In recent years, to serve the Chinese government’s significant strategies including ‘go global’, Belt and Road Initiative, promoting language exchange and learning, building ‘the community of common destiny for mankind’, safeguarding the diversity of global civilisations, the university willingly accepts the strategic task of language education, and plans to cover languages of all the countries that have diplomatic relations with China by 2020.²

To attract talent to teach these foreign languages, the university is offering lucrative pay and benefits by China’s standards, such as a yearly salary of no less than RMB500,000 (US$72,000)³ for senior personnel, no less than RMB200,000 (US$28,900) for early-career Chinese personnel and no less than RMB240,000 (US$34,600) for early-career foreign teachers, in addition to other benefits such as accommodation and research funding.

**Case study of Samoan teaching**

In addition to BFSU, Liaocheng University in China’s Shandong province has started a Samoan course thanks to the interest from its Research Center for Pacific Island Countries in enriching Chinese students’ knowledge of Pacific languages and cultures. It is offered as an elective course. The formal teaching was started in May 2019 by Setope Soʻoa’emalelagi, a lecturer in Samoan language with an extensive background in political science and English as a second language. The opening of the Confucius Institute at the National University of Samoa in December 2018 triggered growing interest in Samoa from the BRI and created an opportunity for Liaocheng University to invite Samoan academics to teach Samoan culture and language from a Samoan perspective.

So far, the course at Liaocheng has had a good start. Chinese students are highly curious of such a ‘novel’ language and far-flung culture, which to them is exotic. The program is
implications

China sees the Pacific region as the southern extension of the BRI. It is expected that the Chinese government will continue to use the BRI to frame China–PIC cooperation in the near future. The teaching of Pacific languages, if it proceeds well, could promote China’s understanding of these island countries’ languages, cultures and other aspects such as politics and economies. It could facilitate the implementation of the BRI. It is expected that the Chinese government will continue to provide a large number of positions for these graduates. That explains why BFSU has planned to teach Pacific languages as a third and elective foreign language and expects students to find jobs based on their skills in English language. In this sense, the sustainability of China’s ambitious program of teaching Pacific languages will be tested in the future.

Author notes

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Endnotes

1. The university also offers new courses on a number of languages in other regions.
2. This was translated by first author.