Investigating the English Pedagogical Usage of WeChat Public Platform

A Case Study of Xi'an University*

Liang Chu
Xi'an University
Xi'an, China

Hongru Huang
Xi'an University
Xi'an, China

Abstract—**With the rapid development of science and technology, people has entered the mobile information age. In particular, WeChat is not only the representative of mobile information era but also an important part of people's daily life. Educational informationization has become the requirement of the times in the development of contemporary education. The integration of information technology and teaching provides learners with a more convenient and efficient way of learning. Therefore, micro-class featured by "micro" is gradually becoming the leading trend of the campus. Nowadays, more and more teachers and students try to use these new teaching and learning methods. Under this background, the author has carried out the application and practice of English teaching in the WeChat public platform, taking Xi'an University as an example. By sharing knowledge of English that is close to campus life, the project aims to foster students' interest in English and enhance students' English proficiency. At the same time, this thesis adopts data research method and data contrast analysis method to find that the micro-classroom learning mode based on WeChat platform is welcomed by most English learners.**

Keywords—information age; WeChat public platform; micro-class

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Definition of the Information Age

The information age refers to the trait that individuals in the present age have the ability to transmit information freely and obtain information in real time. With the emergence and popularization of computers, the influence of information on the whole society has gradually increased to an important position. The amount of information, the speed of information transmission and information processing, and the degree of application information are growing in a geometric progression. The development of information technology poses new challenges for people to learn knowledge, master knowledge and apply knowledge. As the application of computer technology and network technology, people's learning speed is speeding up, that is to say, from the digital processing age to the network age, the learning

speed is getting faster and faster. And WeChat public platform is one of the important platforms for transmitting information in the information age.

B. The Definition of English Teaching on the Public Platform — Micro Class

WeChat public platform referred to as the official account. Once named "official platform", "Media platform", WeChat official account, finally positioned as "Public platform". The use of public platform for self-media activities, in short, is to conduct one-to-many media activities. Among them, the public platform service is a kind of the public platform, which is designed to provide service to the user. WeChat official accounts actively push important notices or interesting content to users. Also, WeChat's characteristics include communication, privacy, interaction, services, etc. Moreover, it is the insurmountable red line for WeChat Night Market. The use of WeChat public platform for English teaching is undoubtedly an excellent teaching method, and is also a kind of service for the users' interest. The project is based on the public platform to teach English in the form of "micro class". About the definition of "micro class", in China, the concept of the Micro- class was firstly put forward by Hu Tiesheng, a teacher in Educational Information Network Center of Foshan Educational Bureau in Guangdong province. Hu Tiesheng (2011) defined the micro-lecture as follows: according to the new curriculum standards and teaching practice requirements, micro-class uses videos as the main carrier, reflecting the teachers contrapose a specific knowledge point in a variety of teaching resources combination. While in 2012, he referred that micro-class refers to online video lecture resources which are designed and exploited to form a contextualization multimode learning style aiming at specific knowledge or teaching link (Hu Tiesheng 2012). Hu Tiesheng (2013) defined the concept of micro-class as teaching resources, including classroom teaching videos, some teaching designs related to the topic, courseware materials, practice tests, and other resources. Of course, Kee (1995) believed that students should grasp the key points to deal with the rapid growth of the integration of interdisciplinary subject knowledge. So he proposed one minute speech given by the students. He demanded that the speech must be refined and must have a good structure and logic. It should contain a number of

examples. Kee thought one minute speech can promote the relation between professional knowledge and learning materials. It will avoid the knowledge isolated.(Kee,1995). Therefore, "micro-class" is the characteristics of short time learning, fine harvest, great flexibility, and contents with current situations, which is better for learning English and teaching English. Thus, the study is a perfect combination of learning English and the form of "micro class", which greatly improves the efficiency of users' access to information.

II. STATUS OF LEARNING USING THE WECHAT PUBLIC PLATFORM

A. Scale of Users

According to Tencent's Penguin Smart Kul released the latest "2017 WeChat Household & Ecological Research report," the report data shows that by December 2016, WeChat had 889 million live users worldwide, while the new public platform had 10 million. From the application of WeChat official account perspective, the main purpose of the user's attention to official account is to obtain information of 41.1%, followed by the convenience of 36.9% and the learning of 13.7%. From the professional perspective, corporate staff, freelancers, students. The four users' categories occupy 80%, while students occupy 19.7%. From the above data, it can be found that students' application of WeChat Official account to acquire knowledge has become an important group user. And 92.31% of the learners focused on 1-3 WeChat official accounts on English learning, while 7.69% chose 6 WeChat official accounts to learn English. Thus, students' using the WeChat public platform to learn English has become one of the indispensable ways.

B. Teaching Mode

1) Micro-listening: With the national college entrance examination reform, listening has become one of the key points of reform. Therefore, we can find that listening plays an important role in English learning. The cultivation of listening ability is still one of the most important and difficult problems in English learning. However, with the advent of the information age, the diversification of the way of obtaining the listening material has become more convenient, such as article with standard audio. In the face of the fact that there are a large number of college English learning learners in our country and the level of specialization of listening teaching is not high, all kinds of "micro-listening" approaches appearing nowadays can just serve as supplements to college English teaching.

2) Micro-talking: The information age offers the opportunity to change the awkwardness of most English learners "mute English." WeChat public platform can share articles with audio, allow readers to read following movies, provide online and offline interaction, and other diversified ways to gradually improve the level of students' oral English. At the same time, a large number of oral materials can not only enable students to learn authentic expressions, but also

expand students' knowledge and improve their language thinking ability.

3) Micro-reading: Language input and output are essential for reading. Under the information age, in order to improve students' ability to comprehensively use the language, there is no doubt that micro-reading plays an extremely important role. Especially, students can use the WeChat public platform for obtaining new information and abundant reading resources with pictures and audio. At the same time, a variety of reading resources can satisfy students to choose interesting topics. In the process of micro-reading, students not only learn some words, but also train the reading ability.

4) Micro-writing: Writing is one of the forms of language output. Under the information age, students have mastered a lot of materials through micro-listening, micro-speaking and micro-reading. Therefore, in the process of micro-writing, students not only have rich writing resources, but also obtain a great deal of writing skills.

III. THE ADVANTAGES OF USING WECHAT PUBLIC PLATFORM TO LEARN ENGLISH

A. Great Harvest in a Short Time

Currently, most people get information by own WeChat official accounts because of its flexibility. Thus, people can read information anytime and anywhere. Also, users can use discretionary time to read and learn according to their own preferences. Meanwhile, learning English is a process of accumulation. Of course, users subscribe to WeChat official accounts and read an article in about 6-10 minutes to acquire knowledge in a very short period of time. In a word, due to its flexibility, directness and short-term make users convenient learning and accumulation.

B. Interesting

The diversity of learning styles in WeChat public platforms, including plain text reading, audio, intuitive pictures and video. These forms can motivate users' interest. At the same time, the dialog boxes and message board on WeChat public platform can make the background directly contact with the users, which broke through the individual learning. The way of interactive learning between people is conducive to improve the interest of learning.

C. Timeliness

Under the information age, dissemination of information is extremely fast. Also, the timeliness of information is especially essential. With the popularity of WeChat, the number of people subscribing to WeChat official accounts is increasing. The content of the public platform is constantly changing with the current situation, so that users can get the latest information in time.

D. Personalization

The WeChat public platform provides users with various forms of learning (text, audio, pictures, video, interactive

learning). Meanwhile, the number of articles is diverse on WeChat public platform. It is convenient for users to choose from the categories they want. This variety of learning styles and article categories can meet people's personalized needs. It also helps users to study independently according to their own needs.

IV. APPLICATION AND PRACTICE OF ENGLISH MICRO CLASS IN XI'AN UNIVERSITY

At present, from the perspective of the user scale, in the project of English micro class in Xi'an University, the scale of the user reached more than 400 people. Among them, the number of foreign language institutes accounts for about one quarter of the total. The number of students in the campus accounts for about one-half of the total, while those who study English outside the school account for one-fourth of the total. From the perspective of reading, the data analysis results show that the main way is to share with friends. At the same time, the type of promotion for users is diverse and convenient, which can help more people get the information quickly.

Fig. 1. A screenshot of the WeChat public platform.

From the perspective of materials, the WeChat official account "English micro class in Xi'an University "is mainly targeted at students of xi 'an university. At present, there are currently 50 articles with bilingual mode, pictures and video in total. Due to the variety of users, the project shared content as much as possible to meet the needs of the popularization, and integrated English teaching forms - micro-listening, micro-reading articles. For example," Three Days to See". Meanwhile, one of the feature of WeChat platform is timely accessing to information. In order to cater to its feature, the project provides "mom" on mother's day. At the time of the Dragon Boat Festival, we will promote the translation of Xi'an food as the theme. Then, let users participate in voting activities to win the food fund. Learning English in the activity is interesting indisputably. Of course, in order to thank users for their long-term concern, the project introduced the development of lipstick in the world and attached English translation. The activity will reward the top three by giving thumb up for the comments section.

Fig. 2. A screenshot of the WeChat public platform.

Fig. 3. A screenshot of the WeChat public platform.

Fig. 4.   A screenshot of the WeChat public platform.

Fig. 5.   A screenshot of the WeChat public platform.

Fig. 6.   A screenshot of the WeChat public platform.

Fig. 7.   A screenshot of the WeChat public platform.

As the main user of college students, we specifically introduced essays for CET4 and CET6 and discrimination of synonyms, which would help students learn English. Also, the public platform has launched various forms such as Today's saying, good books, prose, English speeches and tongue twisters, which not only increase the interest in learning English but also meet the needs of different students. The public platform will mark some difficult words on the article and summary the practical phrases, which not only make readers to read easily and accumulate knowledge, also gradually improve their English ability.

V.   CONCLUSION

WeChat public platform provides an excellent technical support for language teaching and language training. Using WeChat public platform to build a mobile learning environment enables learners to acquire knowledge in a short time. From the learning effect, students are getting more and more acceptable of teaching activities based on WeChat applications. In conclusion, with the continuous development of the information age, using WeChat platform for English learning has become an important means. Learners combine the multiple advantages of WeChat platform to achieve independent, timely and efficient personalized learning.

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