Guidelines
for the evaluation of language MOOCs

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The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission or any person acting on behalf of the Commission.

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1. The MOVEME project

1.1. Project outline
Every year, thanks to the Erasmus Programme, thousands of students in Europe complete part of their university studies in another country using a second language they know at a B1/B2 level of competence. Many studies have highlighted the fact that competences in the common and general use of the language differ from the skills and knowledge required for academic communication; this has also been confirmed by the needs analyses conducted by Move-Me partners on students taking part in mobility programmes. The lack of appropriate academic language competence can negatively impact student grades, completion times and, more generally, their ability to achieve a level of multilingualism that will enable them, as European citizens, to travel and work in a frictionless labour market.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), linguistic-communicative competence describes a multidimensional continuum, articulated in a number of levels that include the different skills and knowledge required to interact in various domains of linguistic use. The vertical progression of competence in one domain and the corresponding acquisition of increased communicative accuracy and effectiveness do not guarantee the same level of mastery in other domains of use. This is the case with many students in mobility who, despite having a good command of the second language and being able to interact fluently in daily communication, nevertheless have difficulties understanding long speeches – e.g. university lectures or study manuals characterised by complex syntactical structures as well as lexical choices and textual conventions not normally found in everyday communication.

The objectives of the Move-Me MOOCs were therefore the following:
to create a learning path aimed at developing linguistic competence in the academic domain by supporting learners in the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required to understand oral and written expository texts relating to specific disciplines; to help learners to develop and refine the skills required to produce various types of academic texts (notes, summaries, theses, oral conversation) related to their discipline.

1.2. Outputs of the project
In support of the language teachers’ community, the MOVE-ME Project has set out to create two products that could be used as reference in building, delivering and evaluating language MOOCs. They are based on the experience of creating and delivering two language MOOCs, one on the use of English and one on the use of Italian in academic contexts.

a) Guidelines for the creation of Language MOOCs

**Guidelines for the creation of Language MOOCs** (or intellectual output one, IO01, as it is referred to in the project application) encompasses a range of topics that were deemed useful for creating and delivering this type of courses. The main topics addressed include: a theoretical reference framework for the implementation of didactic actions; the overarching design of English and Italian learning paths; definition of the learning profiles to which the learning pathways are addressed; criteria for defining the objectives; criteria for the identification of thematic areas; selection criteria for audio, video and written texts; the handling of the socio-cultural particularities of the academic environment in which the students will be active; criteria and tools for formative and summative evaluation and self-evaluation; arrangements for MOOC delivery; possible types of certification.

b) The language MOOC evaluation guide

**The evaluation guide for language MOOCs** is intended to complement the language MOOC manual by offering insights on how the MOVE-ME project has evaluated its outcomes and products; and by formulating a series of conclusions that could be applied in different contexts.

The evaluation of the MOOCs was carried out using data generated by the course delivery platform (i.e. FutureLearn), as well as questionnaires for both the English and Italian courses (pre-course/end of course). The questionnaires focused on learners’ motivation and expectations, learning activities, workload and course satisfaction.

The present guidelines are freely available both in Italian and English, as open educational resources for teachers, researchers and perspective language MOOC designers or online courses.

2. Background information and the two MOOC courses

2.1. Background information

a) Target learners

The project initially envisaged the creation of two, 6 week courses (one for English, and one
for Italian), that would be available for the students to take at their own pace. Though both were designed as a massive, online and open courses from the beginning, the numbers of students involved in their first runs were initially estimated at a few dozen each. This number was greatly surpassed during the implementation of the courses, with over 6000 students registering for the English MOOC and over 3000 for the Italian MOOC. Other indicators that were taken into account were the number of students who actively joined the Community of Practice made available by the project; the degree of satisfaction with the course; the number of posts and comments on the MOOC forum during the lifetime of the project. For detailed information on the target learners, see the Guidelines for the creation of Language MOOCs (http://movemeproject.eu/).

b) Course design
The course was designed in a manner which would allow its components (audio, video, text) to be offered as open education resources (OER). It was estimated that over 200 such OER would be produced and that they would be included in an indexed archive on the project website. In order to make the content accessible and to provide an interactive learning experience it was envisaged that 40% of content would be in audio/multimedia format, 40% of content would have image support; and that 80% of content would be covered by tests (50 written tests for the English MOOC and 40 written tests for the Italian MOOC). Exposure of students to audio and video content was deemed essential for achieving the target levels of proficiency in either language.

c) Long term impact
The project partners have also agreed that, in assessing the long term impact, after the end of the project, they would follow several indicators, such as: the number of new language courses for Italian and English as second languages that will use the MOOCs created by the project; the number of universities that will introduce in their mobility plans for students the subjects approached by the project and its products and content; the number of learners that will use the products of the project outside formal second language education promoted by the partners, within the open and continuous education and training.
2.2. Results of the pre-course survey and routine statistics

2.2.1. English for Academic Purposes MOVEME Project Course (1st run)

2.2.1.1. Pre-course survey (n = 150)

a) Survey respondent profile
A larger percentage of the persons who enrolled in the course were female (62%). The average age of the respondents was 35.5 years old. Participants came from a large variety of countries with a diversity of first languages.

The majority of learners had a higher educational background, with 49% having a University degree and 30% a Master’s degree. 67% of the respondents were actively working (full time, part time or self-employed), 11% were looking for work and 11% being full time students. This profile is representative of the profile of the registered learners (see 2.2.1.2)

b) Expectations about the course
Most of the participants aimed to improve English in general, but also mentioned English for academic writing, reading, speaking and listening. In some cases, very specific requirements were mentioned, such as English for law and international relations, for medical studies or the need to pass the IELTS exam. There were four main types of reasons for signing up for the course: a) career development; b) developing academic skills; c) personal reasons; and d) social interaction

The majority of respondents wanted to learn the subject in-depth (65%), while smaller percentages expected an introduction to the subject (18%) and learning about a specific topic within the course (17%).

c) Previous experience in the subject area and perceived confidence

The majority of students had studied English in school and university (58%), with about 22% working in a related field, while for 39% English was a personal interest or hobby. There were roughly 20% of respondents with no previous experience in this subject. On average, the respondents declared a moderate level of confidence in their knowledge of the course subject.

Most of the respondents agreed (54%) and strongly agreed (30%) that they could learn a language online. The general level of confidence in handling the course was high (average score of 4.20 out of maximum 5), with slightly less confidence in level of competence in
taking part in the discussions with other learners on the course (average score of 3.84 out of 5).

d) Experience with online courses

More than half of the respondents (56%) had not taken an online course before, while 67% had not taken a language course delivered mostly or fully online. In regard to those who did have experience with online courses, they had used FutureLearn (54%) or other such platforms, like Coursera or EdX (37%), an online course for university credit (30%), an online work-related training (28%) or had learned about topics of interest through open resources (e.g. YouTube, Wikipedia) (33%).

2.2.1.2 Routine statistics

a) Learner profile¹

The demographic information of registered learners is represented in the tables and pie charts in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other/not declared</td>
<td>4415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment sector</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and education</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and social care</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and manufacturing</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting, banking and finance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other/not declared</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>working full time</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full time student</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working part time</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking for work</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ This information is volunteered by learners during the registration process.
self employed 6
other/not declared 13.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary level education</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other/not declared</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other/not declared</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Tables and pie charts showing demographics where reported

**b) Participation and dropout rate**

Out of the 4396 students who visited the first course activity, over 2000 students also completed the first activities (i.e. 53.7% for the first activity), and over 1000 commented on their approach and utility. The drop up rate increased consistently throughout the activities from the initial total of participants of 2364 to 30.2% who continued to the second week, to 17.4% continuing with week three, 13% week four, 10.4% week five, around 8% engaged with the activities of week six and 6.9% finished the last activity (6.6). The highest dropout (61.5%) has occurred after the first run. The week by week figures for active learners are shown in Table 1. Of those active at the beginning of week two about 25% have completed the entire course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Active Learners</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2770</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Active learners by week
c) Active involvement

Of the active learners, the biggest majority of students studied less than one hour a week, especially in the first and the last (i.e. the sixth) week of the course. In the weeks two to six the percentage of active learners who dedicated one to two hours increased up to 20% and those active two to three hours 10% and over three hours 15% (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Hours spend by week by percentage of active learners](image)

The significant decrease by week of the active involvement in the course activities indicated in Figure 3 may have be caused, aside from the natural drop of participation in any online course, by the timing which overlapped with students’ holidays.

![Figure 3. Hours spend by week by number of active learners](image)

Overall 1270 students contributed with comments regarding the proposed activities, amounting to 7371 total comments, which had an average of 28.12 words per message (most frequent counting between 20 to 70 words, see Figure 4) and a total of 4106 appreciative tags.
The number of comments and the appreciative tagging (i.e. number of "likes") reflected the participation rates through the course with significant participation in the first activities of over 1200 comments and respectively beginning weeks (around 100 per activity) and lower numbers in the subsequent weeks of up to 20 per activity (see Figure 5 and Figure 6).
2.2.2. Italian language and literature MOVEME Project Course (1st run)

2.2.2.1. Pre-course survey \((n = 81)\)

\textit{a) Survey respondent profile}

Demographic information for survey respondents was not obtained. For all registered learners’ profile, see 2.2.2.2 below.

\textit{b) Expectations about the course}\(^2\)

The most frequently indicated \textbf{work-related reasons} to take this course were: contributing towards continuing professional development (64.79%); developing practical and professional skills for use in one’s job (57.35%); working towards a professional qualification (49.25%); improving future career prospects (45.59%); help decide what to do next in one’s career (41.54%). The full list is shown in Figure 6.

\(^2\) Respondents can select more than one for all the results reported in this section.
The most frequently indicated **academic-related reasons** to take this course were: developing practical skills to use in one’s academic studies (61.77%); supplementing what they are learning in another course (52.31%); helping them achieve a current study objective (e.g. pass an assignment or exam) (43.28%); to help in deciding what to do next in one’s academic studies (42.19%); completing a qualification with FutureLearn (41.79%); keeping up to date with new developments relating to academic studies (41.79%). The full list is shown in Figure 7.

The most frequently indicated **personal-related reasons** to take this course were: keeping one’s brain active (95.46%); passing time in an enjoyable and constructive way (92.19%); learning a practical skill to use in one’s personal life (e.g. a language or money
management) (90.91); building confidence in abilities (87.10%); learning more about one’s hobbies/personal interests (74.19%); being informed about social, cultural or political topics and current affairs (72.58%).

The most frequently indicated networking-related reasons to take this course were: learning from others' experiences or perspectives (77.78%); networking with professionals and experts (58.73%); socialising with other learners (55.74%); getting feedback and support from others (51.67%).

More than a half of respondents were interested in learning about the subject in depth and more than 1/5 of respondents were interested in getting an introduction to the subject.
Other respondents indicated that they are interested in learning Italian to study or to live in Italy and in improving their knowledge of Italian grammar. A high percentage of respondents (84.6%) mentioned that they want to improve their Italian language: speaking fluently, understanding, writing, professional Italian.

c) Previous experience in the subject area and perceived confidence

60.29% of the respondents specified a personal interest or hobby in the subject area; a quarter of the respondents indicated previous experience in taking another face-to-face course in this subject (25%). Less than a quarter of the respondents had no previous experience in this subject (23.53%) or taking any online courses in this subject (22.06%).

As to the confidence regarding the knowledge of the course subject. 9% felt extremely confident, 24% slightly confident; and 43% felt moderately confident. 26% did not feel confident at all.

Regarding previous experience with online courses, 61.97% had taken a course delivered partly or fully online; and 33.80% of the respondents mentioned they have not participated in such a course.

2.2.2.2 Routine statistics

a) Learner profile

The enrolment rate was very good, with a total of 3026 students enrolling in the course. The participants were from a variety of countries, with largest numbers from Great Britain, Italy, Russia, France, Brazil, Spain and USA. Only 423 declared their gender, of which 323 were female. The age ranges of the participants were quite balanced, with between 50 and 80 participants form each age bracket (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65 and over 65). The educational level of participants was overwhelmingly in the tertiary bracket, with only around 15% of participants at a lower level of education. A number of 421 participants declared their employment status, with more than half (238) being in some form of employment. 340 participants mentioned their area of employment, with the largest number (139) coming from “teaching and education”.

3 Self-declared information when registering for the course.
b) Participation and dropout rate

Out of 2193 students who visited the first course activity, over 1000 students also completed the first activities (i.e. 50.56% for the first activity), and over 200 commented on their approach and utility. The drop-out rate increased consistently throughout the activities from the initial total of participants of 1109 who completed the first activity to 345 (31%) who continued to the second week, to 207 (18.6%) continuing with week three, 166 (14.96%) week four, 135 (12.17%) week five, 116 (10.45%) in week six and 101 (9%) actually finishing the last activity 6.16.

This is true also regarding the active involvement in the learning activities which started from 1235 students in the first week and decreased to 129 (or 10.44%) in the last week of the course. Figures for all six weeks are included in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Active Learners</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1235</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Active learners by week

c) Active involvement

From the active learners, the biggest share of students studied less than one hour a week, especially in the first and the last (i.e. the sixth) week of the course. In the weeks two to five the percentage of active learners who dedicated one to two hours increased up to almost 50% and those active two to three hours to more than 25% and over three hours to almost 20% (see figure 3).
Overall, 287 students contributed with comments regarding the proposed activities, amounting to 3775 total comments, which had an average of 38.85 words per message and a total of 5936 appreciative tags.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total comments</th>
<th>3775</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique authors</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean word count</td>
<td>38.85 (s.d.=38.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total likes</td>
<td>5936</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Summary of details of comments and likes

Figure 10. Hours spend by week.

Figure 11. Histogram of word count in comments across the course.
The number of comments and the appreciative tagging (i.e. number of 'likes') reflected the participation rates through the course with significant participation in the first activities and respectively beginning weeks (around 150 comments per activity) and lower numbers in the subsequent weeks.

![Comments by date](image)

Figure 12. Comments by date (lines indicate course weeks).

Like count for each course step:

![Like count](image)

Figure 13. Comments by date (lines indicate course weeks).

**d) Performance**

As opposed to a Gaussian distribution, where the majority demonstrates near median results, while small percentages show very high or very low results, the distribution of the student performance on the learning quizzes and tests is highly polarized. Thus, in this MOOC, the majority of the students scored under 25% and lower numbers are performing
well to very well in tests. Students demonstrate moderate determination and perseverance in learning, with the majority of them trying only once to correct inaccurate answers.

![Figure 14. Distribution of question scores.](image)

### 3. Criteria used for data analysis

In order to analyse the results, we have referred to four quality criteria for MOOC evaluation that consists of four elements: ‘Content, Pedagogical methods, Assessment and community building.’ (LangMOOC toolkit, 2016). The analysis reported in this section is based on three data sources from the 1st run of MOOC English For Academic Purposes⁴: pre-course survey (n = 150), post-course survey (n = 45) and routine platform statistics.

Each of those main areas have several aspects that have an impact when evaluating a MOOC.

#### 3.1 Content

In terms of content, we can evaluate the educational resources chosen for the MOOC, the use of interactive tools to illustrate the content and the activities to put the theoretical knowledge into practice.

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⁴ Only 14 respondents completed the post-course survey for Italian Language and Culture (1st run), so the data was not representative hence we based our analysis on English for Academic Purposes course.
An essential aspect of content is the organization: the need for a clear organization and structuring content (Yepes-Baldo et al. 2016; Aleman et al. 2015, CRUE, 2015). A hierarchical organization based on descriptive titles and subtitles is necessary as well as the clear distinction between basic and supplementary information (Arias, 2007). As part of the content it is also essential to have both, a clear presentation of the course objectives as well as internal coherence between activities, contents and objectives (Arias, 2007; CRUE, 2015). Not only the structure needs to be clear, but the quality of the content is fundamental (Liu, Kang & McKelroy, 2015).

In addition to quality of content, students should have the option to adjust contents according to a scale of difficulty. (Arias, 2007; CRUE, 2015). This is something we did not implement in our MOOCs, but would have been beneficial for students.

Overall, more than half of the respondents considered the course adequately matched the level they wanted. One fifth of the respondents found the course slightly easier than they wanted. The duration of the course was reported as being about right by 68.29 % of the respondents.

The text analysis of positive versus negative words from the comments indicates a positive attitude of students (see Figure 5 — positive numbers on the upper side associated to positive words) towards the proposed learning activities. Figure 5 also indicates, through the lower-side dots, the steps where students encountered difficulties, which should be taken into account in the adaptation phase of the course by introducing further clarifications and support mechanisms for the learning activities.

![Figure 5. Step comment sentiment score. Positive numbers indicate occurrence of positive words](image-url)
More than a half of the respondents feel the course helped them in either their current job, professional development or career progression.

Many of the respondents have declared that they will use the course and what they have learnt for the following reasons (respondents can select more than one): to develop practical and professional skills they can use in their jobs (58%), to contribute towards their continuing professional development (58%), to improve their future career prospects (51.6%), to share what they have learned with others (41.94%), to keep up to date with new developments in their field (38.7%) or to connect with other professionals (32.2%).

There was good agreement among respondents that by taking this course (respondents can select more than one): they have learnt new skills (67.7%), they have gained knowledge they can use at work/in their career (64.5%), they felt confident in using what they have learned at work/in their career (64.5%), they found the course content relevant to their work/career (54.8%), they have improved their working practices/the way they work as a result of taking this course (41.94%) or their results at work have been positively impacted as a result of taking the course and applying what they have learned (41.94%).

61% of the respondents declared that the participation at this course have helped them a lot in current studies or future academic goals.

3.2 Pedagogical methods

One main element in the pedagogical methods is interaction, as well as the relation between static and interactive learning materials, to allow users to create an individualized learning plan (LangMOOC toolkit, 2016).

Existence of an educational guide is beneficial as it allows students to know at which stage they are at (CRUE 2015). A diversity of resources is also recommended: materials in video and audio, computer applications (CRUE, 2015; Sanchez et al. 2015). In particular, a balanced relationship between static and interactive sections is crucial to ensure and maximise the effectiveness of a course (LangMOOC toolkit, 2016). The interactive learning materials (quizzes, cloze-answers, drag and drop etc) are used to test the user's understanding but also the communicative aspect is fundamental for the online learning process. This includes peer-to-peer learning, student-teacher-interaction and open class community.

Related to this element is motivation, which we follow the definition ‘the force that starts and maintains a behaviour and ultimately gives results’ (Alvarez-Alvarez 2005). The high rate of dropping out of MOOCs makes necessary to make sure that strategies and conditions are in place to facilitate the maintenance of motivation. Different ways to maintain motivation are awards, attractive design and content, collaborate activities so learners feel that they belong to a learning community and also the relevance for the present or future studies or career.

It is evident that the English for academic purposes MOOC course was well received: the respondents declared that they strongly liked the following activities: taking quizzes
(65.12%), watching or listening videos (50%), taking tests (47.73%), reading articles and course steps (45.45%) or reading comments posted by educators or mentors (40.91%). The top three favourite activities of the course mentioned in the post-course survey were: writing and speaking, quizzes, and preparing and delivering oral presentations.

It is evident that for accessibility reasons, it is essential to provide subtitles. High percentages of respondents were very satisfied and satisfied with the video subtitles (95%), the written course content (93%) and the video and animations (93%).

In their additional comments, the respondents have highly appreciated this course. Some of them have asked for more practical materials. 34.29% of the respondents declared that they are extremely likely to recommend this course to a friend or family member. 37% of the respondents declared that they are extremely likely to recommend this course to a colleague.

The right proportion of different activity types and different levels of difficulty can help build learner confidence. In the post-course survey, over 83% of respondents didn’t feel nervous at all about the fact that this course was online. Other respondents strongly agree (29.41%) and agree (52.94%) that they feel comfortable about learning a language online. Other respondents strongly agree (28.57%) and agree (48.57%) with the fact they became more and more confident in their level of competence in using the course platform for this course.

3.3. Assessment

Assessment is clearly linked to the learning process. It is aimed at enabling the student to gain an understanding of what they have learned, to improve their learning, to set goals. The assessment process has the following objectives: To document and to improve student learning (LangMOOC toolkit, 2016). There has been a distinction between xMOOCs and cMOOCs. Essentially, xMOOCs mean MOOCs where the teacher plays a fundamental role (Mudavannhu, 2015), they are normally based on summative assessment, while cMOOCs (MOOCs based on networking and knowledge generation by participants) tend to use more formative assessment. When deciding the assessment strategy, it is crucial to provide scaffolding in several ways: instant automated feedback (quizzes etc), peer-to-peer feedback (discussion forums, comments or/and peer reviews on independent or collaborative tasks) and teacher-to-student feedback (answers to forum questions).

The distribution of students’ performance in the MOOC on the learning quizzes and tests was highly polarized, as opposed to a Gaussian distribution, where the majority of individuals demonstrates near median results, while small percentages show very high or very low results. In this MOOC, the majority of students scored under 25% and lower numbers are performing well, to very well in tests.

Students demonstrated moderate determination and perseverance in learning, with the majority of them trying only once to correct inaccurate answers. 2nd and 3rd attempts were common for virtually all quiz items, but 4th and 5th attempts were limited to a handful of items and have appeared only during the first three weeks of the course. This
could be taken as a possible indicator that students with higher skills are the ones that tend to follow the course in its latter stages.

Quiz items which have elicited most attempts have been, predictably, the ones which have asked students to match some content to its corresponding place (e.g. ‘In the following quiz, you will see a number of very common suffixes. Can you insert them in the corresponding slots?’) or to identify the correct answers within a predefined list (e.g. ‘Higher order skills help us to decode paralinguistic information, which contains cues in relation to the speaker’s emotions, opinions, slant, humour, etc. In the following quiz, only 3 are higher-order skills, can you identify them?’).

Most of the submitted written assignments had an average of 218 words, and the 82 submitted were reviewed by 110 students, with a minimum duration of the first review of 15.83 minutes.

### 3.4. Community building

It is vital to create a strong interactive community (LangMOOC Toolkit, 2016; Aleman et al, 2015) as this allows students to monitor their learning, to plan and enhance their performance and to interact with one another to learn. This is precisely one of the distinctive characteristics of online courses. Community and social interaction with peers also give students a proactive role in their education and fosters self-regulation and the development of their own strategies, as evidenced in an open comment “the most important lesson that I have learnt on this course is how I can express myself with other online learners”

In **English For Academic Purposes** course, a Peer review activity which consisted of a few steps in Week 5 proved to have worked and helped with the community building. 41.94% of the respondents declared that they took part in the pPeer review activity in Week 5 by submitting their work. Some of the reasons mentioned by the respondents were: a good way to receive a constructive feedback of our work (4 answers), finding information interesting (1 answer), etc.

51.61% of the respondents declared they commented on the work of others. Some of the reasons mentioned by the respondents were: thinking this as a good opportunity to share our experience, to encourage other people and give them constructive criticism, helping others to improve their work.

46.43% of the respondents declared they found the comments received from other learners very useful and 42.86% quite useful. See Section 4 and Appendix B for further information on our peer-review activity.

We also included links to external tools which allow learners to view live data such as why their fellow learners decided to do this course (showing percentage of each option), how fellow learners interpreted certain concepts (showing percentage of each option). It helped to feel they belonged to a learning community.
Regarding the level of interaction, around half the respondents have reported as ‘about right’ the level of interaction with other learners during the course and the level of interaction with the course team. The educators were considered to be very or fairly well engaged by almost 70% of the respondents.

The overall experience of the course was rated by respondents as excellent (44.12%) and good (44.12%). A quarter of the respondents considered that the course met perfectly their overall needs and 60% appreciated as mostly. 86.96% of the respondents agreed completely that they passed their time in an enjoyable and constructive way and 63.64% agreed completely that they are confident in their knowledge/in using what they have learned in their life.

4. Lessons learned and recommendations

4.1. Lessons learnt regarding data collection

a) We did not collect the demographic information of the respondents who completed the pre-course and post-course surveys for Italian Language and Culture course, nor did we do so for the post-course survey for the English for Academic Purposes. This information is important as we need to make sure that the respondents’ profile is representative of the learner profile for that particular course.

b) In the post-course survey, a final question inviting people to volunteer for a short Skype interview or other forms of post-course interview (e.g. Would you be willing to take part in a short Skype interview?) should have been included. This would have provided the project team with further opportunity to gather more detailed and rich data about the learner experience for further research.

c) We did not carry out a short mid-course survey as a motivational device. It is worth considering doing a short survey in the middle of a MOOC course check the temperature: asking learners, for example, to report the things they find most challenging, and what they found most beneficial, the strategies they have used. This short survey would not only serve to collect useful data to evaluate the course, but also as a motivational strategy to encourage learners to carry on.

4.2. Recommendations

In addition to the four criteria used to evaluate a language MOOC mentioned in Section 3, the following are additional recommendations from the project team and learners of our MOOC course. If those recommendations are adopted, they should be evaluated as well.
a) **Importance of having learner diversity in mind**

Due to the diversity of online MOOC learners, it would be a good idea to include extra learning materials and useful resources at the end of each week for learners who were able to and eager to do further studies.

b) **Importance of teaching learning strategies and metacognitive skills**

*English For Academic Purposes* course includes such metacognitive strategies every week, which was appreciated by learners, as evidenced in the post-course survey data. When asked about the most important lessons, respondents reported: “how to organize an online course in an academic way or about how to properly structure a speech”, “critical and analytical thinking and appropriate expression of thought in writing”, “the academic way of expressing yourself, being more formal and understanding other ways of thinking”. Over 82% respondents reported they felt confident about using what they had learnt during this course in their wider academic studies, which shows the importance of teaching them learning to learn:

c) **Importance of peer-review activity**

We strongly recommend in designing language activities that encourage collaboration and peer review. Our data reveals that over 40% of participants took part in the peer review exercise in the *English For Academic Purposes* course (see 3.2 above).

Below is an example of one of the submitted work and a comment from another student (only those who submitted had the chance to comment on others’ work).

**Submitted work**

‘My brief outline:

1 Introduction: What is sleep deprivation? State the fact that sleep deprivation costs the economy billions and causes workers to an early death. Turn the title into a statement. State the study by Rand Europe and a possible solution for a better work force.

2 Main body: State the costs of sleeplessness- discuss using examples. Discuss the role of employers to improve the situation e.g. a possible shorter working week to allow more leisure time. Give solutions to the problems for a better work life balance.

3 Conclusion: Summarize all points discussed and link to the introduction. Give my opinion.’

**Comments from another student**

‘Yes, the structure is clear and every point is mentioned. It seems that some repetitions are present - which could be avoided - but since it is just an outline it is OK, it will be different when presented orally.’
It indicates that the peer review activity, when designed carefully with clear assignment guidelines and guidelines for commenting, can encourage collaboration and works well as a language activity. See Appendix B for details of this peer review activity.

You can access the print version of the activity to use in your learning and teaching by going to MOVEME Project website:
- for the ‘Guidelines for commenting’ for this particular assignment: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lLi1ddNkG6oeVaQVrjRCVaaYk_5IJXee/view

**d) Advice provided by learners**

The respondents provided the following type of advices on learning language online: “have perseverance in doing online learning”, “take the necessary time to do the activities in order to get results”, “participate actively in all activities and share your thoughts and feelings with other participants”.

The most important lessons about learning online mentioned were: “it is important to be constant and dedicate enough time to do the activities”, “this is an easy and pleasant way to learn and interact with other nice people”, “you can benefit from it as a back up to the traditional way of learning from books and life experience”.

**5. Quality criteria for language MOOCs**

It has been stressed in the literature the need to implement evaluation systems that establish criteria of pedagogical quality, that not only rely on the reputation and name of a HE institution. (Menéndez, 2013).

Over the last decade the topic of establishing quality criteria for MOOCs and in particular for language MOOCs has been object of numerous studies (Yepes-Baldo et al, 2016; LangMOOC toolkit, 2016; Aleman et al, 2015; CRUE, 2015; Roig Vila et al, 2014) to name but a few. It is not our intention to replicate here what these studies have established. Our approach is more practice-based. Our aim is to provide a practical checklist of things you have to take into account, when designing or evaluating a language MOOC. Drawing from the categories established by LangMOOC toolkit, our experience of designing and implementing language MOOCs as well as from the data gathered and the perceptions of students we have developed the following checklist to assess the quality of a MOOC.

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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### Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the materials and activities clearly organized?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the course have a clear structure?</td>
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<td>Does it present a hierarchical organization based on descriptive titles and subtitles?</td>
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<td>Is the distinction between basic and supplementary information clear?</td>
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<td>Are the objectives of the course clearly presented?</td>
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<td>Is there internal coherence between activities, contents and objectives?</td>
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<td>Is the quality of the materials of high standard?</td>
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<td>Have students the possibility to adjust contents according to a scale of difficulty?</td>
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### Pedagogical Methods

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a balance between static and interactive materials?</td>
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<td>Can users create an individualized learning plan?</td>
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<td>Is there an educational guide to let students know at which stage they are?</td>
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<td>Is there a diversity of resources: video, audio, computer applications etc.?</td>
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<td>Are there enough interactive materials (quizzes, cloze answers, drag and drop etc.)?</td>
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<td>Are these interactive materials testing the user’s understanding of the course?</td>
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<td><strong>Are there peer-peer learning, student-teacher interaction and open class community?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Are there strategies and conditions in place to facilitate the maintenance of motivation, e.g. awards, attractive design and content, relevance of the course for future studies or career?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Assessment</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Does the assessment allow students to understand and improve their learning?</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Does it allow them to set goals and analyze results?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Is assessment in consonance with the type of MOOC, e.g. summative for xMOOCs or formative for cMOOCs?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Is there a clear scaffold for the assessment strategy (automated feedback for quizzes, peer-to-peer feedback in discussion forums, teacher to student feedback through answers to forum questions)?</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Community building</strong></th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Does the MOOC create a strong interactive community?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Does it allow students to monitor their learning, to plan and enhance their performance and to interact with one another to learn?</strong></th>
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### 6. References


Appendix A: Post-course survey questions for the English for Academic Purposes: A MOVEME Project Course

Appendix B: Peer-review activity sample and guidelines

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5 The majority of questions in this survey are standard FutureLearn post-course survey questions with some language learning specific questions developed by MOVEME Project team.