



**CHALLENGES IN LEARNING ENGLISH IN MOOC AND SPOC
AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN JIANGXI, CHINA**

By

HUANG QIUYANG

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

September 2024

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September 2024

Chairman : Mohd Mokhtar Muhamad, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

This study aims to explore the learning challenges faced by Chinese university students in English courses using MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) and SPOC (Small Private Online Courses) platforms. Drawing on cognitive and social constructivism theories, as well as Bloom's Taxonomy, it examines how students interact with these platforms and how the embedded support systems influence their English learning experiences. Data collection involved qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, analysis of student assignments, teaching plans, and online forum content. A 14-week case study was conducted at a university in Jiangxi province, China, with thematic analysis identifying key themes. The qualitative approach used was critical in understanding the specific challenges students faced on the platforms. Participants were selected based on purposive sampling to ensure the study focused on students with experience using MOOC or SPOC platforms for their English learning. This approach allowed the study to gather detailed, context-specific insights. The selection process included identifying students from English classes who had been involved in online learning

activities on MOOC or SPOC platforms for at least one semester. This criterion ensured the relevance and depth of their experiences for this study. Data collection techniques involved a combination of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, student assignment analysis, teaching plan reviews, and forum content analysis from the online platforms. Each method was selected to provide a comprehensive view of student experiences and challenges across different learning activities and interactions on the platforms. The researcher acted as the primary instrument for data collection, ensuring the study's objectives were met through rigorous interviews, observations, and data analysis. The research process was further validated by expert reviewers who assessed the interview protocols and observation methods, ensuring their alignment with the study's goals. To increase reliability, the researcher conducted multiple rounds of data review and cross-checked themes with peer debriefing, reinforcing the consistency and accuracy of the findings. Based on the findings, several key challenges were identified, such as language barriers, limited interaction between students and instructors, lack of motivation, and issues with platform design. The study provides practical recommendations, including enhancing interactive learning opportunities, improving the contextualization of learning materials, and developing more effective assessment methods. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of online education in China and offer strategies to improve digital learning environments for English learning. This study also aligns with the global objective of SDG 4 (Quality Education), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, by enhancing the learning experience of university students through MOOC and SPOC platforms.

Keywords: MOOC and SPOC, Challenges, English Learning, University Students

SDG: GOAL 4: Quality Education



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MENJELAJAHI CABARAN YANG DIHADAPI DALAM PEMBELAJARAN
BAHASA INGGERIS MELALUI MOOC DAN SPOC DALAM KALANGAN
PELAJAR UNIVERSITI DI JIANGXI, CHINA**

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka cabaran pembelajaran yang dihadapi oleh pelajar universiti di China dalam kursus Bahasa Inggeris menggunakan platform MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) dan SPOC (Small Private Online Courses). Berdasarkan teori konstruktivisme kognitif dan sosial serta Taksonomi Bloom, kajian ini mengkaji bagaimana pelajar berinteraksi dengan platform ini dan bagaimana sistem sokongan yang disediakan mempengaruhi pengalaman pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris mereka. Pengumpulan data melibatkan kaedah kualitatif, termasuk temu bual mendalam, perbincangan kumpulan fokus, pemerhatian kelas, analisis tugas pelajar, pelan pengajaran, dan kandungan forum dalam talian. Kajian kes selama 14 minggu dijalankan di sebuah universiti di wilayah Jiangxi, China, dengan analisis tematik untuk mengenal pasti tema-tema utama. Pendekatan kualitatif yang digunakan adalah penting untuk memahami cabaran khusus yang dihadapi oleh pelajar di platform ini. Peserta dipilih berdasarkan persampelan bertujuan untuk memastikan kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada pelajar yang mempunyai pengalaman menggunakan

platform MOOC atau SPOC untuk pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris mereka. Pendekatan ini membolehkan kajian mendapatkan pandangan yang terperinci dan spesifik mengikut konteks. Proses pemilihan termasuk mengenal pasti pelajar dari kelas Bahasa Inggeris yang telah terlibat dalam aktiviti pembelajaran dalam talian di platform MOOC atau SPOC sekurang-kurangnya selama satu semester. Kriteria ini memastikan relevansi dan mendalamnya pengalaman mereka untuk kajian ini. Teknik pengumpulan data melibatkan gabungan temu bual mendalam, perbincangan kumpulan fokus, pemerhatian kelas, analisis tugas pelajar, semakan pelan pengajaran, dan analisis kandungan forum dari platform dalam talian. Setiap kaedah dipilih untuk memberikan pandangan yang menyeluruh tentang pengalaman dan cabaran pelajar merentas pelbagai aktiviti pembelajaran dan interaksi di platform tersebut. Penyelidik bertindak sebagai instrumen utama untuk pengumpulan data, memastikan objektif kajian dipenuhi melalui temu bual, pemerhatian, dan analisis data yang teliti. Proses penyelidikan ini disahkan lagi oleh penilai pakar yang menilai protokol temu bual dan kaedah pemerhatian, memastikan keselarasan dengan matlamat kajian. Untuk meningkatkan kebolehpercayaan, penyelidik menjalankan beberapa pusingan semakan data dan semakan silang tema dengan perbincangan rakan sebaya, memperkukuh konsistensi dan ketepatan dapatan. Berdasarkan dapatan, beberapa cabaran utama dikenal pasti, seperti halangan bahasa, interaksi terhad antara pelajar dan pengajar, kekurangan motivasi, serta isu dengan reka bentuk platform. Kajian ini memberikan cadangan praktikal, termasuk meningkatkan peluang pembelajaran interaktif, memperbaiki pengkontekstualan bahan pembelajaran, dan membangunkan kaedah penilaian yang lebih berkesan. Dapatan ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang pendidikan dalam talian di China dan menawarkan strategi untuk memperbaiki persekitaran pembelajaran digital bagi

pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini juga selaras dengan objektif global SDG 4 (Pendidikan Berkualiti), yang bertujuan untuk memastikan pendidikan berkualiti yang inklusif dan saksama serta mempromosikan peluang pembelajaran sepanjang hayat untuk semua, dengan meningkatkan pengalaman pembelajaran pelajar universiti melalui platform MOOC dan SPOC.

Kata Kunci: MOOC dan SPOC, Cabaran, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, Pelajar Universiti

SDG: MATLAMAT 4: Pendidikan Berkualiti



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
CT	Critical Thinking
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
SPOC	Small Private Online Course
Q&A	Question and Answer
RO	Research Objective
RQ	Research Question



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the foundation of the study and provides a summary of the research's significance, purpose, objectives, research questions, and scope. It examines the unique challenges faced by university students in Jiangxi, China, while learning English through MOOC and SPOC platforms. Additionally, the chapter discusses the context of MOOC and SPOC integration in higher education and the evolving landscape of online English language learning within Chinese universities. This chapter highlights key concepts of MOOC and SPOC, explaining their relevance to this study and exploring the current challenges in implementing such platforms in English education.

1.2 Research Background

The rapid development of online education has transformed traditional learning paradigms, with MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and SPOCs (Small Private Online Courses) emerging as prominent platforms in higher education. These online learning formats have significantly reshaped English language education, offering flexible and accessible means of learning. However, despite their widespread use, challenges persist in how effectively MOOCs and SPOCs support students' English learning, particularly in the context of university students in China. This study seeks to explore the difficulties students face when learning English through these platforms, focusing specifically on English classes in Jiangxi Province.

In recent years, MOOCs have gained increasing attention in language learning, especially as global demand for English proficiency has risen. MOOCs provide large-scale, self-paced learning environments, granting students access to extensive resources such as video lectures, quizzes, and discussion forums. However, studies have identified challenges including limited interaction with instructors, lack of peer collaboration, and difficulties maintaining motivation and discipline (Nie, 2020). Conversely, SPOCs cater to smaller groups of students, offering more personalized learning experiences with opportunities for real-time instructor feedback and peer interaction. While SPOCs address some limitations of MOOCs, they also face challenges, particularly in integrating interactive and collaborative activities into English reading courses (Lee, 2021).

In China, national policies advocate the integration of digital learning environments like MOOCs and SPOCs to enhance the quality of English language education (Qiu et al., 2021). Many universities in Jiangxi have adopted these platforms, aligning with the country's educational goal of digital transformation. However, ESL learning on these platforms presents unique challenges. Students must independently manage their learning, engage with digital resources, and build language skills without the immediate feedback and support typical of traditional classrooms. Additionally, students in non-English-speaking regions such as Jiangxi face barriers such as limited language proficiency, reduced motivation, and difficulty adjusting to digital-based learning methods.

The impact of COVID-19 has further complicated the landscape of English language learning through online platforms. During the pandemic, MOOCs and SPOCs became

essential tools for continuing education. While some students thrived in the self-directed learning environments offered by MOOCs, others struggled with the lack of structure and absence of face-to-face interaction (Wang, 2022). SPOCs, though more structured and supportive, also raised concerns about the quality of engagement and the effectiveness of learning experiences during this period (Zhang, 2023). Platforms like Xuetang, Rain Classroom, and Wisdom Tree provided synchronous and asynchronous learning options, yet they revealed distinct challenges for students. The pandemic underscored the need for a deeper understanding of how these platforms can be optimized to support students' learning, particularly in developing English language skills.

English classes, as a key component of language learning, require not only technical comprehension but also critical thinking and engagement with complex texts. This study focuses on investigating the specific challenges faced by university students in Jiangxi when engaging with English materials through MOOC and SPOC. By examining factors such as student motivation, interaction, and the effectiveness of different learning environments, the research aims to provide insights into improving the design and delivery of English courses on these platforms. It seeks to explore how these digital environments affect students' learning experiences and outcomes, offering guidance for enhancing online ESL instruction for non-native English speakers adapting to increasingly digitalized educational settings.

This research is informed by current trends and literature, particularly regarding the challenges and opportunities posed by MOOCs and SPOCs. By identifying and analyzing barriers to effective English instruction, it aims to contribute to the

optimization of online learning platforms, especially in the post-pandemic era, where hybrid and digital models continue to persist.

In summary, by focusing on the challenges of English learning through MOOC and SPOC models, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the barriers students face, contributing to both theoretical refinement and practical advancements in online ESL instruction within Chinese higher education contexts.

1.3 Problem Statement

With the increasing adoption of online learning models such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs), university students are provided with more flexible and autonomous learning opportunities. However, these platforms also pose significant challenges, particularly in the context of English language acquisition. While MOOCs emphasize self-directed learning through pre-recorded lectures and online resources, SPOCs integrate online learning with in-person instruction, offering a blended approach (Li & Che, 2022). Despite their potential, the ability of these platforms to address the diverse and context-specific needs of English learners remains limited.

Research highlights that student in Asian contexts, including China, frequently encounter difficulties adapting to these platforms due to insufficient interaction, lack of motivation, and challenges in managing self-directed learning (Chen et al., 2024). Moreover, Chinese students face unique cultural and educational barriers, such as low self-confidence in language learning, limited access to interactive resources, and difficulty maintaining focus during online lessons (Zhang et al., 2023). Although

MOOCs and SPOCs offer theoretical advantages, studies have shown that their implementation often lacks critical scaffolding, such as personalized feedback, interactive activities, and peer collaboration, which are necessary for effective English language acquisition (Liu et al., 2023; Yuan, 2022).

In Jiangxi Province, China, these challenges are compounded by contextual factors, including regional disparities in educational resources, limited exposure to English, and differences in platform designs and pedagogical practices. Despite the growing body of literature on MOOCs and SPOCs, most research has focused on their general effectiveness without exploring the specific challenges encountered by non-native English-speaking students in provinces like Jiangxi. Furthermore, there is a lack of comparative studies examining the distinct challenges posed by MOOC and SPOC platforms, leaving a critical gap in understanding how these two learning models affect English language learners differently.

This study investigates the challenges experienced by university students in Jiangxi Province as they navigate English language learning through MOOCs and SPOCs, aiming to bridge gaps in both theory and practice. While MOOCs and SPOCs are designed to emphasize learner autonomy and resource openness, they often overlook the influence of cultural and environmental factors on language learning behaviors (Mo,2024). In practice, students in Jiangxi face significant challenges such as language barriers, lack of interaction, and low engagement, which reflect a disconnect between instructional design and its actual application (Liu et al., 2021). Furthermore, most research on online English learning relies on quantitative methods, failing to capture students' subjective experiences and specific challenges (Zhao, 2022). By

employing qualitative methods, this study identifies these barriers and examines their impact on learning outcomes, offering evidence-based recommendations to improve the design and implementation of MOOC and SPOC platforms. The findings aim to enhance theoretical understanding while providing practical insights for educators, policymakers, and platform developers, contributing to the optimization of online English education practices.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research aims to explore and understand the challenges experienced by university students in Jiangxi, China, in learning English through MOOC and SPOC platforms.

- RO1. To identify how students experience learning English through MOOC and SPOC in a university in Jiangxi, China.
- RO2. To explore the challenges that university students in Jiangxi province encounter when learning English through MOOC.
- RO3. To explore the challenges that university students in Jiangxi province face when learning English through SPOC.
- RO4. To compare and analyze the differences in challenges university students experience when learning English through MOOC versus SPOC.

1.5 Research Questions

Four research questions have been posed in response to the study's objectives:

- RQ1. How do students experience learning English through MOOC and SPOC in a university in Jiangxi, China?
- RQ2. What challenges do university students in Jiangxi province encounter when learning English through the MOOC?

RQ3. What challenges do university students in Jiangxi province encounter when learning English through the SPOC?

RQ4. How do the challenges differ for university students in Jiangxi province learning English through MOOC versus SPOC?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value by contributing to various aspects of online English learning through MOOC and SPOC platforms. It not only advances current knowledge on the challenges faced by students in digital learning environments but also adds depth to theoretical frameworks and offers practical insights for improving online language education. The following sections outline the study's contributions to knowledge, theory, and practice, highlighting its potential to inform future research, enhance educational frameworks, and guide the development of effective instructional strategies for online English learning.

1.6.1 Significance to Knowledge

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on online English learning by identifying the unique challenges university students in Jiangxi face when using MOOC and SPOC to enhance their English language skills. These challenges, such as difficulties in self-directed learning, lack of peer interaction, and limited access to interactive language resources, highlight barriers specific to the Chinese context. By addressing these obstacles, the study fills a gap in the literature on online English education in China, where research often focuses on general advantages of online platforms rather than the issues students encounter in adapting to independent language learning structures (Ayçiçek, 2021; Liu et al., 2023).

1.6.2 Significance to Theory

This research advances theoretical understanding by connecting students' learning experiences on MOOC and SPOC platforms to existing theories in online learning and language acquisition. By using constructivist theories, such as cognitive and social constructivism, the study explores how these frameworks apply to language learning in online environments. It considers the role of self-motivation, contextual learning, and social interaction in language acquisition, providing insights into how students engage with language on MOOCs and SPOCs. This theoretical contribution enhances the application of constructivist approaches in language learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1970), particularly for students learning in autonomous online settings where peer interaction and immediate instructor feedback is limited.

1.6.3 Significance to Practice

This study offers practical implications for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance English language education through online platforms. By understanding the challenges students face, educators can design more effective online reading materials and instructional strategies tailored to English learning in MOOC and SPOC. For instance, findings suggest the need for interactive features, such as vocabulary support and comprehension activities, that address the specific obstacles encountered in online language learning. Furthermore, the study's insights can support educational institutions in creating a more supportive environment for online English learning, thus optimizing student engagement and language outcomes. These practical applications contribute to improving online language learning experiences and offer a

foundation for policy adjustments to better integrate MOOCs and SPOCs into traditional curricula.

1.7 Research Scope and Limitation of Study

The scope of the study clearly defines the boundaries and focus of the research, which centers on the challenges faced by university students in Jiangxi Province when learning English through MOOCs and SPOCs. The participants of this study are non-English major undergraduate students aged between 18 and 22 from Jiangxi Province, and their experiences and challenges in learning English serve as the core data for the research. The study specifically examines the impact of MOOCs and SPOCs on students' learning experiences in English, focusing on aspects such as interactivity, motivation, and self-directed learning management. Data collection is limited to a university in Jiangxi Province to ensure regional consistency and context, and the research adopts qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, to provide in-depth insights into the students' learning experiences and challenges. This scope is designed to align with the research objectives while considering the feasibility of resources and time.

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations are acknowledged. Firstly, the sample is limited to students enrolled in English courses at a single public university in Jiangxi. This restricts the generalizability of the findings to other academic disciplines, language courses, or educational settings outside this specific context. Secondly, the relatively small sample size limits the potential for generalizing the findings to a broader population. Thirdly, this study was conducted over a single semester, representing a short-term investigation. This timeframe restricts the study

from capturing long-term challenges that students encounter with MOOC and SPOC platforms, limiting its capacity to assess sustained effects on learning. Fourthly, the study focuses exclusively on MOOC and SPOC platforms, without comparing them to other online or blended learning models. This narrow focus does not fully account for the relative effectiveness of these platforms across different educational contexts. Fifthly, since participants are English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, language barriers could impact their learning experiences on MOOC and SPOC platforms. These challenges complicate the assessment of the overall effectiveness of these platforms for language learning. Consequently, further studies in diverse cultural contexts are needed to validate these findings. These limitations underscore the need for caution when generalizing the results, and they highlight areas for future research to enhance the understanding of online language learning in different educational contexts.

In summary, while this study contributes to a better understanding of the challenges experienced by students learning English through MOOC and SPOC platforms, its findings should be interpreted with these limitations in mind. Future research could address these limitations by expanding sample diversity, employing mixed research methods, and conducting long-term studies to further validate the findings.

1.8 Definition of Terms

This section defines key terms used in the study, including challenges, experiences, English learning, and the specific MOOC and SPOC platforms employed in English learning.

1.8.1 Challenges

In the context of this study, “challenges” refer to the difficulties and obstacles faced by undergraduate students in learning English through MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) and SPOC (Small Private Online Courses) platforms. These challenges encompass a range of issues, including language barriers, lack of motivation, insufficient interaction with instructors and peers, and difficulties in adapting to the online learning environment. The term “challenges” also includes emotional and cognitive barriers that hinder students' ability to effectively engage with the course content and materials. Constitutively, challenges in learning are defined as various factors—both internal and external—that hinder students' ability to fully engage in the learning process, including personal, social, and contextual barriers that negatively affect students' learning experience, engagement, and academic performance (Karumbaiah et al., 2022). Operationally, challenges in this study are identified through qualitative data collected from in-depth student interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and observation, where participants describe their personal experiences with MOOC and SPOC platforms, highlighting specific obstacles they face. These challenges include difficulties with course materials, inadequate interaction with instructors and peers, lack of timely feedback, technical issues, and accessibility of course content, all of which impact students' engagement with the course and their learning outcomes.

1.8.2 Experiences

In this research, “experiences” refer to the subjective perceptions, feelings, and reflections of students as they engage with MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses)

and SPOC (Small Private Online Courses) platforms for English learning. These experiences involve students' personal accounts of the learning process, including their interactions with course materials, instructors, and peers, as well as the challenges and rewards they encounter in an online learning environment. Constitutively, learning experiences are defined as the individual and collective perceptions, emotions, and reflections resulting from students' interactions with educational content, instructors, peers, and the learning environment. These experiences encompass cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions that influence students' engagement, motivation, and overall learning outcomes (Domínguez et al., 2013; Almusharraf & Khahro, 2020; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Khanna et al., 2024). Operationally, in this study, experiences are explored by collecting qualitative data from student interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and observation, where students share their personal narratives about their interactions with the Chaoxing MOOC and SPOC platforms, including their perceptions of course content, engagement with peers and instructors, and the challenges and successes they have encountered. This data is used to assess the overall impact of these platforms on students' English learning experiences.

1.8.3 English Learning

English learning refers to the process through which individuals acquire proficiency in the English language, including the development of skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In an academic context, it involves structured educational activities aimed at enhancing language competency, critical thinking, and communicative abilities, often facilitated through various learning platforms. Constitutively, English learning in this study is defined as a comprehensive process of

acquiring proficiency in the English language, encompassing the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. This learning process is influenced by the challenges, experiences, and outcomes encountered in using MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) and SPOC (Small Private Online Courses) platforms, shaped by the interactive, self-directed nature of these platforms and the ways in which they support or hinder language acquisition (Liu et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2023; Ren, 2024; Alkamel, 2024). Operationally, English learning is examined through the experiences of university students engaging with MOOC and SPOC platforms, which provide a range of learning materials such as academic articles, video lectures, interactive exercises, and language practice tools, designed to improve students' vocabulary, comprehension, speaking, and listening skills. Data is collected through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, text analysis, and participant observations, allowing an exploration of how students interact with course materials and how these interactions influence their language learning process and overall language proficiency.

1.8.4 MOOC

MOOC refers to a course designed for large-scale participation via the internet, offering free and open access to educational resources. These courses are intended to accommodate a vast number of learners, enabling them to study independently while engaging with a variety of educational content, typically designed to enhance learner engagement and improve learning outcomes, with flexible access to materials. Constitutively, MOOCs are defined as online courses that are accessible to a large and diverse audience, characterized by their openness, scalability, and flexibility. They aim to provide widespread access to education by offering free or low-cost courses

that support asynchronous learning, collaboration among participants, and the development of various skills (Anderson, 2013; Terras & Ramsay, 2015; Czerniewicz et al., 2017; Voudoukis & Pagiatakis, 2022). Operationally, in this study, MOOCs are examined through the “Chaoxing MOOC” platform, which offers asynchronous learning opportunities for English courses. The platform allows students to independently engage with curated content, participate in online discussions, and complete assessments for grading. Data on student experiences, engagement, and learning outcomes is collected through focus group discussions, interviews, and analysis of students' interactions with course materials.

1.8.5 SPOC

SPOC refers to a more personalized online learning format designed for smaller groups of students, combining both synchronous and asynchronous elements to create a tailored learning environment. These courses facilitate direct interaction between instructors and students through various digital tools. Constitutively, SPOCs are defined as online courses targeting a limited number of participants, aiming to provide a more personalized and interactive learning experience. Unlike MOOCs, which cater to a massive number of learners, SPOCs emphasize deeper engagement between instructors and students, often utilizing both live sessions and self-paced content to enhance the learning process (Piccioni et al., 2014; Martínez-Muñoz & Pulido, 2015; Guo, 2017; Jiang et al., 2023). Operationally, in this study, SPOCs are explored through the “Chaoxing SPOC” platform, offering a combination of synchronous video conferencing and asynchronous learning materials for English courses. The platform facilitates live interactions between instructors and students, allowing real-time feedback, discussions, and collaborative learning experiences. Data is collected

through student interviews, focus group discussions, text analysis, and observations of live sessions. This mixed-method approach provides insights into how the combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning elements influences student engagement and learning outcomes.

1.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 introduces the research background, offering a brief overview of the key concepts of MOOC, SPOC, challenges, experiences, and affect. The chapter elaborates on the problem statement, highlighting the current research gaps related to the challenges faced by university students learning English in these online environments. Based on the identified problems, the purpose of the research is defined, along with its specific objectives. Research questions are formulated to guide the investigation and facilitate the achievement of these objectives.

The significance of the research is emphasized, focusing on understanding the learning experiences and challenges in MOOC and SPOC contexts. Additionally, the chapter outlines the study's limitations and scope while clarifying essential terminology related to the research. Overall, this chapter lays the groundwork for exploring the multifaceted issues surrounding English language learning in online educational settings.

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