

Autonomy-support and transfer of learning: Testing the self-determination theory in a Chinese service-learning activity

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Introduction

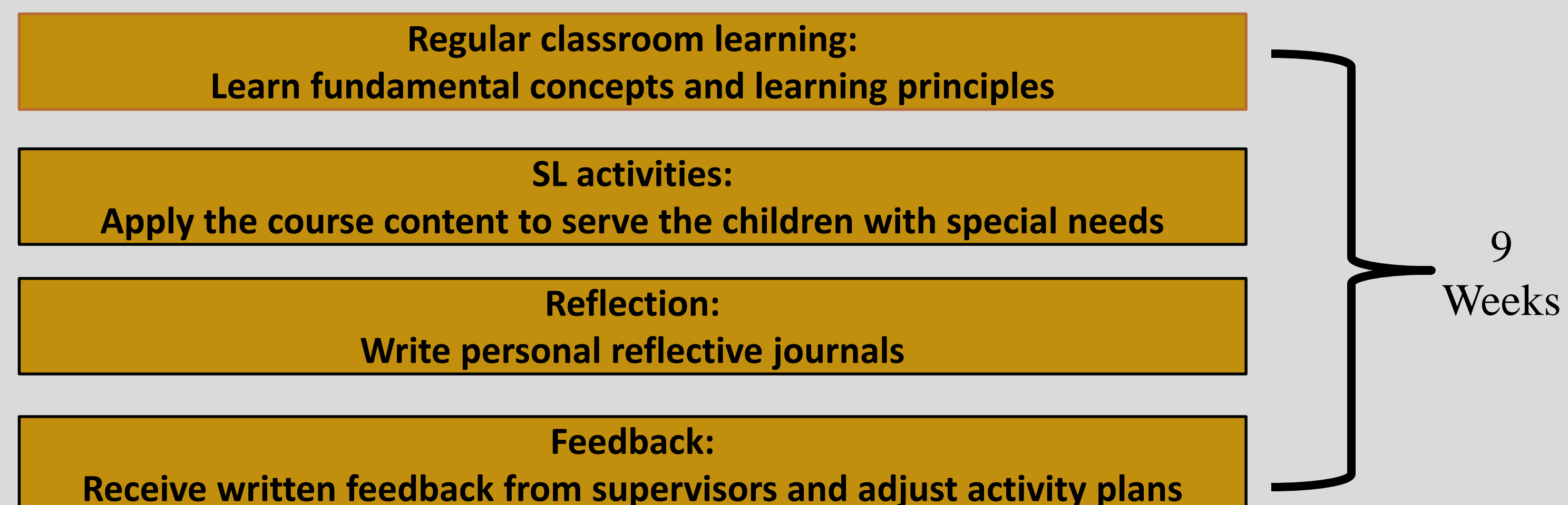
Service-learning is “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). Previous research has shown that participating in service-learning activities could promote college students’ transfer of learning (Wang, Zhang, & Yao, 2018). However, the dynamic processes and mechanisms of students’ development of transfer of learning have not been explored thoroughly. Furthermore, no one has explored the contextual factors that affect students’ transfer of learning in service-learning settings.

According to self-determined theory, autonomy-support from authorities is the key for promoting students’ motivation and performance. Therefore, we hypothesized autonomy-support from supervisors had a positive effect on students’ transfer of learning in the context of Chinese higher education.

Method

Participants

Participants were 96 undergraduates (75 females, 21 males) enrolled in a Psychology of Learning course that addressed the fundamental concepts and important findings related to learning sciences.



Measures

Psychologically controlling Teaching Scale (7-item, 5-point, Soenens, Sierens, Vansteenkiste, Dochy, & Goossens, 2012); SL evaluation scale (4-item, 5-point, Hill & Kellems, 2002); Cognitive conflict scale (12-item, 4-point, $\alpha=0.74$) (Lee & Kwon, 2003); Behavior engagement (10-item, 7-point, $\alpha=0.79$) (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009); Transfer of learning (Self-developed coding system, 5 points).

Results

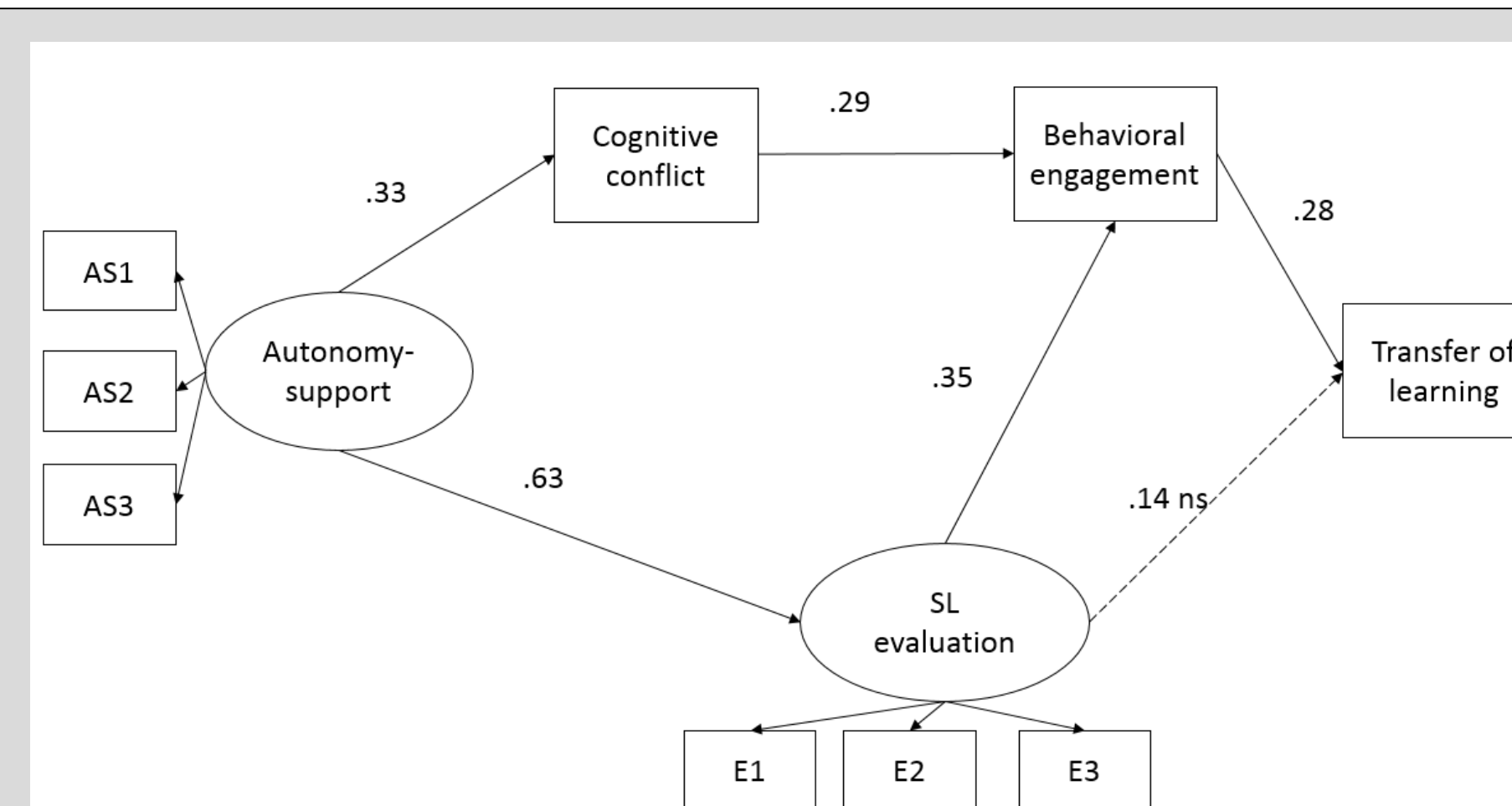


Figure 1. Structural equation model with standardized path coefficients.

Model fit: $\chi^2(24) = 33.28$, RMSEA = 0.08, NNFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98

Table 1. Correlation coefficients between constructs

	AS	CC	BE	SL	ToL
Autonomy-support	1				
Cognitive conflict	.31**	1			
Behavior engagement	.37**	.32**	1		
SL evaluation	.52**	.19	.29**	1	
Transfer of learning	.063	.27**	.33**	.23*	1

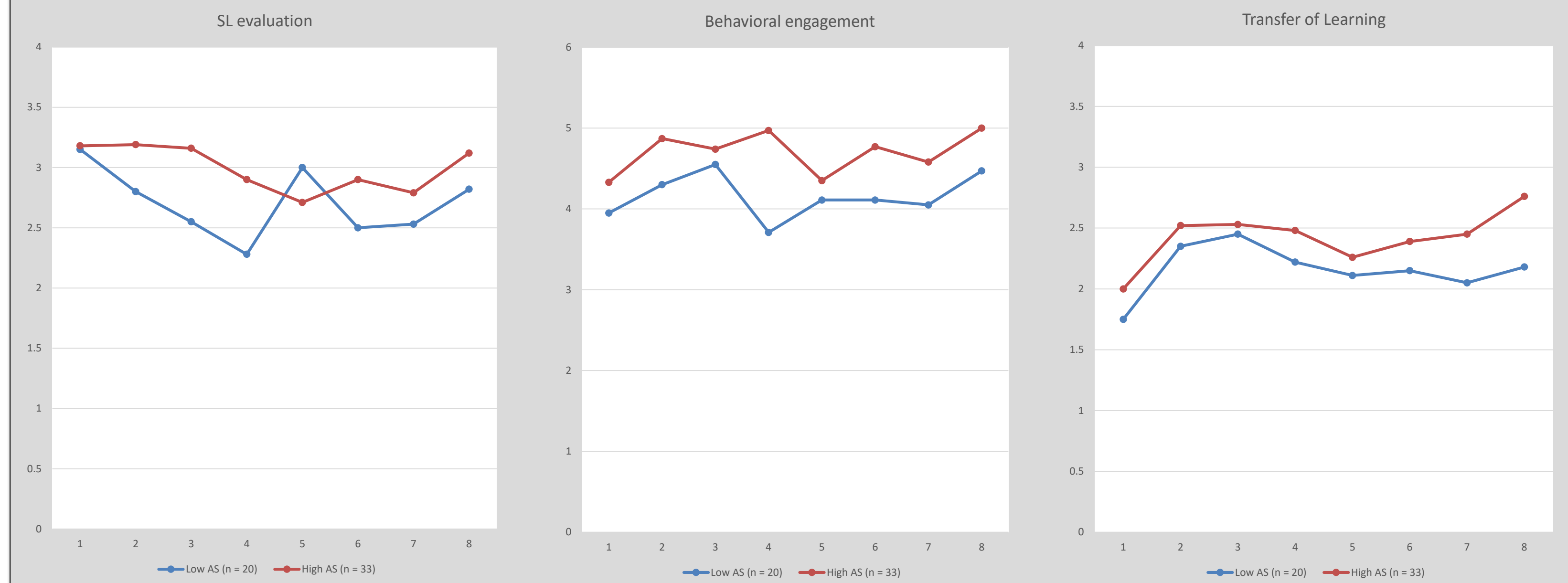


Figure 2. The changes of SL evaluation, behavioral engagement, and transfer of learning during service-learning.

Conclusion

Autonomy-support fosters students’ transfer of learning in a Chinese service-learning activity through the mediations of activity satisfaction and behavior engagement.