ABSTRACT

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are expanding the scope of online distance learning in the creation of a cross-country global learning environment. For learners worldwide, MOOCs offer a wealth of online learning resources. However, such a diversified environment makes the learning process complicated and challenging. To achieve their objectives, learners need to adapt regulation strategies based on different situations in the process, which is called self-regulated learning. Previous research findings emphasize that self-efficacy is one of the key factors that influences self-regulated learning. Currently MOOCs are primarily offered in English, but many students are non-native English speakers. For these learners, English serves as a cross-language and cross-cultural communication medium, and English self-efficacy is a defining element affecting this language application. To further examine the impact of English self-efficacy on self-regulated learning, this study uses non-native English learners in MOOCs as test subjects. It is evident that there is a positive and significant correlation between non-English learners’ self-efficacy and self-regulated learning in MOOCs; the higher the English self-efficacy, the better use of self-regulated learning strategies. This study aims to offer some insight into self-regulated learning strategies of non-native English speakers taking MOOCs, so relevant instructors can subsequently provide more suitable and effective learning methods.

Keywords: Language Learning, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), Self-Regulated Learning

INTRODUCTION

Since the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) launched its online open courses in 2001, the meaning of online distance education has gone through a series of paradigm shifts. Open courses are centered around educational resources that are available to the general public, in which the Internet enables the construction of a global knowledge network, transforming distance education into one with diverse learning resources and giving rise to a new self-learning paradigm. The rise of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) further drives the trend in cross-country and interdisciplinary digital learning in higher education. With improved

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learning framework from traditional open courses and enhanced digital contents, MOOCs provide opportunities for online learning on a large scale with massive number of students, making distance learning more meaningful and effective. In recent years, universities around the world have flocked to set up MOOCs. It is seen as an approach to cultivate an atmosphere of self-learning through open education as well as a means of diversifying and global sharing of higher education resources via the Internet. The development of MOOCs has spawned studies on self-learning process and modes. Through analyzing the literature on this topic, it is found that self-regulation is the decisive factor in the effectiveness in MOOCs.

Self-learning often occurs in certain situations. Whether it is under a physical classroom setting or online learning environment, self-regulation is crucial in the strategic use in the learning process and learning effectiveness. Zimmerman (2002) pointed out that self-regulation is a self-directed process of a learner’s transformation of mental capability into actual academic skills. Learners not only take action control to improve the learning effectiveness, but also adopt various regulation strategies, e.g. cognitive strategies, motivation strategies and resource management strategies, in different situations to achieve their learning goal. Studies show that the higher the level of a learner’s self-regulation, the more a learner is able to focus on the learning process, thus exerting a positive impact on learning achievement (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2013). The importance of self-regulated learning is also reflected in online courses. According to Sun & Rueda (2012), self-regulation ability in an online environment acts as a key factor in successful learning. Effective self-regulation can help MOOC learners develop self-learning progressions and encourage proactive self-learning motivation. For MOOC learners, though the learning process enables more resources and learning control, it lacks the cognitive, behavioral, and psychological support from the physical interaction of a traditional classroom, and often leads to learning discontinuation. Thus, self-regulation is not only a learning management skill in MOOCs but also a crucial element in achieving learning goals.

MOOCs continue to grow in number and scale, with course takers from across the globe. For instance, Coursera, one of the world’s top three MOOC platforms, has approximately four million registered learners. Coursera offers courses taught in English mainly, while many learners come from non-English speaking countries. For non-native English learners on MOOCs, English is not only a language that helps learning, but also a perceived competence – the ability of a learner to be aware of the competence needed to complete a task on a certain level. Perceived competence is related to self-efficacy, which emphasizes learners’ perceived judgment of their “ability” to complete a task. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a critical determinant in self-regulation, affecting self-regulation strategies in all aspects of learning, such as self-monitoring, cognitive process, goal setting, and task value. In short, self-efficacy is the key to the use of self-regulated learning strategies. With the rapid development of the MOOCs, increasing studies have examined the effects of self-efficacy in online learners’ self-regulated strategies (Winters, Greene, & Costich, 2008). Most of the studies predominately focus on the overall self-efficacy of learners, while few have delved into more specific disciplines, such as math, science or language. Furthermore, only a number of studies have touched upon different types of learners.

RESEARCH PURPOSES

In the research of learning process, self-regulated learning has been an important topic. There are numerous definitions of self-regulated learning. The most representative and widely referenced is the definition proposed by Zimmerman (1989): self-regulated learning is related to the level of a learner’s active cognition, motivation and behavior in the learning process. Self-efficacy is a crucial factor in self-regulated learning (Bandura, 1997), and has an important
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