EFL Majors' Attitudes toward Distance Learning via MOOCs: A Comparative Study between Egypt and Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the attitudes of EFL majors in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia towards distance learning with Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and the underlying factors influencing such attitudes. A mixed method was employed to meet such an end, incorporating a quantitative method of investigation (an attitude questionnaire) and a qualitative one (semi-structured interviews). Quantitively, the participants, who were randomly selected, were 218 EFL majors: 114 from the Faculty of Education for Boys in Cairo, Al-Azhar University in Egypt, and 104 from the College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University- Saudi Arabia. Qualitatively, ten EFL majors (five Egyptian and five Saudi) were purposively selected using Convenience Sampling Technique. Quantitatively, the results revealed that both Egyptian and Saudi Arabian EFL majors exhibited negative attitudes toward distance learning via MOOCs. Qualitatively, some underlying factors interpreting the participants' attitudes were revealed, i.e., a lack of interactivity and social interaction, limited technological proficiency, language barriers, inadequate feedback, unclear learning objectives, insufficient resources, and concerns about the credibility of MOOCs certificates. The research recommended raising the EFL learners' awareness about MOOCs, empowering them with systematic support to overcome the technical and linguistic challenges, and fostering collaboration among universities and MOOCs services providers.

1. Introduction

The distance learning paradigm has emerged due to the rapid continuous development in the field of communication technology which transcends the geographical boundaries boosting drastic shifts in the higher educational institutions worldwide. Likewise, the transformation of the traditional classroom to a technology-based one seeks to enhance the effectiveness of the learning outcome in the digital era.

Bearing this in mind, technology has become a key instrument in all the spheres of life in general and the educational context in particular (Heidari and Onvani, 2018; Hsu, 2017; Singhal, 2004); a wide array of technological resources has been employed encompassing corpora, dictionaries, educational software, and multimedia resources to stimulate the students' interests and boost the learning outcomes (Farr & Murray, 2016). Following this perspective, a plethora of language learners are inclined to experience distance learning as one of the pivotal technological advancements with auspicious implications for language learning (Sharma & Westbrook, 2016).

Consequently, among the multitude of innovations, that have become reality, are the massive open online courses (henceforth: MOOCs) (McAuley et al., 2010; Subbian, 2013). The term MOOCs embodies three key aspects: massive (various activities and learners), open (open access and adaptive materials), and online (available on the internet) (Masters, 2016). The term MOOCs was initially formulated by George Siemens and Stephen Downes based on the principles of the Connectivism Theory representing the format of distance learning (Downes, 2008). Siemens (2012) categorized MOOCs into two main categories cMOOCs (knowledge creation and communication) and xMOOCs (structured content and traditional delivery and traditional interaction). Precisely, MOOCs are defined as "integration of the connectivity of social networking, the facilitation of an acknowledged expert in a field of study, and a collection of freely accessible online resources" (McAuley et al., 2010).

Qin and Bax (2017) underscored that MOOCs enable accessibility to a myriad of educational resources, discussion forums, and communities of learning. Collective scaffolding is another characteristic of MOOCs highlighting that such platforms echo with the learners' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Given this thought, the perception of distance learning is profoundly influenced by the learners' awareness, feelings, and reactions toward the acceptance and employment of such technologies.

In other words, attitudes have paramount importance in demonstrating the learners' engagement with the teaching-learning process, specifically with the novel teaching-learning environment, as attitudes are considered the indicators of behaviour (Çelik & Uzunboylu, 2022). The learners' attitudes delineate the individual disposition towards an object, person, or situation prior to action; more critically, the attitudes have a significant role in interpreting the learners' engagement and acceptance of modern technology (Çelik & Uzunboylu, 2022). Specifically, the term attitude is defined by Ajzen (1993, p. 42) as "an individual's disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to an object, behaviour, person, institution, or event- or any other discriminable aspect; of the individual's world". The learners' positive attitudes towards e-learning entail the acceptance likelihood of such a modern technology as well as the degree of engagement. Al Rashidi and Phan (2015) delineated that the acceptance of modern technologies in the teaching-learning process is sometimes met with limited enthusiasm from the participants.

With this in mind, grabbing the attention of educationalists worldwide, MOOCs as a form of distance learning have emerged and rapidly evolved as a protruding mechanism for educational delivery which have the potential to revolutionize language learning. The global rise of MOOCs, which has boosted an educational shift towards technology-based learning, necessitates exploring the EFL majors' attitudes toward the utilization of such promising platforms in the learning process. Subsequently, the present research primarily sought to explore the attitudes of EFL majors in Egypt and Saudi Arabia concerning employing MOOCs in their English learning experiences which might inspire the educationalists and policymakers to best employ them in the teaching-learning process. With this in consideration, both Egypt and Saudi Arabia are characterized by varied sociocultural and educational landscapes, yet they have distinctive educational backgrounds, namely, a stimulating setting to investigate the learners' attitudes towards distance learning. More critically, verifying the EFL learners' attitudes might contribute to the ongoing discourse on technology integration in language learning as well as shedding light on the contextual factors affecting such attitudes, which might assist the stakeholders in both countries to make informed decisions concerning employing MOOCs in the learning process. Ultimately, the results attained might fill a knowledge gap by associating the potential advantages of MOOCs and their successful implementation in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, the present research sought to find solutions to the following questions:

1   What are the attitudes of EFL majors in Egypt and Saudi Arabia towards learning English through MOOCs?

2   What factors do EFL majors in Egypt and Saudi Arabia perceive as influential in shaping their attitudes towards learning English through MOOCs?

2. Literature Review

The genesis of MOOCs was demonstrated by Baturay (2015) who linked the terms to the course devised by Downs and Siemens (2008) entitled "Connectivism and Connectivity Knowledge". The course, utilizing a learning environment, enables collaboration among the participants (totalling 25) using the online accessible tools during that time at the universities of Manitoba and Canada. The participants' numbers considerably increased to incorporate 2300 students. The platforms of Udacity, Coursera, edX, and FutureLearn appeared shortly, implying the success of such platforms in providing adequate and attractive learning experiences.

The study of Ushanov et al., (2021) outlined that Russian tertiary students have positive attitudes towards using MOOCs. Additionally, their usage of MOOCs allows them to sideline their usage of conventional learning resources. On the same line, many studies handled learners' attitudes towards e-learning and the results indicated that learners link the usage of distance learning to the advantages they may gain. Furthermore, distance learning proved to positively affect their overall success (Cinkara & Bagceci, 2013; Erarslan & Topkaya, 2017).

Şahin (2021) investigated the impact of the analytical power of observed learning, learner fulfilment, and community on learners' academic success in distance learning. The study was conducted in Turkey in which students had to partake in a mandatory online English course. The results of the research uncovered that when students have a positive perception of learning, the level of their academic achievement will be greater.

In another study, Holzer et al. (2021) investigated the students' self-regulated learning, well-being, and basic need satisfaction in confronting the situation of COVID-19. They gathered data from students in two countries, namely Austria and Finland. The results were comparable in both countries affirming that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, encompassing competence, autonomy, and relatedness, significantly correlated with students' well-being, positive emotions, and intrinsic motivation.

Mozafari, et al. (2023) conducted a study to analyse EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of online learning effectiveness. The results indicated that the poor internet connection along with low interaction between students and the teacher were the most frequently noted negative points of online classes.

Kader, et al. (2021) investigated the acceptance of e-learning systems in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The study made use of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) for identifying the factors influencing e-learning acceptance which assist in improving student satisfaction and enhance educational systems to become more efficient. The results showed that students accept e-learning when it is perceived as a useful means and easy-to-use system. Computer and internet self-efficacy have a direct effect on the students' perception of the e-learning system in both countries.

Uyar (2023) aimed to explore university students' attitudes towards e-learning through an explanatory mixed-method design study. The findings revealed that students had positive attitudes towards e-learning. It was also found that male students, who had prior e-learning experience or home internet access, personal computers, and studying in technical fields had more positive attitudes towards e-learning than

their counterparts.

Benadla and Hadji (2021) sought to examine the challenges encountered by both teachers and students using the Moodle platform to facilitate the teaching-learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of the study revealed that both teachers and learners were not well prepared for an online learning experience. Furthermore, the technological skills, the teachers' lack of experience as well as the social situation of the students have made e-learning a complex process. More importantly, students expressed negative attitudes toward e-learning and expressed their preference for traditional classrooms.

Abderrahmane and Mebitil (2022) assessed students' and teachers' attitudes towards using MOOCs for language learning and teaching. The results indicated that EFL students and teachers have positive attitudes towards online learning courses. Mizher et al. (2023) sought to explore the EFL students' attitudes toward online learning by administering the technology acceptance model (TAM) along with the characteristics of the online learning system. The attitudes of students who studied online for four semesters or more were negative compared to those who took less than four semesters online. On the other hand, Chen et al. (2020), utilizing innovative structural topic modelling to analyze 1920 reviews of 339 computer science MOOCs based on identified Nine major topics, revealed negative reviews focused on issues such as assessment and learning tools, while positive reviews tackled course levels and organization. The findings offer insights for tutors to develop online courses.

Bearing this in mind, stimulating positive attitudes towards distance learning via MOOCs might optimize their outcomes to the maximum degree. Furthermore, having positive attitudes means active engagement with the content and higher levels of motivation. With this in mind, many studies underscored that university students have positive attitudes toward MOOCs and highlighted the participants' satisfaction with the learning process via MOOCs (Abderrahmane and Mebitil, 2022; Kader et al., 2021; Ushanov et al., 2021); likewise, a plethora of studies highlighted positive attitudes toward e-learning in general (Cinkara and Bagceci, 2013; Erarslan and Topkaya, 2017). However, Benadla and Hadji (2021) cited that students and teachers have negative attitudes toward MOOCs and enumerated a list of factors affecting the ultimate utilization of such MOOCs in learning. Chen et al. (2020) revealed negative reviews about MOOCs focused on issues such as assessment and learning tools, while positive reviews tackled course levels and organization. Subsequently, a discernible research gap emerges when investigating the EFL major's attitudes toward MOOCs, specifically when drawing a comparison between two different contexts, mainly Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In other words, addressing the gap via conducting a thorough investigation employing a cross-cultural lens representing a comparative analysis of the participants' attitudes in the two different contexts remains scarce in the available literature.

3. Method

In pursuit of assessing the EFL majors' attitudes towards learning via MOOCs, it is of key importance to employ a research philosophy. The present research adopted the pragmatism paradigm due to its suitability for achieving the research objectives. More importantly, the pragmatism philosophy as a holistic paradigm enables flexibility and practicality and ensures incorporating both the theoretical aspects as well as the practical ones. Ontologically, the dynamic nature of interaction reveals the criticality of understanding the factors and formulating the EFL majors' attitudes towards using MOOCs in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia as a measurable construct. In light of the pragmatism paradigm, both the quantitative data with the qualitative ones were combined to gain a comprehensive understanding of the EFL majors' attitudes towards distance learning. In other words, the present research employed the mixed method to foster comprehensive in-depth exploration of the multifarious intricate aspects of the phenomenon under examination: meticulously, capturing and comprehensively assessing both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the EFL learners' attitudes towards utilizing the MOOCS in the teaching-learning process. Methodologically, the exploratory sequential design was incorporated to attain the objectives of the present research. From a quantitative perspective, the research adopted the descriptive survey method to uncover the EFL learners' attitudes towards using the MOOCs in the teaching-learning process using Likert five-point scale; on the other hand, from a qualitative perspective, the phenomenological method was employed using semi-structured interviews with the participants to explore the EFL learners' attitudes towards using MOOCs as the combination of quantitative and qualitative data might yield valid and robust outcomes.

Quantitively, the participants of the present study were selected totalling 218 EFL majors from the English Branch in both countries. To elaborate further, 114 EFL majors were assigned from the English Branch at the Faculty of Education for Boys in Cairo, Al-Azhar University in Egypt; 104 EFL majors were selected from the branch of English, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. The participants in both contexts were selected randomly using the SPSS random distribution formula as randomization ensures the credibility and generalizability of the findings to a wider population. Qualitatively, making use of the convenience sampling technique, 10 EFL majors (five Egyptian & five Saudi) were selected purposively from those who responded to the questionnaire.

Pursuing ethical conduct, the participants' informed consents were attained before being involved in the study. The study objectives and procedures were thoroughly explained to the study participants; furthermore, they were informed that their participation was voluntary. The participants' responses, on the other hand, to the questionnaire and the interviews were treated confidentially, ensuring the participants' anonymity.

1. The attitude questionnaire

The ultimate purpose of the Likert five-point attitude questionnaire toward MOOCs is to explore the EFL majors' attitudes both in Egypt and Saudi Arabia towards distance learning via MOOCs. The items of the questionnaire were developed and integrated based on thoroughly reviewing the relevant literature and studies related to the learners' attitudes towards distance learning in similar contexts and the level of

participants' maturation (Marjerison, et al., 2020). The primary form of the questionnaire consisted of (45 items), and it was reviewed and refined considering relevancy, appropriacy, clarity, and cultural familiarity until reached thirty items. The questionnaire was electronically administered using the Google Forms platform for both the Egyptian and Saudi participants. The participants were requested to respond to the items (strongly agree – agree – neutral – disagree – strongly disagree).

The validity of the questionnaire was assured using the content validity (ensuring that the questionnaire assesses the phenomenon under investigation) via submitting the questionnaire to a jury of specialists and experts in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to judge the items' relevancy, appropriacy, clarity and cultural familiarity of the participants. The jury members requested a plethora of modifications to attain the questionnaire's ultimate aim which was accomplished by both researchers. Another noteworthy point, Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the reliability of the questionnaire as the results of the reliability coefficient revealed 0,78 indicating that the questionnaire is highly reliable and ready for administration (see appendix: A).

2. The semi-structured interview

The definitive aim of the semi-structured interview is to serve as a complementary instrument to explore the EFL majors' attitudes in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia towards distance learning via MOOCs. While the questionnaire developed rich quantitative data, the semi-structured interview provided qualitative data. The semi-structured interviews aimed to delve deeper to explore the participants' subjective experiences, opinions, and emotional reactions concerning using MOOCs in the teaching-learning process.

The development of the interview protocol to form insights concerning the phenomenon under investigation necessitates reviewing a wealth of literature (Creswell, & Báez, 2020; Creswell, & Clark, 2004; Creswell, & Miller, 2000; Gugiu, & Rodríguez-Campos, 2007). Another point to be considered, experienced researchers and experts in the field of distance learning were consulted; their feedback was invaluable and assisted in fine-tuning the interview questions. Furthermore, pilot interviews were conducted with a subset of the study participants to test the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions. The interview encompassed mainly several open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives.

The interviews were conducted individually with each participant and the responses were recorded to ensure thoroughness of the yielded results after attaining the consent of the participants. The recorded interviews were listened to carefully, and transcribed verbatim by both researchers. They were subjected to a series of qualitative analyses to uncover the Egyptian and Saudi EFL majors' attitudes towards distance learning via MOOCs. To ensure the credibility of the results, criterion-related validity was established as the qualitative results attained from the questionnaire were compared and triangulated with the quantitative questionnaire results. On the other hand, to ensure the dependability of the attained results of qualitative findings, inter-rater reliability was employed as the transcripts of the interviews were independently coded and analysed interchangeably by both researchers separately.

Procedurally, both researchers reviewed the ethical considerations and ensured the anonymity of the participants. The participants in both contexts were randomly selected using the same selection technique: SPSS, random distribution formula. After attaining the informed consent, the Likert five-point questionnaire was administered to both samples to assess their attitudes towards using MOOCS as a form of distance learning quantitatively. After completing the questionnaire, five participants in each context, who willingly wanted to partake in the other side of the research, were interviewed by the researchers to attain qualitative data. The quantitative data collected via the questionnaire were separately analyzed by the researchers using suitable statistical techniques. The quantitative analysis was followed by the qualitative one of the data obtained from the interviews. The audit trail technique was used to ensure the credibility of the data attained, and once the analysis was completed, both researchers collaborated online to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the findings attained; the data were compiled, and the findings were discussed in light of the study objectives and questions. Recommendations and suggestions for further research were developed.

4. Results and Discussion

The present research purports to investigate the EFL learners' attitude towards distance learning via MOOCs in two unique distinct environments, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, shedding light on the factors formulating such attitudes.

Questionnaire Results

Consequently, the first research question "What are the attitudes of EFL majors in Egypt and Saudi Arabia towards learning English through MOOCs?" was tackled. Due to the nature of the research question and the purpose of the research, the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed. The participants' responses were statistically analyzed as depicted in the following table (1) as each response was assigned a score to convert qualitative data into quantitative ones for statistical analysis purposes. The scoring was as follows: strongly agree = 5; agree = 4; neutral (somewhat agree) = 3; disagree = 2; strongly disagree = 1. To statistically verify the significance of the targeted phenomena tackled in the research, an evaluative scale was adopted based on the five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree (from 1 to 1.80); disagree (from 1.81 to 2.60); neutral (somewhat agree) (from 2.61 to 3.40); agree (from 3.41 to 4.20); and strongly agree (greater than 4.20).

Table 1. The Participants' Responses to the Attitude Questionnaire

| Items | Egyptian Students | | | | | | | | Saudi Students | | | | | | | |
	SD Total %	D Total %	N Total %	A Total %	SA Total %	Mean	SD	Direction	SD Total %	D Total %	N Total %	A Total %	SA Total %	Mean	SD	Direction
Item 1	12 / 10.5	62 / 54.4	36 / 31.6	4 / 3.5	- / -	2.3	0.70	D	- / -	74 / 71.2	28 / 26.9	2 / 1.9	- / -	2.30	0.50	D
Item 2	18 / 15.8	57 / 50.0	33 / 28.9	6 / 5.3	- / -	2.2	0.78	D	- / -	71 / 68.3	27 / 26.0	6 / 5.8	- / -	2.37	0.59	D
Item 3	9 / 7.9	66 / 57.9	39 / 34.2	- / -	- / -	2.3	0.60	D	- / -	76 / 73.1	28 / 26.9	- / -	- / -	2.26	0.44	D
Item 4	13 / 11.4	53 / 46.5	48 / 42.1	- / -	- / -	2.3	0.67	D	- / -	69 / 66.3	35 / 33.7	- / -	- / -	2.33	0.47	D
Item 5	13 / 11.4	44 / 38.6	57 / 50.0	- / -	- / -	2.4	0.68	D	- / -	63 / 60.6	41 / 39.4	- / -	- / -	2.39	0.49	D
Item 6	5 / 4.4	52 / 45.6	57 / 50.0	- / -	- / -	2.5	0.58	D	- / -	65 / 62.5	39 / 37.5	- / -	- / -	2.37	0.48	D
Item 7	28 / 24.6	59 / 51.8	27 / 23.7	- / -	- / -	2.0	0.70	D	- / -	- / -	104 / 100.0	- / -	- / -	3.00	0.00	N
Item 8	32 / 28.1	79 / 69.3	3 / 2.6	- / -	- / -	1.7	0.49	SD	- / -	- / -	104 / 100.0	- / -	- / -	3.00	0.00	N
Item 9	10 / 8.8	87 / 76.3	15 / 13.2	2 / 1.8	- / -	2.1	0.53	D	- / -	90 / 86.5	12 / 11.5	2 / 1.9	- / -	2.15	0.41	D
Item 10	72 / 63.2	42 / 36.8	- / -	- / -	- / -	2.4	0.48	D	- / -	75 / 72.1	29 / 27.9	- / -	- / -	2.27	0.45	D
Item 11	32 / 28.1	74 / 41.2	33 / 28.9	2 / 1.8	- / -	2.0	0.80	D	- / -	73 / 70.2	29 / 27.9	2 / 1.9	- / -	2.31	0.50	D
Item 12	38 / 33.3	52 / 45.6	24 / 21.1	- / -	- / -	1.9	0.73	D	- / -	78 / 75.0	26 / 25.0	- / -	- / -	2.25	0.43	D
Item 13	11 / 9.6	68 / 59.6	30 / 26.3	5 / 4.4	- / -	2.3	0.69	D	- / -	79 / 76.0	22 / 21.2	3 / 2.9	- / -	2.26	.50	D
Item 14	23 / 20.2	66 / 57.9	24 / 21.1	1 / 0.9	- / -	2.0	0.67	D	- / -	80 / 76.9	23 / 22.1	1 / 1.0	- / -	2.24	0.45	D
Item 15	32 / 28.1	61 / 53.5	21 / 18.4	- / -	- / -	2.1	1.01	D	- / -	80 / 76.9	9 / 8.7	15 / 14.4	- / -	2.37	0.72	D
Item 16	34 / 29.8	59 / 51.8	21 / 18.4	- / -	- / -	1.9	0.69	D	- / -	79 / 76.0	25 / 24.0	- / -	- / -	2.24	0.42	D
Item 17	23 / 20.2	49 / 43.0	36 / 31.6	6 / 5.3	- / -	2.2	0.83	D	- / -	70 / 67.3	29 / 27.9	5 / 4.8	- / -	2.37	0.57	D
Item 18	25 / 21.9	58 / 50.9	30 / 26.3	1 / 0.9	- / -	2.1	0.72	D	- / -	77 / 74.0	26 / 25.0	1 / 1.0	- / -	2.26	0.46	D
Item	36	49	24	5	-	2.0	0.84	D	-	75	26	3	-	2.30	0.52	D

Items	Egyptian Students								Saudi Students							
	SD Total %	D Total %	N Total %	A Total %	SA Total %	Mean	SD	Direction	SD Total %	D Total %	N Total %	A Total %	SA Total %	Mean	SD	Direction
19	31.6	43.0	21.1	4.4	-				-	72.1	25.0	2.9	-			
Item	43	57	6	8	-				-	85	14	5	-			
20	37.7	50.0	5.2	7.0	-	1.81	0.83	D	-	81.7	13.5	4.8	-	2.23	0.52	D
Item	12	45	57	-	-				-	62	42	-	-			
21	10.5	39.5	50.0	-	-	2.4	0.67	D	-	59.6	40.4	-	-	2.40	0.49	D
Item	15	77	18	4	-				-	85	17	2	-			
22	13.2	67.5	15.8	3.5	-	2.1	0.65	D	-	81.7	16.3	1.9	-	2.20	0.44	D
Item	37	40	33	4	-				-	69	33	2	-			
23	32.5	35.1	28.9	3.5	-	2.0	0.87	D	-	66.3	31.7	1.9	-	2.35	0.51	D
Item	28	59	21	6	-				3	76	5	14	6			
24	24.6	51.8	18.4	5.3	-	2.3	1.18	D	2.9	73.1	4.8	13.5	5.8	2.46	0.96	D
Item	20	67	27	-	-				2	78	24	-	-			
25	17.5	58.8	23.7	-	-	2.1	0.64	D	1.9	75.0	23.1	-	-	2.21	0.45	D
Item	13	65	36	-	-				1	71	32	-	-			
26	11.4	57.0	31.6	-	-	2.2	0.63	D	1.0	68.3	30.8	-	-	2.29	0.48	D
Item	43	63	8	-	-				3	88	7	6	-			
27	37.7	55.3	7.0	-	-	1.76	0.78	SD	2.9	84.6	6.7	5.8	-	2.15	0.55	D
Item	66	40	8	-	-				15	73	9	7	-			
28	57.9	35.1	7.0	-	-	1.6	0.82	SD	14.4	70.2	8.7	6.7	-	2.07	0.70	D
Item	21	32	57	4	-				5	47	49	3	-			
29	18.4	28.1	50.0	3.5	-	2.4	0.83	D	4.8	45.2	47.1	2.9	-	2.48	0.63	D
Item	59	54	1	-	-				-	59	44	1	-			
30	51.7	47.4	0.9	-	-	2.5	0.52	D	-	56.7	42.3	1.0	-	2.44	0.51	D
	Weighted mean = 63.9 = 2.13								Weighted mean = 70.32 = 2.34							

The statistical analysis encapsulated in the above table demonstrated that the weighted mean of the study participants in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia were 2.13 and 2.34, respectively. Such results delineated that such scores fall between 1.81 to 2.60 which means that they have negative attitudes toward using distance learning via MOOCs; Consequently, the first question was thoroughly answered.

Semi-structures interview results

The researchers sought to answer the second research question "What factors do EFL majors in Egypt and Saudi Arabia perceive as influential in shaping their attitudes towards learning English through MOOCs?" Semi-structured interviews were employed to gather the participants' responses regarding the factors reshaping their attitudes toward MOOCs. The recorded data were systematically processed using Creswell and Clark's (2017) model of qualitative data analysis and the following themes were finally developed after a lengthy process of securitization, modification, and grouping.

1) Lack of technological proficiency

Encountering navigational difficulties when trying to make use of the platforms, and lacking technical proficiency are among the many difficulties reported by the students. Such obstacles may hinder the best utilization of the resources available and cause digital distraction which results in frustration and dissatisfaction as well as minimum attainment of learning outcomes. A student reported, "*I spend much time knowing how to submit an assignment. It is too difficult for me.*" Another student stated, "*They are confusing, and I meet a lot of difficult things and many options too difficult.*"

2) Limited language proficiency

It was reported by the students that they face a myriad of difficulties concerning understanding the provided content. The participants

might struggle to grasp the content which undermines their motivation, confidence, and attitudes towards MOOCs. More importantly, the confusion encountered from using different accents and dialects as well as using authentic language containing a plethora of culture-bound expressions might hinder the usage of such environments and thereby affect their attitudes towards using such platforms. A student mentioned, "*They are using a very difficult English language. Sometimes, they use strange expressions that I didn't hear before*." Another student reported, "*the content is very advanced, and I work slowly*."

3) Lack of interactivity and social interaction

The participants in both countries reported a lack of meaningful interaction and peer collaboration which in turn limits their engagement and leads to dissatisfaction with the environment. Such a stimulus demonstrates the significance of the interaction and the social learning which has a considerable impact on the learners' attitudes. A student said, "*I think that I'm alone, and there is no one to ask about the difficult things*." Another student mentioned, "*I wish there were more discussions to help us understand the difficult points*."

4) Unclear learning objectives

Having a degree of uncertainty regarding the feasibility of spending much time in front of MOOCs accompanied by unclear learning outcomes might decrease the students' willingness to participate and decrease their motivation which might be responsible for the negative attitudes expressed. A student commented, "*I don't know why the course teaches many different things different from the title of the course. We waste much time*." Another student reported, "*Usually, I ask myself why I must study these things, and I want someone to tell me how to use them in my life*."

5) Limited feedback

Missing support and feedback from the instructor due to the enormous number of participants might lessen the enthusiasm to participate leading to negative attitudes. Furthermore, the students' doubts concerning accountability entail misjudgement of the progress achieved as well as procrastination and incompletion of the tasks. A student said, "*I wanted to ask the instructor about something in the course, but she did not reply to my email*." Another student said, "*If I write anything in the essay questions, the program accepts it; I think there is something wrong*."

6) Inadequate resources

Having insufficient resources for utilizing the full resources available in the learning platform might negatively affect the participants. Using MOOCs necessitates high-speed devices whether computers or mobile phones which might not be available for some students obliging them to avoid using such environments completely in the teaching-learning process. A student stated, "*Sometimes, I could not follow the videos because the internet is very slow*." Another student reported, "*I hate using the internet in learning because it is extremely terrible*."

7) The suspect credibility

The participants expressed their doubts about the credibility of the certificates granted by the MOOCs and questioned whether such credentials might be acceptable in the job market or not. Such doubts might mitigate their motivation to learn and interact, and they might abandon the usage of MOOCs completely. A student questioned, "*Will the schools accept the courses that I studied on MOOCs as face-to-face courses*." Another student pointed out, "*I do not want certificates from them, they are not very important*."

5. Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations for Further Research

Quantitively, the results presented in Table (1) portrayed that both the Egyptian and Saudi students have negative attitudes towards distance learning via MOOCs. Such elicited results necessitate exploring the factors influencing their attitudes and highlighting the areas of improvement. Qualitatively, the factors affecting the participants' negative attitudes can be summarized in the lack of interactivity and social interaction, the lack of technological proficiency, the limited language proficiency, the limited feedback, the unclear learning objectives, the inadequate resources, and the suspect credibility of the certificates.

The results yielded demand for raising the EFL learners' awareness through workshops, seminars, and orientation sessions about the services provided by the MOOCs as well as removing the misconceptions the learners have about such platforms in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The faculties ought to guide learners to overcome the difficulties encountered whether technical or linguistic to maximize the outcomes targeted. Another item of concern, collaboration between the universities and the MOOCs institutions might be of significant help in providing customized course content and meeting the interests and preferences of learners. Universities, for best utilizing the MOOCs, might reward those who excel in their courses or show proper degrees of participation or accomplishment. Most critically, continual assessment of MOOCs might be essential to monitor the achievement of the learning outcomes, the provision of feedback, and the meeting of students' needs and expectations. Considering the findings attained, several promising domains emerge as pertinent spheres for prospective researchers. Researchers might investigate the impact of some pedagogical approaches on the EFL learners' attitudes toward distance learning via MOOCs as it poses an additional area of appeal. The correlation between the level of language proficiency and engagement level in distance learning with MOOCs constitutes a valuable research area. The idea of exploring the effect of blended learning based on MOOCs versus traditional classrooms in developing the EFL majors' language proficiency presents another area of interest.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

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Appendix (A)

Attitude Questionnaire

N	Items	Response				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
	I believe MOOCs provide a variety of resources for learning the English language.					
	I believe MOOCs provide proper opportunities for practicing language.					
	I deem MOOCs to be a valuable toolkit for language learning.					
	I find learning English through MOOCs an available option.					
	I feel MOOCs can enhance my English language skills.					
	I find learning English through MOOCs a practical option.					
	I appreciate the various English language courses offered by MOOCs.					
	I acknowledge the advantages of self-paced learning in MOOCs.					
	I believe MOOCs support me in gaining additional EFL knowledge and skills.					
	I feel hesitant about using MOOCs for English language learning.					
	I feel satisfied when I complete a step in MOOC-based English courses.					
	I feel motivated to explore MOOCs for different aspects of English language skills.					
	I believe that learning English through MOOCs is a means of self-improvement.					
	I feel enthusiastic about using MOOCs to learn English.					
	I perceive that MOOCs facilitate interactive learning experiences.					
	I feel motivated when using MOOCs to learn English.					
	I feel anxious about the effectiveness of MOOCs in teaching English.					
	I feel excited about learning English through MOOCs.					
	I am driven to use MOOCs for learning English.					
	I regularly schedule specific times for studying with MOOCs.					
	I enthusiastically engage in peer discussions within MOOCs.					
	I actively participate in collaborative projects within MOOCs.					
	I actively look up extra resources within MOOCs for more practice.					
	I seek help from instructors when needed while using MOOCs.					
	I partake in online communities related to MOOC-based English courses.					
	I set proactive goals for my development in MOOC-based English courses.					
	I recommend MOOCs to those who want to develop their English language skills.					
	I always complete MOOC-based English courses within the defined timeframes.					
	I participate in discussion forums linked to MOOC-based English courses.					
	I find MOOCs a proper way to adjust my English learning to my timeframe.					