

Design of a Spanish MOOC Course for Chinese University Students (A1): a case study in the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Lili Wang and María Teresa Cáceres-Lorenzo

Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Our education system faces great challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak; we have been forced to move from classroom teaching to online teaching. In this situation, MOOC courses as an online learning resource have become more important in this pandemic period than before. As a researcher teaching Spanish as a foreign language to Sino-speakers, we pay attention to their learning difficulties at level A1 (Moreno, 2014; González, 2015), such as verb conjugation. In order to develop their communicative competence, this present work aims to design a MOOC course (A1) according to the learning characteristics of Chinese students.

This research contains the following specific objectives:

1. Analyze the problems of the Spanish MOOC courses on the Chinese MOOC platform;
2. Identify the learning characteristics of Chinese students in learning Spanish as a foreign language;
3. Design a Spanish MOOC course (A1) for Chinese university students.

To this end, our research needs to answer the following questions:

- a. Is the development of MOOC course suitable for teaching Spanish to Chinese students?
- b. What are the fundamental learning characteristics of Chinese students? How do we help them improve their communication skills?
- c. How to design a MOOC course for Chinese university students?

For this reason, we used action investigation as the methodology for this study (Elliott, 1990).

The design process of this MOOC course contains the following steps: analyze the problems of Spanish MOOC courses on the platform of *Chinese University MOOC*; investigate the learning characteristics of Chinese students from the perspective of the comparison of Chinese and Spanish languages and cultures; and finally, design a MOOC course A1 for Chinese University students through the use of ICTs, including the title of course, the learning of verb conjugations, contrast of past tense, the creation of activities, exercises, tests, forum, and questionnaire, etc.

We have applied part of the content of this MOOC course to the Spanish online course for Chinese teachers at the Confucius Institute of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, and the results show that students' interest and their participation in online course are getting better and better; especially we have helped them solve the difficulties of verb conjugation. We can evaluate that, our subjects' oral and written communication skills are improving with our MOOC course. Also, we have received good feedback from our students.

In summary, our Spanish MOOC course designed for Chinese university students has achieved initial success; therefore, we can answer the previously established questions: MOOC courses can help Chinese students improve their communication skills; designing a good MOOC course according to their learning characteristics is fundamental. In addition, through our research, we have also observed that China is a big potential market for Spanish MOOC course.

Keywords: MOOC, Spanish as a foreign language, learning characteristics of Chinese students, ICTs, ULPGC.

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