English proficiency in China. According to Zheng and Cheng (2008: 408): 'The purpose of the CET is to examine the English proficiency of undergraduate students in China and ensure that Chinese undergraduates reach the required English levels specified in the National College English Teaching Syllabuses (NCETS)'.

Figure 1: The Stages of the B-MELTT Project

Stage 1 (preparatory)
• Face-to face in-class delivery of institutional ELT syllabus (e.g. task-based language learning and teaching)
• Institutional Moodle discussion between peers on courses at each partner institution
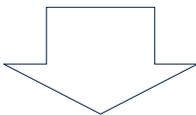
Stage 2 (preparatory)
Pre-MOOC survey
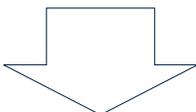
Stage 3 (engagement 1)
• Weekly relevant units on the MOOC questions/reflections on the MOOC
(e.g. CLIL – content and language integrated learning)
• Face-to-face interaction
• Moodle discussion (home/local) – Virtual mobility
• Questions/reflections on the MOOC
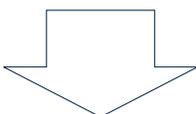
Stage 4 (engagement 2)
• MOOC/VE dialogue/Moodle with partners/face-to-face/reflections
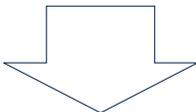
Stage 5 (engagement 3)
• Live dialogue (live class-to-class dialogue via Skype)
• Group interviews
• Post-MOOC survey
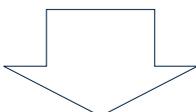
Stage 6 (assessment)
• Portfolio/in-class reflective essay
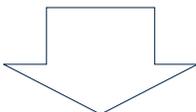
Stage 7 (real mobility)
• Face-to-face discussion (whenever possible) during study trip/workshops with
partners/staff-students symposia on lesson learned

The B-MELTT blend involved face-to-face classroom interaction in each of the participating institutions (in the UK, China and the Netherlands). The face-to-face contact was blended with distance communication with the overseas partners through the VE supported by a tailor-made Moodle platform managed by CU (called Open Moodle). This social collaboration was furthermore blended with global learning and peer learning on the selected MOOC. At the end of the online experience, some of the students had the opportunity to participate in study trips to meet their partners in their own country and to share their reflections in MOOC symposia, adding physical mobility to the 'virtual' mobility afforded by the VE.

At CU, a VE, locally known as OIL (Online International Learning) project, must include the following features (Centre for Global Engagement, 2018):

1. it involves a cross-border collaboration or interaction with people from different backgrounds and cultures

2. students must engage in some sort of online interaction, whether it is asynchronous or synchronous

3. it must be driven by a set of internationalised learning outcomes aimed at developing global perspectives and/or fostering students' intercultural competences

4. there must be a reflective component that helps students think critically about such interaction.

The face-to-face and Moodle blend was enhanced by the massive open and online blend with the MOOC on teacher education (see Appendix 1), repurposed for the aims of the project and integrated into the existing teacher education syllabus of each of the participating institutions.

There were therefore multiple layers of blended learning, particularly in view of the fact that each of the participating institutions was also delivering ELT content in blended mode through their standard VLE (Moodle in CU, the in-house created HUbl – Hogeschool Utrecht blended – in HU and a variety of other VLEs in China), which could not, however, be used for the VE with the partners, due to local restrictions to the access of facilities, such as the library databases for students who are not officially registered on a course. The reason why a tailor-made password-protected Moodle environment was used for the interaction among the partners, as opposed to other popular social media tools like Facebook,

had to do with ethics approval to carry out research on the data collected. A passworded Moodle environment complies with the European GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) law introduced in May 2018 and the UK Data Protection Act (2018).

2.3 The MOOC: background and description[4]

Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching was designed by the University of Southampton in partnership with the British Council (Borthwick, 2017; 2018) for the FutureLearn MOOC platform based at the Open University (UK). The participants who took part in this research project registered for the occurrence of this MOOC that ran between 17 October and 21 November 2016.

This MOOC was intended to act primarily as a marketing tool to increase student recruitment on a jointly run online Master's in English Language Teaching delivered by the University of Southampton.[5] It offers a 'taste' of key concepts in the study of applied linguistics and runs over five weeks, featuring a different topic each week: language learning, language teaching, technology in teaching, Global English and a research week. Course content reflects some activities and topics covered in the Masters in ELT. The course has attracted over 100,000 learners over six runs.[6]

Course content is delivered by a range of staff from the Applied Linguistics Department at Southampton and the British Council, via short videos and linked discussion questions. It aims to be academic but approachable in tone. There are also texts to read, tasks to engage in and interactive elements, such as polls. Learners discuss and respond to questions or tasks in comment areas attached to each activity and the notion of 'learning as a conversation' is at the core of the learning design (FutureLearn, 2018). All FutureLearn MOOCs include sections that enable participants to engage in an online dialogue with other participants and/or the moderators in the forums for each unit, as well as with the materials available, as they are underpinned by Laurillard's (1993) conversational model of online learning (see Figure 2).

---

4   Please note that parts of this section have also been published in Borthwick (2018) and Orsini-Jones et al. (2017b).
5   https://www.southampton.ac.uk/humanities/postgraduate/taught_courses/taught_courses/modern_languages/r900_ma_english_language_teaching_online.page
6   Learners are defined by FutureLearn as people who have signed up and viewed at least one step.

Figure 2: Conversational Model of Online Learning (Laurillard, 1993) revisited by Sharples (2016) (used with permission)

Level of descriptions

Shared medium
• enables learners and partners to represent arguments and reach agreements

Learner
• demonstrates understanding
• proposes solutions to problems

'why' questions and responses

proposing goals and modifying actions

Partner
• demonstrates understanding
• elaborates solutions to problems

reflect

reflect

adapt

adapt

Learner
• acts to develop models
• acts to solve problems

'how' questions and responses

proposing goals and modifying actions

Partner
• acts to develop models
• helps to solve problems

Shared medium
• enables learners and partners to access information, develop models and solve problems

Level of actions

Peer learning through social activity is a key part of the course's design, and activities frequently require learners to share their own content, e.g. photographs of their own classrooms or plotting their global location on an interactive map. The course is underpinned and enriched by the shared experiences and knowledge contributed by participants, even if it is not always easy to navigate a comments section that contains thousands of posts (Orsini-Jones et al., 2015a). The tutors on the course monitor comments and respond with questions, comments and further information. One of the key roles of a tutor on the 'Understanding Language' MOOC is to foster the development of conversations around course concepts and topics. Such ongoing activity is complemented by more high-profile tutor input in the form of end-of-week video reviews, which summarise key discussions and respond to learner questions raised during the week.

For the cycle of MOOC integration discussed here, after their initial registration, participants could access the MOOC after it finished on a continuous basis. Thanks to this feature, users had the opportunity to complete the MOOC at their own pace. The instructions within the MOOC were that it would involve around three hours of weekly engagement to complete the course for the five weeks of its duration. Each unit consisted of five sections that included articles, discussions, audio-visual materials or exercises related to the specific themes of the unit. Week five had four sections that summarised the previous four weeks and invited people to take part in a research project. At the end of each unit, there was a section called 'Reflection' where participants were expected to share the positive aspects of the week and to discuss with their online peers their thoughts about how they could take the lessons forward into the field of language learning and teaching. The MOOC was, in effect, used as a springboard to stimulate a dialogue among the participants involved on the links between theory and practice in ELT. It also offered the opportunity to reflect 'in action', 'on action' and 'for action' with reference to the key themes of autonomy and digital literacy.

2.4 Autonomy as a threshold concept and troublesome knowledge

An assumption underlying the project was that autonomy is a threshold concept (Meyer and Land, 2003: 412), a troublesome area of teacher education knowledge, which is challenging to grasp, but, once understood, could open new educational horizons. Meyer and Land define a *threshold concept* as follows:

> A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view.

A threshold concept is normally (Flanagan, 2018):

- troublesome: the learners will often find it problematic

- transformative: once understood, its potential effect on student learning and behaviour is to occasion a significant shift in the perception of a subject

- integrative: it exposes the previously hidden interrelatedness of concepts that were not previously seen as linked

- irreversible: the change of perspective occasioned by acquisition of a threshold concept is unlikely to be forgotten

- bounded: a threshold concept will probably delineate a particular conceptual space, serving a specific and limited purpose

- discursive: the crossing of a threshold will incorporate an enhanced and extended use of language

- reconstitutive: understanding a threshold concept may entail a shift in learner subjectivity, which is implied through the transformative and discursive aspects already noted.

What distinguishes the methodological approach adopted for this study from the transactional threshold concepts enquiry discussed by Cousin (2009), where troublesome knowledge is explored between academic staff and educational developers, is that the identification of threshold concepts is driven by student researchers. The researcher attached to this project, Barbara Conde, was an *expert student*, who, after having experienced the MOOC blend herself on her course, adopted threshold concepts pedagogy for her own research design for her MA dissertation, thus helping staff members to see the problematic curricular area previously identified 'through the looking glass' of her student's perspective, in a role-reversal model of action-research-informed threshold concepts pedagogy developed at CU (Orsini-Jones, 2014).

Autonomy is proving to be 'troublesome' in ELT. Jiao (2018) argues that autonomy is particularly challenging as a concept for students who, like himself, come from a teacher-centred Confucian learning tradition, as also discussed by Littlewood (1999: 75). Perkins (1999) defines *troublesome knowledge* as knowledge that can be perceived as alien, or counter-intuitive, by students. It could be that the concept of autonomy is so troublesome because it requires teachers and students engaged in teacher education to critically review their practice (or perception of good practice) and belief systems on a continuous basis.

Autonomy appears to challenge the belief system of many students (who are either teachers or teachers-to-be) on the MA ELTAL at CU (Orsini-Jones, 2015). It is not necessarily because autonomy is an intellectually difficult concept. Even the best learners are challenged by it. The concept of *becoming an autonomous teacher* is troublesome to grasp because it is alien in terms of both language and knowledge (epistemological dimension) and the identity of the learner (ontological dimension). The resistance to the concept is well illustrated in the article 'Autonomy, never, never, never!' (Lacey, 2007) which documents the troublesome journey of an established English teacher from autonomy sceptic to autonomy convert after he attended workshops by the famous educationalist and expert on autonomy in ELT, Leni Dam, and implemented an autonomous approach in his classrooms. He fully resisted letting

go of his teacher-centred method to begin with; his 'conversion' started when he observed the increased fluency and proficiency of his students who had been given the freedom to choose their own discussion topics and take control of their own learning, albeit under his 'scaffolding' eye, and to keep logs recording their progress.

Autonomy in language learning and teaching is a complex concept. It is generally agreed that learner autonomy was first defined by Holec (1981: 3) as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning'. In Holec's theorisation, the role of the individual in taking control is central to the development of autonomy. Benson (2006: 6) and Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) discuss how this definition has evolved in English language teaching, stressing that at its core there is a shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred viewpoint. Benson (1997: 18) classifies learner autonomy into three perspectives: (1) a 'technical perspective' that focuses on the skills and strategies that learners should be able to carry out in order to succeed in unsupervised learning situations; (2) a 'psychological perspective' that considers the attitudes and cognitive abilities that allow learners to take responsibility for their own learning process; and (3) a 'political perspective' that empowers the students to take control over their own learning.

Oxford (2003: 75) argues that the theoretical framework of learner autonomy is based on inconsistencies and conflicting perspectives. Autonomy can sometimes be associated with an individualised language learning approach. In the context of the study discussed here, autonomy is aligned with Little's (1991: 4) claims that learner autonomy is developed in two ways. On the one hand there is the 'capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action'. On the other, there is collaboration, which Little argues is a fundamental aspect of learner autonomy. He claims that 'self-regulation' can only be achieved through 'other-regulation' (Vygotsky, 1962) and students exchange knowledge with peers or teachers to adjust their own performance. However, most definitions of autonomy refer to a face-to-face language learning classroom situation through 'focused interaction with teachers and other learners' (Little, 2001: 31), as also proposed and discussed by Dam (1995; 2003).

New dimensions and definitions of autonomy are emerging, facilitated by the affordances of Web 2.0 platforms and by the interaction between formal and informal modes of learning that such platforms have made possible. In keeping with Kumaravadivelu's (2012) theorisation around autonomy, Thorne argues that autonomy consists of 'enhanced opportunities for agency, identity formation, decision making, and taking control of your own learning' (Little and Thorne, 2017: 27). Thorne discusses further how new technologies are enabling language teachers to implement the social collaboration advocated by Dam in a face-to-face setting, but online.

A good summary of the conceptual 'state of the art' regarding autonomy for English language teachers is provided by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012: 7), who conclude that:

1. learner autonomy is established as a central concept in the field of foreign language learning

2. there is a large literature on learner autonomy which, though, awards limited attention for foreign language teachers' beliefs about this concept

3. understanding such beliefs is central to the process of understanding and promoting changes in the extent to which teachers promote learner autonomy in their work.

There is some evidence that the crossing of the troublesome terrain of autonomy can be scaffolded through the use of blended approaches (Brooke, 2013; Orsini-Jones, 2015; Cappellini et al., 2017). The development of autonomy through online platforms also makes it urgent to enhance the critical digital literacy of both learners and teachers, as well illustrated by Helm and Guth in their comprehensive competency chart 'Framework for the goals of Telecollaboration 2.0' (2010: 74). B-MELTT aims to do this with a reflection on autonomy carried out through 'blended learning action'. The social networking opportunities afforded by a blended setting, where formal classroom interactions can be integrated with informal communication on a global scale, have created new opportunities for a reflection on the re-conceptualisation of learner autonomy. In this study, the integration of a MOOC in a blended setting was instrumental in supporting a crossing of the threshold concept of autonomy in language learning and teaching for some of the participants. It also helped participants to acquire new critical digital skills.

3

Research methods

3.1 Participants, data collection and methodology

There were a total of 154 participants in the B-MELTT project, but they engaged in different ways with the platforms used, resulting in different figures reported for each platform. The participants were, in the main, students reading for either an MA or a BA (Hons) in ELT/TESOL, and included 17 lecturers involved in teacher education. Some of these lecturers were Chinese visiting scholars on study placements at CU. The participating students were based in five different higher education institutions in three different countries: one in the UK, one in the Netherlands, and three in China:

1. Coventry University (CU)
2. Hogeschool Utrecht (HU)
3. Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU)
4. Sichuan International Studies University (SISU)
5. East China University of Science and Technology (ECUST).

There were 13 different nationalities represented in the sample: Austrian, Bangladeshi, British, Chinese, Dutch, Ghanaian, Kenyan, Iranian, Malaysian, Nigerian, Russian, Swedish and Vietnamese. This heterogeneous sampling allowed for the collection of several perspectives relating to participants' beliefs. Each participant was coded according to their home institution, e.g. CU1, 2, 3; SISU1, 2, 3; HU1, 2, 3; ECUST 1, 2, 3.

As previously mentioned in the introduction, this study aimed to address the following Research Questions (RQs):

1. Can a blended learning curricular intervention project, based on integrating a MOOC into the curriculum, support the identification of ELT students' beliefs, with particular reference to learner autonomy, across five HE institutions from three different countries?

2. Can the project lead to a transformation in the ELT students' beliefs about ELT?

3. What recommendations on how to integrate MOOCs into existing ELT courses could be made, based on the results of the project?

4. Can the use of blended learning help students on English language teacher education courses in higher education to acquire a holistic approach to the integration of technology into their learning and teaching?

The research methodology approach was based on related action research cycles (Orsini-Jones et al., 2015b; Orsini-Jones, 2015) that had preceded the implementation of the B-MELTT project. A grounded mixed-method approach was adopted, in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected (Dörnyei, 2003; 2007; Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2010).

3.2 Online survey

A pre-MOOC and a post-MOOC online survey were both administered through a survey provider that complies with the UK Data Protection Act requirements: 'Online Surveys',[7] to involve participants in individual meta-reflections before and after they engaged with the MOOC. Before administering the surveys, a pilot was completed by four English education lecturers involved in the project (two from the UK, one from the Netherlands and one from China). Following their recommendations, some questions were modified, and the number of items was reduced. For example, the word *troublesome* was replaced with the word *problematic* in the Pre-MOOC survey (question 13) as the Chinese partner who took part in the pilot felt that 'troublesome' was not a clear concept in the Chinese context and might not be understood.

---

7   Online Surveys (formerly Bristol Online Surveys): https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/

In terms of structure, the pre-MOOC survey consisted of two sections. The first section, which was adapted from the research study by Orsini-Jones (2015), included two types of questions:

1. Specific open questions that were used to gather sufficient 'biodata information' from the participants such as nationality, university affiliation, mode of study, native language(s), age, gender, English language proficiency, and previous teaching experience (Mackey and Gass, 2016: 177). The biodata provided an insight of their HE context; these data were used as indicators to determine whether the teachers' inner beliefs on learner autonomy (Barkhuizen, 2008) and the attitudes towards the blended learning project were shaped by their learning context.

2. Short-answer questions that allowed participants to express their opinions, attitudes and expectations towards the blended MOOC project (questions 10–14). Some of the items were 'clarification questions' that were attached to yes/no items, which provided relevant information to the research findings (Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2010: 38) (questions 10–12). Participants were also asked about the areas they considered as troublesome knowledge in English language teaching and learning because, as Meyer and Land (2005) state, it is necessary to try to identify these problematic areas before proceeding with a threshold curricular intervention. This question was also included in the post-MOOC survey with the aim of noticing whether the prior concepts participants had mentioned as 'troublesome knowledge' matched with the 'problematic areas' they listed after their MOOC engagement.

The second section of the pre-MOOC survey covered attitudinal statements in Likert-scale format, which were based on the work by Palfreyman (2003) and Benson (2007) on autonomy in language education (Statements 18–28). This part of the survey aimed to identify participants' beliefs on learner autonomy in English language teaching and learning. A total of 121 participants completed the pre-MOOC survey.

The post-MOOC survey consisted of three sections. The first section, which was similar to the first segment of the pre-MOOC survey, included a multiple-choice item that asked for the degree of participation with the MOOC. This question aimed to reveal the possible correlation between the degree of participation and the degree of change in participants' beliefs after they engaged with the MOOC (question 10). The second section of the survey consisted of Likert-scale type statements that enquired about participants' perceptions and attitudes regarding their MOOC experience. A total of 76 participants completed the post-MOOC survey.

3.3 Additional data collection tools

In addition to the surveys, the following were also analysed and triangulated:

- the discussion postings in the asynchronous forums in the tailor-made Moodle environment managed by CU ('Open Moodle')[8]

- the transcripts of the interviews carried out with self-selected participants. Some of the interviews were carried out in-group (with students) and some individually (with participating staff and some students)

- the transcripts of the in-class assessment at CU, a reflective essay on the MOOC/VE project that students could choose to answer as part of their summative tasks for the relevant module

- the post-project reflections by participating staff and some students who took part in the two B-MELTT symposia, one held in Utrecht in April 2017 and one held in Coventry in June 2017[9]

- individual interviews with the CU visiting scholars from China who participated in B-MELTT.

8   Unfortunately permission to harvest data on the participants' engagement with the MOOC was denied by FutureLearn
9   Selected proceedings are available for the Coventry event, Orsini-Jones and Smith (2018) and selected videos: http://bmeltt.coventry.domains/about/

4

Results

4.1 Pre-MOOC survey

Of the 154 participants who gave their consent to participate in this project, 137 were students and 121 of them completed the pre-MOOC survey (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic data on the participants who completed the pre-MOOC survey

Institution	Degree	Mode of study		Age		Sex		Level of proficiency		Length of teaching experience (year)		Total
		FT	PT	>41	<41	F	M	Native	B2–C2	>1	<1	
CU	MA in ELT/AL	32	4	2	34	28	8	8	28	17	19	36
HU	BA in English Teaching	17	9	4	22	23	3	7	19	24	2	26
XJTLU	MA TESOL	12	2	0	14	13	1	0	14	5	9	14
SISU	BA in English Pedagogy	36	3	0	39	38	1	2	37	3	36	39
ECUST	MA in AL	6	0	0	6	6	0	0	6	1	5	6

In the first set of questions, 67 per cent of respondents (81) answered that they knew what a MOOC was. However, only 25 per cent of them had participated in a MOOC before and only four per cent stated that they had completed an online course for continuous professional development (CPD) before engaging with B-MELTT.

Table 3 illustrates that a social orientation towards learner autonomy was supported by 79 per cent of the sample that agreed with statement 19, 'Learners should work together and take shared responsibility for their learning'. Most participants from China strongly agreed, with 93 per cent of respondents

in agreement with that perspective of learner autonomy. Participants from the three universities in China were grouped as one context due to their similar responses. The 'technical perspective' of learner autonomy (Benson, 1997) received the joint highest level of agreement from the participants, with 96 per cent of respondents in agreement with statement 23, 'Teachers should help students to develop skills and strategies for unsupervised learning'. The strong support for this orientation seems to be linked to the 90 per cent support for statement 28 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Results from the statements that reflect a social and technical perspective of learner autonomy (19, 23, 28)

CONTEXT	AGREE	%	NEUTRAL	%	DISAGREE	%	TOTAL	%
19. Learners should work together and take shared responsibility for their learning								
CU	27	75.0	6	16.7	3	8.3	36	100.0
HU	14	53.8	8	30.8	4	15.4	26	100.0
CH	55	**93.2**	1	1.7	3	5.1	59	100.0
TOTAL	96	**79.3**	15	12.4	10	8.3	121	100.0
23. Teachers should help students to develop skills and strategies for unsupervised learning								
CU	35	97.2	1	2.8	0	0.0	36	100.0
HU	25	96.2	1	3.8	0	0.0	26	100.0
CH	56	94.9	2	3.4	1	1.7	59	100.0
TOTAL	116	**96.0**	4	3.3	1	0.8	121	100.0
28. Providing learning activities to be done outside the language classroom promotes learner autonomy								
CU	33	91.7	2	5.6	1	2.8	36	100.0
HU	26	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	26	100.0
CH	50	84.7	9	15.3	0	0.0	59	100.0
TOTAL	109	**90.1**	11	9.1	1	0.8	121	100.0

Nevertheless, the opinions on some statements tended to vary across the three main higher education contexts. In statement 21 in Table 3, only HU participants (50 per cent) did not agree that 'Being an autonomous learner implies working on your own' while the sample from CU (69 per cent) and the three universities in CH (59 per cent) agreed with that statement (Table 4). This may imply an individualistic view of learner autonomy.

Table 3 Results from the statement that reflects an individualistic view of learner autonomy (21)

CONTEXT	AGREE	%	NEUTRAL	%	DISAGREE	%	TOTAL	%
21. Being an autonomous learner implies working on your own								
CU	25	69.4	3	8.3	8	22.2	36	100.0
HU	7	26.9	6	23.1	13	**50.0**	26	100.0
CH	35	59.3	12	20.3	12	20.3	59	100.0
TOTAL	67	55.4	21	17.4	33	27.3	121	100.0

Table 4 illustrates that a 'political perspective' of learner autonomy (Benson, 1997) was embraced by 75 per cent and 80 per cent of the participants from CU and HU respectively, who agreed with statement 22, 'Teachers should give students control over the learning process'. However, the participants from CH were the ones who supported this view less, with 48 per cent only in agreement with it.

**Table 4:** Results from the statement that reflects a political perspective of learner autonomy (22)

22. Teachers should give students control over the learning process								
CONTEXT	AGREE	%	NEUTRAL	%	DISAGREE	%	TOTAL	%
CU	27	75.0	5	13.9	4	11.1	36	100.0
HU	21	80.8	3	11.5	2	7.7	26	100.0
CH	28	**48.0**	17	28.8	14	23.7	59	100.0
TOTAL	76	63.0	25	20.7	20	16.5	121	100.0

4.2 VLE access and data mining

After completing the pre-MOOC survey, participants were sent the instructions by email on how to register in Moodle and enrol on the course called 'B-MELTT (Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training) – British Council ELTRA Project 2016–17'. The VLE contained a welcoming message, a link inviting participants to meet the B-MELTT team, a forum for participants where they could introduce themselves, an embedded link with direct access to the FutureLearn MOOC, and five discussion forums, one for each week of the MOOC (see Figure 3).

The design of the VE environment in Moodle, managed by the expert student in collaboration with staff at CU, was informed by the experience of engaging in online international learning since 2011 (Orsini-Jones et al., 2015a; Orsini-Jones and Lee, 2018). There were 137 student participants registered on the VLE; of these 78 posted to the Moodle forums.

Figure 3: Moodle website for the B-MELTT project
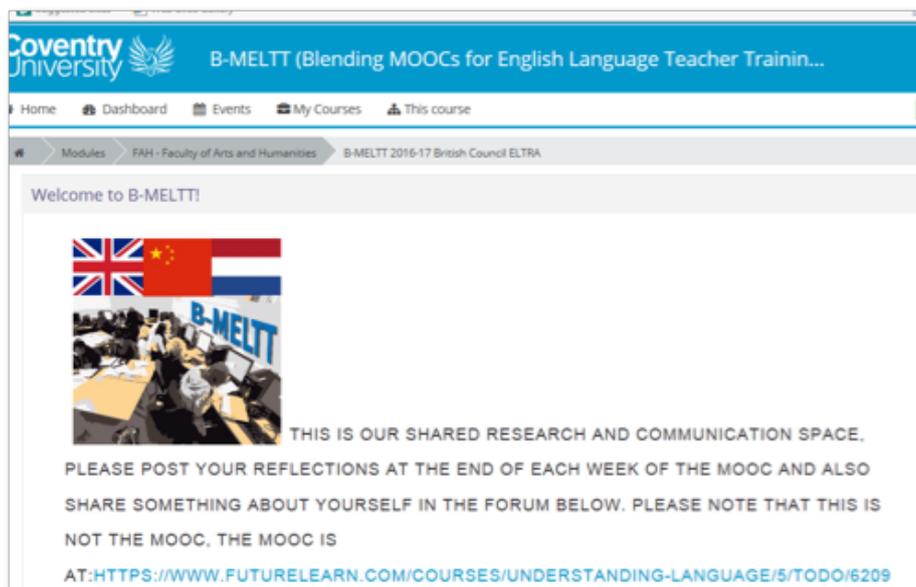
The themes that 'trended' most in the forums were:

1. MOOC content
2. blended learning
3. integration of a MOOC into future teaching practice
4. learner autonomy
5. teaching contexts.

In relation to the discussion relating to digital contexts of teaching, two sub-trends emerged in the forum exchanges: the first one related to appreciation of how much could be gained by engaging with a global and digital community of teaching practice, e.g. (*verbatim*): [10]

Participant 1 (HU), posting from 11/12/2016

In the MOOC, the discussion forum added extra value as compared to my blended learning experience as I really learnt from the many postings of other participants.

Participant 2 (HU), posting from 16/12/2016

I thought it was really cool about the mooc that people all over the world could comment on your ideas and even add in some ideas of their own. It gave me, as a student teacher, a lot of tips to work with students face to face but also via the internet. it gave me also a fresh perspective on how to deal with online learning and how to make the best of it for students and for myself as a future teacher. Technology is our future so we have to learn how to work with it and how to make sure your students can adapt easily towards the future and technology is a big part of that! I enjoyed this course and it will be likely to do one again.

---

10   Note that all comments are reproduced verbatim here.

The second 'sub-theme' related to how the B-MELTT project appeared to provoke some food for thought in terms of raised awareness of specific teaching contexts and the need to teach intercultural awareness. Two participants from China (13 and 6 SISU) also wrote a few words of warning of the dominance of English on the global linguistic arena (which echoed remarks made in the post-MOOC survey) (*verbatim*):

Participant 13 (SISU), posting from 14/11/2017

English is taught as a foreign or second language in many countries, this is the inevitable result of globalization. Many universities around the world offer courses through the medium of English to meet the needs of the global community. As far as I am concerned, this can help students adapt to the society and further connected with the world. But every coin has two sides, this teaching methods does not take into account the individual differences of students. What's more, some universities pay too much attention to English, but ignore the mother tongue. This is not conducive to the heritage and development of local culture.

Participant 14 (SISU), posting from 8/11/2016

As a future teacher, I will not just teach my students the vocabulary, the grammar and other aspects of English (which I received in my previous study), I will consider more about the intercultural awareness.

Participant 6 (SISU), posting from 20/11/2016

There are many traditional festivals every year in China. While in these years, more and more people especially children celebrate western festivals, such as Christmas, Halloween, April fool's day. It is difficult for our children to recognize what is tradition, why they are different. This may affect our culture's inheritance. Learning a language, we must get to know some cultures of their country. If we blend them together with our own's, the disadvantage is obvious.

The individual comments and exchanges between participants also showed some reflections about the concept of learner autonomy, and its relation with online learning:

CUVLE14, Participant 14 (CU), posting from 4/11/2016

Learner autonomy is a problematic term because it is widely confused with self-instruction. It is not the same as self-study. Autonomy learning require students to focus on the specific aims. Compare with self-study, self-study is students study by themselves under the guide of teachers

Participant 24 (CU), posting from 25/11/2016

I definitely understand what you mean about the absent teacher role in online learning settings. However, I think it is very important to promote learner autonomy and also participating in online communities (without a teacher-instructed command), as they will be able to build and elicit individual, personal viewpoints as well as becoming more aware of other learners' perspectives. I believe it can develop learners' language skills as well as promoting personal growth.

4.3 Post-MOOC survey

The post-MOOC online survey was completed by 76 participants, mostly female. Their feedback on their engagement with the project was overall very positive, particularly with reference to the impact it had on their raised awareness of their teaching context and their 'metareflection' (see Table 6).

Table 6: Sample results from the Post-MOOC survey December 2016, statements 15, 16 and 17

S 15: I think that participating in the project as a whole helped me to reflect on how students from my teaching context learn.

Strongly agree	19 (25%)
Mostly agree	45 (59.2%)
Neither agree nor disagree	10 (13.2%)
Mostly disagree	2 (2.6%)
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)
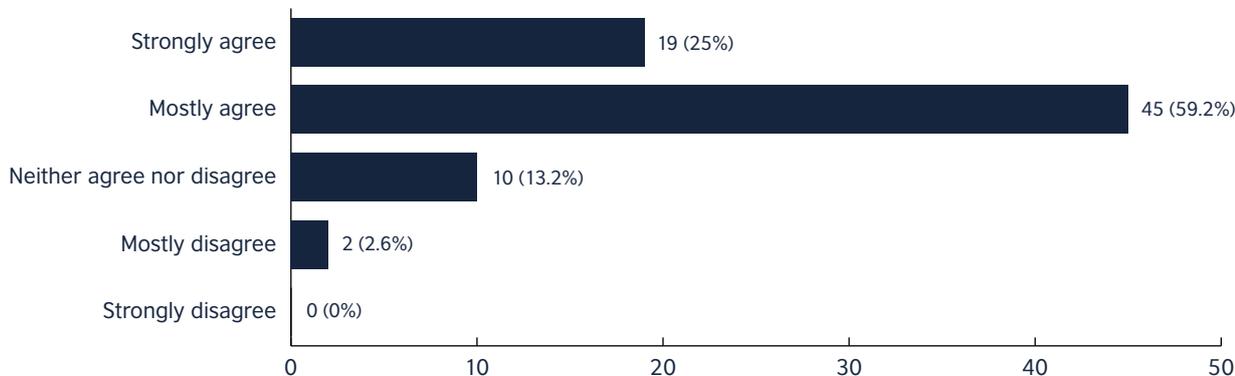
S 16: I think that participating in the project as a whole helped me to reflect on how I learn.

Strongly agree	19 (25%)
Mostly agree	38 (50%)
Neither agree nor disagree	15 (19.7%)
Mostly disagree	3 (3.9%)
Strongly disagree	1 (1.3%)
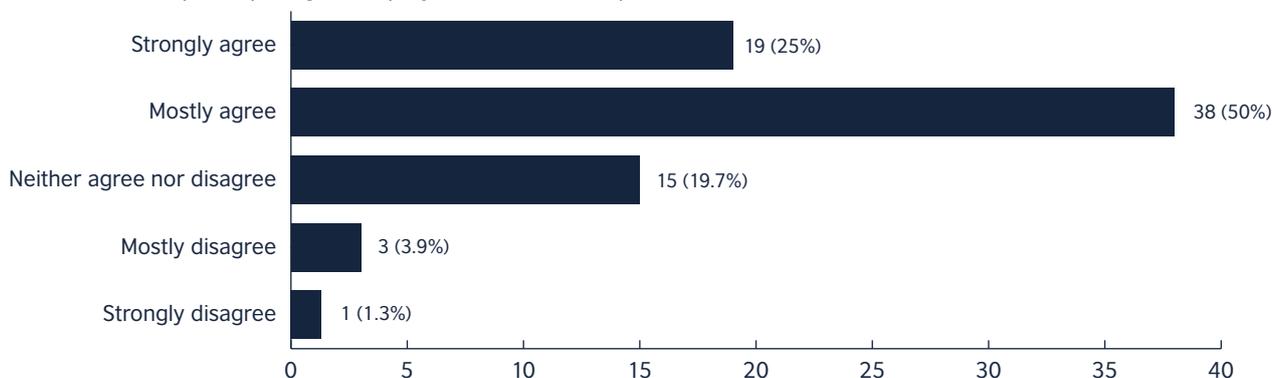
S 17: I think that participating in the project as a whole helped me to reflect on how I plan to teach in my teaching context.

Strongly agree	22 (28.9%)
Mostly agree	43 (56.6%)
Neither agree nor disagree	9 (11.8%)
Mostly disagree	1 (1.3%)
Strongly disagree	1 (1.3%)
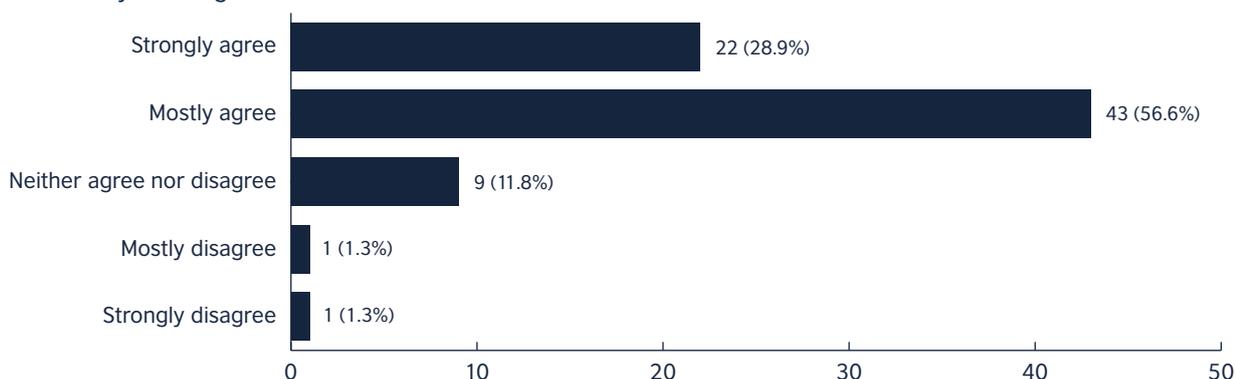
The following three points of interest arose from the survey:

1. Most participants agreed that more scaffolding was needed within the MOOC from mentors/tutors as they thought that there was not sufficient support to gain full benefit from its socio-collaborative and dialogic aspects.

2. The percentage of the sample that considered the teaching context as an *obstacle* to the promotion of autonomy increased from 48 per cent to 68 per cent after engaging with the blended MOOC.

3. Half of the participants (51.3 per cent) agreed that engaging with B-MELTT had changed their beliefs on language learning and teaching (see Table 7).

Table 7: Post-MOOC survey perceptions on changed beliefs, statement 14

S 14: My beliefs on language learning and teaching have changed by engaging with the B-MELTT project.
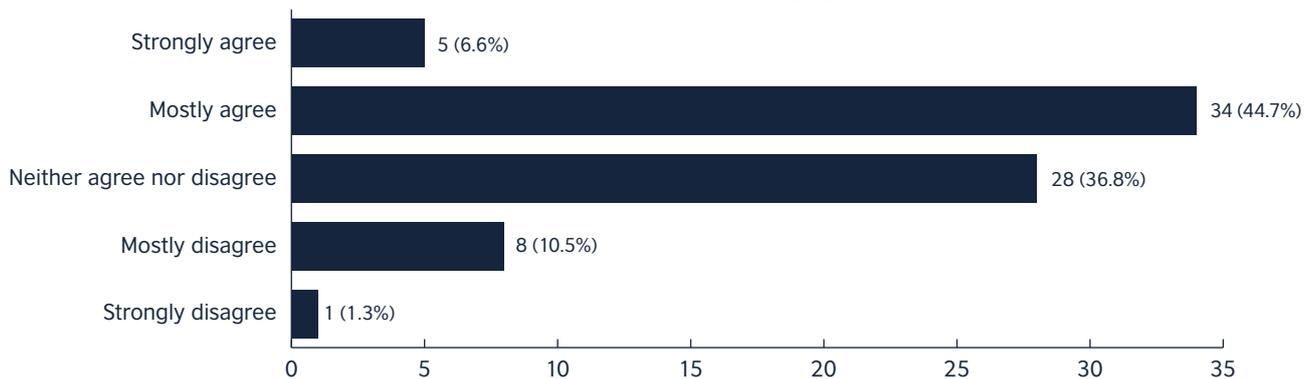
Triangulation with the interview transcripts confirmed that participating in B-MELTT had caused a conversion to the use of online learning for their own practice for many participants, which they had not considered before: (*verbatim*) (the B-MELTT project) 'opened my eyes not only to new ways to learn but also new ways to teach. I was thinking a lot about what it is like to be a teacher on a screen (...) and it also opened my eyes to teaching online' (HU2, interview, group 2).

4.4 Group interviews

Three group interviews were carried out with a total of 25 students, who were first of all asked to elaborate on what the term 'autonomous language learner' meant to them (see Appendix 3). Two categorisations of autonomy emerged from the interviewees' answers: there were participants who saw it more as *independent learning* while others appeared to value *interdependent learning*. According to Littlewood (1999) interdependence involves co-operation between teachers and students to achieve a shared learning goal. Three participants from HU and two from CU associated an autonomous learner with independent learning. For instance, one of them believed that 'an autonomous learner is a person who manages every aspect of learning by themselves from scheduling, studying, finding resources and even the assessment as well' (CU13, interview, group 1, 02/12/2016). One student from HU and 19 from CU related this term to *interdependent learning* by claiming, for example, that 'it also refers to the learning process itself. So, on the one hand you provide them with information and learning tools and on the other hand they have to find out and learn for themselves' (HU3, Skype interview, group 2, 07/12/2016).

All the interviewees contributed positive adjectives such as 'useful' and 'interesting' when asked to define the blended MOOC project. They all agreed, however, that there should be more face-to-face instruction (time) compared to the study (time) online in blended learning projects by stating, for example, that 'Online learning supports face-to-face interaction with the teacher or with other people. [So, I would say] 30 per cent online and 70 per cent face-to-face communication' (HU2, group 2).

All the participants from CU and CH described the MOOC content as 'new' and 'fresh'. Eight participants from HU stated that they were familiar with the content of the MOOC. However, they agreed that receiving that content from tutors on the MOOC allowed them to have different perspectives from the ones they had been working on within their degree programme at their institution.

Despite expressing different perceptions of blended learning, 14 participants from the three learning contexts highlighted their preference for a blended approach to learning, as shown in the exchange below:

CUVLE16

> I really liked this week's topic. I could express my feelings in discussions and I learned how to include online learning in my classroom. A lot of really good tools and tips on online learning were introduced. I learned a lot this week. Till now it is my favourite. I still think f2f learning is a more effective environment for me as I need to have a holding hand to learn.

CUVLE9

> I agree with you. Online learning makes learning more interesting as learners of the current generation are growing up with the use of technology. However, face-to-face should not be excluded because it is an important element. We communicate with others not often through online but by meeting them and conversing in our daily lives.

5

More findings, discussion and recommendations: addressing the research questions set at the beginning

The initial results have suggested that students studying on ELT courses welcome this type of MOOC/VE blend, but that sometimes their declaration of changed beliefs (see Section 4.3) is not reflected in reality. Below are comments and reflections emerged from B-MELTT in relation to each of the initial research questions (RQs) posed.

5.1 RQ1: Can a blended learning curricular intervention project based on integrating a MOOC into the curriculum support the identification of ELT students' beliefs, with particular reference to learner autonomy, across five HE institutions located in three different countries?

The major differences among the three educational contexts represented in the project related to their beliefs around 'learner autonomy'. CU Chinese participants and participants in Chinese universities saw it as 'working on one's own', while participants from HU and the non-Chinese students from CU equated it to 'learning with others, but taking responsibility for one's own learning', so the latter students aligned with Benson's 'political perspective' on autonomy while the former with his 'technical' one. Another difference in the pre-MOOC survey related to the beliefs relating to the differing degrees of control that the teacher should have on the learning environment (same 'split' as for previous question). A majority of the participants from China, whether based in China or at CU, preferred a tutor-centred approach.

The above illustrates that contextual factors, such as a tradition of tutor-centred, face-to-face ELT practice, strongly affect ELT students' beliefs, even if they have engaged with educational research findings that prove their beliefs wrong. This is substantiated by a related study by another 'expert student' from CU who found that experienced Chinese ELT teachers on the MA in ELTAL were more opposed to the development of learner autonomy and the integration of MOOCs into their curricula than

novice teachers (Jiao, 2018). Jiao's study shows that the more experienced teachers strongly favoured a teacher-centred approach, in line with other related studies that highlight the influence of Confucian culture on Chinese teachers' beliefs (e.g. Orsini-Jones et al., 2017c), where the teacher must be the 'sage on stage' not the 'guide on the side' (definition by King, 1993). Some of the Chinese scholars interviewed for this B-MELTT project also stated that adopting an existing MOOC could undermine their authority and cause them to lose face, in case students asked questions relating to the material that they could not answer. The reluctance to adopt existing MOOCs, and a preference towards creating one's own MOOC, tailor-made for local settings, also emerged from interviews carried out with experienced teachers of English from Nanjing Agricultural University who took part in a teacher education summer school at CU in July–August 2017. They viewed existing 'off-the-shelf' MOOCs as a threat to the teacher's authority (Orsini-Jones et al., 2017c: 9).

Despite the fact that many participants stated in their answers that the project had supported their development as autonomous teachers, even acknowledging that the project had encouraged them to reflect on how they learn and how they plan to teach, the gap between what they believed learner autonomy was and what they did as autonomous reflective teachers betrayed a certain level of 'mimicry' (Flanagan, 2018), i.e. seeming to understand the concept but not fully grasping it. It was revealing that when the CU students engaged in an assessed micro-teaching session for a module in semester 2, the majority of them adopted a traditional teacher-centred approach, delivering micro-lectures, apparently having 'forgotten' all that was learned in semester 1 regarding autonomy (also refer to Phi (2017; 2018) and Jiao (2018) on this point). Hence, the challenge for ELT educators is to encourage students to theorise from their practice and practise what they theorise (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

5.2 RQ2: Can the project lead to a transformation in ELT students' beliefs about ELT?

The majority of participants agreed that there are major benefits in engaging with a global conversation on a MOOC, which provided them with interesting 'food for thought'. Although some of the enthusiasm for the MOOC could be attributed to what Murray and Barnes call the 'wow factor' (1998), as the majority of participants had never engaged with a MOOC before (see Section 4.1), there was a noticeable shift in positive beliefs towards online learning during the course of the project. Many participants who had not contemplated blended learning before, started to see its potential for both their personal development and for their future ELT practice. It could be argued that the global collaborative knowledge-sharing exchange afforded by the MOOC, and reinforced by the VE Moodle discussion and the face-to-face contact in B-MELTT, contributed to transformative changes in some of the participants' beliefs. For example (in-class reflective essay assessed task answer extract, CU1, Nigerian, verbatim):

> As someone who had not previously taken part in an online course I found that it provided me as a learner with a broad opportunity to globally communicate with others, showing me that learning is not limited to the classroom setting. As a teacher the MOOC provided a space for global interaction with other learners and educators, which gave insight into different styles of teaching.

It is interesting to note how the 'meta-reflective' dimension of the MOOC experience positively affected the learning experience of the three participants below (again, in-class test reflective essay extracts, CU13, Chinese and CU 30, Malaysian), who incidentally also appear to begin to grasp the concept of autonomy (verbatim):

> As a student, I have studied for about 20 years but I have never experienced this kind of learning before. In China, teachers always take control of the whole class, they decide what we learned every day and check our homework. Most of us study to pass the exam or to make our parents happy in order to go to a good university to get a good job. Most of the students never enjoyed the process of learning. As a teacher in the future, I would like to say, I will use this new way to teach students because I want them to study more effective and happy […] I was very happy to communicate with other students and I enjoyed the whole process.

> Taking part in MOOC changed my perception of online learning. I used to think that online learning is not effective. (CU13)

> To be honest, MOOC was my first attempt of online learning. Before, I thought online courses as something waste of time and energy. I believed there is nothing suitable for learning just teacher-learner traditional classrooms. I was so dependent to the teachers. But, when I came through the MOOC I found that not only it is not wasting time but also it saves my time and energy […] I feel more independent I had the control of learning I could manage my time and resources. I think MOOC was a really good start for me to try more online courses. (CU30)

Participants from each of the contexts involved stated that they were now considering a blended MOOC approach in their ELT practice, as illustrated in this VLE post (verbatim):

> In my opinion the FutureLearn way of learning should be encouraged everywhere due to its relevancy to the current world of social media podiums. It resembles what students do on a daily basis even during the lessons if given the chance. Therefore, as an upcoming teacher, I would want to incorporate this into my classroom. (HUVLE12, week 2 post)

More experienced teachers on the MA at CU also commented positively on the experience of taking part in B-MELTT (CU23, in-class test reflective essay, extract, British), even if it could be argued, yet again, that the concept of autonomy is still a bit 'blurry' here, at least in terms of semantics (see line 2):

> Taking part in the MOOC supported my learning journey in a number of ways. There was a great deal of autonomy within the course. This was illustrated through the ability of being able to make decisions for myself and to choose what I believed was necessary for me to focus on based on my personal needs. It was through the MOOC that I identified some critical incidents in my teaching, which raised questions of the views that I had held. (CU23, British)

5.3 RQ3: What recommendations on how to integrate MOOCs into existing ELT HE courses could be made based on the results of the project?

Ten main recommendations resulted from the project.

1. Academics involved in teacher education considering this type of 'flipped MOOC/VE blend' should engage in a thorough dialogue with their partners to clarify in writing what is meant by each relevant term, starting at 'MOOC' and 'blended learning'. No knowledge should be assumed on the part of any participating institution. In fact, it would be useful to administer a diagnostic quiz on the 'semantics' of the project and then agree definitions in order to avoid, or at least to minimise, possible misunderstandings.

2. A clear, written step-by-step guide with instructions on the stages of the project, as well as the aim and purpose of each e-tool/e-platform used and clear instructions on how to access them should be jointly written. The project leads from CU should have conveyed the fact that they were using more than one platform and why they were doing so in a clearer way. Partners in China and in the Netherlands were initially puzzled by the need to use both Moodle and the MOOC. Also, they assumed that CU had created the MOOC and was in charge of it.

3. It is necessary to allow plenty of time for the clearing of the ethics requirements and the signing of the consent forms by all participants involved. This is now made more crucial by the recently introduced GDPR law in Europe.

4. The blend must include a face-to-face synchronous element (e.g. via Skype) for all participants involved. This recommendation ties in with the guidelines issued in 2018 by Erasmus+ regarding VEs.

5. It is of fundamental importance to identify a suitable MOOC that is released at a time that matches the dates and content of existing curricula. This is not always possible and in some countries, like the Netherlands, higher education syllabi are highly regulated by the central ministry of education, so it is more difficult to adapt and tweak them. Also, the identification of a suitable MOOC can be challenging, and its integration will always require extra work to adapt the weekly plan for the relevant module/course.

6. A synchronised induction to the project was recommended by the student expert. This would serve first of all as a means to familiarise participants with the online platforms they will use within the blended MOOC project (FutureLearn and Moodle). Second, it would provide the opportunity to train participants in computing and navigational skills aimed at minimising the technical difficulties participants may encounter when accessing those platforms. It was for example observed that CU participants assumed that they could use the same password for Moodle and for FutureLearn, which was not the case. The level of computer literacy among participants varied considerably. It is important for the tutor to observe these problems live in a lab.

7. A face-to-face classroom element must be included. Some partners appeared to interpret 'blended learning' in a different way from the Principal Investigator and they only recommended the MOOC for activities outside classroom time. This caused some misunderstandings among participants.

8. There must be an alignment between the theoretical components covered in class with the appropriate content covered in each week of the MOOC, so that participants can reflect on the content covered in different ways and compare the various modes of learning they are exposed to in a meaningful way (see Appendix 2).

9. There must be summative assessment aligned with the blended MOOC/VE project. Many interviewees stated that they would not have engaged with the MOOC project if a summative assessment element had not been linked to it. For example, students at CU had the option of choosing a question related to the B-MELTT project they had engaged with in their in-class reflective summative assessed task in the relevant module.

10. It must be borne in mind that since 2017 the MOOC will be closed once the course finishes unless students pay for a subscription fee. This created an issue with a CU student who had deferred the in-class assessed task. So it is better not to assign summative assessment tasks that require access to the MOOC after it has closed.

5.4 RQ4: Can the use of blended learning help students on English language teacher education courses in higher education to acquire a holistic approach to the integration of technology into their learning and teaching?

It would appear that the project exerted a positive impact on its participants' perception of e-learning and dispelled some of their fears and reservations about online and blended learning: see the results for statements 26 and 27 in Table 8.

Table 8: Results for statements 26 and 27 in the Post-MOOC survey – attitudes towards online learning

S 26: Learning a language online can motivate learners.

Response	Value
Strongly agree	29 (24%)
Mostly agree	47 (38.8%)
Neither agree nor disagree	36 (29.8%)
Mostly disagree	9 (7.4%)
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)
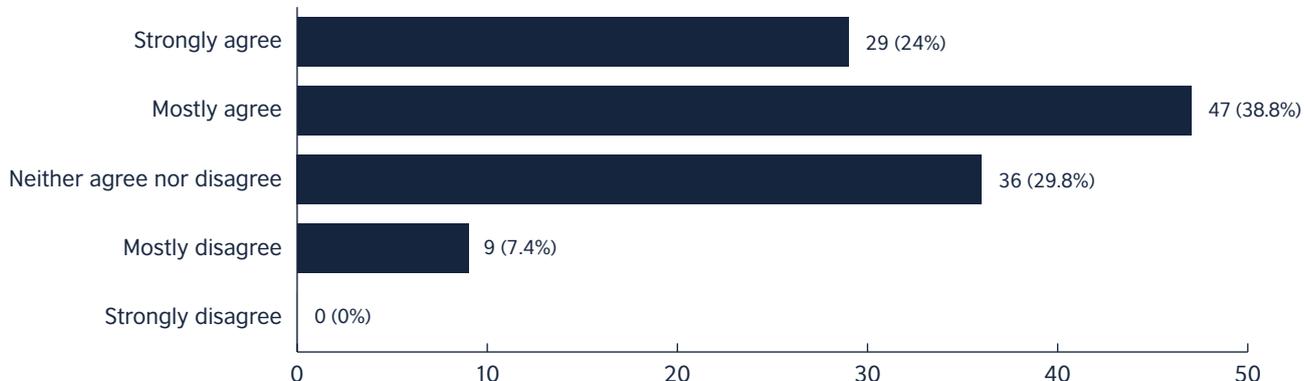
S 27: Learning about language learning and teaching online can motivate teachers.

Response	Value
Strongly agree	34 (28.1%)
Mostly agree	57 (47.1%)
Neither agree nor disagree	23 (19%)
Mostly disagree	7 (5.8%)
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)
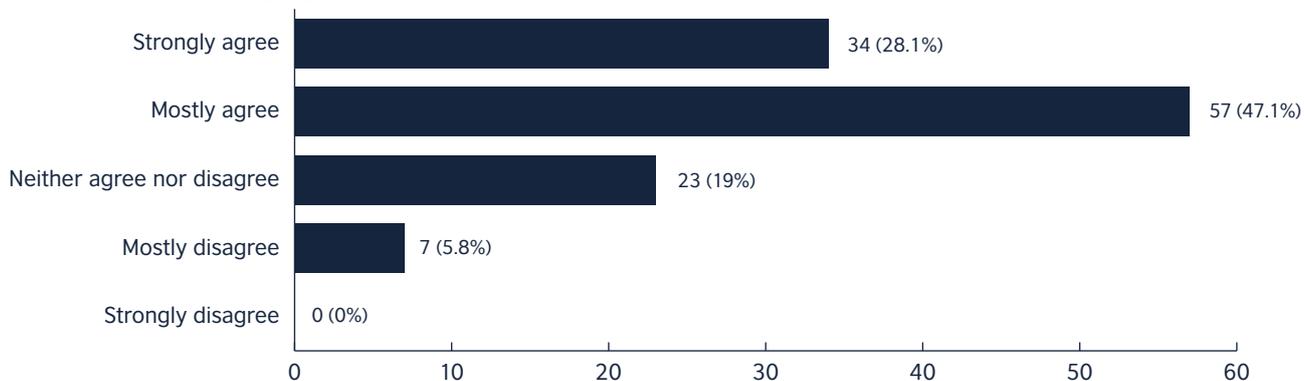
Many participants stated that the project had offered them the opportunity to rethink their beliefs and practice. On the whole, the data collected would appear to indicate that B-MELTT supported the enhancement of digital critical skills, the development of the ability to engage online with a global community of practice and the social-collaborative opportunity to embrace new viewpoints on one's beliefs and practice. Furthermore, this was done at a 'meta-level' as the participants were reflecting on digital practice while engaging with units on the MOOC on this topic (Week 3), so 'in action', 'on action' and for their future practice, 'for action'.

However, reservations were expressed by some participants, mainly relating to the extra time needed to engage with the materials on the MOOC as well as the materials provided in class. Some participants expressed their dislike for the marketing focus in the MOOC, which was aimed at promoting the MA in ELT at the University of Southampton, and others stated that they only engaged with the MOOC because they had to for their assessment (mainly CU students).

The lack of what was perceived to be 'real interaction' with the mentors on the MOOC was also raised as a problematic issue, as well as the challenging navigation of the MOOC comments area, where some participants became a bit lost and others preferred to 'lurk' rather than post, because of the fear of exposure in such a massive environment. [11] Not all participants were therefore 'converted' to this blend for ELT CPD, and some stated that they still favoured face-to-face to both blended and online learning.

Nevertheless, on the whole, the feedback on the experience of taking part in B-MELTT was very positive. Participants from each of the contexts involved stated that they were now considering a blended MOOC approach in their ELT practice, as illustrated in these VLE posts (verbatim):

In my opinion the FutureLearn way of learning should be encouraged everywhere due to its relevancy to the current world of social media podiums. It resembles what students do on a daily basis even during the lessons if given the chance. Therefore, as an upcoming teacher, I would want to incorporate this into my classroom. (HUVLE12, Week 2 post)

I have to use the word 'impressive' to describe my experience of this MOOC thing. This is my first time to participate in such kind of online courses which might be a new fashion in the field of pedagogy now. So, what the MOOC gives me is not the knowledge presented each week by those heartful and diligent professors but also this new form of teaching that I can make use of in my future teaching career. (SISUVLE4, Week 1 post)

---

11   Borthwick (who was one of the creators of the MOOC and provided consultancy support for B-MELTT) reported that 19,903 participants signed up for the occurrence of the MOOC under discussion, 10,983 took part in its activities and 2,435 posted comments (Borthwick, 2018, personal communication).

6

Conclusion

B-MELTT would appear to have supported the enhancement of its participants' digital literacy and the development of their ability to engage online with a global community of practice. The project also provided the opportunity for all involved to reflect on learner and teacher autonomy while engaging with new ELT learning practices.

It cannot be claimed that all participants managed to grasp the threshold concept of autonomy thanks to the curricular MOOC/VE blend; some continued to find it troublesome – but the data collected and discussed here demonstrates evidence of a shift in positive beliefs towards both autonomy and online learning for many participants who commented on the transformational nature of their blended MOOC/VE learning journey with particular reference to their professional development as teachers of English language.

The data collected on this large-scale project would benefit from further analysis and processing. More research into this area of English teaching and learning would provide a better insight into how the relatively new FutureLearn MOOC courses can support ELT teachers with a reconceptualisation of their continuous professional development.

References

Abeysekera, L and Dawson, P (2014) Motivation and cognition load in the flipped classroom: definition, rationale and a call for research. *Higher Education Research & Development* 34/1: 1–14. Available online at: https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.934336

Barkhuizen, G (2008) A narrative approach to exploring context in language teaching. *ELT Journal* 62/3: 231–239.

Bax, S (2003) CALL – past, present and future. *System* 31/1: 13–28.

Bax, S (2018) 'MOOCs as a new technology: approaches to normalising the MOOC experience for our learners' in Orsini-Jones, M and Smith, S (eds) *Flipping the blend through MOOCs, MALL and OIL – new directions in CALL*. Dublin: Research-publishing.net, 9–16.

Benson, P (1997) 'The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy', in Benson, P and Voller, P (eds) *Autonomy and independence in language learning.* London: Longman.

Benson, P (2006) *Learner autonomy 8: Insider perspectives on autonomy in language teaching and learning.* Dublin: Authentik.

Benson, P (2007) Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching* 40/1: 21–40.

Bonk, CJ and Graham, CA (2006) *The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs.* San Francisco: Pfeiffer/Wiley.

Borg, S (2011) The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System* 39/3: 370–380.

Borg, S and Al-Busaidi, S (2012) *Learner Autonomy: English Language Teachers' Beliefs and Practices.* British Council research paper available online at: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/b459%20ELTRP%20Report%20Busaidi_final.pdf

Borthwick, K (2017) *What our MOOC did next: embedding, exploiting and extending an existing MOOC to fit university strategic aims.* Paper presented at the B-MELTT: Flipping the Blend through MALL, MOOCs and BOIL – New Directions in CALL Symposium, 29–30 June 2017. Available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imykUd9in4s&list=PLbq2uHCU8FRnkXHP_ykBqr3_kN1URFvtT&index=9

Borthwick, K (2018) 'What our MOOC did next: embedding, exploiting, and extending an existing MOOC to fit strategic purposes and priorities', In Orsini-Jones, M and Smith, S (eds) *Flipping the blend through MOOCs, MALL and OIL – new directions in CALL.* Dublin: Research-publishing.net, 17–23.

Brooke, M (2013) Facilitating the Development of the Autonomous Language Learner Using Online Virtual Learning Environments. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 3/4: 572–580.

Burns, A (2010) *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners.* London: Routledge.

Burns, A and Kurtoğlu-Hooton, N (2016) *Using action research to explore technology in language teaching: international perspectives.* ELT Research Paper 16.06. London: British Council. Available online at: http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/continuing-professional-development/cpd-researchers/using-action-research-explore-technology-language-teaching-international-perspectives

Bruff, DO, Fisher, DH, McEwen, KE and Smith, BE (2013) Wrapping a MOOC: Student Perceptions of an Experiment in Blended Learning. *MERLOT. Journal of Online Learning and Teaching* 9/2.

Cavey, C (2016) MOOCs and your CPD. Teaching English. British Council. Available online at: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/chris-cavey-moocs-your-cpd

Cappellini, M, Lewis, T and Rivens Mompean, A (2017) *Learner Autonomy and Web 2.0.* Sheffield: Equinox.

Centre for Global Engagement (2018) *Online International Learning (OIL)* Available online at: https://www.coventry.ac.uk/study-at-coventry/centre-for-global-engagement/online-interactive-learning-oil/

Cousin, G (2009) *Researching Learning in Higher Education: An Introduction to Contemporary Methods and Approaches.* London: Routledge

Coventry University (2018) Study a Coventry University qualification online. Available online at: https://www.coventry.ac.uk/study-at-coventry/online-learning/

Dam, L (1995) *Learner Autonomy 3: from theory to classroom practice.* Dublin: Authentik.

Dam, L (2003) 'Developing learner autonomy: the teacher's responsibility', in Little, D, Ridley, J and Ushioda, E (eds) *Learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: teacher, learner, curriculum and assessment.* Dublin: Authentik.

Data Protection Act (2018) Available online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted/data.htm

Dörnyei, Z (2003) *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing* (1st edition). London: Routledge.

Dörnyei, Z (2007) *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics.* Oxford: Open University Press.

Dörnyei, Z and Taguchi, T (2010) *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing* (2nd edition). New York: Routledge.

Efklidis, A (2006) 'Metacognition, affect, and conceptual difficulty', In Meyer, JHF and Land, R (eds) *Overcoming Barriers to Student Understanding: Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge.* London: Routledge/Falmer, 48–69.

Erasmus+ (2018) Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en

Flanagan, M (2018) Threshold Concepts: Undergraduate Teaching, Postgraduate Training, Professional Development and School Education – A Short Introduction and a Bibliography. UCL Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering. Available online at: www.ee.ucl.ac.uk/~mflanaga/thresholds.html

Flavell, J (1979) Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new era cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34/10: 906–911.

FutureLearn (2018) Why FutureLearn Is An Effective Way To Learn. Available online at: https://www.futurelearn.com/using-futurelearn/why-it-works

General Data Protection Regulation (2018) Available online at: https://gdpr-info.eu/

Godwin-Jones, R (2012) Emerging Technologies: Challenging hegemonies in online learning. *Language Learning & Technology* 16/2: 4–13.

Helm, F and Guth, S (2010) 'The Multifarious Goals of Telecollaboration 2.0: theoretical and practical implications', In Guth, S and Helm, F (eds) *Telecollaboration 2.0.* Bern: Peter Lang, 69–106.

Higher Education Academy (2017) Massive open online course. Available online at: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/massive-open-online-course-mooc

Holec, H (1981) *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning.* Oxford: Pergamon. (First published 1979. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.)

Israel, M (2015) Effectiveness of integrating MOOCs in traditional classrooms for undergraduate students. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 16/5: 102–118.

Jiao, Y (2018) 'Understanding learner autonomy through MOOC-supported blended learning environments: an investigation into Chinese MA ELT students' beliefs', in Orsini-Jones, M and Smith, S (eds) *Flipping the blend through MOOCs, MALL and OIL – new directions in CALL.* Dublin: Research-publishing.net, 33–40.

Joseph-Israel, M (2013) Effectiveness of Integrating MOOCs in Traditional Classrooms for Undergraduate Students. *IRRODL The International Review of Open and Distributed Learning* 16/5. Available online at: www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/2222

Klapper, J (2006) *Understanding and developing good practice: Language teaching in higher education.* London: CILT.

Killion, JP and Todnem, GR (1991) A process for personal theory building. *Educational Leadership* 48/6: 14–16.

Kim, P (ed) (2015) *Massive Open Online Courses: the MOOC revolution.* New York: Routledge.

King, A (1993) From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side. *College Teaching* 41/1: 30–35.

Kumaravadivelu, B (2012) *Language teacher education for a global society: A modular model for knowing, analyzing, recognizing, doing, and seeing.* New York: Routledge.

Laurillard, D (1993) *Rethinking university teaching: A framework for the effective use of educational technology.* London: Routledge.

Laurillard, D (2014) Anatomy of a MOOC for Teacher CPD. UCL, Institute of Education. Available online at: https://iite.unesco.org/files/news/639194/Anatomy_of_a_MOOC.pdf

Lacey, F (2007) Autonomy, never, never, never! *Independence* 42: 4–8.

Little, D (1991) *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems.* Dublin: Authentik.

Little, D (2001) 'Learner autonomy and the challenge of tandem language learning via the Internet', in Chambers, A and Davies, G (eds) *ICT and language learning: A European perspective.* Abingdon: Swets & Zeitlinger Publishers, 29–38.

Little, D, and Thorne, SL (2017) 'From Learner Autonomy to Rewilding: A Discussion', in Cappellini, M, Lewis, T Mompean, AR (eds) *Learner Autonomy and Web 2.0.* Sheffield: Equinox, 12/35.

Littlewood, W (1999) Defining and developing autonomy in Eastern Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics* 20/1: 71–94.

Mackey, A, and Gass, SM (2016) *Second Language Research: Methods and Design.* London: Routledge.

Mann, S and Walsh, S (2017) *Reflective Practice in English Language Teaching: Research-Based Principles and Practices.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Meyer, JHF and Land, R (2003) Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: linkages to ways of thinking and practising within the disciplines – Occasional Report 4. Available online at: www.tla.ed.ac.uk/etl/docs/ETLreport4.pdf

Meyer, JHF and Land, R (2005) Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (2): Epistemological considerations and a conceptual framework for teaching and learning. *Higher Education* 49/3: 373–88.

Murray, L and Barnes, A (1998) Beyond the 'wow' factor – evaluating multimedia language learning software from a pedagogical viewpoint. *System* 26: 249–259.

Online Surveys (formerly Bristol Online Surveys) (2018) Available online at: https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/

Orsini-Jones, M (2014) *'Towards a Role-Reversal Model of Threshold Concept Pedagogy',* in O'Mahony, C, Buchanan, A, O'Rourke, M and Higgs, B (eds) *Threshold Concepts: From Personal Practice to Communities of Practice,* Proceedings of the National Academy's Sixth Annual Conference and the Fourth Biennial Threshold Concepts Conference. Dublin: NAIRTL. Available online at: www.nairtl.ie/documents/EPub_2012Proceedings.pdf#page=88

Orsini-Jones, M (2015) *Integrating a MOOC into the MA in English Language Teaching at Coventry University: innovation in blended learning practice.* Higher Education Academy. Available online at: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/marina_orsini__jones_final_1.pdf

Orsini-Jones, M, Lloyd, E, Gazeley, Z, Lopez-Vera B and Bescond, G (2015a) 'Student-driven intercultural awareness raising with MexCo: agency, autonomy and threshold concepts in a telecollaborative project between the UK and Mexico', in Tcherepashenets, N (ed) *Globalizing On-line: Telecollaboration, Internationalization and Social Justice.* New York: Peter Lang, 199–239.

Orsini-Jones, M, Pibworth-Dolinski, L, Cribb, M, Brick, B, Gazeley-Eke, Z, Leinster, H and Lloyd, E (2015b) 'Learning about language learning on a MOOC: how Massive, Open, Online and "Course"?', in Helm, F, Bradley, L, Guarda, M and Thouësny, S (eds) *Critical CALL – Proceedings of the 2015 EUROCALL Conference, Padova, Italy.* Dublin: Research-publishing.net, 450–457. Available online at: https://dx.doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2015.000374

Orsini-Jones, M, Altamimi, S and Conde, B (2017a) 'Integrating a MOOC into the Postgraduate ELT Curriculum: Reflecting on Students' Beliefs with a MOOC Blend', in Kan, Q and Bax, S (eds) *Beyond the language classroom: researching MOOCS and other innovations.* Dublin: Researchpublishing.net, 71–83. Available online at: https://research-publishing.net/display_article.php?doi=10.14705/rpnet.2017.mooc2016.672

Orsini-Jones, M, Zou, B, Borthwick, K and Conde, B (2017b) 'B-MELTT (Blending MOOCs for English Language Teacher Training): a "Distributed MOOC Flip" to Explore Local and Global ELT Contexts and Beliefs', in Kern, R, Colpaert, J, Aerts, A and Kaiser, M (2017) *XVIIIth International CALL Conference: CALL in Context, Conference Proceedings 7–9 July 2017, UC Berkeley, USA,* 608–625. Available online at: http://call2017.language.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CALL2017_proceedings.pdf

Orsini-Jones, M, Zou, B, Hu, Y and Li, W (2017c) Chinese English Teachers' Perspectives on 'Distributed Flip MOOC Blends': From BMELTT to BMELTE'. *IJCALLT* 7/4: 1–14.

Orsini-Jones, M and Lee, F (2018) *Intercultural Communicative Competence for Global Citizenship: Identifying Rules of Engagement in Telecollaboration.* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Orsini-Jones, M and Smith, S (eds) (2018) *Flipping the blend through MOOCs, MALL and OIL – new directions in CALL.* Dublin: Research-publishing.net.

Oxford, RL (2003) 'Toward a more systematic model of L2 learner autonomy', in Palfreyman, D and Smith, RC (eds) *Learner autonomy across cultures: Language education perspectives.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 75–91.

Palfreyman, D (2003) 'The representation of learner autonomy and learner independence in organizational culture', in Palfreyman, D and Smith, RC (eds) *Learner autonomy across cultures: Language education perspectives.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 183–200.

Perkins, D (1999) The Many Faces of Constructivism. *Educational Leadership* 57/3: 6–11.

Phi, MT (2017) Becoming Autonomous Learners to Become Autonomous Teachers: Investigation on a MOOC Blend. *IJCALLT* 7/4: 15–32.

Phi, MT (2018) 'Integrating a MOOC into the MA curriculum: an "expert" student's reflections on blended learning', in Orsini-Jones, M and Smith, S (eds) *Flipping the blend through MOOCs, MALL and OIL – new directions in CALL.* Dublin: Research-publishing. net, 25–31.

Sandeen, C (2013) Integrating MOOCs into Traditional Higher Education: The Emerging 'MOOC 3.0' Era. *Change* 45/6: 34–39.

Sharples, M (2016) 'Language Learning at Massive Scale.' Paper presented at the *International Symposium on CALL*, 22–23 July 2016, Qingdao, China.

Schön, D (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action.* New York: Basic Books.

Vygotsky, LS (1962) *Thought and Language.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Zhang, X (2017) 'Researching into a MOOC embedded flipped classroom model for college English Reading and Writing course', in Kan, Q and Bax, S (eds) *Beyond the language classroom: researching MOOCs and other innovations.* Dublin: Research-publishing.net, 15–27. Available online at: https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2017.mooc2016.668

Zheng, Y and Cheng, L (2008) Test review: College English Test (CET) in China. *Language Testing* 25: 408–417.

Appendix 1: Structure of the FutureLearn MOOC (2016): Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching (fourth iteration of the MOOC)

FutureLearn MOOC: Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching		
Week 1: Learning Language: Theory		
Section 1: Welcome		
1.1	Welcome to the Course	Video (02:02)
1.2	Join the Online Community	Article
1.3	Using FutureLearn and Getting Help	Article
Section 2: Introduction to Week 1		
1.4	Welcome to Week 1	Video (00:47)
1.5	How do You Use Language in Your Life?	Video (04:43)
Section 3: What is Language?		
1.6	What do We Know When We Know Language?	Video (02:40)
1.7	What is Meaning?	Video (04:26)
1.8	Task: What is Meaning? – Implied Meaning	Article
Section 4: What is Hard and What is Easy in Second Language Learning?		
1.9	How do We Acquire Meaning: The Bottleneck Hypothesis	Video (02:57)
1.10	Understanding 'the Bottleneck' of Language and Issues in Language Learning	Discussion
1.11	What is Hard in Second Language Learning?	Article
1.12	What is Easy in Second Language Learning?	Article
1.13	Implications for Teaching	Video (01:15)
1.14	Other Factors Which Affect Language Learning	Audio
1.15	Poll: What do You Think?	Exercise
Section 5: Summary Activities		
1.16	Video Update on the Week's Activities	Article
1.17	Reflection	Discussion
1.18	What's Next?	Article

FutureLearn MOOC: Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching		
Week 2: Language Teaching in the Classroom		
Section 1: Welcome to Week 2		
2.1	Introduction to Week 2	Video (00:59)
Section 2: Classrooms as a Community of Practice		
2.2	Classrooms as Communities of Practice	Video (03:56)
2.3	Classroom Culture	Video (04:36)
2.4	Classroom Culture	Article
2.5	Task: Classroom Culture	Article
2.6	What's your Classroom Culture Like?	Discussion
2.7	Naturalistic vs Classroom Learning	Video (05:21)
Section 3: Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT)		
2.8	Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT)	Video (04:17)
2.9	What is a Task?	Article
2.10	Task: TBLT in Action	Video (01:24)
2.11	Review: Task TBLT in Action	Video (02:49)
Section 4: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)		
2.12	Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)	Video (04:47)
2.13	Task: CLIL	Discussion
2.14	Applying TBLT/CLIL and the Challenge of Innovation in Teaching	Discussion
Section 5: Summary Activities		
2.15	Video Update on the Week's Activities	Article
2.16	Reflection	Discussion

FutureLearn MOOC: Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching		
Week 3: Technology in Language Learning and Teaching: A New Environment		
Section 1: Welcome to Week 3		
3.1	Introduction to Week 3	Video (00:47)
Section 2: Difference between Online Learning and F2F Learning		
3.2	Differences between Online Learning and F2F Learning	Video (03:28)
3.3	Is it Possible to Learn Languages Well Online or is F2F Essential?	Discussion
3.4	Online Learning and languages	Video (03:45)
Section 3: Teaching in a new environment		
3.5	Engaging with Online Learning	Video (04:58)
3.6	Teaching in a New Environment	Video (02:18)
3.7	Task: Identifying the Roles of an E-Tutor	Article
3.8	Task: Facebook Discussion with British Council Tutors	Article
Section 4: Connectivism and Language Learning		
3.9	Connectivist Learning	Video (02:20)
3.10	Online Learning and Using Social Media in Language Learning	Discussion
Section 5: Summary Activities		
3.11	Video Update on the Week's Activities	Article
3.12	Reflection	Discussion

FutureLearn MOOC: Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching		
Week 4: Language in Use: Global English		
Section 1: Welcome to Week 4		
4.1	Introduction to Week 4	Video (01:07)
Section 2: Global Englishes		
4.2	Introduction to Global Englishes	Video (02:17)
4.3	Historical Spread of English	Video (05:28)
4.4	Is the Spread of English a Good Thing?	Discussion
Section 3: English as a Lingua Franca		
4.5	English as a Lingua Franca	Video (04:28)
4.6	Task: Identifying Characteristics of ELF	Article
4.7	Controversies in ELF Research	Video (04:01)
4.8	Poll: What is your Attitude to ELF?	Exercise
4.9	Interview with an ELF Researcher	Video (03:13)
4.10	Feedback from Poll: Attitudes to ELF	Article
Section 4: The Future of English		
4.11	Implications of the Spread of English for Teaching	Video (03:55)
4.12	Native Speakers vs Non-Native Speakers Teachers	Discussion
4.13	The Future of English	Video (04:48)
4.14	Poll: What do You Think is the Future of English?	Exercise
4.15	Responding to Questions and Controversies in ELF Research	Article
4.16	Feedback from Poll: The Future of English	Article
Section 5: Summary Activities		
4.17	Video Update on the Week's Activities	Article
4.18	Reflection	Discussion

FutureLearn MOOC: Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching		
Week 5: The Future is Now! Join a Live Research Project		
Section 1: Welcome to Week 5		
5.1	Introduction to Week 5	Video (01:22)
Section 2: What do We do all Day?		
5.2	English the 'Multilingua' Franca	Video (03:54)
5.3	English Used as a Medium of Instruction in Universities: The Growing Trend	Video (05:54)
5.4	A Year in the Life of the Centre for Global Englishes	Article
5.5	The Next Phase of ELF: What do You Think?	Discussion
Section 3: Join a Research Project		
5.6	Background to Our Current Research Project	Video (01:46)
5.7	Discussing our Results So Far	Video (06:34)
5.8	Become a Part of Our Research Community and Join a Live Research Project	Video (01:28)
Section 4: Summary Activities		
5.9	Reflection	Discussion
5.10	Goodbye!	Video (01:27)
5.11	An Invitation	Article
5.12	Post-Course Survey	Article

Appendix 2: Weekly Plan (selected) for Module Theories, Approaches and Methods of Language Learning and Teaching (CU) with MOOC blend

Week(s)		Theme	Topic
1	Monday 3 October 11–12 and 2–5 and Friday 7 October 1–2	Introduction to the module and to academic practice	Draw on our own experiences as teacher or learner to explore some of your understanding of theories, approaches and methods in language learning and teaching. Read the article 'Mediating…' available online in Moodle before the class For next week: read Part 1 in Johnson and '40 years of languages teaching' (article in Moodle). You will be asked to present one section in pairs next week in the seminar (we are 'flipping' the lecture)
2	Monday 10 October 11–12 and 2–5 and Friday 14 October 1–2	What is there to learn? Pre-MOOC activities	From methods to models Discussion on '40 years' (article in Moodle) For next week: read Part 2 in Johnson 'What is there to learn?' and start 3: Some views of language learning and teaching but stop at 3.3 (don't read yet) Pre-MOOC questionnaire in class on Friday, no preparation needed Registration on the British Council/University of Southampton FutureLearn MOOC *Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching* Registration on 'Open Moodle' for the VE exchange
3	Monday 17 October 11–12 and 2–5 And Friday 21 October 1–2 **MOOC week 1**	Learner language What do we know when we know language (revision) MOOC week 1: please do the MOOC activities in preparation for the seminar on Friday	The key to learners and their learning processes What studies of learner language (interlanguage) tell us about the processes of language learning For next week read chapter 4 in Johnson, Learners and their errors For Friday start the FutureLearn MOOC, what do you think of the 'bottleneck hypothesis'? Have you learnt more about what is needed to learn a language? Has this unit in the MOOC added to what Johnson says about 'what we need to know' and errors? Now also read 3.3 (Hymes) in Johnson

Week(s)		Theme	Topic
4	Monday 24 October and Friday 28 October 1–2	Cognitive approaches to the process of learning	The importance of noticing and attention in learning, focus on form and feedback Read noticing section in Johnson and the article on Lacey's conversion to autonomy in Moodle
	MOOC week 2	MOOC week 2 flipped classroom: watch the mini lecture on task-based learning before the seminar	Study the MOOC Unit with particular reference to the task-based session
5	Monday 31 October and Friday 4 November 1–2 **MOOC week 3**	Sociocultural approaches to the process of learning/ learner autonomy Carry out all activities in Week 3 of the MOOC	The learner's role in constructing knowledge and the development of learner autonomy For next week reflect on how (and if) working on the MOOC reflects principles of learner autonomy. Please go through week 3 in the MOOC on your own as this relates to the CALL module you will do in semester 2
6	Monday 7 November and Friday 11 November 1–2 **MOOC week 4**	Interactionist theories of language and CLT Study well the CLIL section in the MOOC	Merging the psycholinguistic and the sociocultural. The role of input and output and interaction Read Richards and Rodgers on CLT (ch 5) and the lecture notes Read the famous article by Canale and Swain available in Moodle
7	Monday 14 November and Friday 18 November 1–2 **MOOC week 5**	From CLT to TBLT/TBLL	Read Richards and Rodgers on CLIL (ch 6) and the lecture notes Go back to the CLIL section in the MOOC and the related videos. Do you think the way CLIL is implemented in the videos encourages an autonomous approach to language learning? What do you think about CLIL? Post-MOOC questionnaire

Appendix 3: Orientation questions – group interviews [12]

1. What does being an autonomous learner mean in the field of language learning and teaching?

2. What skills and knowledge do you think one should have when taking a MOOC for the first time?

3. If you were asked to write a guide for future iterations of this project, what would be the most important instructions to include?

4. What problematic issues did you encounter? Both technical and other?

5. How did you find the experience of interacting on the MOOC in comparison with the experience of interacting in class (if applicable) or in Open Moodle discussion forums.

6. Did the MOOC blend project support your development as an autonomous teacher in your opinion?

7. If you were to define the B-MELTT project (Blending MOOOCs into Language Teacher Training), what key words would come to your mind?

8. Can you define blended learning in your own words?

9. Any other thoughts?

Thank you very much for taking part!

---

12   Similar questions were administered to the staff and students who engaged in individual interviews. The questions were designed by the 'expert student' in collaboration with the rest of the team.