

1. From your perspective as a learner, what are your general thoughts about the MOOC as an educational platform?
2. What suggestions or "lessons learned" would you offer to teachers or administrators who are considering offering MOOCs through their institutions? (Not for-credit, but free and open as most of the courses offered on Canvas Network?)

1.- I think it is a good option to learn for people who have not the opportunity to attend classes, for people who want to learn new things and so on. Moreover, you can study every day when you want. I think it is a way to democratize culture.

2.- Feedback is very important. Sometimes, courses are too much focused on American culture, but students are from many continents and countries. Subtitles can be very important sometimes.

Steve: have you heard of John McWorther's [*The Hoax. Why the World Looks the Same in Any Language*](#) book? I have not read it, but I have read that it goes against the Sapir-Whorf theory.

Best regards. Good luck!

Great to hear from you. I'm happy to help out. Here are my thoughts (and yes, if you choose to use my name, you certainly may):

1. From your perspective as a learner, what are your general thoughts about the MOOC as an educational platform?

The General Semantics course was the first MOOC in which I have participated. Even though there were many, many people enrolled in the course, I noted from student comments that we seemed to be scattered across a broad spectrum of educational and experiential ranges. My personal style is geared toward learning in a small group/seminar environment, where relationships are built across time. I realized at the start that MOOCs are not structured for that sort of engagement, due to massive enrollments, and so my intention was - as an independent learner - to gain as much as I could from each week's work.

I appreciate knowing the numbers - enrollment of 1300, completion by 36. This means that roughly 2.7% of the students enrolled actually finished the class. This makes me wonder whether or not you and the other instructors would consider it to have been time well spent.

Due to personal circumstances, I was unable to engage as I would have liked on Day 1 of the course. I had left the country to present a paper in Thailand in January during the middle of a household move to be completed immediately upon my return. This overlapped with the start of the 2014 Spring semester of my doctoral course work, and so I entered the MOOC feeling that I had missed out on early "settling in."

Over all, I enjoyed the course, and I find that I engage with what I learned during those six weeks on an ongoing basis. I have all the materials printed, and inserted in a binder for current and future reference. It was time well spent!

2. What suggestions or "lessons learned" would you offer to teachers or administrators who are considering offering MOOCs through their institutions? (Not for-credit, but free and open as most of the courses offered on Canvas Network?)

Here are some of the questions I have asked myself - during the course, and now after receiving your email:

1. Unless my MOOC was drawn from a course I had already taught, would it be worth the investment of my time?

- a. Yes, if I wanted broad exposure of my materials, or even of my name.
- b. No, if I dreamed of high levels of course completion, sort of a return-on-investment from my efforts.
- c. Yes with or without high levels of course completion, if I am being paid for my work.

2. Exactly what threshold of exposure would I allow into my personal research and writing? For example, what would I feel comfortable placing "out there" in a MOOC, vs. that over which I feel protective?

3. If course completion rates are typically similar to this one, is it worth the time and effort of a team of colleagues to conduct a MOOC?

- a. Maybe yes, for publicity, for creating name-recognition (sort of a broadcast PSA).
- b. Yes for establishing my credibility as a knowledge expert in many countries.
- c. Maybe no, for personal satisfaction, although I'm not sure about that. New relationships/contacts could prove to be quite simulating and fun.

As I mentioned early in the MOOC, I enrolled at the request of one of my professors, with whom I was doing a special doctoral readings course this semester. After the MOOC I moved on to readings in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and advanced readings in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Public Discourse Analysis. Of course, general semantics is a good fit with my interest in CDA, so what I learned in the MOOC will certainly go forward with me.

I would love to view your presentation, so put me on the list for that!

It is certainly my pleasure to provide a bit of insight from my perspective about the MOOC General Semantic (GS) experience. First off, I would like to say "thank you" all--the course was full of great content and I learned a lot. That being said, in general I believe the MOOC is a fascinating and incredible way to reach, connect with, and teach a mass audience. It is very interesting to know that I was 1:36 to complete the course. Approximately 2.8% of those who signed up...I believe here lies the greatest opportunity for improvement.

I will briefly state how I see your setting expectations for the course might have had an modulating effect on course completion outcome. This is what I suggest:

1. Regarding the course Schedule, eliminate the statement: "However, for this course "due" dates are suggested and not fixed"...and the rest of this paragraph. The due dates were set. Setting clear expectations of what is expected would be very important to a mass audience of participants who enters a MOOC with different ideas on what "deadline" or "due date" mean. Certainly you did not mean to communicate that you expected the participants not to meet the due dates, right?

2. In this same vain, regarding student responsibilities, eliminate "you have no responsibilities."

3. And finally, it appears you fell under the trickster of our Western culture when you followed that statement up with the fact that the three of you were not getting paid. It seems to me that you equated the value of your time/commitment with money. You may not have been paid, but the value of having instructors who actually guided the pathway to learning, by being "present" in the "here and now", created a connectedness through communication which was likely priceless to students who was equally committed to complete the course. It certainly was to me.

Currently I am taking another MOOC called "30 days of TED Talks." However, the two instructors are "MIA" and dependent on pre-written text-message aggregate communication....I am not interested in completing the course simply because I am not invested in making time to explore something I could have easily explored on my own (TED videos of my choosing). Although purported to help the participant to utilize TED talks in instruction, the platform is flawed. I certainly appreciate the "connection" and structure and guidance that ought to be in place if you are considering offering a MOOC.

In my opinion, the content and organization of the GS course was splendid. I loved the videos, the shared research, the contextual messages/lectures, and the relevant history woven throughout the course. I have attached snapshots of the areas I weighed in on as an attachment.

I hope your presentation goes well at the conference. I would love a copy of your presentation or link to it.

Thank you (again) for your great efforts (along with the others) in preparing and presenting this course.

Thank you also for in\is invitation to follow-up. Yes, please, a copy of your presentation to the Canvas User Conference, and link to link to the video, would be much appreciated. It would in addition be quite timely, for I'm to present a seminar next Sunday 25 May, to the Australian General Semantics Society, on my experiences of this course. So anything further of your follow-up reflections on the Canvas process, would be most helpful.

Are you proposing to contact the course participants with a further request for feedback (in addition to this one), eg after six months? I'd be keen to participate, and to stay in touch with you in the longer term.

1. Education provides us with the tools to apprehend the world (life and work)). In this sense the MOOC as an educational platform offers the opportunity to continue learning (life long learner) and therefore we can shape our world and not the other way.

2. My suggestion to teachers and administrators is to continue presenting courses with quality and free. In this way they contribute to the education of individuals around the world. We needed the MOOCs.

1. General thoughts about the MOOC as an educational platform: The General Semantics was my first MOOC. As I explored more, I enrolled for at least 7 more. Couldn't complete all of them sadly. But I've found the idea of MOOC to be very revolutionary. I would be so thankful if such a possibility for PhDs also existed. It would be great to interact with intellectuals and professors at an international level and make the thesis so much more rigorous. I have learnt a lot from all my MOOCs. The GS course let me open modules at my own pace. That made me complete all the levels. In other MOOCs, the pace just goes on, irrespective of the input from the learner. Both the approaches have great merits though.

2. Suggestions: Most of the courses I've come across are meant for college because they are largely introductory. The courses at Masters' level would be a huge boon.

Would love to see how your presentation turns out. Do send me your paper if you can.

Of course I remember you and your excellent course.

From my perspective as a learner I must say that learning this way is an excellent opportunity to get in touch with all the research the world is doing because if it wasn't for this courses I wouldn't have the chance.

I have learned to work and listen and read with people from other countries, something not easy, as the language we talk is not the same.

I have broaden my mind in a way I have never thought and this has made me a better person.

I have a suggestion: people like me, who live in a small city , need to get these courses and need to have them in their curriculum. I pay my subjects in the university, I would be very happy to pay for subjects in the world.

It would be a good idea to develop strategies to be able to work in groups.

I would be very interesting in receiving a copy of your presentation.

I hope my opinion would be of some help.

Even though I still don't know if I passed the General Semantics course as there is no result on my profile on canvas, I really appreciated this course and I wanted to thank you for your work.

1) I'm not at my first MOOC and as far, I've always enjoyed the courses. I think Mooc's are really important. It gives me free access to thousand of subjects I would like to learn about, but never had a chance to. I can improve my knowledge through it, without any stress of failing as I feel sometimes at uni. I think university courses are really important but I also think MOOCs are the future. It gives opportunity for some people who can't afford to go to university to learn and this is priceless. Also, for my job, I think having free certificates can be a great value.

2) I'd like to thank any teacher who gets involved in MOOCs and time to provide lessons internationally. Having the possibility to get in touch with them and other students is good, so we feel like it's not only virtual. Studying via different resources as videos, pictures, texts makes it even more interesting.

I would appreciate getting the link to the video later on or copy of the conference; my father is an author and actually writing a book about MOOCs, this could help.

Thank you very much.

I am happy about your participation in the conference in Utah. Certainly, a lot of people will learn from your presentation and open their minds on the benefits and advantages of MOOCs. From my perspective as a learner, MOOCs is a platform for a wider engagement among learners because you get to interact with fellow learners around the world. Aside from General Semantics, I was able to learn and open up with a bigger public and was able to understand little by little different cultures and how GS were to them without the trouble of pressure of time and money. In short, this educational platform provide opportunities for a more casual and flexible approach to learning. If I would suggest teachers and administrators who are thinking of using MOOCs in their classrooms and schools, I would tell to not hesitate. This not so traditional approach to the teaching-learning process is a more convenient way for teachers to give immediate feedback to their classes and for students to monitor their own learning as well. In addition, make this online experience more gamified. Put more spice and fun into this wave of online learning.

Good luck on your presentation Steve! Hope I was of help and I am definitely wanting to have a copy of your presentation soon.

Thank you for your message (and for running the course!). To answer your questions:

1. I find the MOOC very useful as I wish to continue learning (forever, really), but with the best will in the world I don't have the time or energy to attend a class at a local university. Also, the costs of these courses are often prohibitive. The other advantage is that, because the courses are free of charge, it allows you to 'dip your toe in the water' and try out subjects you wouldn't necessarily have gone into if there was a heavier time and money commitment at the front end. The other aspect (which because of time restraints I don't always take advantage of) is the social aspect of it; connecting with learners elsewhere in the world brings something to the learning experience which could otherwise be lost. I remember from my time at University that having the input and perspectives of students from other generations and cultures made the experience less one-dimensional. If this aspect were missing, it would mean we would not get to hear ideas from people who are different to us. I also like the flexibility of studying with a MOOC. There is enough structure to make it a valuable learning experience and to motivate you to continue, but at the same time you can catch up a little if life gets away from you a little and you can't watch lectures/read articles straight away.

2. In terms of lessons learned, I've done 5 MOOCs now on different platforms, so I have a few suggestions.

a) While the structure of the course itself does not need to be simple, I found with the Canvas platform that it was less simple to see my progress and see what I had completed and what I had not. Anything which simplifies this and makes it very clear for the student would be a good idea.

b) Some courses are very quiz-based, which is fine, but I do find that at the other end, not assessing peoples' learning, even informally, is not a great idea. One course I have taken had a lesson on each screen and many would have either large amounts of information followed by no way of 'anchoring' the information or they would have brief screens presenting one small idea and then saying 'share your thoughts below' when there wasn't really anything much to discuss. I think it's important to make it clear exactly what is expected in each lesson/lecture or page of text.

c) Length of video lectures is an important factor. I realise that some of the lectures on the General Semantics course were from Youtube and therefore you didn't have control of the content, but being able to watch them in small chunks (e.g 15 minutes or under) is really helpful. People may not have full hours to devote to studying, but fitting in half an hour is easier and I would think that it was easier to stick to a course if you weren't facing a full hour or so of lecture.

d) For lecturers considering offering MOOCs, I'd suggest that clarity and simplicity in presenting the course is key. A clear description of the course, what it involves, the level it is pitched at and what is expected should be available up front. The layout of what the student is expected to do (e.g the sequence to follow) and the method of tracking progress should also be simple. The course material itself does not have to be basic or simple; there are varying levels of complexity in various courses. The important factor is that this is clear when the student starts, so they don't become disillusioned when it is harder or easier than expected. Finally, and I'd say this was a feature of the General Semantics course and a couple of others that I've found particularly enjoyable, informality and humour are really helpful and important. Courses I've done which have lacked this and seemed rather robotic have been less successful and enjoyable. People are doing these courses in their free time and an element of enjoyment aside from the learning is a nice touch. Happy to answer any questions you have about my response or about MOOCs in general.

I'm stunned that only 36 people completed the class. I've taken many MOOC courses and yours was one of the best. So, here are my thoughts:

1. I absolutely love learning through MOOCs. I can take a wide variety of classes and do them at my convenience. I think they are especially valuable for people who want to sample a topic. I didn't know anything about General Semantics before your class and now I wish I was at the beginning of my career instead of at the end because I'd like to dive in to General Semantics deeper. MOOCs provide an excellent opportunity for both young people wanting to choose a career and older adults wishing to stay mentally active. If a student is looking for a college or university to attend in person, a MOOC is also a good way to learn about different institutions.

2. I understand that many people do not finish a given MOOC. From my perspective, some of the reasons are:

lack of interest (the subject turned out not to be as interesting as expected),
lack of time (some classes require a lot of time),
poor quality (videos and/or text are not easy enough to follow - I've experienced that in only a very few classes. For the most part the quality has been very high),
difficulty of the material (some of the classes are more advanced than expected).

Other issues:

The courses are often unreliable. Since most institutions are still experimenting with the format, they can't commit to offering the courses more than once, so it can be hard to create an education plan.

Sometimes I find out about a class after it has already started, so making it possible for students to join a class already in progress is very helpful.

If you find a subject that is very interesting to you (like General Semantics) you generally have to figure out the next step on your own. There may or may not be follow-up MOOC courses you can take.

I don't find the forums useful because of the volume. If there was a way to subdivide the classes into more manageable subgroups, I might interact with the forums more often. As it is, I generally just use the forums to address technical issues or problems with the course materials. Canvas is one of the rare MOOC platforms that require forum interaction. I understand why, but I personally don't find it a helpful requirement.

So, in general, my experience with MOOCs has been very positive. I'm very sorry only 36 people completed the General Semantics class because I would have loved to have seen a follow-up.

1) General thoughts concerning the MOOC.

Education is finally released from all the old orders chains. One can now freely study whatever he/she wishes, on his/her own free will thanks to the MOOC educational platforms. MOOCs are a huge breakthrough enhancing the modern human spirits. Mooc are taking the education way far from the medieval educational means still exist at schools all over the world and obey on the family legacy , politics, power plays, authorities, huge tuition. There is indeed some short of meritocracy in this kind of online education. Some spiritual release that connects people with what they indeed wanna do- gifted to do - instead of following the social stereotypes.

There is a need on linguistic courses- like approaching the science of linguistics - and translation courses. Semantics as well. Maybe some literature as well. Applied linguistics.

On MOOCs in general: I think they are a great way to encourage further development and learning and I've found they help me to stay motivated to study due to their interactional nature. I've managed to complete a few courses and I've enjoyed some more than others, but I think that's partly a result of whether the content was really something I wanted to learn about or not. However, with courses which are really just a series of mini-lectures followed by quizzes this also depends a lot on how interesting the lecturer is - I've done 2 such courses I really enjoyed and 3 that I really only stuck out as I had a lot of free time and they weren't very demanding, but as a result I don't think I really learned much. Courses with student-student interaction and task assessment are definitely more fun and more challenging, but also for this reason more time-consuming, so I guess there are benefits and drawbacks to both approaches.

"Lessons learned": I don't think there is a one-size-fits-all solution to a successful MOOC, so offering a variety of courses and delivery styles is probably important. One thing I really liked about the GS course was the daily updates - they helped me to stay focused and motivated. I also really don't like courses which don't send a link each week to that week's content, receiving a link to my inbox reminds me to do the week's study and also makes it much quicker to access the materials, so I find this very important to my motivation - much more so than badges, etc.

If the course is going to be a series of lectures, check the quality - I did one course where the lecturer paused and ummed and erred so much when she spoke that I ended up just reading the transcripts as listening took twice as long. Also, the only lectures I really enjoyed and can remember both used graphics to illustrate the lectures, so I think this shouldn't be done as an easy option but needs a bit more work going into the course still.

One area I think still needs improving is peer comments - they are often useful and interesting to read but there often ends up being pages of them under the same thread so I just stop reading as I don't have time. I don't know the solution to this, but one thing I would have liked on the GS course would be to be able to click on a comment in the daily updates and get taken to that actual comment, not just the thread. Being encouraged to like comments when you read might also help organisation, or maybe dividing them up by day, so you can find which you've read and which are new. One thing I liked about the GS course was the final exam task of re-reading comments and emailing the writer, but I realised if I'd known about this at the beginning I might have posted more. Some way of making reading as well as writing comments part of the assessment throughout the course might be a good idea. The other thing that increased my motivation on the GS course was how active you conveners all were throughout the course - I haven't experienced that level of commitment on any other course and it definitely increased my motivation to finish all the tasks. Your course took a larger time commitment than others I've done, but the couple of times I was tempted to give up and just watch the videos and do the readings it was this that stopped me more than anything else. Finally, some courses have weekly deadlines and others have only one at the end - I'm not sure which I like best, but I know there are definitely courses I was only able to complete as they didn't have weekly deadlines. For peer-peer tasks I realise deadlines are needed, but I think some way of giving participants the opportunity to submit one or two tasks late and then peer-mark other late submitters would be useful, as some weeks are just busier than others. I moved my country of residence during the GS course, for example, and needed the flexible deadline that week so I could leave the course for a few days and catch up next week.

Hope this helps anyway and good luck with the conference! Thanks for the interesting course too - I hope you get to run it again.

Thank you for the interesting course on GS. It was my third MOOC and at first I was misled by the name of the course as being a philologist I saw a familiar word - Semantics. Even though the course was not related to my profession I found the material really interesting and useful what helped me to complete the course in spite of my busy schedule.

I joined MOOCs relatively recently - only last summer. Before that I was unaware of them and I've benefited a lot from several courses that I've taken. I think that it's especially important in education where I work (I teach English at University level). What is really important in the courses of this kind is their "massiveness" - with lots of people participating in the course one gets different perspectives and learns best practices from all over the world. Besides, MOOCs help to spread information as participants are willing to share the information. This all eventually benefits the students who become competitive on the international market. It's also interesting how grown up people react to badges - they really motivate.

As for the knowledge from the course I can definitely say (now being even more sure) that politics lies entirely in the field of GS. The current Russian-Ukrainian crises in particular.

Waawww .. Am I really one of the 36 participants who completed the course „General Semantics: An Approach to Effective Language Behavior“? ;-)

Please find herewith "straight from the heart" my comments and feedback:

1. It was my personal objective to achieve in a short period of time a good basic understanding in General Semantics. I didn't had much experience with e-learning. MOOC as an educational platform was completely new to me. From my perspective as a learner, I was really surprised about the ease to navigate through the course materials, and the ability I had to follow my own studying-approach.

About the content of the course and the personal and gentle guidance I can only say "great". About MOOC as an educational platform have I only one word to say „exceptional“.

2. Give effective feedback. This way of communication will guide participants/learners through explicit expectations. MOOC offers an ideal platform to communicate with all stakeholders (teachers and learners). Steve and his colleagues did this in a wonderful way. Congratulations to all of them!

If I can help MOOC to introduce it in Belgium as an educational platform, I will not fail to do this.

I really benefited from the course. The main benefit was from the course content and exercises. I didn't interact that much with other participants, in part because it seemed to me there were so many different ways and places to respond to others that I had difficulty finding the thread of any one conversation. I would say the drawback for me, then, was the complexity of site navigation, or at least the number of fora in which to communicate within each module. Add to that the areas where we could correspond with instructors and so forth, and it just became easier to concentrate on the course offering rather than trying too hard to dialogue with others. Having to navigate through multiple links and web pages to complete the course could be a little daunting for me at times.

I have made good use of the course content, and have profitably incorporated many of the lessons learned into my personal and professional life. I earn a living as an attorney, so effective and more accurate use of language is particularly beneficial to me. I've also begun to plow through the 5th edition of General Semantics and am re-visiting my studies of the new rhetoricians, such as Kenneth Burke, whom I haven't had the pleasure of reading since my undergrad days in the 1980s.

I would enjoy seeing your presentation. Please send me a link.

Best of luck to you, and please don't hesitate to ask me any follow up questions!

Sorry for the late reply. I hope it reaches you while you're still working on your presentation.

1) I love the whole idea of MOOC's. Being from and located in Saudi Arabia, having access to a high-quality education such as this course, is a real privilege. I take my self-development very seriously and MOOC's have been a great resource. I started taking MOOC's since Oct 2012. I finished 30+ courses (some with certificates of accomplishments and some I just audited). I enjoyed most of them and learned a great deal of knowledge in disciplines that I really love but didn't have the time or the opportunity to pursue in college or my higher education (Master's degrees).

I've been a promoter of MOOC's among family, friends and co-workers. MOOC's have been instrumental in my professional and personal development. I believe it is stepping stone towards leveling the ground for people from all sort of backgrounds. And that's what i love about it. I think it is very noble for people like yourself to put the time and effort and conduct this course for free. I hope you're gaining great insights from all of the participants' feedback and discussions. .

2) Since your audience is the general public, the more you make the material relevant to everyday errands, interactions, or dealings, the more people will be dedicated, I believe. The thing about Canvas courses, I think there is a big portion of the courses' material that is self-taught, as opposed to instructor's lectures or activities that challenge the students to reproduce or apply the learned knowledge.

I'd be honored to receive a link of your presentation video. As for the GS course, I believe it was the best communication course I've ever taken. I recommend it to all leaders and people who are interested to improve their communication and facilitation skills. I am waiting for your second offer to suggest it to my circles.

Best of luck in your conference and I hope to hear from you soon and always.