

Motivating Chinese Students with Personal Influence

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On 7th April 2017, we attended a video conference (International Conference on Responsible Research and Transformation in Education) in London. Our paper evaluated perceptions and attainments of Chinese students in relation to the use of translanguaging support via WeChat (Tencent Holdings Limited, 2011). We developed a honeycomb framework for the implementation of this kind of support with quick response, accurate information, informal communication style, convenient communication platform, variety of communication choices, and collaborative environment (Sun *et al.*, 2017b). Delegates from different parts of the world appeared to have great interest in this piece of research. Many questions were asked during the video session. However, we felt a question on 'how to motivate our Chinese students' has provoked us to reflect on another dimension of this project - the impact of personal influence from the lecturer on students. This might be an inspiring topic to be explored further.

Translanguaging support may have helped Chinese students in relation to their English proficiency and transition issues, to allow them to be more engaged in the class or any other learning activities. However, the majority of Chinese students are often too shy to talk, no matter at which level, or at which university (Edwards and Ran, 2006). Using the lecturer's personal influence to push students forward might help students who have limited interest or confidence in their studies. Therefore, this reflection focuses on the topic of "how to motivate Chinese students".

According to recent research (Sun and Smith, 2017; Sun *et al.*, 2017), Chinese students are part of the "always-on" generation. The use of social media is a type of lifestyle (McLoughlin and Lee, 2010), and Chinese students believe that WeChat is part of their culture because they feel they cannot live without it. Considering the experience of providing translanguaging support, we felt personal influence via social media might also have a positive impact on students, but this was not highlighted in our paper. It should be noted that it is crucial not only for students to understand what they are expected to do and to be able to engage in, but also to motivate them with personal influence. Lecturers, who have more frequent interactions with students, might well have more influence on students. Social media appears to be a very effective tool to populate this influence with low cost (Leung, 2007). An extensive amount of research has exposed both the positive and negative impact of social media on students' engagement, motivation, and performance (Cowley *et al.*, 2017; Gikas and Grant,

2013). However, research on how to use personal influence to motivate students appears to be limited.

Reflecting upon our experiences, we feel somekind of personal influence from lecturers via social media may have been revealed in the focus groups conducted for our current research projects (flipped classroom, social media, and translanguaging support). This influence might have boosted the impact of the personalised learning experience on students via encouragement, compliments, and guidance provided by lecturers during 1-1 conversation. Moreover, the use of social media helped students to be more relaxed during their conversations with lecturers and they felt more secure because social media appears to give them more privacy via 1-1 instant messaging system. Furthermore, students at Higher Education level 7 commented that the personal conversation they had with lecturers on social media was unexpected, which took their learning experience beyond their expectations. However, this appeared to have no such impact for the majority of students at Higher Education level 3 (Year 0 foundation level).

Consequently, it might be interesting to measure and evaluate this influence to give some insights for educators to understand how to manage our media relations in mass communication for motivating students. Our future research will aim to develop personal influence strategies for students at different levels and different disciplines via the support of social media, Moodle, and 1-1 meetings. Additionally, we feel it is imperative to consider the impact of personal influence on our daily teaching, pastoral care, and administration activities to help provide students with positive energy, due to many of our students belonging to the 'always-on' generation. This might be better as an embedded element within the role of the personal tutor. Some evidence would need to be collected to help personal tutors to understand how to provide support for students' study, career, and personal life, and personal influences. Such influences could help students to cope with current issues, and to be prepared for their future, especially students who may find difficulties in balancing their workload, family life, and study time, as well as students who may not have the required knowledge and skills for certain modules.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors confirm being the sole contributors of this work and approved it for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.