

Bridging Voices: A Mini Review of Bel Canto's Pedagogical and Cultural Integration in China Universities

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ABSTRACT

This mini review critically examines the evolution and pedagogical transformation of the Bel Canto singing method within Chinese university music programs. While Bel Canto, rooted in Italian opera, has long symbolized vocal refinement, its integration into Chinese higher education raises complex questions of cultural translation, artistic authenticity, and pedagogical ownership. Drawing on empirical and theoretical studies published between 2020 and 2025, this paper synthesizes interdisciplinary perspectives spanning acoustic science, technological mediation, intercultural pedagogy, and decolonial music education. Findings reveal that Bel Canto's adaptation in China extends beyond technical imitation to a transcultural process of negotiation. Digital tools such as AI and IoT technologies have enhanced vocal precision and feedback mechanisms, yet their value depends on educators' capacity for ethical and culturally responsive application. Gender-sensitive and personality-oriented pedagogies further demonstrate the need for individualized, inclusive learning practices. The paper conceptualizes Bel Canto as a transcultural pedagogy of voice: a framework that interweaves embodied technique, dialogical culture, ethical reflexivity, and technological mediation. Through a micro-meso-macro analysis of classroom, institutional, and policy levels, the study proposes a model for culturally sustainable vocal education that bridges Western and Chinese traditions while fostering mutual enrichment rather than assimilation.

Keywords: Bel Canto pedagogy; transcultural music education; intercultural learning; embodied voice; vocal music in China; cultural hybridity; AI and IoT in vocal training; higher music education

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Chinese vocal education, the intersection between Western classical singing and traditional Chinese vocal aesthetics has become a pivotal site of pedagogical innovation and cultural negotiation. Among the imported Western techniques, the Bel Canto singing method, originating from Italian opera traditions, occupies a prominent role for its emphasis on purity of tone, refined breath control, and expressive phrasing. The growing adoption of Bel Canto in Chinese universities marks not merely a technical shift, but a broader rethinking of how global vocal traditions is localized within China's higher education system. This process reflects the ongoing dialogue between universalized Western standards of vocal art and the distinctive phonetic, emotional, and cultural identity of Chinese national singing.

The Bel Canto method, historically rooted in the ideals of "beautiful singing," prioritizes legato phrasing, resonance blending, and emotional authenticity. When introduced into the Chinese conservatory system, these qualities initially appeared foreign to native performance traditions, which privilege linguistic clarity and regionally inflected tonal color. However, over the past two decades, Chinese universities have increasingly

integrated Bel Canto techniques to enrich technical precision, expressive range, and international competitiveness of vocal students (Wang, Jamali, & Muhid, 2025). This integration process has not been merely imitative but transformative, giving rise to hybrid vocal pedagogies that merge Western operatic principles with Chinese musical sensibilities.

At the core of this pedagogical convergence lies the question: How can Bel Canto be meaningfully adapted within the Chinese context without eroding the cultural and aesthetic essence of national vocal styles? Scholars have examined this question through different lenses. Wang et al. (2025) demonstrate that Bel Canto's breath management and resonance control significantly enhance the projection and timbral clarity of Chinese songs, leading to a more balanced synthesis of emotional and technical delivery. This suggests that Bel Canto functions as both a technical and expressive scaffold through which Chinese singers can access a broader palette of vocal colors while maintaining native expressivity. Technological innovation has further amplified the pedagogical relevance of Bel Canto in Chinese higher education. Recent research shows that Internet of Things (IoT) devices are now used to analyze and refine vocal performance parameters such as breath stability, phonetic resonance, and vocal power (Zheng, 2025). These technologies facilitate individualized feedback loops, aligning with the trend of precision-based training. Such developments underscore the convergence of artistic pedagogy and data-driven analysis, situating vocal training within a broader digital learning ecosystem.

Meanwhile, gender-differentiated pedagogical models have emerged to address physiological and expressive diversity among singers. Jiang and Wu (2022) highlight how gender-specific approaches to breathing, resonance, and emotional expression enhance both vocal development and learner motivation. These insights reflect a holistic pedagogical shift, from rigid technical drills toward a more person-centered, psychophysiological model of learning (Wang, 2024). As creativity and self-expression gain importance in higher education, personality-oriented teaching becomes integral to how Bel Canto is contextualized and sustained in China's music conservatories.

Acoustically, the contrast between Bel Canto and Chinese national singing continues to attract scholarly attention. Liu and Wang (2025) identify that tenors trained in Bel Canto exhibit distinct spectral and formant structures, often emphasizing the "singer's formant" region that is less pronounced in Chinese styles. This acoustic differentiation reveals deep-seated contrasts in phonation and articulation, issues that are not merely technical but symbolic of broader aesthetic paradigms. Similarly, Lou (2024) employs AI-driven sentiment analysis to map emotional expression patterns in Italian opera, offering new analytical pathways to assess vocal nuance and interpretive authenticity. These studies collectively point toward a future where vocal pedagogy integrates cultural theory, acoustic science, and artificial intelligence, redefining what it means to "sing beautifully" in the 21st century.

Despite these advancements, significant cross-cultural and theoretical challenges persist. The adaptation of Bel Canto into Chinese contexts raises questions about cultural translation, artistic authenticity, and pedagogical ownership. While its techniques enrich Chinese vocal practice, there remains the risk of marginalizing indigenous vocal aesthetics or subordinating them to Western evaluative frameworks. Therefore, the current conceptual problem is not simply how to teach Bel Canto in China, but how to conceptualize Bel Canto pedagogically in ways that affirm mutual enrichment rather than assimilation. This article therefore seeks to critically synthesize the theoretical, technological, and pedagogical dimensions of Bel Canto in Chinese universities. It argues that the Bel Canto method functions as a transcultural pedagogical framework, one that enables both technical advancement and cultural dialogue. By examining how breath, resonance, expression, and technological mediation intersect within this framework, the paper contributes to ongoing debates about global-local dynamics in music education and proposes directions for a culturally sustainable model of vocal pedagogy in the Chinese context. To address this conceptual problem, this paper adopts a mini-review approach, synthesizing empirical and theoretical studies published between 2020 and 2025. Sources were identified from Scopus-indexed journals and include scholarship on vocal acoustics, music technology, intercultural pedagogy, and decolonial education. Rather than aiming for exhaustive coverage, the synthesis focuses on patterns of theoretical convergence that reveal how Bel Canto functions as a transcultural pedagogical framework within Chinese higher music education.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL SYNTHESIS

To situate the pedagogical and cultural significance of Bel Canto within Chinese higher education, it is essential to examine how existing scholarship has interpreted this evolving practice. The literature spans multiple dimensions, historical, pedagogical, acoustic, technological, and cultural, each revealing distinct yet interrelated narratives of adaptation. However, much of the existing research remains fragmented, often emphasizing technical application or pedagogical innovation without addressing the broader theoretical implications of cultural hybridity and artistic ownership. The following synthesis therefore reviews and critically evaluates these strands of scholarship to clarify how Bel Canto has been conceptualized, contested, and reimaged in Chinese university contexts.

Historical Trajectories and Pedagogical Shifts

The introduction of Bel Canto into Chinese university music programs represents one of the most significant turning points in the modernization of China's vocal education system. Historically, the adoption of this Italian singing method in the 20th century coincided with China's broader aspiration to align its higher education in the arts with Western classical traditions. The literature consistently identifies Bel Canto as a technique that offered Chinese singers greater technical control and expressive capacity (Wang, Jamali, & Muhid, 2025; Jiang & Wu, 2022). However, this integration was not merely pedagogical, it signified a profound cultural negotiation between Western tonal ideals and Chinese linguistic and aesthetic identities. While many studies have highlighted the benefits of this fusion, such as improved resonance and breath management (Wang et al., 2025), fewer have critically interrogated its epistemological implications. By framing Bel Canto as an "enhancement" to Chinese vocal methods, much of the existing literature risks reinforcing a hierarchical view that privileges Western vocal standards as the benchmark of technical and expressive excellence. This assumption underplays the cultural and phonetic integrity of Chinese vocal traditions, which prioritize linguistic clarity, tonal color, and narrative authenticity. The challenge, therefore, is to reinterpret this integration not as Westernization but as the emergence of a transcultural pedagogical practice, a hybrid space where distinct singing cultures interact and evolve.

Pedagogical and Technological Innovations

Recent research on Bel Canto in Chinese higher education reveals a marked shift toward technologically mediated pedagogy. Parallel to these developments, recent reviews by Mazlan (2025) emphasize that the rise of AI and IoT in music education reflects a broader global trend of hybridized learning ecosystems, within which Bel Canto pedagogy in China can be contextualized. Zheng (2025) demonstrates how Internet of Things (IoT) devices allow for real-time monitoring of students' breath control, resonance, and phonation, offering quantifiable insights previously inaccessible in traditional training. Similarly, Tang (2022) shows that AI-based sentiment analysis and neural network models can evaluate emotional expression in vocal performance, enabling feedback on subtler affective qualities. Together, these technologies appear to promise a more precise and personalized learning environment.

However, this technological optimism warrants scrutiny. While IoT and AI tools enhance technical standardization and feedback accuracy, they also risk reducing singing to measurable mechanics, potentially marginalizing its embodied and emotional dimensions. Bel Canto, as a historical practice, is deeply rooted in the embodied knowledge of the singer, the connection between body, emotion, and musical lines. Literature rarely addresses how digital mediation might alter that embodied experience, or how algorithmic feedback interacts with the singer's interpretive agency. This critical gap invites the question: does technological precision necessarily translate into artistic depth?

Parallel pedagogical innovations reflect a similar duality. Gender-differentiated teaching methods (Jiang & Wu, 2022) and personality-oriented learning models (Wang, 2024) highlight an important movement toward individualized pedagogy in Chinese vocal education. Such approaches acknowledge the physiological and emotional diversity of learners, aligning with constructivist and humanistic educational theories. Yet, these methods still operate within a framework primarily concerned with adapting students to Bel Canto standards,

rather than allowing Bel Canto to adapt to Chinese cultural and linguistic contexts. The literature thus exposes a paradox: pedagogical innovation thrives, but conceptual decolonization lags.

Acoustic and Technical Comparisons

The acoustic and physiological studies of Bel Canto and Chinese national singing provide rich empirical insights, but their conceptual implications remain underexplored. Liu and Wang (2023, 2025) reveal that Bel Cantotrained singers exhibit distinct formant clustering in the 2–3 kHz range (the “singer’s formant”), facilitating projection and tonal uniformity across registers. In contrast, Chinese national singing displays greater phonetic specificity and variability, often shaped by tonal language patterns and text-driven articulation. This technical contrast encapsulates deeper aesthetic priorities: Bel Canto pursues homogeneity of sound and sustained legato, whereas Chinese vocal art values textual intelligibility and the expressive contours of linguistic tone. Recent evidence also underscores the importance of vocal health awareness among Chinese music students, highlighting both physiological and pedagogical dimensions of safe vocal technique (Xiao & Mazlan, 2024). Integrating Bel Canto breath and resonance principles within this framework could contribute to sustainable voice use in higher education.

Critically, these studies suggest more than a difference in vocal mechanics, they reveal divergent philosophies of voice. Bel Canto is predicated on a universalizing ideal of tone beauty, while Chinese national singing treats voice as a culturally inscribed medium of expression. The dominance of acoustic terminology (formants, harmonics, resonance peaks) in existing research risks flattening these philosophical nuances. By reducing cultural difference to measurable frequency spectra, such research often misses the larger question of how technique and meaning co-evolve within specific cultural logics. What is needed, therefore, is a theoretical lens that interprets acoustic distinctions as expressions of cultural epistemologies, not simply physiological phenomena.

Cultural Hybridity and Theoretical Gaps

Scholars such as Wang et al. (2025) and Xia (2022) acknowledge that the integration of Bel Canto with Chinese national vocal techniques fosters innovation and emotional richness. Yet, these works largely treat hybridity as an additive process: Chinese singing + Western technique = improved performance. This instrumentalist framing overlooks hybridity’s deeper, dialogical nature. The interaction between Bel Canto and Chinese vocal aesthetics is not merely technical borrowing, it is a process of mutual transformation, where each tradition reshapes the other’s pedagogical assumptions, expressive goals, and aesthetic standards.

From a theoretical standpoint, this process aligns with the concept of transcultural pedagogy, where learning occurs across overlapping cultural boundaries rather than within a single tradition. However, literature seldom articulates this explicitly. Few studies engage with critical theories of interculturality or pedagogical hybridity, resulting in what might be called a theoretical silence around the cultural politics of voice. Without such perspectives, discussions of Bel Canto in China risk remaining at the level of technical adaptation rather than cultural co-creation. Furthermore, while most studies emphasize the enrichment of Chinese vocal performance through Western technique, little attention is paid to the reverse flow, how Chinese aesthetic values might challenge or expand Bel Canto pedagogy itself. This absence reinforces a one-way model of influence, perpetuating the notion that innovation flows from West to East. A more critical lens would instead ask how Chinese vocal traditions contribute new understandings of timbre, emotion, and expressivity to global vocal discourse.

Synthesis: Toward a Transcultural Pedagogy of Voice

Taken together, the existing scholarship provides a multifaceted but fragmented picture of Bel Canto’s role in Chinese universities. Historical studies emphasize modernization and professionalization; acoustic analyses focus on vocal mechanics; pedagogical research explores motivation, gender, and technology. Emerging AI-driven voice analysis systems, such as those demonstrated by Mazlan et al. (2025) in educational acoustics research, further illustrate how data-driven feedback can extend perception and enhance self-regulated vocal

learning. Yet few works attempt to synthesize these domains conceptually. The result is a body of literature that is rich in empirical detail but limited in theoretical integration. A critical synthesis suggests that the central issue is not whether Bel Canto should be localized, but how localization can be understood as a dynamic, reciprocal process.

Bel Canto in China has evolved from a foreign import into a pedagogical practice situated between cultures, technologies, and identities. However, to move beyond technical hybridity, future research must adopt frameworks that account for the cultural, embodied, and epistemological dimensions of voice. The challenge for educators and researchers is to cultivate a pedagogy that honors both the discipline of technique and the diversity of expression, a pedagogy that listens not only to sound, but to culture. In this sense, Bel Canto in Chinese universities should be conceptualized as a transcultural pedagogy of voice: a field where breath, sound, language, and culture intersect to produce new forms of musical knowledge. This critical perspective transforms Bel Canto from a symbol of Western mastery into a platform for intercultural dialogue, one that reflects China's ongoing negotiation with global modernity through the artistry of the human voice.

Discussion: Toward A Transcultural Pedagogy of Voice

The preceding literature review revealed that Bel Canto's integration into Chinese higher music education has been marked by both innovation and tension, technological advancement, pedagogical reform, and cultural negotiation. Yet, these studies remain largely descriptive, offering limited theoretical explanation for how such diverse elements interact within the broader educational landscape. This discussion therefore reframes the reviewed findings through the lens of transcultural and intercultural pedagogy, interpreting Bel Canto not as a borrowed technique but as a dialogical process of cultural and pedagogical transformation. By theorizing this intersection, the section proposes a model of Bel Canto as a transcultural pedagogy of voice that bridges technique, technology, and culture. This analysis also draws upon decolonial music education perspectives, which question how Western epistemologies continue to shape pedagogical hierarchies in global music training (Sánchez-Gatt, Menon, & Hess, 2025). Framing Bel Canto through this lens situates its adaptation in China not merely as cultural borrowing but as a dialogical rearticulation of artistic agency.

From Adaptation to Transcultural Pedagogy

The integration of Bel Canto into Chinese university vocal programs has often been described as a process of adaptation, an attempt to modernize or internationalize Chinese singing through the adoption of Western vocal methods (Wang, Jamali, & Muhid, 2025). Yet, framing this evolution as mere adaptation oversimplifies the cultural and pedagogical complexity involved. Emerging transcultural and intercultural theories in music education (Sánchez-Gatt, Menon, & Hess, 2025; Westerlund et al., 2022) emphasize that learning across cultures should not reproduce hierarchies of "donor" and "receiver," but rather cultivate a dialogical process of mutual transformation. Applying this lens to Bel Canto in China shifts the narrative: what has developed is not a passive assimilation of Western opera technique but an evolving transcultural pedagogy of voice, where Italian operatic discipline and Chinese expressive aesthetics interact to produce new artistic meanings. This re-conceptualization aligns with Campbell and Mellizo's (2024) argument that music education must move "from rhetoric to realities" of intercultural engagement by acknowledging power, context, and identity in performance. The contemporary Chinese vocal classroom therefore becomes a third space, a site where global technique and local sound values coexist, challenge, and redefine one another.

The Interplay of Technique, Technology, and Embodiment

Recent Chinese studies foreground technological innovation, such as IoT sensors, AI-based sentiment analysis, and acoustic visualization as powerful tools for improving technical mastery (Zheng, 2025; Tang, 2022). While these advances expand possibilities for individualized feedback and precision, they also risk disembodiment of the singer, transforming artistry into data. In contrast, intercultural pedagogy research (Bartleet et al., 2020; Joseph, Nethsinghe, & Cabedo-Mas, 2020) underscores embodied participation as central to intercultural learning: musical understanding emerges through bodily interaction, not detached analysis. When viewed together, these literatures suggest that Bel Canto's future in Chinese universities depends on balancing technological mediation

with embodied awareness. The breath-centered principles of Bel Canto, like arpeggio, resonance flow, and expressive phrasing, already represent an embodied cognitive system. Integrating digital feedback should therefore serve to enhance this embodied understanding rather than replace it. The most progressive pedagogy will combine technological precision with corporeal and emotional authenticity, allowing students to inhabit a space where the voice becomes both scientifically refined and culturally expressive.

Reframing Authenticity and Cultural Ownership

One persistent tension in global music education concerns artistic authenticity: who decides what counts as “authentic” performance when traditions intersect? Liu and Wang’s (2025) acoustic research implicitly elevates the Bel Canto tone ideal, a pure, projected sound sustained across registers while Chinese vocal aesthetics value textual clarity and tonal nuance. This contrast mirrors the broader debate in transcultural music pedagogy over the danger of privileging Western criteria of excellence (Sánchez-Gatt et al., 2025). From a critical perspective, authenticity in transcultural contexts must be redefined not as fidelity to an original source, but as ethical responsiveness to multiple musical identities. Rector (2025) calls this a “culturally sustaining pedagogy,” where teaching honors both local and global traditions by cultivating reflexivity in educators and learners. In Chinese Bel Canto programs, this could mean treating Italian technique as one expressive resource among many, while empowering students to integrate linguistic rhythm, poetic imagery, and timbral aesthetics from Chinese art song. Such pedagogical co-creation transforms Bel Canto from a symbol of Western mastery into a dialogical art form that negotiates authenticity through collaboration.

Theoretical Synthesis: Bel Canto as Transcultural Pedagogy of Voice

Drawing these threads together, Bel Canto’s evolution in China can be conceptualized as a transcultural pedagogy of voice, a dynamic framework uniting technical, cultural, and technological dimensions of singing. As illustrated in Figure 1, this framework conceptualizes Bel Canto as a transcultural pedagogy grounded in four interrelated principles: embodied technique, dialogical culture, ethical reflexivity, and technological mediation.

Conceptual Foundations of Bel Canto as a Transcultural Pedagogy of Voice

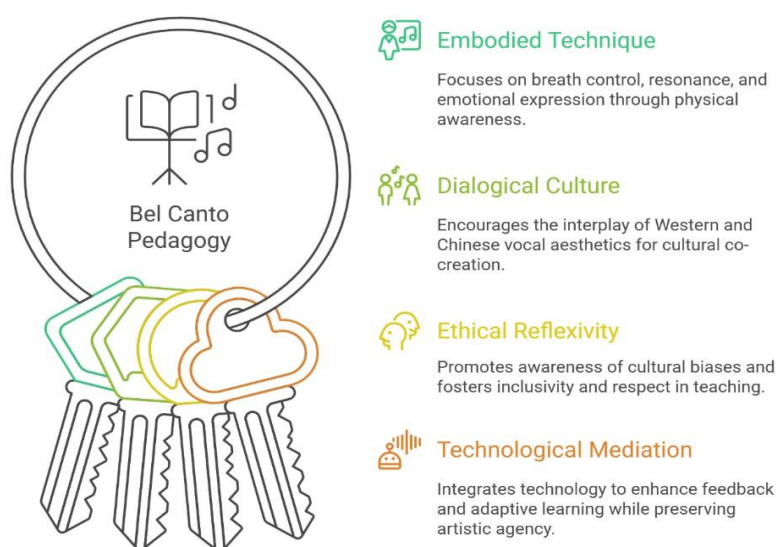


Figure 1. Conceptual foundations of Bel Canto as a transcultural pedagogy of voice, illustrating four interrelated principles: embodied technique, dialogical culture, ethical reflexivity, and technological mediation, that together support intercultural and inclusive vocal education in Chinese universities.

(Source: Authors)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the four foundational principles of Bel Canto pedagogy operate as an integrated system, shaping a transcultural pedagogical model that interweaves technical mastery, cultural dialogue, ethical

awareness, and technological innovation. Together, they position voice education as a multidimensional process that unites artistic, cognitive, and cultural forms of knowing. The synthesis reveals four interlocking dimensions:

1. **Embodied Technique** – Bel Canto’s breath management and resonance principles provide the physiological basis for expressive freedom. When situated within Chinese linguistic and poetic traditions, these techniques nurture embodied intercultural learning (Bartleet et al., 2020).
2. **Dialogical Culture** – The convergence of Western operatic and Chinese national vocal aesthetics exemplifies intercultural co-creation, reflecting Westerlund et al.’s (2022) “pedagogy of interruption,” in which encounters across difference generate new artistic knowledge.
3. **Ethical Reflexivity** – Vocal educators must critically interrogate how pedagogical practices may reproduce colonial hierarchies (Sánchez-Gatt et al., 2025) and instead cultivate humility, inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness.
4. **Technological Mediation** – Digital tools such as AI and IoT-based feedback systems (Zheng, 2025; Tang, 2022) act not as substitutes for artistry but as mediators that extend perception, support reflection, and enable cross-cultural analysis of sound.

Collectively, these principles conceptualize voice training as both artistic practice and cultural inquiry. This synthesis situates Bel Canto within global movements toward de-colonial and intercultural music education, aligning with Mantie & Tironi-Rodó (2024) and Campbell & Mellizo (2024), who advocate pedagogies that fuse technical excellence with cultural empathy.

Bridging to Practice and Policy

Understanding Bel Canto as a transcultural pedagogy reshapes how Chinese universities might design vocal curricula. Instead of positioning Bel Canto as an imported benchmark, institutions could embed it within pluralist frameworks that emphasize comparative study, bilingual repertoire, and collaborative intercultural projects. This approach parallels the “global mobility” and “intercultural exchange” programs described by Bartleet et al. (2020) and Joseph et al. (2020), which demonstrate how immersive collaboration fosters both musical growth and identity negotiation. Such reorientation would also influence policy at the institutional and national levels: assessment rubrics could include cultural reflexivity alongside technical mastery, and teacher training could incorporate modules on transcultural competence. These steps would align China’s evolving vocal pedagogy with broader global movements toward ethically grounded and culturally sustaining education.

SUMMARY

The discussion demonstrates that the convergence of Bel Canto and Chinese vocal traditions is not a story of assimilation but of transformation. When interpreted through the lens of transcultural pedagogy, this intersection becomes a living laboratory for exploring how technique, technology, and culture co-construct musical meaning. By integrating embodied practice, digital innovation, and ethical reflexivity, educators can cultivate a new generation of singers who are not only technically accomplished but also culturally attuned and globally literate.

Pedagogical and Policy Implications

Building on the theoretical synthesis presented earlier, the following section translates the concept of Bel Canto as a transcultural pedagogy of voice into practical and policy-oriented dimensions. While the preceding discussion explored the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of this model, its broader significance lies in how these principles can reshape teaching, curriculum, and institutional strategy. To bridge theory and practice, the implications are examined across three interrelated levels: micro (classroom pedagogy), meso (institutional and curricular structures), and macro (policy and global education). This multilevel framing situates Bel Canto pedagogy not only as a technical discipline but also as a transformative educational paradigm capable of fostering cultural dialogue, inclusivity, and sustainability in higher music education.

Micro Level: Classroom Pedagogy and Learning Design

At the classroom level, a transcultural approach to Bel Canto education calls for rethinking voice teaching as intercultural dialogue rather than technical transmission. Traditional vocal pedagogy in China has often

emphasized replication of Western models, ideal tone production, resonance balance, and stylistic imitation (Wang, Jamali, & Muhid, 2025). However, drawing on transcultural pedagogy principles (Campbell & Mellizo, 2024; Westerlund et al., 2022), educators can transform the studio into a space of mutual cultural inquiry. Teachers can implement comparative vocal analysis, for example, examining how the same poetic text is interpreted through Bel Canto phrasing and Chinese folk singing. This dual approach cultivates both technical mastery and cultural awareness. Similarly, integrating reflective journaling or discussion-based critique encourages students to interrogate how their vocal choices embody linguistic, cultural, and emotional meaning. As Hassim & Mazlan (2024) emphasize, students' persistence in music learning is shaped by an interplay of internal motivations and external support systems, which aligns with Bel Canto-based instruction emphasizing both self-regulation and teacher scaffolding.

Technological mediation offers further pedagogical potential. Tools such as IoT-enabled biofeedback and AI-based resonance analysis (Zheng, 2025; Tang, 2022) can provide personalized diagnostic insights while allowing students to visualize differences between Western and Chinese tonal systems. However, consistent with Bartleet et al. (2020), these technologies must be used within an embodied learning paradigm, supporting bodily awareness, not replacing it. Effective pedagogy therefore combines digital precision with kinesthetic understanding, situating technological analysis within the expressive act of singing. Finally, incorporating gender-differentiated and personality-oriented teaching (Jiang & Wu, 2022; Wang, 2024) aligns with transcultural ethics by recognizing individual difference as a source of artistic diversity. This individualized approach nurtures students' identity formation, enabling them to construct hybrid artistic selves rather than conform to a singular "authentic" sound ideal.

Meso Level: Institutional and Curricular Reform

At the institutional level, adopting Bel Canto as a transcultural framework requires curricular transformation. Current Chinese university programs often treat Western classical singing as a distinct stream parallel to, rather than integrated with, national vocal traditions. A transcultural curriculum would interweave global and local repertoire, positioning students as co-creators of cross-cultural meaning rather than passive recipients of stylistic conventions. Universities could, for example, design intercultural ensemble projects or team-taught courses that pair Western and Chinese voice faculty to explore blended performance styles. These initiatives resonate with Joseph et al. (2020) model of intercultural collaboration, which enhances both musicianship and cultural empathy. In parallel, assessment frameworks should evolve instead of evaluating students purely on tonal uniformity and projection, rubrics might assess intercultural awareness, expressive versatility, and ethical engagement with diverse musical materials. This aligns with broader transformations in higher education described by Mazlan et al. (2025), who identify digital hybridization, personalized learning, and adaptive feedback as defining trends in modern learning environments. These trends provide fertile ground for embedding Bel Canto pedagogy into technologically mediated curricula.

Institutional research centers could further promote practice-based inquiry into transcultural singing methods, combining acoustic research (Liu & Wang, 2025) with ethnographic reflection. By fostering interdisciplinary research across voice science, education, and cultural studies, universities can lead the development of a uniquely Chinese model of global vocal education, scientifically informed, artistically diverse, and culturally grounded. Importantly, as Westerlund et al. (2022) argue, teacher education programs must embed critical reflexivity, helping future vocal pedagogues question their own cultural assumptions and power relations in teaching. This aligns with Rector's (2025) call for culturally sustaining pedagogy, ensuring that Bel Canto training evolves in ethically responsible and locally meaningful ways.

Macro Level: Policy and Global Music Education

At the policy level, recognizing Bel Canto as a transcultural pedagogy supports China's broader goals of cultural exchange and educational internationalization while preserving national artistic identity. Ministries of education and culture could encourage universities to adopt global music frameworks that emphasize collaboration, not competition, between traditions. This vision aligns with Mantie and Tironi-Rodó's (2024) argument for interculturalism as policy, where music education functions as a platform for inclusive global citizenship.

Policies might promote exchange programs, intercultural festivals, and co-authored digital archives that document hybrid vocal works, reinforcing the role of music as a medium of social inclusion and intercultural understanding (Aparicio & León, 2018).

These initiatives would not only enhance students' intercultural competence but also contribute to international recognition of Chinese vocal artistry. As Ma & Zeng (2025) note, global music education trends already reveal that transcultural exposure enhances creativity, cognitive development, and professional adaptability. On a broader ethical level, Sánchez-Gatt, Menon, and Hess (2025) remind educators that transcultural practices must resist neo-colonial narratives. Policy frameworks should therefore emphasize reciprocal exchange, valuing Chinese cultural contributions to global vocal pedagogy. Such policies would reposition China not merely as a recipient of Western techniques but as a co-shaper of 21st-century global vocal discourse.

Summary of Implications

The pedagogical and policy implications of this transcultural model can be summarized across three interconnected levels, as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Pedagogical and Policy Implications of Bel Canto as a Transcultural Pedagogy of Voice

Level	Focus	Key Implications
Micro (Classroom)	Teaching and learning processes	Foster dialogical, embodied, and technology-enhanced learning; emphasize comparative analysis and reflexive practice.
Meso (Institutional)	Curriculum and assessment	Develop hybrid courses and intercultural collaborations; integrate cultural reflexivity into teacher training and evaluation.
Macro (Policy)	National and global frameworks	Promote intercultural exchange programs and policy incentives that affirm mutual enrichment and resist cultural hierarchy.

In sum, Bel Canto's integration into Chinese higher education can become a model for transcultural vocal pedagogy worldwide. By operationalizing this framework across educational scales, China's music institutions can demonstrate how classical technique, digital innovation, and cultural pluralism can coexist productively. This approach reframes Bel Canto from a Western import into a culturally sustainable, globally dialogical practice, a living embodiment of musical exchange in an interconnected world. Collectively, these implications suggest that Bel Canto's transcultural model not only informs teaching strategies but also redefines institutional and policy structures for a culturally sustainable future in music education

CONCLUSION

As this review has shown, the Bel Canto tradition in China exemplifies how global musical practices can evolve into locally meaningful pedagogies, bridging voices across cultures and institutions. The integration of the Bel Canto singing method into Chinese university music programs reflects a complex negotiation between artistic technique, cultural identity, and educational reform. While initially introduced as a means of aligning Chinese vocal training with global performance standards, Bel Canto's evolution in China has transcended imitation. This review demonstrates that the method now functions as a transcultural pedagogy of voice, a living framework that connects Western operatic technique with Chinese aesthetic and linguistic traditions through dialogue, technology, and embodied practice. Across the literature, Bel Canto emerges as both a site of innovation and tension. Technological tools such as IoT and AI have advanced precision in vocal training, yet they also highlight the need to preserve the emotional and embodied essence of singing. Similarly, while Western vocal ideals have enriched Chinese vocal expressivity, they have simultaneously raised concerns about cultural assimilation and

pedagogical dependence. The concept of transcultural pedagogy, drawn from global music-education theory, offers a way forward: it reframes Bel Canto not as an imported model but as a shared, evolving space of intercultural creation. By synthesizing technical, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions, this paper argues for a model of voice education that is both globally engaged and locally grounded. Such an approach affirms mutual enrichment between Western and Chinese vocal traditions, ensuring that future generations of singers are not merely carriers of technique but reflective cultural interpreters. Ultimately, the transcultural pedagogy of voice positions Bel Canto education in China as a vital contributor to the global dialogue on decolonizing and diversifying music education in the 21st century. As Mazlan (2025) argues, the future of music education depends on pedagogical frameworks that balance cultural authenticity with adaptive innovation, an ethos echoed in Bel Canto's transcultural evolution within Chinese universities.

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Ethical Approval

Not applicable

Consent To Participate

Not applicable

Consent To Publish

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