Engagement Markers in EFL MOOC Lectures in Chinese Universities

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***Abstract*—Effective engagement is a crucial aspect of teaching and learning, particularly in online environments such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), where face-to-face interaction is limited. However, there is minimal research on how instructors employ language to engage students within MOOCs. In this regard, the concept of engagement markers becomes invaluable. These linguistic devices facilitate interaction between speakers and their online audiences. This study involves an analysis utilizing a self-built corpus of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) MOOC lectures offered by Chinese universities. Hyland's engagement model identified the types, frequency, and functions of engagement markers employed by lecturers to engage learners in EFL MOOC lectures. In particular, the researchers compared nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures with those from ordinary universities. The research findings indicated diverse engagement markers in EFL MOOC lectures. Nationally recognized EFL MOOCs exhibited a more extensive and frequent utilization of these markers than their counterparts from ordinary universities. For example, EFL MOOC lectures from top universities made significantly greater use of personal pronouns than those from ordinary Chinese universities. These results hold significant implications for EFL lecturers, providing valuable insights into effective engagement strategies for MOOCs. Furthermore, the present study contributes to the professional development of educators in this dynamic educational landscape.**

***Index Terms*—Engagement, engagement markers, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) lectures, Chinese universities**

I. Introduction

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have gained immense popularity in China. The concept has become integral to modern education, enjoying widespread acceptance within the education community. Due to the drastic developments over the years, the number of MOOCs in China has reached 64,500, with over 400 million registered users as of February 2023 [1]. These figures solidify China's position as the global leader in MOOC adoption [1]. This remarkable success is unsurprising, given the substantial and widespread support for MOOCs nationally in China. This support is rooted in China's comprehensive national education reform policy, which outlines a clear path for integrating online learning into a lifelong learning framework, ultimately fostering a society centered around continuous learning. As Chinese President Xi Jinping highlighted in May 2015, MOOCs play a pivotal role in transforming China into a learning society, where individuals can pursue education anytime and anywhere [2]. Given this national education policy and President Xi's explicit endorsement, it is evident that MOOCs will occupy an essential position in the future of online education in China, with the potential to engage a larger number of learners. In a significant stride forward, China's Ministry of Education introduced an initiative in July 2017, further emphasizing the value of MOOCs. This initiative stipulated that MOOCs meeting specific quality criteria would receive national recognition [3]. At the time, the Ministry's objective was to have 3,000 nationally recognized MOOCs in China by the end of 2020. Nearly every university in China, especially top universities, has established requirements for creating MOOCs. The concepts developed by top universities are widely acknowledged as exemplars of quality. However, MOOCs originating from ordinary universities also serve as valuable resources for student learning support. Pursuing nationally recognized MOOC status is a common aspiration for most universities, as it represents the highest accolade an open online course can attain in China [3].

Consequently, many MOOC creators aspire to earn recognition from the Ministry of Education in China. Nevertheless, as reported by Meng [4], MOOCs are influenced by variations in lecturer attributes, encompassing instructing demeanor, teaching proficiency, and professional expertise. This distinction is particularly pronounced between MOOCs produced by top universities and those from ordinary universities. This disparity presents many opportunities for in-depth investigations into the differences between MOOCs from elite institutions and those from more conventional universities, aiming to enhance MOOCs' development and learning outcomes. However, studies examining the linguistic characteristics of MOOCs produced by top and ordinary universities must be updated. Therefore, this study examines the linguistic features of nationally recognized MOOCs by top universities and those MOOCs by ordinary universities in China, explicitly emphasizing the engagement markers utilized in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) MOOCs. Investigating how educators in top Chinese universities effectively engage their learners and create high-quality EFL MOOCs in China is relevant and timely.

II. Literature Review

Student engagement is a complex and multidimensional construct that combines several distinct yet interconnected dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and affective [5, 6]. Hoi and Le Hang [7] delineate these dimensions as follows: 1) The

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behavioral dimension refers to explicit and observable behaviors such as participation in learning and skill development and performance. 2) The cognitive dimension is related to students' purpose and motivation to learn, efforts to understand, and self-regulated learning. 3) The affective dimension refers to the emotional response to the learning activities and learning environment, including students' attitudes toward teachers, peers, and subject matter.

Student engagement is "the student's psychological investment in an effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" [8]. In brief, the student plays a pivotal role in the teaching and learning process, with effective student engagement being indispensable for successful student learning outcomes [9].

Engagement features in online courses, such as MOOCs, may be more crucial than face-to-face lectures. This heightened importance arises from the virtual nature of online learning, where students participate remotely, often encountering monologic, teacher-centric classes [10]. A study by Dumford and Miller [11] highlights that in online learning environments, students tend to exhibit lower levels of engagement in collaborative learning, student-lecturer interactions, and discussions with diverse peers, potentially resulting in reduced immediate interactivity and diminished attention. Given the fundamental role of engagement in practical education, guiding and engaging students in the online learning environment is imperative, with effective engagement strategies becoming integral to educators' pedagogical approaches [9]. Furthermore, Sen [12] emphasizes the need for online instructors to foster instructor-student interactions, recognizing their significant influence on student engagement and learning outcomes. Thus, this study presents findings on how MOOC instructors employ language to engage their students during teaching and learning sessions.

While research on engagement in MOOCs has been limited, previous studies have delved into various critical elements associated with student engagement in online teaching environments. These elements encompass curriculum design [13], engagement detection methods [14], instructor-student interactions [15], and student interactions [16]. For example, Yu [17] posits that MOOC lectures strategically employ language to establish connections between instructors and learners, fostering engagement. Nevertheless, as highlighted by Zhang and Sheng [18], there has been a relatively scarce exploration of MOOC lecturers' discourse, with some exceptions, such as Liu's examination of lexical density, speech rate, and academic vocabulary coverage [19], Atapattu and Falkner's investigation into lengthy sentences [20], and Camiciottoli's analysis of I-you patterns [21]. In summary, insufficient investigations examine linguistic features in MOOC lectures, especially considering EFL MOOCs within the Chinese context [16], and even more so, comparative analyses of engagement markers between nationally recognized MOOCs and those created by ordinary universities.

Studies on EFL MOOCs in China hold significant importance due to their potential to advance the country's foreign language education reform [22, 23]. Hundreds of EFL MOOCs are accessible to learners, offered through two prominent MOOC platforms in China, namely iCourse (China University MOOC platform) and xuetangX. In addition, a growing number of English teachers are eager to develop their MOOCs, indicating an anticipated increase in their availability [22]. While studies related to EFL MOOCs are on the rise, they have predominantly focused on aspects other than the linguistic features employed by lecturers. For instance, some have explored learner autonomy, autonomous learning modes, and the cultivation of learners' independent learning abilities [24, 25]. Others have delved into the design principles for EFL MOOCs and the significance of enhancing student interactions [6, 26–28]. These studies suggest the need for more extensive research on the linguistic features utilized in EFL MOOCs from the students' and lecturers' perspectives. This study attempts to bridge the gap by investigating the engagement markers employed by lecturers in EFL MOOCs. It compares their usage in nationally recognized MOOCs and those produced by ordinary universities. The findings aim to shed light on using engagement markers in EFL MOOC lectures. The comparative aspect of this study holds significant value for educators and teacher training staff. It provides a deeper understanding of effective strategies for engaging students in MOOCs. It offers insights into the production of EFL MOOC lectures that have the potential to gain national recognition.

This study's key terms include nationally recognized EFL MOOCs, EFL MOOC lectures by ordinary universities, and engagement markers. Brief definitions for these terms are provided below:

- Nationally recognized EFL MOOCs, hereafter referred to as EFL MOOCs from top universities, earned national recognition from China's Ministry of Education. These MOOCs are designated "nationally recognized MOOCs" on the China University MOOC platform. These nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures are worthwhile and significant because they feature excellent quality and outstanding social impact.
- EFL MOOC lectures from ordinary universities refer to EFL MOOC lectures conveyed by EFL lecturers from ordinary Chinese colleges and universities. Up to this point, these MOOCs have not received national recognition or are seeking authorization from China's Ministry of Education. Consequently, they do not bear the label of a "nationally recognized MOOC" on their respective MOOC platforms.
- Hyland [29] defines engagement markers as "the various ways writers or speakers bring readers or audiences into the discourse to relate to them and anticipate their possible objections." Writers or speakers, armed with an understanding of the textual norms within their discourse community, can foresee how readers or audiences are likely to react to their arguments. They possess the ability to employ persuasive techniques, address potential objections, and aid readers or audiences in interpretation, thus enhancing the overall engagement of the discourse.

III. Materials and Methods

This study aims to examine engagement markers in EFL

MOOC lectures in China by utilizing a self-built corpus consisting of orthographically transcribed texts from EFL MOOC lectures. The analytical framework employed in this research is Hyland's engagement model [30], which encompasses five sub-categories of engagement markers. The objectives of this study include the identification of these engagement markers, an exploration of their respective functions in the interaction between lecturers and learners, and an examination of their different usages in nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures from top universities compared to EFL MOOC lectures from ordinary Chinese universities.

Two subcorpora have been established, with text analysis as the primary research method for this comparative study. The researchers employed the text analysis tool Antconc 4.2.0 to search keyword frequencies, patterns, and concordance. Qualitative and quantitative methods have been utilized to explore the empirical reality and statistical aspects of engagement markers used in the two targeted types of EFL MOOCs and their roles in enhancing engagement within EFL MOOC lectures.

A. Research Questions

The overarching objective of this research is to investigate and compare the utilization of engagement markers in nationally recognized EFL MOOCs from top universities with those employed in EFL MOOCs from ordinary universities. The study seeks to address three specific research questions:

1) What do EFL MOOC lecturers in Chinese universities employ as the most prevalent engagement markers?
2) How do these markers facilitate interaction between lecturers and students in EFL MOOC lectures?
3) To what extent do the types and frequencies of engagement markers vary when comparing nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures from top universities with those from ordinary universities in China?

Hyland's taxonomy classifies engagement markers into five categories: reader or audience pronouns, directives, questions, personal asides, and appeals to shared knowledge [30–32]. Engagement markers encompass rhetorical features writers or speakers employ to signify their awareness of and communication with their audience [33, 34]. This study primarily relies on Hyland's taxonomy to identify and analyze these engagement markers [30].

B. Materials

The EFL MOOC lectures analyzed in this study are sourced from the China University MOOC platform (www.icoruse.163.org), China's most widely utilized MOOC platform [35]. This research necessitated assembling a video-recorded collection of EFL MOOCs as the primary dataset. The objective was to establish two subcorpora: one consisting of nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by lecturers from top universities and the other consisting of EFL MOOC lectures by lecturers from ordinary Chinese colleges and universities. These MOOC lectures cover topics taught to college-level EFL students in China and are conducted entirely in English. In this paper, the researchers scrutinize two distinct EFL MOOC lectures representing the categories above.

While the dataset is small, it remains a suitable representation of two distinct categories of EFL MOOC lectures. Firstly, these lectures were collected from the China University MOOC platform (www.icourse.163.org), China's largest and most comprehensive MOOC platform. It has garnered support from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education, with the MOOCs hosted on this platform considered eligible for research purposes. Secondly, the chosen MOOC holds national recognition and is officially authorized by China's Ministry of Education. It has been evaluated and selected based on six criteria: team expertise, design quality, content, instructional effectiveness, social impact, and support. This particular MOOC has made a significant social impact due to its educational value. Further, for comparative analysis, the researchers collected an EFL MOOC lecture presented by faculty members from ordinary universities, accessible on the same platform. This specific MOOC lecture meets the platform's strict criteria and serves as a representative example of this lecture category.

It is reasonable to acknowledge that this specialized corpus focused on EFL MOOCs in Chinese universities may be criticized due to its limited scope and relatively small size. Nevertheless, the deliberate choice to construct a compact and specialized corpus serves a crucial purpose. It enables researchers to delve deeply into language usage and its contextual nuances [36]. These qualitative insights, in turn, lay the foundation for robust quantitative analysis. Critics highlighting the small sample size should be seen as an opportunity rather than a limitation. This scrutiny may encourage researchers to embark on more expansive studies. For instance, as argued by Aston [37], the examination of small corpora can serve as a valuable stepping stone for researchers aspiring to explore larger corpora within a research context, and it can prove beneficial for language-learning endeavors.

C. Corpus

After data collection and processing, the researchers established two textual data subcorpora. The first subcorpus comprises transcribed content from nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures offered by top universities in China. Specifically, one lesson was selected randomly from the nationally recognized EFL MOOC titled *Academic Communicative English*, with a duration of 14 min and 49 s. The second textural subcorpus encompasses the transcribed text of an ordinary university EFL MOOC lectures in China. Similarly, a lesson was randomly chosen from the EFL MOOC titled *Business English Writing*, produced by an ordinary university in South China for a duration of 8 min and 5 s.

This approach enabled the construction of "specialized corpora" comprising EFL MOOC lectures delivered by Chinese university lecturers. These corpora stand out due to their specific concentration on English language learning-related subjects, setting them apart from other academic canons such as MICASE (Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English). This academic canon includes all spoken events within an educational context (https://varieng.helsinki.fi/CoRD/corpora/MICASE/basic.html), while BASE gathers lectures from a diverse array of

fields (https://www.base-search.net/about/en/index.php).

D. Research Procedure

As mentioned earlier, two types of EFL MOOC lectures delivered by Chinese university lecturers are randomly collected from the China University MOOC platform. These lectures were then transcribed into orthographically textual materials using the iFLYTEK Smart Recorder, serving as the foundational step for this research. Subsequently, a meticulous manual review was conducted to ensure the completeness and accuracy of transcribed texts. The data was subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative procedures involved the development of categories for engagement markers and the calculation of their frequencies. Simultaneously, qualitative insights were obtained by labeling different types and analyzing their communicative functions. Examining and analyzing the EFL MOOC lecture transcripts entailed a comprehensive approach combining corpus-based and textual analytic methodologies. The corpus-based method integrated manual and computer-assisted analyses of lecture transcripts within their contextual framework to find various engagement markers. Each lexeme or phrase identified was thoroughly examined to discern the specific engagement functions they served, employing a textual analytic technique. Utilizing the corpus analysis software AntConc 4.2.0, all instances of each item were meticulously examined within their context to accurately determine their primary function accurately.

The software generated concordances for each search result, which were then meticulously reviewed to eliminate instances that did not truly represent engagement markers. A further functional analysis was performed on the final list of target words and phrases to determine the type of engagement marker they represented. Subsequently, these markers were systematically categorized into five categories based on their distinct purposes. Further, a manual verification and examination were carried out concerning a revised version of Hyland's list of engagement markers [30] to ensure objectivity. An independent researcher specializing in text analysis was consulted to evaluate a few sample sentences and help determine the principal function of multifunctional engagement markers, establishing inter-rater reliability. The results of the inter-rater reliability test exhibited a robust consensus and consistency in identifying engagement markers among raters, with an impressive score of 0.89. This outcome highlights the high accuracy and precision of the evaluation process [38].

E. Analytic Framework

Subsequent text analysis relied on Hyland's engagement taxonomy [30], encompassing five distinct subcategories of engagement markers: 1. Reader/audience pronouns; 2. Directives; 3. Questions; 4. Personal asides; and 5. Appeals to shared knowledge. The following table shows the typical examples of engagement markers and their functions as outlined by Hyland.

Table I highlights the role of engagement markers in consciously forging a connection with readers or the audience. Examining how EFL MOOC lecturers employ these engagement markers to establish a rapport with learners is imperative. Furthermore, a comprehensive exploration of these engagement markers to fosters interpersonal communication between lecturers and learners within the EFL MOOC learning environment.

TABLE I: ENGAGEMENT MARKERS IN HYLAND'S TAXONOMY OF ENGAGEMENT [30]

Sub-category	Example	Function
Reader/audience Pronouns	we, our, you, your.	The most explicit way that readers are brought into a discourse.
Directives	note, see, consider. It's important/ necessary/ essential to. must, should, and ought to.	Directing readers to engage in three types of activity [32]: 1. Textual acts. 2. Physical acts. 3. Cognitive acts.
Questions	Can you think of a better method?	The strategy of dialogic involvement.
Appeals to Shared Knowledge	Of course, obviously, distinctly.	To position readers within apparently naturalized boundaries of disciplinary understandings.
Personal Asides	As we saw in the previous section, As I believe many TESOL professionals will readily acknowledge.	To address readers directly by briefly interrupting the argument to offer a comment on what has been said. Personal asides express something of the writer's personality and willingness to explicitly intervene to offer a view.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data was analyzed to identify engagement markers employed by university lecturers in different types of EFL MOOCs.

A. Types of Engagement Markers in EFL MOOCs

In this research, all types of engagement markers, along with illustrative examples utilized by EFL MOOC lecturers, are comprehensively presented in Table II. These markers have been categorized according to Hyland's taxonomy, which includes reader/audience pronouns, directives, questions, appeals to shared knowledge, and personal asides [30]. The engagement markers have been extracted from the lectures. Based on this extensive list, it becomes evident that during the delivery of EFL MOOC lectures, both lecturers exerted significant effort and employed various discourse strategies to involve students in the course content actively. In comparing nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures offered by top universities and those delivered by ordinary universities, it is noteworthy that lecturers consistently utilized the same types of reader pronoun types to address learners, thus captivating them and fostering a conducive learning environment. As for directives employed as engagement markers, imperatives and modals of obligation emerged as prevalent categories. Notably, in nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities, a novel approach was observed using noun phrases, such as "the most important part…" and "the best way is to do…" These innovative instances of directives as engagement markers may represent a distinctive facet of engagement markers in the lecture format. Questions also constituted a standard

engagement marker, with both EFL MOOC samples employing real questions and rhetorical questions. However, appeals to shared knowledge and personal asides were relatively less frequent than the previous three engagement markers categories.

TABLE II: RESEARCH FINDINGS OF LIST OF ENGAGEMENT MARKERS (TYPES AND EXAMPLES) IN EFL MOOCS

	Reader/audience Pronouns	Directives	Questions	Appeals to Shared Knowledge	Personal Asides
Nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities	we, us, you, your, yours.	Let match please refer to should have to make the most important part the best way is to …	real question, rhetorical question	Basically	Just as a good meal has a starter..., also the most important part...
EFL MOOC lectures by ordinary universities	we, us, you, your, yours.	Should must highlight express do use keep let pay attention to please match need to.	real question, rhetorical question.		Hopefully

Upon a more detailed statistical examination of the findings presented in Table II, we can conclude that in both categories of EFL MOOC lectures, Chinese lecturers employed a variety of engagement markers to interact with their learners. In nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures offered by top universities, the lecturer effectively utilized each category within Hyland's taxonomy of engagement markers. In contrast, when making a comparative analysis, it becomes apparent that EFL MOOC lectures delivered by ordinary universities omitted appeals to shared knowledge. This discrepancy is visually represented in Fig. 1, where the utilization percentage of appeals to shared knowledge is conspicuously absent, registering at 0%.

B. Comparative Analysis of Engagement Marker Usage in Nationally Recognized EFL MOOC Lectures and Standard EFL MOOC Lectures

Regarding research Question 1, Fig. 1 indicates that reader pronouns are consistently the predominant engagement markers employed to address learners or establish a community in both categories of EFL MOOC lectures within Chinese universities. The utilization percentages for the five engagement marker categories in the two types of EFL MOOCs can be seen in Fig. 1.

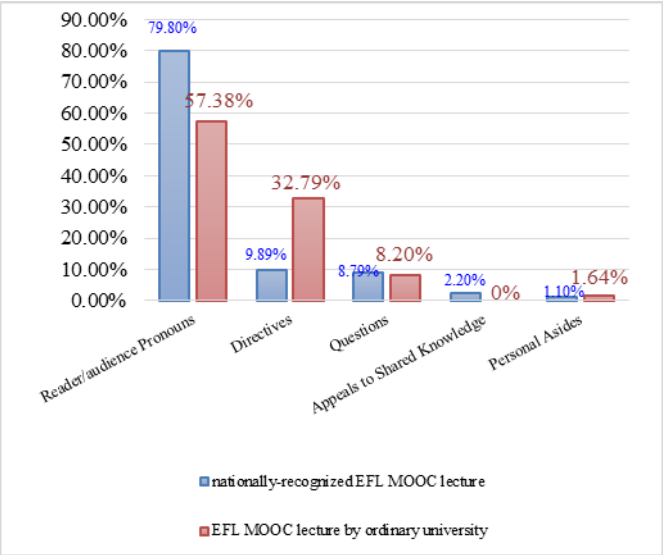

Fig. 1. Comparative analysis of the utilization percentages of five engagement marker categories.

As shown in Fig. 1, reader pronouns emerged as the most frequently utilized engagement markers in both EFL MOOCs, accounting for 79.80% of nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities and 57.38% of EFL MOOC lectures by ordinary universities. Conversely, appeals to shared knowledge and personal asides were employed less frequently. This disparity contrasts with the use of engagement markers in opinion pieces and economics-related articles [33], where directives are the prevailing engagement markers. This variance in frequency may be attributed to the specific genre of EFL MOOCs. Given that EFL MOOCs are delivered without a physical student presence, lecturers often prioritize addressing and engaging learners to maintain their involvement in learning. Based on the comparative analysis in Figs. 1 and 2, it becomes evident that in nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures, reader/audience pronouns as engagement markers constituted nearly four-fifths of the total engagement markers employed, significantly surpassing their usage in EFL MOOC lectures delivered by ordinary universities.

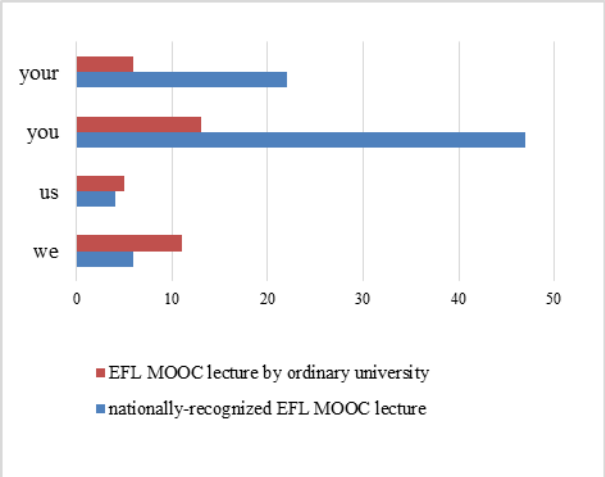

Fig. 2 Comparative Assessment of Reader/Audience Pronouns as Engagement Markers.

As shown in Fig. 2, there is a substantial disparity in the usage of reader/audience pronouns between nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities and those from ordinary universities. The second-person pronoun, "you," emerges as the most frequently used engagement marker in both EFL MOOC lectures. The length of the blue

bar demonstrates a significant predominance of its usage in nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures over its application in EFL MOOC lectures delivered by ordinary universities. Consequently, this discrepancy may be regarded as a distinctive hallmark of engagement features within EFL MOOC lectures, warranting further analysis of the engaging functions attributed to the second-person pronoun "you."

A general comparison of engagement marker frequency, it is evident that top universities' nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures surpass their counterparts from ordinary universities. The frequencies were normalized per 1000 words, following Biber *et al.* [39] raw frequency count, and corresponding percentages are calculated to assess the significance of the disparities. After analyzing the word count, it is noteworthy that nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures from top universities and EFL MOOC lectures from ordinary universities have significantly higher rates of 79.2 and 69.07 per 1000 words, respectively, in comparison to findings from three-minute thesis presentations encompassing social science (33.3 per 1000 words) and complex fields (53.7 per 1000 words) [40]. Similarly, the word count in student presentations, at 29.35 per 1000 words [41], was lower than the EFL MOOC lectures from the top and ordinary universities. The distinction arises from the fact that EFL MOOC lectures, being conducted in a virtual setting without the physical presence of students, compel lecturers to anticipate potential student reactions and diligently engage learners to enhance comprehension.

Consequently, engagement markers are more abundant in EFL MOOC lectures than in postgraduate thesis presentations and student presentations. In the latter scenarios, where the audience is physically present, speakers deliver their thesis results or presentation content and then interact with the audience. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures delivered by top universities employ a more significant number of engagement markers compared to those in EFL MOOC lectures from ordinary universities. Within different types of EFL MOOC lectures, Chinese university lecturers exhibit diversity in the subcategories of engagement markers employed, aligning with findings from the study of student presentations, reflecting the nature of spoken genres [41] (see in Fig. 3).

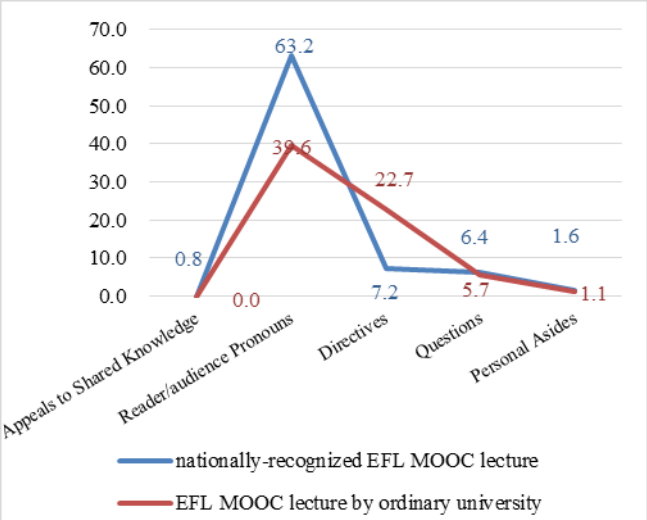

Fig. 3 Raw and normalized counts of engagement markers per 1000 words.

As illustrated in Fig. 3, there are variations in the raw and normalized counts of each type of engagement marker. Specifically, reader/audience pronouns stand out with 63.2 per 1000 words in nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities and 39.6 per 1000 words in EFL MOOC lectures by ordinary universities, representing the highest usage rates within both EFL MOOC lectures. This result is consistent with the findings identified in Fig. 1.

C. Functions of Engagement Markers

In this section, reader/audience pronouns will be used to demonstrate the functions of engagement markers in the interaction between lecturers and learners during EFL MOOC lectures in Chinese universities. Given the limited interactivity in EFL MOOCs, primarily stemming from the absence of students, reader/audience pronouns serve as a direct and effective means to capture learners' and engage them as active participants in the learning process. Using "you" and "your" explicitly acknowledges the learner's presence. In addition, the frequent use of the inclusive personal pronoun "we" underscores the connection between the writer/speaker and the readers/audience. As an illustrative example within the reader/audience pronoun category [41], emphasis is made on the second-person pronoun, "you." This choice is made because "you" stands out as the most prevalent and effective engagement marker for maintaining a high level of engagement. The absence of "you" may result in a less apparent level of engagement. As observed in this corpus, second-person pronouns like "you" are the most frequently employed engagement markers in EFL MOOC lectures, a trend consistent with student presentations [41]. Compared to other engagement markers, "you" is a straightforward, accessible, and effective tool for addressing learners and ensuring their concentration in the learning process. In the context of EFL MOOC lectures, studying "you" is particularly significant when considering its role in enhancing engagement during the teaching process.

As the subsequent example sentences demonstrate, "you" is an engagement marker.

1) Next, also the most important part, a brief overview of what will be discussed in presentation. It's a map to your destination. ***You*** have to provide an outline of your presentation. (Sample of nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities).
2) Your opening is the first impression your audience has of ***you***. (Sample of nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities).
3) Without audience's attention and interest, ***you*** have a room of non-listeners. (Sample of nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities).
4) Well, this is an often-heard typical start of a presentation. If ***you*** open this way, ***you*** will find yourself in the company of many others. (Sample of nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities).
5) Now, let's have a look at how a presenter starts his presentation to see what ***you*** need to say in the presentation introduction. (Sample of nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures by top universities).

Based on the examples provided, it can be deduced that the second-person pronoun "you," specifically addresses the

audience of learners engaged in viewing the EFL MOOC lecture. This term is utilized to engage learners as active participants in the content directly. Including "you" facilitates more precise communication of meaning and teaching content, as learners may feel involved in actions or membership in the teaching-and-learning community. In essence, "you" represents a more direct mode of communication in traditional face-to-face classes and MOOC lectures. Within MOOC lectures, second-person pronouns are valuable tools for fostering interpersonal communication between lecturers and learners, offering a direct and influential means of involving learners in the course environment. For aspiring lecturers tasked with creating EFL MOOC content, it is imperative to recognize important to understand the significance of second-person pronouns. Incorporating similar teaching expressions can significantly enhance learner engagement and interest during lectures. In summary, second-person pronouns are typical and effective engagement markers in EFL MOOC lectures, as they play a crucial role in addressing learners and maintaining their attentiveness throughout the learning process.

V. Conclusion

In summary, engagement markers are vital in attracting, retaining, and actively involving learners within a MOOC learning community. These markers are practical engagement tools and strategies in EFL MOOC lectures. It is crucial to acknowledge that the utilization of engagement markers varies depending on the genre, with distinctions noticeable in genres such as opinion pieces and 3-minute thesis presentations compared to EFL MOOC lectures. Comparative analysis showed a notable contrast in the usage of engagement markers, encompassing their frequency, types, and intended functions, between nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures offered by prestigious universities and those provided by ordinary institutions. Engagement markers are more prevalent and encompass a broader spectrum in nationally recognized EFL MOOC lectures delivered from top universities.

This study reveals the engagement strategies employed by Chinese EFL MOOC lecturers, offering valuable insights for educators and training professionals. Since top universities have embraced MOOCs for over a decade, attracting millions of learners, this research holds significant relevance for stakeholders in this field. Nationally recognized EFL MOOCs serve as exemplary models, showcasing the success of MOOC implementations. Following this investigation, it becomes evident that lecturers in nationally recognized EFL MOOCs by top universities have effectively utilized various engagement features and strategies. These findings can be especially beneficial for new or inexperienced university lecturers venturing into MOOC creation. These findings are poised to assist Chinese university EFL lecturers adopt linguistic techniques that facilitate effective and engaging online lectures by studying the genre of Chinese video-recorded EFL MOOC lectures. This research has the potential to aid educators striving to enhance their students' engagement within online learning environments.

Moreover, it may improve future academic interactions between instructors and learners, fostering more effective teaching approaches for EFL MOOCs. Furthermore, the results of this study can inform teaching administration offices in crafting targeted and effective MOOC pedagogical training courses for university EFL teachers. This empowerment enables them to foster student engagement during EFL MOOC lectures. It is worth noting that this study, while valuable, is limited by its sample size. Future studies are encouraged to expand the corpus size to obtain more comprehensive results.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Guo Xiaohua conducted the research, designed the methodology, collected and analyzed the data, drafted the original version of the article, and revised it. Dr. Noor Mala Ibrahim contributed to the final review and editing of the article. All authors have approved the final version.

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