Project Description

> **University: Universidad de Salamanca**
> **Project (Challenge/Tool/Action):** "Habla bien, escribe mejor. Claves para un uso correcto del español" (*"Talk properly, write better. Keys for a proper use of Spanish"*). **Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)**

1. **Introduction:**

   Since the first appearance of MOOCs in 2011, the cumulative number of courses started or scheduled has reached 5,000. The universities and institutions involved are almost 900 and the courses are taught in 17 different languages (Spanish is the third one after English and French).

   There is a specific type of MOOC that has grown significantly: the LMOOC, or language MOOC. These courses are among the most requested and usually have a higher completion rate than MOOCs on other subjects. LMOOCs are a trend that involves many countries and many different languages (the most popular are English and Spanish).

   To carry out this project, the Universidad de Salamanca relies on a multidisciplinary team made up of professors from the Spanish Language Department of the Universidad de Salamanca, members from the R+D+I department of Cursos Internacionales de la Universidad de Salamanca, graduates and doctors in Spanish Philology with expertise both in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language and in the use of new technologies applied to the teaching of languages, and members of the Digital Production and Innovation Service, which had previously carried out a first LMOOC ("Español Salamanca A2") whose results were highly satisfactory.

   After several meetings and taking into account the different kinds of LMOOC which are currently offered, we decided, without abandoning the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language, as we can still try to take full advantage of the experienced gained with the previous MOOC, to aim at a wider target audience. We are thinking of a group of native speakers who are interested in knowing, because they need it for their work or because they are curious, the language framework and use. With this regard, the normative issues are the most important these days in publications, mass media and social networks, where they are more visible and arouse more interest.

2. **State of the art:**

The MOOCs (*Massive Open Online Courses*) have their precedent in the systems and structures of distance learning previous to the appearance of the technological systems currently known as ICT (information and communication technologies). At the international level, the contributions made by the Instituto Federal de Capacitación del Magisterio de México, founded in 1945, the impact in Europe of the Open University of the United Kingdom (founded in 1969) and the launch in 1999 of the project Open Course by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have been essential.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of the Web 2.0, second generation of the development of web format and designs, whose characteristic feature was to facilitate the intercommunication among readers, share information and interoperate, meant that the users became the main character and that their need to satisfy their specific learning needs made interactivity and shared knowledge be the main purpose of the net.

Everything we have said was paving the way for the appearance of the first course known as MOOC: "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge", organized by George Siemens and Stephen Downes at the University of Manitoba (Canada) in August 2008, and for which 2,300 students registered, which was undoubtedly a significant figure. But the first MOOC that really promoted this kind of teaching was the one designed in the autumn of 2011 by Sebastian Thurn, professor at Stanford University (California, United States) and Peter Norvir, research director in Google. It was called "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence", and had about 160,000 registered students.

The inflection year for the growth of the MOOCs in the open education was 2012. It was in that year when the most known international platforms were developed, boosted by US universities, mainly within the so-called "Ivy League": Coursera, Udacity y edX, although before the peak of these platforms their main developer had already offered MOOCs through their non-specialized resources.

The basic ideals that have promoted the philosophy of MOOCs can be summed up in two: democratization of the specialized education and access to university level education. These two values emerged within the idea of the digital *potlach*. However, the contents of the MOOCs are much more atomist: specific courses about very concrete subjects and subjects that go beyond official training and often have to do with popular, and even populist, motivations. The flexibility regarding what, how and where we study can make us prejudge MOOCs as not very serious. However, at least we have to admit that they interest their audience and sometimes also map some knowledge areas that have often been marginalized by academic sectors and in which only intercultural studies and extremely specialized areas have interest at last these days.

As we have seen, new kinds of MOOCs have been developed and a great

amount of courses are created every year. But what about the quality of all these MOOCs? We did a thorough review of the literature and wrote a report ("Calidad y evaluación de MOOC", 2016) about quality issues in MOOCs, that is the basis of our approach to the new course we are creating for this project.

We all know that traditional education measures the quality of teaching and learning with a variety of assessment methods based on a set of established criteria. But MOOCs do not fit into the traditional education system; therefore, it is not so easy to find the benchmarks to evaluate the design and the contents of the MOOCs, as it is quite a heterogeneous and evolving group.

Some experts have analyzed the MOOCs' market in order to establish quality parameters. A couple of the most popular studies are the one carried out by OpenupEd, that proposes a quality label for MOOCs, and the MOOC Quality Project, an initiative of the European Foundation for Quality in E-Learning (www.efquel.org).

The MOOC Quality Project identifies six key areas:

- Massive (and often unspecified) target group: MOOCs should be flexible and diverse, with a variety of content, assignments, forms and levels of interaction and assessment methods to provide a range of possible learning paths.
- Mixing formal and informal learners: it is important to define different levels of success for the different learners and offer certain activities specifically for the credit students.
- Learning across contexts: a MOOC comprises several large networks of learners with varying focus areas but which influence each other and drive the course forward, and these networks should be allowed to modify the course rules to a certain extent.
- Declaration of contents (pre-course information): students must be able to see a clear declaration of what sort of course they are signing up to, with information about the structure, expected workload, study methods…
- Peer to peer pedagogy: peer learning, peer review and peer assessment are essential, as well as scaffolding to assist learners.
- MOOCs supporting choice based learning: MOOCs should encourage shared responsibility, be open about requirements of self-organization and provide scaffolding for those who lack that self-organization.

According to the OpenupEd quality label, what does seem clear is that, to establish the value of a MOOC, we need to focus on different aspects:
- Strategic management: in order to develop quality MOOCs, it is important that the institution involved has a general e-learning and open education powerful strategy. For example, in Salamanca our research in these fields is really growing and we have some research groups and sections of the university that are working in these specific subjects.
- Curriculum and course design: for instance, course materials must be up to date, regularly reviewed and improved.
- Course delivery: including aspects related with the teaching methodology and the platform.

- Course level: the course content must be relevant and accurate. Activities should be interactive, provide feedback and help students to construct their own learning and to communicate it to others. Assessment has to be explicit, fair, valid and reliable.
- Staff and student support: before, during and after the course.
Of course, we must remember that, as we already said, LMOOCs have very specific characteristics that we must consider when we design a course and that determines specific quality criteria.
So, according to these benchmarks, it seems that the connectivist model is the most appropriate or, at least, the one that can guarantee a quality standard as described in the most recent studies, and starting from this approach we have designed our course. We have tried to resolve from the beginning the problems traditionally attributed to LMOOCs:
- The lack of personal monitoring during the learning process.
- Assessment, because language learning is usually a skill-based learning and not only a knowledge-based one. This is related to the short variety of activities that the platforms usually offer.
- The format. Most people have argued that online environment is not the most suitable to learn a language, especially for the oral interaction. As a result, most language MOOCs focus mainly on writing, on the passive skills (reading/listening) and on considering language as a structure, due to the constraints of the online format.

Regarding the chosen subject, from the very beginning we tried to look for a field of common interest and a typology of target audience related to the activity of the members of the work team, which, as it has been said, is made up of teachers of Spanish language, experts in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language and experts in the use of ICT applied to language teaching. Finally, with regard to the subject, we decided to focus on the linguistic norms, a very important issue in the Hispanic publications nowadays and which arouses much interest in the internet and mass media, it has specific sections in newspapers and TV and radio programs that only talk about it.

Just to justify what we have said, we can refer to "Español al día", the linguistic consultancy department of the Royal Spanish Academy, whose main duty is to answer linguistic doubts (about spelling, vocabulary and grammar) from the perspective of the norms of formal Spanish. This website receives about 250 questions every day. From its creation in 1998 till today there have been more than 700,000 questions.

The Fundación del español urgente (*Fundeu*), which has been ensuring the right use of the Spanish in the media since 2005, also receives 150 questions per day.

In connection with the target public, we tried to develop a MOOC for both high level students of Spanish (C1 and C2 levels according to the European Framework of Reference) and native speakers with great interest in the language.

We thought that, due to the subject on which we were going to work for the MOOC, we could not resign the contact between the two types of target audience. In addition, it would be a new feature in this field and add great enrichment to the MOOC.

To decide the subject of the MOOC and design its contents, we also turned to the descriptors of the Common European Framework, where we found the key to link content and target audience. According to this document, when we plan a course or design any material or activity aimed at speakers of a foreign language, it is indispensable that the non-native learners of the levels before mentioned have a series of skills very similar to those of the native speakers with regard to the spoken and written use of the language. Referring to the contents of our project, we can highlight the following skills:

- Flexible and effective use of the language for social, academic and professional purposes.
- Wide and reliable command of linguistic elements to express thoughts with precision.
- Correct and suitable vocabulary.
- High grade of consistent grammar correctness.
- Lack of spelling mistakes in writing.
- Consistent and practical use of structures, distribution in paragraphs and punctuation.
- Correct spelling, except for sporadic typographic mistakes.
- Awareness of the sociocultural and sociolinguistic implications in the language used by native speakers.
- Development of coherent and united texts, with a complete and appropriate use of different organization criteria and a big variety of cohesion mechanisms.
- Precise transmission of subtle nuances of meaning.

3. **Target groups:**

This course is aimed at advanced and proficient students of Spanish as a second language that are interested in improving their level. At the same time, also native speakers can enroll in this course. In fact, we are going to take advantage of the variety of potential audience of this MOOC in order to foster the cooperation among the students.
We have designed an accessible and participatory MOOC, a kind of scaffolding that moves students progressively toward stronger understanding and greater independence in the learning process. We want to take advantage of the fact that learners of different cultures (native speakers or not), with different levels and different backgrounds, can enroll and create a collaborative community where they can help each other recommending resources, creating documents, sharing ideas, etc. Hence, one of the best outcomes of our MOOC is the network connections they can create with other people.
The course is distributed, so all the blog posts, forum discussions, tweets, tags,

lists and so on connect together to create a networked course.
And last but not least, this MOOC is a step towards lifelong learning.

4. Methodology:

The aim is to offer an open, connectivist and constructivist approach, as against the so-called xMOOCs, which keep a strict hierarchy of the learning process, as they are focused on behaviourist methods and place teachers and their materials (whose order and structure is thought to reach very clearly defined objectives) in the center of the teaching and learning experience.

The traditional hierarchy of the MOOC causes unidirectionality in the learning process, but resources 2.0 such as forums are used to promote collaborative activities. In spite of that, they have a reduced impact and it is considered that their ability to promote dialogue and a collaborative and collectivized knowledge building is not comparable with that of the cMOOCs (connectivist MOOC).

This opposite orientation regarding teacher and learners' role between cMOOC y xMOOC is said to give xMOOC an advantage to approach an objective of empirical knowledge against the holistic one of the cMOOC. It also means that in the xMOOC teachers continue playing the role of guiding and leading learning, while in the cMOOC the teacher's role is building a community.

The preparation of the MOOCs also varies according to these two big aspects. The cMOOC, due to their connectivist approach, must favor the adding of materials against the preselection which is dominant in the xMOOC. At the same time, these materials should favor the connection among students in order to promote their collaborative and teamwork skills.

Of course, the xMOOCs match better the main pedagogical trends in the field of higher education, and can be understood as a direct translation of the classroom (even of the master class due to the predominance of instructional videos) to the open teaching. However, the difficulties in building a strong community among the students can be one of the reasons why drop-out rates from the MOOCs are so high, a problem which has also traditionally affected distance learning.

The completion rate of the MOOCs offered in the Spanish platform Miríada X is of 18 % (Oliver, Hernández-Leo and Albó, 2015). According to the same study, this percentage is in a level close to other platforms such as MITx o HarvardX, whose completion rate is of 17 %. The course completion rate is highly conditional on a third part of the participants who finally do not start the course they have register for. It represents a common feature of the MOOC. Yuan and Powell (2013) suggest that the MOOC aspects regarding quality, sustainability, pedagogy, completion rates and credits are of great importance

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for the institutions of higher education. Jordan (2014) says that it is confusing to refer just to the numbers of initial registration and completion as numbers of dropouts. The registrations of six digits are getting more and more uncommon, while the number of the courses continue increasing. The majority of MOOCs have a completion rate under the 10 % of the registrations, but the definition of the completion rate is the percentage of students registered that fulfill the course criteria to get a certificate. This definition is used because the information is usually available, but we have also to consider the different ways in which the MOOC students can participate and take advantage of the course without completing the assessments. Jordan suggests that this guarantees future work in order to understand better the reasons why those who initially register for the course finish or do not finish them. From the quality point of view, it is necessary to consider if the completion in this context is or is not a primary worry. However, Jordan also suggests to consider it a starting point to get a better understanding of the MOOC design and the ways to help students to complete these courses. For this it is necessary to take into account the impact of the different kind of assessments, and take the completion rate together with the underlying pedagogy to see the differences that arise depending on how much transmissive (xMOOC) or connectivist (cMOOC) the courses are. Other aspect is the previous information which is available for the possible students (Creelman et al 2014).

In this respect, the xMOOC has been the most boosted format in some of the most important platforms for these kinds of courses, such as Coursera or EdX. Their own tools for the administration, assessment and development of courses are oriented to a structural design of contents within those parameters against the just pure integration of 2.0 social components.

To this dual categorization we have to add the tMOOC. They are proposed as a hybridization of cMOOC and xMOOC, which seems a clearer response to the dominant production of this kind of courses. The approaches for the design of the materials developed by these authors indicate that the different courses have been done from different theoretical approaches: the XMOOCs come from the objetivist theory, the tMOOCs from the constructivist approach and the cMOOCs are related to the connectivist theory.

Furthermore, Moreira and Mota (2014) add the iMOOCs to the taxonomy of the MOOCs and consider them the first institutional model specifically designed for a MOOC. This model is compatible with the university learning culture, as it is built over the main four pillars of its pedagogical model: a learner-centered approach, flexibility, interaction and digital inclusion. The aim is to combine the self-learning with a strong social dimension and interaction that enrich the learning and make it more profitable. We also focused on the flexibility necessary for the learners of online courses and the stimulation needed to help them make progress and follow the course. At the same time, we did our best to make the course available for the highest possible number of people. We wanted to bring people closer to the online digital environment, so that we

could help reduce the digital divide (and thus respond to the previously stated ideals of the digital citizens and the commons). This model is called iMOOC, as it is centered on individual responsibility, interaction, interpersonal relationships, innovation and inclusion.

Our objective is to follow a line close to the tMOOC: to establish appropriate teaching materials but de-hierarchize the sequence of contents, be flexible with the students and respect their personal goals, favor the connectivity and interaction to build a community that can benefit from their positive feedback, contribute with their own materials and contents, and build new knowledge through the experience of the online learning with the group.

5. **Development of the project:**

The Project *Habla bien, escribe mejor. Claves para un uso correcto del español (Talk properly, write better. Keys for a proper use of Spanish)* focuses on the correct use of spoken and written language, specifically on those aspects which were considered to get high profitability and progress in this kind of courses. After the most important contents were selected in accordance with the criteria before mentioned, they were divided into seven modules which, for their part, were organized in three sections according to the following outline:

SECTION I. *Habla bien (Talk properly)*. Vocabulary, grammar and speech issues

- Module 1. Paronyms, derivative pairs, lexical improprieties, taboo words and euphemisms. Political correctness. Use of the dictionary.

-Module 2. Loan words (¿adaptation or equivalence?), Latinisms, valid neologisms, *Spanglish*. Phraseology. Linking words.

-Module 3. Agreement (gender and number) and adverbs with possessives. Formation of feminine (professions and positions, etc.). Linguistic sexism, inclusive language.

- Module 4. Personal pronouns (leísmo, laísmo, exclusive use of *le* in singular…) and use of relatives (*quesuísmo*, *que galicado*, depronominalization...). Prepositional regime *(queísmo, dequeísmo*, regime vacilation...) and use of some prepositions. Verbal conjugation: regularizations (*andé, satisfacieron, dijistes*), participles (*freído/frito; imprimido/impreso*) and imperative form of *you* (*vosotros*).

SECTION II. *Escribe mejor (Write better).* Spelling issues.
- Module 5. Accentuation: basic rules, problematic cases, diacritic accent. Is it written together or in a separate way? They sound the same, but are spelled differently: "y/ll", "h/0", "b/v", "g/j".

- Module 6. Use of uppercase and lower case letters: basic rules and problematic cases. Punctuation: basic rules (special emphasis on the differences with other languages), problematic marks.

SECTION III. *Claves para un uso correcto del español (Keys for a proper use of Spanish)*. Your learning.

- Module 7. *El curso en un portfolio (The course in a portfolio)*. P2P task in which the students who want to get the paid certificate have to upload their portfolio of the course (learning notebook) and assess their mates' portfolio using the guidelines provided.

Each module has the following structure:

Empezamos (Let's start).
Initial resource → On the main screen, with reference to the forum/blog to discuss the resource.

—Quiero verde amor.
—¿Verde?
—"Verte" Es el autocorrector.
—Pues desactívalo.
—Lla, hay mejor haci, ce lo uviera kitado desde anthes.

Aprendemos juntos (Learning together).
It is divided into the corresponding sub-item for each module. Each sub-item contains:
• Qué quiero aprender (What I want to learn): "Placement" survey to choose the itinerary.

2. En la secuencia *¡Cometelo rápido, Agustina!*
   a. falta una tilde.
   b. sobra una tilde.
   c. no sobra ni falta nada.

Feedback para respuesta correcta (a): ¡Exacto! Falta una tilde en cómetelo. Al ser una palabra sobresdrújula debe llevar acento gráfico.
Feedback para respuesta incorrecta (b y c): Respuesta incorrecta. La respuesta correcta es a, ya que falta una tilde en cómetelo. Al ser una palabra sobresdrújula debe llevar acento gráfico. Como has fallado esta pregunta, te aconsejamos que realices el itinerario 1 de este bloque, en el que se repasaran las reglas básicas de acentuación.

• Ruta de aprendizaje A (Learning route A): multiple-choice activities
• Ruta de aprendizaje B (Learning route B): multiple-choice activities
→ At the end of each route, students are referred to the following resources:
• Forum (the subcategory of this sub-item)
• Wiki (resource repository)

> **REPOSITORIO WIKI**
>
> **MÓDULO 2 - *BIENBENIDOS!* CUESTIONES DE ORTOGRAFÍA**
>
> ¿Compartimos recursos? ¿Has encontrado algún material interesante relacionado con los contenidos de este módulo? Compártelo en la sección correspondiente.
>
> **2.1. *De tilde en tilde***
>
> http://blog.lengua-e.com/2013/ejercicios-de-acentuacion/
>
> http://www.fundeu.es/recomendacion/tilde-diacritica/
>
> **2.2. *Juntos pero no revueltos***
>
> Consejos de redacción de la Fundéu BBVA (relativos a prefijos)
>
> http://www.fundeu.es/recomendacion/prefijos-cuatro-claves-para-una-buena-redaccion-817/
>
> **2.3. *Suenan igual, pero se escriben diferente***
>
> Ejercicios interactivos de ortografía (b/v, g/j, etc.)
> http://www.aplicaciones.info/ortogra/ortogra.htm
>
> Un test online
> http://www.psicotecnicostest.com/testpsicotecnicosonline.asp?TIP=Ejercicios%20de%20ortografía%EDa&TEST=1

- Blog (final resource)

Comprobamos (Checking)
- <u>Team work</u>: P2P task (optional and not in all modules)

• <u>Qué he aprendido (Things I have learnt)</u>: Learning test (compulsory)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. He mejorado mis conocimientos ortográficos.							
2. He afianzado mis conocimientos sobre las reglas de acentuación.							
3. Conozco cuándo escribir juntos y cuándo separados algunos elementos lingüísticos.							
4. Distingo el uso correcto de "y/ll", "h/0", "b/v", "g/j" en ciertas palabras.							
5. Conozco cuándo utilizar las mayúsculas correctamente.							
6. Sé cómo utilizar correctamente algunos signos de puntuación.							
7. Me siento más preparado para escribir un texto sin faltas.							
8. He seleccionado el itinerario más acorde con mis conocimientos.							
9. He aprendido cómo resolver mis dudas ortográficas.							
10. He sacado provecho del intercambio de opiniones con otros participantes del curso.							
11. He contribuido a generar conocimiento en el curso.							

• <u>Cuaderno de aprendizaje</u> (Learning notebook). In a survey form, the results must be saved.

The course also has the following resources:

General forum

- Key questions about the course
- Technical doubts
- The expert's corner: section in which native students can answer foreign speakers' questions and vice versa.

Wiki

- General repository with resources about style rules and recommendations that students can also complete.

Blog

- Space to put on final resources and talk about them.

External resources

- Challenge-question repository (Twitter): students can ask in Twitter all doubts they have and which are not solved by the course. At the end of the course, the highest voted questions will be answered.
- Expert's lecture: proposal of setting up a virtual classroom with an expert for those students who can attend and record it for the students who cannot follow the lecture directly.
- Virtual desktop with the final resources of the wiki (Symbaloo).

Regarding the certification, two models are planned:
Free certificate. To get it, the learning tests of each module must be completed.
Paid certificate. To get it, students have to do task P2P of module 7: upload the portfolio (learning notebook) and grade two other students' portfolio. The portfolio must include the results of at least 4 complete modules.

6. **Chronogram:**

   2016:
   1) Initial exploration of the already existing MOOCs.
   2) Critical analysis of the results of the MOOCs previously carried out by the Universidad de Salamanca.
   3) Study of the state of the art
   4) Writing a report about the typology of MOOCs and proposal of the quality assessment criteria for MOOCs.
   5) Study, from the report, of the features applicable to a MOOC for the teaching of languages.
   6) Identification of the target audience, spectrum of interested potentials and possible foreseeable learning goals.
   7) Design of the MOOC structure.
   8) Establishment of the MOOC platform for hosting.

9) Adaptation of the structure design and prediction of the contents demanded by the platform.
10) Design of the MOOC contents and selection of the external learning objects and contents.
11) Design of the audiovisual materials for the MOOC.
12) Design of the advertising video and other promotional materials.

2017:
1) Technical design of the MOOC.
2) Incorporation of the contents to the digital platform.
3) Technical creation of the advertising video and the other promotional materials.
4) Advertising campaign.
5) MOOC Development (1st edition).
6) MOOC Supervision (1st edition).
7) Study and analysis of the results.
8) Identification and application of possible improvements.
9) Advertising campaign.
10) MOOC Development (2nd edition).
11) MOOC Supervision (2nd edition).
12) Study and analysis of the annual results.

Subsequent plans:

1) Publication of the first results and diffusion in conferences, lectures and symposiums.
2) Analysis of the platform impact in the results and report with the proposals for improvement regarding the management and versatility of the MOOC in the platform.
3) Consecutive revisions and editions of the MOOC according to the platform standards.
4) Critical analysis and study of the MOOC results with regard to the initial teaching hypothesis.
5) Verification of the satisfactory points and achievements made with the method, identification of problems and development of proposals to solve them.
6) Publication of the final results and diffusion in conferences, lectures and symposiums with the aim to continue improving the online teaching methodology, the linguistic MOOCs and the MOOCs in general.

7. Dissemination:
1) MOOC Diffusion:
The MOOC developed in this project will have the usual advertising campaign for the hosting platform, that is, MiríadaX. It includes the following activities, which are carried out by the company responsible for the platform itself and which we know because we have done more open courses with them, as they are habitual partners of the Universidad de Salamanca:

- Massive *mailing*
- Advertising aimed at specific *targets*
- Advertising aimed at former students of previous MOOCs

Furthermore, habitual advertising strategies in social networks will also be developed both by MiríadaX and by the members of the projects.

2) Transfer and scientific research

With regard to the knowledge transfer, the results of the research will be announced in international conferences, workshops and symposiums in which one or more MOOC experts will take part. A full report has also been written, and it will be published in an open access journal as soon as we make progress with the project.

Both the creation of the MOOC and its teaching development and subsequent analysis of results can give rise to important research publications in the areas of Applied Linguistics, Teaching of Second Languages, IT Use in the Teaching Sector, Communication and Teaching Innovation. The plan for the scientific dissemination of the results will give priority to publication in prestigious open access journals, which are conveniently indexed following the Humanities standards.

As MOOCs can be done in numerous editions along the years, the data study can also go on longer, so new important data can arise to assess the social impact, the scope and the learning achievement level in the consecutive editions. Consequently, the results will also be analyzed during several years, and they will include comparative studies which lead to a deeper and more detailed analysis of the different aspects, the impact of the changes and the improvements that can be introduced in following editions.

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