Impact of International MOOCs on College English Teaching and Our Countermeasures: Challenge and Opportunity

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***Abstract** –MOOCs are world-wide online courses with the purpose of open visit and massive participation, which is the newly-booming course model in the global educational field. The article firstly introduces the outline of MOOCs in terms of types, theoretical foundations, features in course models and contents, and then analyzes the impacts of MOOCs on Chinese college English teaching including the quality of college English teaching, the contents of college English course, and the assessment system of college English test. In the latter part of the article, the author puts forward effective countermeasures to respond to this new educational situation. They involve the establishment of Flipped English Class under the MOOCs environment, and the adjustment of college English contents and curriculum system to apply MOOCs teaching resources into our English teaching research and English class.*
***Keywords** –Impact, MOOCs, College English teaching, Countermeasures, Challenge*

I. INTRODUCTION

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) is the educational pop term in 2012, attracting active participation from American prestigious universities. According to the network actual circumstances, three MOOCS websites of Udacity, Coursera and edX in America have established 600 courses by November 2013, and these courses cover many languages and include 30 subjects. At present, more than 100 famous educational institutions and millions of learners participate in MOOCs.

The rapid and integrated development of MOOCs is bound to have radical impact on the society. Once the openness of high-quality higher education resources goes beyond campus, covering every corner at home and abroad, individuals, families, enterprises, and governmental agencies can enjoy perfect knowledge, inforrmation and skill training without limit. Undoubtedly, an actual learning society and knowledge society is approaching. [1] Under such educational situation, MOOCs will exert a great influence on college English. Data of 2013 indicates that the platform of Coursera provides 12 language courses, and 91% of them are lectured in English. Here, English acting as the main learning tool has become undisputable reality and college students can enhance their English levels through focusing on some knowledge points.

College English as a single course with the highest proportion in college credits has always been the experimental field for teaching reform. Curriculum Requirements for College English Teaching issued in 2007 formulated to implement College English Teaching Model based on computer and classroom which stimulates students to participate in language learning with multi sense organs and improve their learning efficiency by means of multi-model presentation. Ministry of Education established the specialized project for College English Teaching Reform guiding colleges to implement new teaching model based on computer and classroom with the purpose to advance the deep integration of information technology into college English teaching. The booming of MOOCs will give compelling impetus to the actual progress of college English teaching reform.

II. THE OUTLINE OF MOOCS: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION, COURSE MODEL AND FEATURES

2.1 The MOOCs types and their theoretical foundations

MOOCs include two types, one is cMOOC, and the other is xMOOC. cMOOC is based on Connectivism learning theory. George Siemens, the founder of CCK08, holds that knowledge is connected by network, and learning is a process to connect specialized nodes and information sources. [2] cMOOC attaches much importance to the knowledge creation and generation, which connects instructors and learners together who are distributed over the world through a common topic and theme. Learners build learning network and construct knowledge by means of communication and cooperation. [3] xMOOC is based on Behaviorism learning theory whose core theory is Skinner's operational conditioned response learning [4] which considers knowledge as some particular response combination, regarding that most of human learning is operational learning in which consolidation is the vital measure to form operational conditioned response and teaching is to arrange events to make consolidation in order to promote learning. There are three conditions to render learning efficient; they are: to present learning materials with minor stages and fewer contents, to offer timely feedbacks

to learners' any response; to make learning process by learners themselves. According to different theoretical focuses, specialized course design, learning environment establishment, and learners' behavioral management can be formulated scientifically and reasonably.

2.2 The analysis of MOOCs features in course models and contents

There are huge differences between cMOOC and xMOOC owing to different theoretical foundations. cMOOC belongs to knowledge construction type, focusing on knowledge construction and creation, and stressing creation, autonomy and social network learning. Figure 1 presents the concrete links of this theory. The course is distributed in different places of the network; teachers and students contribute their ideas to the course together; learners enjoy higher autonomy to connect and construct new knowledge through resources sharing and different cognition and multi-perspective interaction.
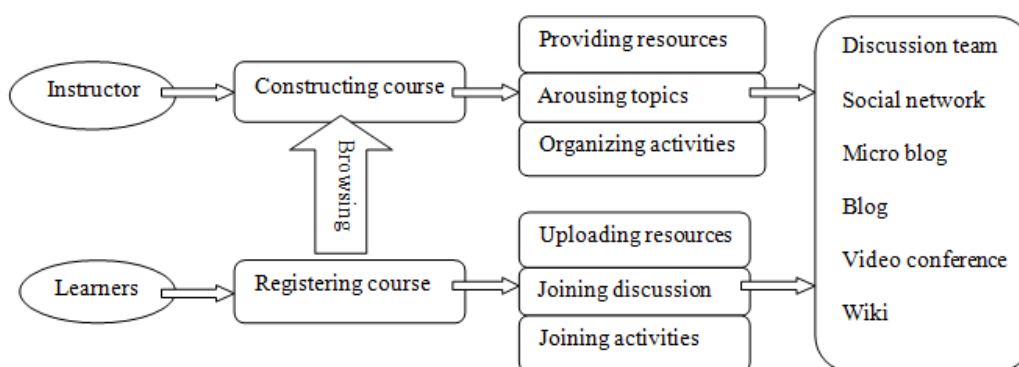

Fig 1: The general course model of cMOOC (referenced from Wang Ping's figure [3]

However, the course model of XMOOC reflects the traditional teaching concept and process, paying more attention to learning contents, knowledge passing on and copying, and meanwhile, emphasizing such learning methods as videos, assignments and tests. Figure 2 reflects that instructors provide and organize contents, encouraging students to finish learning the course completely and linearly. As to most of xMOOCs, they not only involve videos teaching, but also a series of matched teaching methods and process, such as online tests, common sharing, multi-aspect interaction, peer review, and so on.
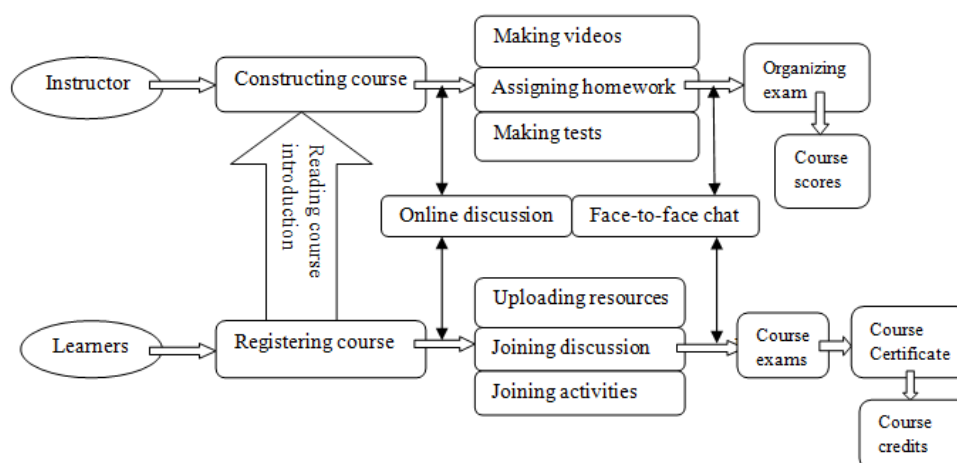

Fig 2: The general course model of xMOOC (also referenced from Wang Ping's figure [3])

In practice, there are also some big differences between these two MOOCs. All cMOOCs belong to single courses organized and taught by instructors themselves without other educational institutions' participation. xMOOCs, on the other hand, are based on platform operation which cooperates with famous universities and commercial organizations operated in commercial form. Nowadays, three major MOOCs adopt xMOOC model whose influences are much greater than cMOOC.

Meanwhile, we can also conclude the following features that MOOCs possess include the time limitation (generally each course will last 2 to 12 weeks, and those who don't register cannot visit the course when it is finished), the regular assignment with timely accomplishment and peer review, the active interaction among various participants, the learners' learning file, the statement of accomplishment for finishing the course and obtaining certain credits. [5] Apart from them, there are three key specialties of MOOCs. They are micro videos, automatic assessment system, and learners' interactive forum. [6]

Coursera, as the most popular MOOCs platform today, has established nearly 600 courses by the end of 2013 which concern 25 categories including art, biology, chemistry, education, social science, statistics, and teacher's education. This platform provides 12 languages and 84.3 percent of them are lectured in English. That is to say, there are 486 English courses which cover 90 humanities courses, 68 social science courses, 67 health & society courses, and 63 biology and life sciences courses. This platform is really a superior course supermarket meeting the requirements of learners to choose various courses. The classification of each course is very concrete, for instance, Computer Science is classified into Artificial Intelligence, Software Engineering, Systems & Security, and Computer Theory. Therefore, learners have adequate space to choose their particular learning field, to choose An Introduction to Public Speaking if you like speech, and to choose English Composition I: Achieving Expertise if you want to improve English writing.

III. MOOCS' INFLUENCE ON CHINESE COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING：CHALLENGES [7]

With the popularity of MOOCs, our college English teaching is confronted with serious challenges. On one hand, a great number of international non-language MOOCs (English as the teaching language) are uploaded to the platform, which equal to all-English specialized course set in some universities. On the other hand, English Council declares that it will cooperate with Future Learn to establish English Language MOOCs to help improve English levels. These courses are based on its abundant support and evaluation for global students and teachers. The first batch of courses is open to the world in 2014. These new English Language MOOCs can make global learners efficient in English communication and receive higher education in English.

3.1 The challenge for the quality of college English teaching

According to the recent survey, more and more Chinese netizens participate in MOOCs learning. 80 percent of them are bachelor's degree or above. But only a small percent (about 6 percent) of them finish learning the whole course. The elements preventing them from fulfilling the course mainly consist in limited time for MOOCs learning, lack of persistence, language barrier, and discrepancy between course contents and anticipations.

MOOCs pose the challenge for the training quality of our higher education talents. Most of the college students after finishing college English course cannot meet the language requirements of MOOCs. Although the Curriculum Requirements of 2007 proposed to improve the students' comprehensive competence in English, our college students cannot be equipped with adequate comprehensive skills in English. Moreover, MOOCs are student-centered courses, posing the direct challenge for Chinese teacher-centered English teaching model. MOOCs construct all-English learning environment, provide classical learning resources, and practice teacher-to-student and student-to-student online interaction in order to enhance teaching quality and establish super English course.

3.2 The challenge for the contents of college English course

Generally, MOOCs are composed of four links; they are micro-videos, designated reading references, forum discussion, and assignments. Language barrier is the vital element to stop students' learning MOOCs, and it can happen in any link. Maybe learners cannot understand videos and reading materials, or they cannot finish their homework.

College English teaching materials are made up by integrated college English and visual-audio-oral course which stress the importance of improving humanity attainment, but neglect the individual learning requirements inclusive of academic English training. Therefore, learners' follow-up development in English is affected. MOOCs are quite different from our curriculum installation. On the platform of Coursera, there have been 486 English courses covering many majors. What's more, MOOCs have free and non-credit courses which pose challenges for those dull, boring and authoritative credit courses.

3.3 The challenge for the assessment system of college English test

Chinese Curriculum Requirements of 2007 proposed that there should be two assessment methods, one is formative assessment, and the other is summative assessment. But, in fact, the quality of formative assessment is not as high as expected owing to the fact that college English is only regarded as public elementary course, and English teachers have to teach the big class with so many students. The summative assessment tends to weigh the passing rate of all the students of the grade. In addition, the main standard that employers judge the students' English proficiency is performance in CET 4 and 6. The students have to spend plenty of time on

preparing for these tests, memorizing vocabulary mechanically, repeating the exercises of reading comprehensions, and practicing standard listening with standard speed and test model. Once these students appear in the real context, they cannot respond to this actual scenario. Furthermore, they are unable to adapt to MOOCs with various speed and teaching styles from famous lectures. Due to deficiency of finance, material resources and manpower, massive oral test cannot be implemented effectively, and, as a result, the training in speaking and listening seems like an armchair strategy.

IV.   MOOCS' INFLUENCE ON CHINESE COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING：COUNTERMEASURES

4.1 The establishment of Flipped English Class under MOOCs environment

At first, English teachers should change their teaching concept and improve English teaching technology attainment, realizing that they are not the authoritative knowledge source. English teachers can no longer take language points explanation as teaching focus, but make preparatory teaching ware to inspire students to finish self-study before English class. In each English class, teachers become guide, organizer, and supervisor; students become role-players, debaters, and most of important of all, the creators. Linguistic competence cannot be equal to memorizing competence and practical skills; it should be the competence combination of creative thinking, cooperative operating, and critical thinking.

The start of education accompanied with knowledge, and when the knowledge is updated, education has to be adapted in good time. College English teachers should admit their deficiencies, complementing their outdated knowledge via logging in Coursera and learning the course of English Composition I: Achieving Expertise with their students together. This equal teaching attitude is the real reflection of the change of teaching concept. We permit and encourage our students to doubt and challenge our opinions and practice, which is the embodiment of educational democracy and common proving. In this information era, there is no knowledge authority. How to apply information technology to obtain knowledge and relevant information and how to rely on task-driven approach to propel students to throw into English learning and practicing have been the priorities of college English teaching reform.

Secondly, English teachers should change their functions from directive teaching to constructive learning service. Flipped English Class is a class to construct deep-leveled knowledge, students being as the leading actors in it. This class highlights the combination of face-to-face learning and online learning, which requires the students pre-study teaching materials online in advance, and put forward questions and carry out discussions in English class. This teaching model can optimize the valuable teaching resources (that is the "time"), to help the poor students to develop learning motivation and narrow differences in leaning progress.

4.2 The adjustment of College English teaching contents and curriculum system

The biggest advantage of MOOCs is to make the famous course made by eminent teachers from prestigious universities open to the whole world freely, and the learners can set their own MOOCs learning process all by themselves. Those college students with spare capacity can learn MOOCs to participate in global network discussion on curriculum contents and exchanging learning experience.

In order to solve the problem of language barrier preventing smooth MOOCs learning, on one hand, we should answer the questions in our English class to help students seek the answers in the process of MOOCs learning. On the other hand, we should make a survey to find the concrete language barrier in their learning, strengthening those language points in class teaching process. Furthermore, English teachers can offer some assessments for students' homework in writing or other subjects to replace the regular peer review.

In recent years, the voices of reforming college English teaching contents are very strong and diverse; some experts argue that teaching contents should be ESP and EAP, while others believe that the contents should be general knowledge to develop student's humanities quality and cross-cultural competence. Different voices are attributable to different circumstances of their universities. It is necessary to establish the combined college English curriculum system of EGP plus ESP. Meanwhile, teachers can conduct survey on MOOCs learning among their college students and adjust English curriculum system in accordance with students' learning requirements.

V.   CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The development of language is rooted in social development; to keep pace with the times is the sensitivity that the language teachers should possess. To keep pace with the social development indicates the reforming of outdated teaching methods. [8] MOOCs, as the brand-new online teaching model, pose great challenges and valuable opportunities to our college English teaching and learning. MOOCs are not to revolutionize the higher education, but to advance the popularity of high-quality teaching resources, educational cost, educational quality and equality. MOOCs will complement and better, but not replace, the higher education institution. To establish Flipped English Class under MOOCs environment and to reconstruct college English

teaching system fully reflect the deep integration of educational information technology into foreign language curriculum in MOOCs era. On reconstructing college English curriculum system, we should remember that MOOCs themselves are massive superior teaching resources and we can introduce them to our teaching practice, enhancing our college English teaching qualities efficiently and rapidly.

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