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How do you make MOOCs more accessible to an international audience?

How to overcome the major difficulties encountered by students who take mass online courses in English.

Each MOOC, **Massive Open Online Course**, attracts by definition hundreds of thousands of students from all over the world, each with different backgrounds and goals. A study published in the Online Learning Journal tried to analyse the difficulties of these international students and the strategies implemented by trainers to improve their learning and participation experience.

The research conducted by Thang Pang, an associate professor at the State University of California, did not limit himself to analysing the MOOC statistics, but run empirical interviews to directly ask teachers how to improve the global students' e-learning experience. Three critical areas emerged from the research results: language, use of content and participation.

The language barrier of MOOCs

The first obstacle for international students is the English language. Many of the MOOC members do not have the proper knowledge to use the contents and play the tracks in English. To overcome the language factor, alternative solutions have been found: to have the MOOCs translated by students who already had completed the course or to ask international students to do their "homeworks" in their mother tongue provided that 3 other participants from the same country were willing to correct them.

The content of online courses

The geographical diversity of students also implies a technological gap that does not allow everyone to follow long hours of live course due to lack of IT infrastructures. One of the solutions adopted was the transcription of course content into a sort of online manual accessible to students, as well as using recorded lessons, audio and downloadable Power Points. Another difficulty in terms of content comes from the different preparation of the students. To enable everyone to reach an appropriate level, quizzes were created for the most advanced students and extra materials to reinforce learners with a basic level.

Participation in discussion forums

Previous studies have shown that without an inclusion strategy, participation in MOOC discussion forums is not fair. For this reason, trainers try to emphasize the voices of women and participants from some regions of the world such as the Middle East, Japan and China where silence is most appreciated. In other cases, the challenge in the discussions was to bring together students with opposing positions and to encourage them to interact.

For a greater inclusion of international students, therefore, trainers must pay attention to their needs.

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