

## Exploring factors that influence the impact of MOOC learning and participants' professional practice

Our study draws on data from the MOOC, *Teaching EFL/ESL Reading: A Task Based Approach*, developed and taught by the research team. Using a mixed-method approach, it is an achievement of our research to be able to identify the ways in which a task-based pedagogical construct can influence participants' application of their online CPD learning to their own teaching.

### About the project:

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are an increasingly popular way in which different organisations offer Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to teachers. We present findings from a research project which examined a MOOC run by the UCL Institute of Education, *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading: A Task-Based Approach*. We employed a mixed-method study including a survey disseminated to all learners on the MOOC, ten semi-structured interviews with learners and course analytics obtained through the Coursera platform. Few studies to date have looked at the long-term impact of MOOC learning on participant practice. Through our survey and the interviews, we asked participants to reflect on the actual impact the MOOC has had on their classroom teaching. We were also able to highlight which participant background variable was a key predictor of application of learning to professional practice; which MOOC activities (e.g., tutor video lectures, discussion forums, readings) were perceived to influence participants' continued professional development; and also the ways in which participants on our MOOC applied their learning to their teaching practices.

Our findings led us to conceptualise the five MOOC activity types we had designed (videos, readings, discussion forums, giving/receiving feedback, other assignments) as falling into two main categories: input-based activities (videos, readings) and output-based activities (discussion forums; preparing peer-graded assignments; giving feedback on assignments). Some of the output-based activities (i.e., peer-graded assessments) in our MOOC can be viewed as task-based activities in a task-based approach to teaching and learning. This then suggests that the input-based activities (i.e., videos and readings) function as pre-task activities in a task-based approach to teaching and learning. Overall, then, participants benefited from a task-based approach to teaching and learning in the MOOC itself.

The task-based approach is helpful for conceptualising a pedagogical construct for online CPD. Participant comments on the way they were able to apply the activities they wrote for assessment on the MOOC to their actual classrooms mirrored the focus in TBLT approaches on a 'real life' outcome. It is a major achievement of our research to be able to identify the ways in which task-based principles can be used to define, guide and design online CPD activities. We consider our combined framework especially generative for future design and development of online CPD aimed at attracting global audiences.

For full details see the [final project report](#).