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# US online learning groups seek to push borders

By April Dembosky in San Francisco

America's fast-growing online education networks are racing to win business in the global market as growing international demand produces copycats in other countries.

Udemy, the latest online learning company to expand overseas, says it is launching its site in nine languages to meet the needs of thousands of users who want to take courses in their native tongues. Half of its 1m students are now outside the US.

"We always saw this as a global problem," said Eren Bali, co-founder and chief executive. "You can't expect the whole world to translate an American education. It's like asking all people to read a translation of American newspapers everyday."

Foreign students have been flocking to these "massive open online courses", known as Moocs. They are drawn by the brand names of elite American universities such as Stanford, MIT and Harvard, whose professors began uploading their academic courses for free on Coursera, Udacity, and edX two years ago. Several start-ups outside the US have jumped on the bandwagon, including iversity in Germany, Schoo in Japan, and Veduca in Brazil.

Udemy's expansion into Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese and other languages follows similar efforts by Coursera, which raised \$43m last month to support its own plan to move into the developing world.

Mr Bali said that in most countries people want to learn specific skills that help them get a job that pays \$10 per hour. Half of the courses on Udemy focus on technology skills – the most popular is a tutorial on how to use Microsoft Excel.

Udemy is also a for-profit marketplace, unlike the others, which are either non-profit or less focused on developing a business model. It allows instructors to charge for their courses, with the site taking a 30 per cent cut of all purchases.

"It's the democratisation of teaching," said Russ Fradin, an Udemy investor. "Not all the greatest professors in every area of study happen to work at Stanford. There are many amazing people around the world."

Fernando Rodriguez teaches iOS programming in Madrid, showing students how to develop their own iPhone or iPad app. After prospective students complained that they could not get to Madrid for the course, he produced an online version in Spanish and

posted it on Udemy for \$399. In less than two months, he has earned \$32,000 from downloads throughout Spain and Latin America.

He said Udemy's move to translate its site into other languages was necessary to attract more teachers to post courses in other languages and to provide the framework so students can find them.

"In non-English speaking countries, there are many, many developers who have very poor English," he said. "Having the whole platform in your language is a big, big plus."

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