

The Enlightenment of MOOC for the College English Teaching in China

ZHENG Xinyi^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Foreign Language, China West Normal University, Nanchong, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The rising tide of MOOC is causing an unprecedented revolution in the area of higher education. The great change has a huge impact on the higher education in China, especially in English teaching. This paper describes the background of MOOC, compares the development of MOOC at home and abroad, reveals the problems in college English teaching in China, then give the enlightenment of MOOC for the teaching of English in ordinary college in China.

Key words: MOOC; College; English teaching

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INTRODUCTION

In the background of the big data era, Massive Open Online Course, “MOOC” for short, emerge as the times require. In 2012, MOOC swept the world in the way of “digital tsunami”, which caused wide attention in the world. New York Times called 2012 as the first year of MOOC. In Britain a report entitled “an avalanche is coming” which pointed out that an unprecedented revolution taking place in the world in the field of higher education, the main driving force is the rise of online university. The rise time of MOOC is brief, but its development speed is unusually amazing, about 6 million

participants involved in this course throughout the world over 220 countries.

To face such an avid MOOC wave, people’s view about MOOC is different. Sir Michael, former prime minister advisor, said, he would be very surprised if there are no several universities closed within a decade years in Britain. Georgia Institute of Technology President, George P. Peterson, considers that MOOC indicates the possibility of disruptive changes in the educational field. East China Normal University MOOC center director, professor Chen Yukun, think, MOOC brings a hyperspace change. He used to call MOOC as one of the biggest revolution after class-based teaching system, because it not only makes education beyond the boundaries of time and space, but also it makes the advantage of educational resources sharing in global. Some supporters even considered that in the near future, the traditional university will not exist. The critics believe that MOOC has no development meaning because it can not be divorced from the traditional classroom mode. American billionaire, Moon Express company founder, Naveen Jane, think, MOOC is not the breakthrough of education system. It is more like the previous version of educational television that put the teacher in the center place. The drawbacks of the traditional teaching still exist. Most people on the sidelines of MOOC. I insist that in the face of current MOOC craze, we should not blindly follow the trend, but be objective and rational to MOOC, explore the sustainable development of MOOC.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOOC AT HOME AND ABROAD

From 2008, whether in Europe or Asia, Latin America or Oceania, many colleges and universities in these countries began to launch company and curriculum that have the characteristics of MOOC. MOOC blossoms everywhere (Jiang & Wang, 2014). UK’s famous Open University

launched their own MOOC—Futurelearn. Germany launched “Iversity”. By the end of 2013, the registered students of “story of the future” lesson have more than 8 million people who becomes the largest number of students in registered course in Europe. European Union has launched an online education platform that transcends national and ethnic groups - OpenUpEd. In October 2013, French government launched the France Université Numérique (FUN), plans to develop their own MOOC. In Asia, there is “Edukart” in India; Japan has “Schoo”. And East China Normal University professor Chen Yukun said: “MOOC’s development in China is in 2013 with Shanghai Jiao Tong University was the first to join the world’s largest MOOC platform as a symbol.” Subsequently, Tsinghua University, Beijing University, Fudan University and other well-known universities signed a cooperation agreement with MOOC platform. China’s First MOOC platform led by university—“online school” started in October. A number of social education institutions have established their own online education programs. Sina, Netease, Sohu have opened their own online education institutions. Some people even called 2013 as the Chinese first year of MOOC (Guo, 2014). Now, there are more and more universities as well as network education companies, network technology companies actively invest in the construction of the MOOC. The development of the MOOC is extremely rapid, and is still growing.

However, after such an upsurge, MOOC also suffered a challenge. In the international, MOOC has entered a relatively calm period in 2013 after experienced the rapid development in 2012. Waters Audrey, proposed Anti- MOOC in 2013. However, surprisingly, one of the founders of the famous MOOC movement, George Simon, a Canadian scholar of Athabasca University even said: “If the 2012 is the first year of the MOOC, then 2013 will be reversed MOOC.” Why did Simon George’s opinion suddenly change? In fact, Simon George is the famous initiator of the Unicom. He pointed out that the study is not only a person’s activities, but the process of connecting specialized nodes and a source of information. He insisted that technology has restructured our life and learning style. Regular education is no longer the subject of our study, and informal learning becomes the important part of our study. George Simon seems that MOOC has been away from Unicom teaching philosophy, and did not reflect open, connected concepts. In this regard, he is very unsatisfied, thereby proposing the idea of “Flipped MOOC”. He believes that a large number of online courses in the name of the subject of MOOC, still in a very traditional way of teaching. The Anti-MOOC is that the class can return to the pattern of Unicom, any excessive reading is inappropriate (Chen & Lin, 2014). These scholars have a cool attitude towards MOOC, and they criticize and reflect it. This rational reflection is the need for further development of MOOC. In contrast, the voice of China is relatively less, because we still didn’t

cognitive the essence of MOOC, or we need a longer period of time to explore the localization development of MOOC (Chen, 2014)

2. THE PROBLEMS IN UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEACHING IN CHINA

2.1 Teachers Pay Attention to Language Knowledge, Neglect Language Ability

China’s college teachers in English teaching, excessively emphasizing knowledge imparting, emphasis the explanation of the basic knowledge of language, neglect students’ English application ability, communicative language ability, learning ability, language art aesthetic and noble sentiments of the culture. Also they neglect the combination of English and other subjects. Then students only have professional knowledge by intensive training and narrow professional concept in their subject. With this teaching model, students accept knowledge in passive way, do not want to explore new knowledge by themselves. Under this circumstance, students are not well competent future work. Moreover, the university English teaching utilitarian obvious. As a measure of the level of an university, CET4 or CET6 is an important indicator. It has become a baton of English Teaching over the years. A lot of units use CET4 or CET6 as their standard of hiring employees. And many schools connect degree certificate with CET4 certificate. All these things caused great pressure in the majority of teachers and students. The phenomenon of examination oriented education in College English teaching is quite serious. The teachers teach for exams and students learn for exams. In the classroom teaching, teachers neglect the teaching activity and content that are not directly effect to the examination. And students do not want to speak, but more willing to take notes. Students usually concern the results of the exam. What’s more, students mistakenly believe that as long as they remember some words, and more familiar with grammar rules, they will learn English well. And they think that the main purpose of College English learning is passed CET4 and CET6. Obviously, the students developed under the language teaching method are not popular in the world.

2.2 Teacher-Centered

In the course of teaching, teacher or student-centered bring very different teaching process and results. Our current principal teaching activities are still teacher-centered. Teachers based on student knowledge independently design teaching objectives, manipulated the whole teaching activities. Teachers have an absolute advantage in the distribution of teaching time. Teacher is the absolute authority in teaching and they judge the right or wrong in learning. Most university teachers are accustomed to the use of expository method to carry out

teaching. Most teachers believe that teaching methods can impart a lot of knowledge in limited time. This avoids wasting time may be caused by other teaching methods, and easy to grasp the progress, the classroom. Thus, for teachers, teaching method beneficial to complete the task of teaching, receive immediate good results. For students, this approach eliminates the reflection of teachers' question, the trouble to speak. They regarded this method as an enjoyment.

2.3 Teacher's Lack of Teaching Ability

In college English teaching, the teaching method is obsolete and the efficiency of teaching is low. Teachers are still teaching language knowledge on textbook as the main method. They explain the new words, grammar, syntax in the text. Language knowledge is an important task, but not and should not be the ultimate goal of language teaching. It should not only allow students to gain knowledge, but also let students use this knowledge. Chinese current English teaching has some achievements, including college students of science and engineering students' English levels are improving, many students can pass CET4 and CET6, a growing number of students in the practical application of English ability has greatly improved over the past, but after all this is still a very small proportion of students. In addition, the network developed in the information age, students have understood various types of knowledge no longer confined in textbooks but from network platform. The teacher's lectures are often unable to meet the needs of students. And the interaction between students and teachers can only take the form of questions and answers in class because of limited time and heavy task. So teachers rarely give time for students to discuss in class which result students get the opinions directly by teachers, students do not have time to seriously consider or derive conclusions. The reason, I believe it is due to teachers hadn't implemented new teaching theories and ideas in the actual teaching, did not create a good opportunity for the students' English comprehensive application training. On current form of college English teaching organization, the main focus is the large class to teach, varying degrees of the students sitting in the same classroom with the same textbook, this approach is easy to over-emphasize the teaching of knowledge on the principles and objectives of the establishment of teaching, attention to test scores, lack of training of students' abilities.

3. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF MOOC FOR UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEACHING IN CHINA

MOOC is big data, big school, innovative and comprehensive completely open class. It should be said that the soul of the MOOC is its philosophy, is its university spirit, is its big data era dare to face a major

challenge in social transformation (Sang, Xie, & Yang, 2014). People have different views about MOOC's development prospects and influence, but one thing for sure is that MOOC transmit high-quality, open, innovation, independent spirit (Ren, 2013). Big Data, MOOC and foreign language teaching, giving a strong sense of the times. From the beginning to the rise, the real promoter is big data to make MOOC as the product of the times growing vigorously. In the development of the world, big data is a trend, MOOC is a hot spot, and foreign language is an essential tool for people to pursue the connection of international standard (Chen, 2015). The arrival of MOOC can bring the reform of basic English education in China.

3.1 Combine MOOC and Traditional Classroom Closely

MOOC, the massive open online courses, has clear teaching goal, concentrated knowledge and strong interest, but it cannot completely subvert traditional class, cannot take the place of the teacher in inspiration and guidance, only as a supplement to traditional class. MOOC have the advantage of distance education, and traditional classroom compensates MOOC which unable to have face to face communication and practice. It is one of the sustainable development ways to combine MOOC and traditional classroom. There are two main ways to combine MOOC and traditional classroom: one is that make MOOC as curriculum resources to use it, and try to introduce, supply, display and support the traditional classroom. In the college English teaching classroom, it can enhance the curriculum interest, enrich the classroom teaching form. Second is that make MOOC as the students' own learning curriculum resources. Let the students study independently, or in groups to discuss, so that MOOC can help traditional classroom teaching. Integrating MOOC and traditional class, it can generate online learning and student's own face-to-face interaction. Students use this platform which provided virtual communities for learners of the same interest, form a study group, arrange exchange of online learning and face-to-face interaction. At the same time, it also can generate online learning and local teachers face-to-face interaction, cooperate with many excellent teachers, connect online teaching and local classroom. Teachers guide their students, discuss with them in local classroom to make them preview or consolidate the knowledge. All these things require teachers to spare no effort in teaching design, to explore the course related to MOOC resources. Then based on the basis of MOOC, combine MOOC with traditional classroom.

3.2 Change the Role of the Teacher and Student, Truly Taking Students In Center

In the teaching of English in universities, it is not wise to take textbook as the blueprint. It needs us to know more about students interests, what benefit to students, what

are the present fashionable subjects. In the past teaching reform, “change the roles of teachers and students” is a stereotyped topic. However, after numerous calls, the reform failed to change the roles. Reform can not attempt an effective solution for this situation. Under the traditional mode, university education is dominated by the teacher, focusing on the teaching. Teacher has always been the source of professional knowledge, the initiator of course, the control of study. In the current university teaching situation, teachers have pressure in academic research, even some teachers take the academic research as the center of their work. So how to cultivate students in this teaching atmosphere?

MOOC focus on the creation of teaching environment, which is the innovation of the whole education process from the curriculum design to the teaching evaluation. Teachers guide and service students. On the platform of MOOC, the learning center is turned from teachers to students. Students no longer passively receive knowledge, but participate in the construction process of knowledge actively. Students can select what he is interested in the course through MOOC platform and be responsible for their own learning. Students are the consumers, builders, participants of courses which promote diversification and individuality of English teaching. At the same time, MOOC change the evaluation methods of education with the support of big data, teaching organizer can evaluate and guide each learner’s learning behavior, learning process and learning performance. Teachers’ role change from “teacher” to “tutor”, then a new relationship between teachers and students emerges.

3.3 Strengthen the Construction of Teachers Staff

Facing this new teaching mode, teachers in common universities in China must face certain impact and challenges. Teachers should deal with the opportunity and challenge initiatives, adapt the teacher’s role, renewal education idea, out of the traditional teaching mode, explore the teaching method MOOC era.

First, improve the teaching ability of college teachers when we face such a challenge. We should not only reflect the practical application effect of computer technology, but also seriously consider the teaching ability of the teachers. A course which is loved by students is the embodiment of teacher’s comprehensive knowledge level. When learn from MOOC, we should pay attention to the teacher’s knowledge structure and professional spirits. Second, improve the teachers’ ability of spread knowledge. In addition to the teachers’ wealth of knowledge, it also needs teachers to take effective methods to spread knowledge. In the process of spreading, we need to take the students’ cognition structure into consideration, and then give the students a gradual way to

acquire knowledge. Also the interaction between teachers and students is required. The College English classroom is not the teacher lowers the head to the computer screen, and regardless of the student. In the College English class, take MOOC into traditional classroom can not only make it become vivid, but also strengthen the interaction between the teachers and students. Through the problem of the interaction, the students can give the feedback to the teacher in time. Third, improve teachers’ ability of creation. Some teachers have been actively involved in the MOOC construction said that join MOOC is affected by the sense of crisis instead of passion. MOOC has led to fierce competition among countries, schools and teachers. In the case of teachers, learning and spreading knowledge is not enough, we should have the ability of innovating knowledge. It can be predicted that when MOOC developed to a certain stage, traditional teaching mode will be no longer popular. The competition will be focussing on new teaching content which is the inevitable law of the development and advancement of science and technology.

CONCLUSION

Under the background of big data, MOOC has its own benefits in teaching. But it can’t take place of the traditional classroom. So we should take advantage of its benefits, make it help our traditional classroom. The Enlightenment of MOOC for university English teaching in China is that we should combine MOOC and traditional classroom closely, change the role of the teacher and student, truly taking students in center, strengthen the construction of teachers staff.

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