

# Bilingual use of translanguaging: Chinese student satisfaction in a transnational Business degree in English

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*Studies of student satisfaction in higher education settings highlight the contribution of teaching, learning and assessment, institutional status, and the personal factors of self-efficacy, preparedness, and sense of community. Transnational partnership research has identified that similar student satisfaction factors are experienced by mainland Chinese students enrolled in English-language degrees. However, there are certain challenges related to foreign language skill development, intercultural exchange, and lack of local contextualization. This paper provides insights into the interplay among satisfaction factors in the transnational context of an Australian-China higher education partnership for Chinese students studying a Business degree in their home country. In addition, the paper highlights the value added to the student experience by the expeditious use of local Chinese exemplars and translanguaging across the two languages to explain the more complex concepts presented in the course content. In so doing, the paper sheds some light on the role of local, native speaking staff in the teaching and learning process and their contribution to student satisfaction, a known retention benefit to higher education institutions.*

*Keywords: Chinese students; transnational education; satisfaction; translanguaging; bilingual pedagogy*

## INTRODUCTION

Transnational higher education programs in China developed rapidly in the decade of the 2000s as host English-speaking universities arranged international partnerships with interested universities. Transnational education refers to higher degree study programs where students are located in a country other than that in which the awarding institution is based (Wilkins, 2016). Most transnational education programs facilitated by Australian higher education institutions are undertaken through partnership arrangements (TEQSA, 2013, p. 3); there are more formal education partnerships with Chinese universities than with any other country (Marszalek, 2012).

According to Mok and Xu (2008), a key impetus for the growth was the entry of China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in late 2001. Programs, particularly in Business, flourished in the period 2007–2015. By 2015, there were 1,116 transnational higher education partnerships in China with 64 institutions from 22 countries, 148 of these with Australian institutions (Mok & Han, 2016; Wilkins, 2016).

The growth of such programs has been attributed to the benefits accruing to both the Chinese Government and Chinese higher education, and the host institutions. From the perspective of the Chinese Government, affiliation between Chinese and Western institutions builds Chinese institutional capacity and human capital, enabling the institutions to broaden their program offerings and build prestige and student demand through access to foreign resources and expertise (Yang, 2008, p. 274). Over time, transnational education in China has evolved from an informal and relatively unregulated activity into a more systematic model with increasing layers of oversight (Mok & Han, 2015). Recent regulations include the *Education Blueprint 2020*, released by the Ministry of Education in 2010. A key policy of that document is a drive to increase the internationalization of tertiary programs through partnerships with foreign institutions, encompassing teaching, professional scholarship, and research. Transnational partnership governance is not regulated by the Central Chinese Government, but Chinese higher education institutions are under that authority and, thus, partnerships are indirectly affected (Mok & Han, 2016).

Chinese student motivation for enrolling in transnational programs has been studied. Fang and Wang (2014) investigated motivations underlying Chinese students' choice of a transnational higher education program. Pull factors that drew students towards transnational programs included the benefits of foreign teaching methods and foreign knowledge, improved foreign language skills and cross-cultural communication, better prospects and preparation for studying abroad, and the ability to attain a well-regarded foreign degree or dual Chinese and foreign degree. Push factors that deterred students from the alternative study options related primarily to perceived deficiencies in Chinese programs, such as lack of access to programs or majors of choice, insufficient internationalization, and lack of foreign language development opportunities. Other push factors were barriers to cross-border, on-campus entry into overseas higher education institutions arising from high costs, high language requirements, visa issues, and the hurdles of cultural adjustment. In addition to the pull and push factors mentioned, students enrolled in transnational programs were likely to be studying a dual degree, which was more expensive than gaining a local qualification. These factors also had potential for affecting student satisfaction.

The purpose of this study is to review the benefits to Chinese undergraduate business students of a partnership between an Australian regional university and a Chinese university. Student satisfaction was analysed in terms of personal factors, language, culture and use of Chinese local exemplars in relation to their experiences with the curriculum and their Australian and Chinese teaching staff. We begin with a brief overview of historical and contemporary research on student satisfaction with an emphasis on student experience in transnational education programs in China, and highlight the importance of translanguaging in this context. Details follow by examining key contributors to student satisfaction before presenting and discussing the research findings and drawing conclusions to the study. Important features of satisfaction nominated by students related to the teaching and learning components of the program, in particular the support of bilingual Chinese teachers in China and the communication channels opened by the lecturers for improving the students' levels of comprehension and engagement. Chinese teaching staff contributed to student satisfaction and mitigated Chinese cultural concerns about transnational education. They enhanced the quality of the Australian curriculum through translating and contextualizing course content and other forms of translanguaging. We believe that raising awareness of the Chinese

teachers' use of English and complementary use of Chinese has added another dimension to transnational education research, which Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) claimed is "needed to establish when, where, and how translanguaging is a suitable teaching approach" (p. 651).

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: What were the teaching, learning, and personal drivers of Chinese student satisfaction in an undergraduate Business program transnational partnership between an Australian regional university and Chinese tertiary partner?

Research Question 2: What role did the local teaching staff play in using the practice of translanguaging with the students and contextualizing the Australian course content?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview of student satisfaction studies**

Student satisfaction is linked to institutional benefits of higher retention (Roberts & Styron, 2010; Sembiring 2015; Tinto, 1993), improved grades (Bean & Bradley, 1986); positive communication about the institution (Alves & Raposo, 2009), and student loyalty to the institution (Webb & Jagun, 1997). More generally, institutions gauge students' overall experience in much the same way as if the students are customers of that institution (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013). University experience is understood to include elements such as experience with teaching staff and the study curriculum, administrative advisory staff and support, facilities and virtual resources, institutional reputation, and social integration within the learning environment (Gibson, 2010). Factors identified as significant in the analysis of satisfaction contribute either positively or negatively to student experience.

Additional elements have been identified among Business students. These include the acquisition of real-world skills, prospects for successful employment and their expectations of academic performance (Debnath, Kumar, Shankar, & Roy, 2005; Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006; Elliot & Shin, 2002; Mai, 2005; Rapert, Smith, Velliquette, & Garretson, 2004) as well as their perceptions of the grading system in the transnational context (Mok & Han, 2016; Xu, 2005 as cited in Yang, 2008). Of the various factors mentioned, Gibson (2010) found that the academic factors of teaching and the wider curriculum were generally the most important. These studies were mainly based on quantitative evidence from surveys and did not extend to levels of satisfaction expressed by students in focus group discussions. Nor did they explore satisfaction associated with studying and functioning in a foreign additional language—factors pertinent to this study—where teaching involved a partnership between bilingual local teachers and native English-speaking staff of the host university.

### **Transnational education programs in China: Learning and teaching experience**

Transnational education in China has unique features and hence it is relevant to overview contemporary studies of student and teacher experience in those programs. Mok and Xu (2008) reported on the learning experiences of Chinese students from three institutions in Hangzhou city enrolled in transnational higher education programs with an Australian higher education provider. Students were generally satisfied with the teaching methods employed and course assessments, although most students raised concerns about their

English proficiency and related communication issues. Previously, Xu (2005, as cited in Yang, 2008) had reported similar satisfaction findings for Chinese students enrolled in transnational programs. He reported positive satisfaction with the teaching approach, competency of foreign staff, and assessment methods, but also noted communication difficulties with foreign staff arising from lack of English competency.

When addressing challenges faced by Australian staff relating to course design and teaching, some authors have highlighted distinguishing characteristics of mainland Chinese students. Course writers and examiners should be cognizant, therefore, of students' learning style preferences. Debowski (2003) noted the tendency of Chinese students to defer to those with higher status in the student group and that this impacted negatively on the quality of classroom interactions. On a related theme, Heffernan, Morrison, Basu, and Sweeney (2010) investigated cultural and learning style differences between Australian and mainland Chinese business students to facilitate the development of more tailored education products in transnational settings. While both cohorts were found to be visual learners, Chinese students were more sensory or fact-oriented, and commonly global or holistic rather than sequential learners. Recommended strategies to improve learning outcomes for Chinese students included using visual aids, emphasizing linkages between theory and real-world practice, presenting the overall session goals at the commencement of each class, and implementing group activities and guest presentations that emphasized contextualized learning. Yang and Yao (2007) raised concerns about a lack of contextualization in the form of local Chinese content exemplars in transnational programs. They expressed the view that the influence of Western social values on the teaching pedagogy and the curriculum had resulted in a certain disconnection of students from Chinese culture, society, and politics.

Australian academics recognize the need to contextualize learning in their courses, yet the international contexts are often not integral to a course. Dunn and Wallace (2006) surveyed 61 Australian academics from nine universities involved in transnational education programs based on their experiences travelling overseas to conduct teaching schools. Reflecting concerns about lack of contextualization in the learning pedagogy, several academics indicated that they had added local examples and case studies to the course materials for the students in the partnerships. They recognized that the expertise of local teachers in the partnerships was an important resource often overlooked by the Australian universities. Debowski (2003) had previously established that a gap existed in the literature. While many Australian academics had acted as mentors to foreign teachers to facilitate the teaching in transnational programs, little was known about the contribution that local Chinese speaking teachers were making to the teaching and learning process and its impact on overall student experience. In a subsequent study, the researcher re-stated her claim that greater awareness of the skill sets of local Chinese staff was needed (Debowski, 2005). Leask (2004, p. 3) confirmed that the local teachers' contextual knowledge should be given more prominence in the teaching arrangement, given that they acted as "cultural mediator and translator". This paper addresses that apparent gap in teaching practice research.

Additional factors in the satisfaction equation for students, therefore, include issues of language and culture, lack of local contextualization in course content and the contribution made by local, bilingual teaching staff. The studies reported here highlight elements of the teaching partnership and the need for greater awareness and recognition of local staff. However, they do not explore the value-adding contribution of the

phenomenon of “translanguaging” (Cummins, 2008) by local teachers who engaged in “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (Baker, 2011, p. 288) thereby advancing student learning outcomes and satisfaction. Translanguaging pedagogies promote metacognition, build deeper thinking, and enable emergent bilingual students to engage with texts that are typically considered beyond their instructional capacity (Garcia & Wei, 2014, as cited in Lubliner and Grisham, 2017, p. xii). Teachers’ use of translanguaging can assist students to construct meaning and build their understanding of course content.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study assessed levels of satisfaction, including the translanguaging environment, of Chinese students in their higher education journey.

The research method targeted undergraduate student satisfaction factors of the Australian university Chinese students enrolled in its transnational undergraduate Business degree at Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC) in Hang Zhou, China. Three instruments were utilized: (i) Questionnaire; (ii) Focus groups comprising a subset of respondents to the questionnaire; (iii) Written follow-up open-ended surveys of the Chinese business teachers and students at ZUCC. The Human Research Ethics Committee of the Australian university granted approval for surveys, interviews, and focus groups (Ethics approval number: H07REA686).

### **Data collection**

#### **Surveys**

A questionnaire was completed by approximately 100 ZUCC students in each of two consecutive years, enabling the gathering of quantitative data relating to demographics and students’ experience of the transnational program. The survey design was informed by known universal influences on university student experience. The surveys were conducted in-class under the supervision of ZUCC teaching staff. Completion of the questionnaire was entirely voluntary and anonymous.

#### **Focus groups**

Two focus groups were established at the same time as administration of the survey. They were designed to access the views, experiences, and attitudes of the student participants to enrich the data captured by the questionnaire. Further exploration exposed finer detail of the various factors that increased or reduced satisfaction (for example, Levers, 2006; Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Each group was managed by a single moderator who covered the same topics in the same sequence. Focus group participants consisted of students with varied academic performance histories as identified by ZUCC transnational program staff. The selection of an equal balance by gender of nine volunteer participants per group was consistent with the view that between six and 12 participants is ideal (Baumgartner, Strong, & Hensley, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Participants were generally active in the discussions and exhibited a degree of confidence in their responses. Members who did not express an opinion on an issue in the focus group discussion were assumed to have agreed with the majority viewpoint (Harding, 2013, p. 150). Discussions continued until, from the moderator’s perspective, data saturation

had been reached, both within and across the two groups (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009; Samure & Given, 2008).

### **Follow-up surveys**

Based on the original survey and focus groups, two open-ended surveys were developed by the researchers to capture further reflections on the teaching and learning in the transnational program, one for the ZUCC students and one for the ZUCC teachers. The teacher survey document, consisting of six open-ended questions, was emailed to three volunteers from among the ZUCC Chinese teachers. It explored elements of the teaching experience and teaching practice that had been raised by the focus-group participants.

A member of the ZUCC teaching staff facilitated the follow-up student surveys comprising two open-ended questions that explored learning approaches and cultural adjustment. The eight participating students were selected on the basis of varied academic performance histories and gender balance as identified by the overseeing teaching staff member.

## **Data analysis**

### **Surveys**

Associations between how Chinese undergraduate Business students rated various aspects of their undergraduate experience and their overall satisfaction with the institution were evaluated using Spearman's Rho ( $\rho$ ) Correlation technique. Sixty-one statements probing students' experience of teaching practice and their personal learning attributes were rated from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree on a nine-point Likert Scale and were correlated against student satisfaction in response to, "Overall I am satisfied with my experience at university". Statements that correlated positively with overall satisfaction at the 99% level of significance in both survey years were identified as positive factors that increased satisfaction.

The questions on elements of teaching practice did not distinguish between Australian and ZUCC teaching staff. However, the design of the courses and their assessment were the responsibility of the Australian course examiners. Assessment feedback and course delivery were primarily the responsibility of ZUCC teaching staff.

### **Focus groups**

Focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed to provide rigour (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009) and analysed through the application of classical content analysis (Morgan, 1997). Transcripts were overviewed to establish key categories of concern to the students. The general categories were then grouped into sub-categories and coded. The frequency of response per category and sub-category were calculated for the combined groups (see Table 1), as discussed by Kidd and Parshall (2000). We viewed the frequency of independent mention of a sub-category as evidence of its relevance to the participants (Parker et al., 2012). Participant responses were summarized by sub-category and are reported below.

### **Follow-up surveys**

ZUCC teacher and student responses to open-ended questions were summarized and are reported in the results below.

## RESULTS

The results take the form of analysis of the demographics of the participants, initial survey and focus group findings, and summary of responses of the local Chinese teachers and their students to the follow-up open questions.

### Demographics

ZUCC students who participated in the surveys formed a relatively homogeneous group between the ages of 20 and 25 years and studying full-time (see Table 1). Most were living on campus in the college dormitories. The majority of respondents were female and not engaged in paid employment.

**Table 1. ZUCC survey respondents by age group, enrolment type and gender**

Category	Sub-category	Year 1	Year 2
Age group	< 20	1	1
	20–25	88	97
	26–35	10	1
	>35	1	1
	Total	100	101
Enrolment	Full-time	88.6%	93.2 %
	Part-time	11.4%	6.8 %
Gender	Male	41%	18.4 %
	Female	59%	81.6 %

Eighteen students were selected from the Survey 1 respondents to participate in focus groups. Group 1 consisted of nine participants: four females and five males, and Group 2 consisted of nine students: five females and four males. Follow-up surveys involved three ZUCC staff (2 males and 1 female), and eight ZUCC students (4 males and 4 females).

### Survey and focus group findings

Analysis of the focus group transcripts revealed a high degree of inter-group consistency on issues of student concern, so the findings were combined to produce frequencies of response as indicated in Table 2.

Two broad satisfaction categories, namely teaching practice factors and personal learning factors emerged from the survey and focus group findings. All factors identified as significant were positively correlated with satisfaction. No negative factors were found at the 95% level of significance or higher.

**Table 2. Focus group analysis: Top 10 sub-categories ranked by frequency**

Rank	Sub-Category	Frequency
1	Assessment.	66
2	Language difficulties in course materials or assessments.	55
3	Course content issues, main source of help to answer questions, level of satisfaction with help given.	51

4	Suggested improvements to the host Australian university program.	47
5	Belief about the role of course examiner and role of local teachers.	37
6	Positive attributes of the Australian university program.	34
7	Culture.	32
8	Dissatisfaction with the host Australian university.	31
9	Value of teaching schools with course examiner.	30
10	Perceived benefits in the decision to enrol in a transnational program with the Australian university.	20

### Teaching practice factors

Analysis of survey responses indicated that teaching approach and the interactions between students and teachers, complemented by the quality of teaching rooms, contributed positively to overall student satisfaction. Efforts to make courses interesting and relevant ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.545; 0.487$ ), such as through an enthusiastic approach to teaching ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.466; 0.365$ ), the use of real-world examples ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.363; 0.355$ ), and clarity of both explanations ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.449; 0.496$ ) and expectations ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.546; 0.517$ ), were important elements of teaching practice. Helpful assessment feedback ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.550; 0.335$ ) also contributed to satisfaction, a likely benefit of which was improved performance in future assessments.

Consultation activities, particularly where teachers demonstrated the qualities of availability ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.527; 0.383$ ), helpfulness ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.555; 0.537$ ), approachability ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.539; 0.359$ ), sensitivity ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.532; 0.347$ ), understanding ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.375; 0.349$ ), and a flexible, accommodating approach to varying student needs ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.537; 0.406$ ), also contributed positively to student satisfaction. Satisfaction was also facilitated by the belief that teaching rooms provided a high-quality learning environment ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.421; 0.580$ ).

Focus group interactions highlighted assessment performance as a priority because the students functioned within a highly competitive educational and employment environment. They generally favoured time-flexible forms of assessment, such as online quizzes that assessed textbook knowledge, because they were rewarded for revising course content progressively. Students expressed a desire for greater guidance on structuring assignment answers. Consistent with the literature (for example, Debnath et al., 2005), they preferred assignment tasks to be oriented towards authentic real-world skills, thereby creating a more tangible sense of accomplishment.

A key feature of classroom pedagogy was the bilingual nature of teaching at ZUCC. Students found it helpful that ZUCC teachers explained complex topics in Chinese, thereby lowering language and cultural barriers to learning. Students also recognized the value-adding contribution of Chinese staff, who added local exemplars to contextualize the course content, and requested that the local content be included in the assessable content by the Australian course examiners. In comparing Australian and local courses, students noted that Chinese courses tended to emphasize memorization, while Australian courses tended to emphasize understanding and application.

Students valued the teaching schools conducted by the Australian course examiners, particularly where the examiner fostered participation. Students believed that visits helped to bridge the cultural gap and build understanding despite many feeling reticent to ask questions and participate in classes when it was culturally more acceptable for them to sit quietly and listen. While this is consistent with the reflections of Debowski (2003), follow-up surveys of ZUCC teachers indicated that students became more confident as the transnational program matured.

Intermittent communication between Australian course examiners and the ZUCC teachers was one area of concern, particularly about the requirements of individual assessment items such as assignments and exams, since it resulted in a disconnection between the effort they made and the grade they received. Students also expressed concern that foreign universities and both foreign and Chinese employers did not recognize the qualitative distinction between grades earned in Chinese courses and those awarded by the Australian university.

### **Personal learning factors**

Personal factors that correlated positively with satisfaction included a sense of belonging to the university ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.602; 0.461$ ), possessing clear career goals ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.314; 0.415$ ), regularly seeking advice from teachers ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.326; 0.270$ ), and qualities that contributed to self-efficacy. Such qualities included being hardworking ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.495; 0.397$ ), having confidence in their academic ability ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.488; 0.302$ ), being enrolled in their degree of choice ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.434; 0.555$ ), finding their courses interesting ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.563; 0.463$ ), enjoying the intellectual challenge posed by their studies ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.481; 0.548$ ), recognising the importance of high quality analytical skills ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.259; 0.381$ ), and participating in classroom discussions ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.389; 0.509$ ). Satisfaction was also linked to the belief that courses built upon previous knowledge ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.312; 0.395$ ), reflecting scaffolding in the degree structure.

Satisfied students also enjoyed social interaction ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.401; 0.289$ ) and had a positive view toward intercultural dialogue ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.343; 0.346$ ), intercultural group work ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.374; 0.295$ ), and the sensitivity they experienced from students of other cultures ( $\rho_{y_1;y_2} = 0.418; 0.263$ ), consistent with the findings of Fang and Wang (2014). This level of satisfaction was evident in their participation in intercultural exchanges in the online activities and study forums. Some focus group members reported using the course forums as a means of building community with foreign students and acquiring and experiencing new ways of thinking.

Focus group responses revealed that the desire to improve their English language skills was a key motivation for ZUCC students to undertake the transnational program. These findings are consistent with the results of the Fang and Wang (2014) study. Participants identified that their English language skills had improved throughout the dual degree and this improvement brought benefits, including improved course results, improved performance on English language proficiency tests required for studying abroad, and improved employment prospects. Such benefits contributed to their satisfaction. However, focus group participants nominated language issues as the primary cause of early dropouts from the Australian university courses. English difficulties were generally of most concern in the first semester of study when the likelihood of dropping courses was higher than in later semesters.

### **Follow-up survey of ZUCC teachers: Summary of findings.**

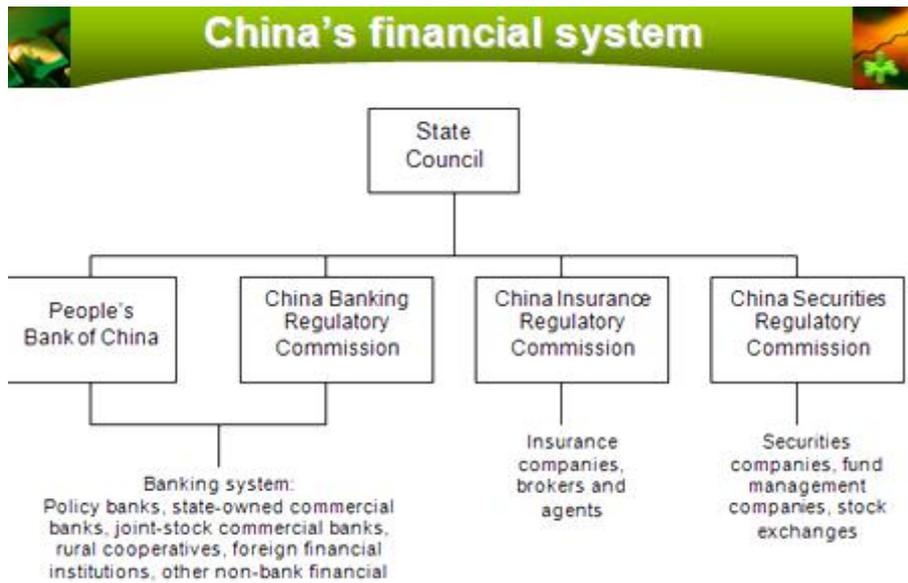
In the view of the ZUCC teachers, a number of factors contributed to their students' success in the program, which were similar to the satisfaction factors identified in the original survey. The transnational program students generally worked harder and more consistently than students in the single degree ZUCC courses, since they were studying in English as their second language and had a higher course load in the dual degree. They paid closer attention to teachers' in-class instructions and put more time into post-class review of materials. In addition, students undertaking the transnational program were more likely to aim at undertaking postgraduate studies, either abroad or in China, and were more explicitly goal-oriented.

ZUCC teachers adjusted their content delivery over time. They delivered lectures more slowly, placed greater emphasis on explaining the content—contextualizing content through the inclusion of Chinese examples (Figure 1), a feature highlighted previously by Heffernan et al. (2010). They augmented lecture PowerPoints with Chinese language explanations (Figure 2) and used Chinese language PowerPoints to explain complex topics while encouraging students to ask and answer questions in English. Some teachers provided a template for students to use, which enabled them to undertake assignment tasks in a coherent way. Further, they emphasized to students that understanding and applying concepts was more important than memorization.

The ZUCC teachers varied in their complementary use of English and Chinese in the classroom. One teacher used English language PowerPoints but spoke predominantly in Chinese. Another stated key theories or concepts in English, then provided an in-depth explanation in Chinese. In the view of one ZUCC teacher, their translanguaging approach helped students to adapt more quickly to the English language materials and this was particularly beneficial to those students who intended to undertake further studies abroad.

I use English to state theorems and theories, and I use Chinese to explain the specific interpretation. Bilingual teaching is very useful for many students who intend to study in English speaking countries, since it makes them to adapt to foreign study very quickly (Ren, ZUCC teacher, Personal Communication, 13 April 2016).

Concerning higher order thinking, one ZUCC teacher believed that students' critical thinking improved as they took higher level, more specialized courses. One example of critical thinking was demonstrated by the students expressing interest in analysing the impact of Chinese firms on the economy, such as Yu'E Bao, an investment service offered by China's leading online payments provider, Alipay ("Ye", ZUCC teacher, Personal Communication, 1 August 2016). Another ZUCC teacher noted that students in the transnational program became noticeably more competent at presentations and more willing to provide views and feedback in the classroom than those undertaking only ZUCC courses. A change in classroom culture had taken place, in contrast to student reports from the focus groups. This is a welcome reflection given Debowski's (2003) observation that Chinese students tended to defer to those with higher status in the student group and this impacted negatively on the quality of classroom interactions.



**Figure 1. Contextualized content example**

Source: 'Ye', ZUCC teacher, Personal Communication, May 9, 2016

**◆ Recessions (unemployment) and expansions affect all of us**

**◆ Monetary Theory ties changes in the money supply to changes in aggregate economic activity and the price level**

- 货币理论：分析货币数量的变化与经济总体运行状况的波动和物价水平变化的联系

**Figure 2. Example of augmented lecture PowerPoint**

Source: 'Ye' ZUCC teacher, Personal Communication, May 9, 2016. (translation validated by a Chinese staff member of the Australian university)

### **Follow-up survey of ZUCC students: Summary of findings**

Students in the transnational program employed several strategies or learning approaches including:

- Previewing materials before class;
- Taking notes during class to complement supplied learning materials;
- Listening carefully during class, facilitated by good English listening skills;
- Asking face-to-face questions of teacher during or after class;
- Reviewing slides, and other materials post-class and emailing local teachers with questions arising from this review;
- Attending review sessions (tutorials) conducted by ZUCC teachers;
- Summarizing the main themes of each topic;
- Consulting Chinese language textbooks;
- Developing a vocabulary of professional terms;
- Analysing the marking criteria prior to beginning assessment items; and

- Using progressive assessment items (quizzes and assignment) as a resource for the final exam.

Students outlined several positive and negative elements of the cultural adjustments made for the transnational program. Positive elements included:

- Improved spoken English proficiency;
- Improved written English skills;
- Expanded English vocabulary of professional commerce terms, particularly helpful since English is the default global language of commerce;
- Increased professional knowledge arising from increased course load required by the dual degree;
- Emphasis on understanding concepts using examples rather than memorization aided comprehension;
- Broadened viewpoint and acquisition of international knowledge, including knowledge about Australia;
- Exposure to new perspectives on various issues;
- Opportunity to interact with other cultures; and
- Smoothed adjustment process due to similarities between the learning environments in the Chinese and Australian universities.

Chinese education emphasis[es] memorising mechanically and I always recite things while it is exactly [the] opposite when learning “*transnational university*” courses for their aim is to understand them [sic], therefore, more examples are involved in the course (ZUCC student ‘F’, personal communication, April 1, 2016).

Negative elements included:

- Difficulties structuring essays due to major differences between Chinese and English language structure;
- Higher time cost of courses because English was their second language; and
- Higher time cost of courses because of additional time required to adjust to differences in culture and values.

Other cultural adjustments noted by the students were:

- Adjusting to differences between Australian and Chinese accounting standards;
- Adjusting to differences in business culture and work ethic—one student noted surprise that working overtime was less highly regarded in Australia than in China; and
- Adjusting study method by reducing focus on the text book and increasing focus on other course materials.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Survey and focus group findings highlighted teaching and learning factors that contributed to the Chinese students’ satisfaction with the transnational program. Statistically significant factors rated as benefits included: good teaching and assessment practice within a well-scaffolded degree structure, real-world relevance of materials, and desirable teacher attributes in addition to elements of student self-efficacy, work ethic, and goal orientation. A critical element appeared to be successful assessment outcomes positioning the students well for success in a competitive job market and in future

postgraduate study opportunities. In addition, students benefited from the inter-cultural experiences afforded by the Australian course content and exemplars, interactions with foreign students via online course forums and valued dialogue with their course examiners during teaching school visits, all of which facilitated a broadening of perspective and satisfaction with the transnational experience.

Studying in English presented both opportunities and challenges. Students claimed they had improved their written and spoken English and professional vocabulary, yet they still faced the challenges of comprehension of course materials. English language difficulties were reported to be a cause of attrition from the program in the first year and students believed they were disadvantaged by a certain cultural dissonance between Chinese and Australian grading systems.

ZUCC staff varied in their classroom pedagogy, but all surveyed used a blend of English and Chinese in their oral presentations and delivery of class materials. This bilingual blend helped students to navigate the difficult transition in undertaking an English-language degree. The teachers' use of translanguaging through a culturally sensitive understanding of the language needs of the students may also have assisted students to develop English language skills, enabling their cognitive development and increased confidence to speak in class. In addition, augmenting content with Chinese exemplars helped to reduce the disconnection between course materials and the social, political, and business context within which the students functioned. Programs such as this, with a translanguaging approach to pedagogy have the capacity to promote the academic achievement of emergent bilingual students, providing them with exposure to comprehensible language (Harklau, 1999, as cited in Lubliner & Grisham, 2017, p. xii).

## **CONCLUSION**

Good teaching practice of the host university and student qualities of self-efficacy and goal orientation combined to produce a positive experience for Chinese students in this transnational program. At the same time, language difficulties, cultural adjustment, and the contextual challenges of studying in a foreign language negatively impacted satisfaction for some students. We contend that the previously understated translanguaging ability of local teachers was a value-adding component of this transnational program. The Chinese teachers made a significant contribution to student satisfaction by mitigating those negative language and cultural factors. The teachers' bilingual presentation of the course materials, augmented by local contextual examples and translations of complex topics, contributed to student satisfaction. Translanguaging potentially enhanced the students' language development and their use of professional vocabulary in English, facilitating improved assessment outcomes, employment, and postgraduate prospects. The results, therefore, reinforce the notion that bilingual teaching by Chinese staff contributes to the quality of student satisfaction in transnational programs.

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