Promoting Beijing Opera Heritage via Multiple-media Convergence

Xia Zhang

School of Foregn languages, Wuhan University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China

znxhu@163.com

Abstract. Media convergence plays an increasingly significant role in transmission of culture, especially among GenZ students. Trans-medium and cross-platform modes of mass communication, featuring PGC (professionally-produced content), UGC (user-generated content), and OGC (occupationally-generated content), contribute to the majority of content presentation to which students are exposed. Under such a background, this study on promoting Beijing Opera heritage is conducted by integrating in-class instruction into converged multiple media. The purpose is to revive students' interest in Beijing Opera so as to explore a viable way to cultural inheritance. The study takes samples of students from WUST who take an optional course named Art Appreciation of Beijing Opera. Three phases of teaching serve as a test on students' levels of interest in Beijing Opera, all of which are facilitated by multiple media. At first, students are required to complete a questionnaire conducted through the platform of www.sojump.com, and their basic understanding, intensity of interest as well as motives to promote this heritage are assessed. Then, during a five-week course, students are exposed to comprehensive materials about Beijing Opera, including its history, schools of performance, styles of performance, four main role categories, representative repertoire and music, facial make-up &costumes. All of the content presentation is based on an integration of multiple media, with teachers serving as presenters. Students are actively involved because their credit is partly based on their participation in online quizzes, in-class improvises, and after-class investigation, etc. This study compares how an established 5 I (imagine, immerse, interact, identify with, innovate))teaching principle is upgraded along with innovations in multiple media. This upgradation testifies that an effective promotion of cultural heritage can be achieved through multiple media convergence whilst teachers no longer dominate the class. In the last stage, students' feedback and achievements are assessed via the platform of www.yuketang.cn. A survey is conducted as a comparison to the previous questionnaire. The finding of this study is that promotion of Beijing Opera heritage can be achieved under the condition that multiple media convergence and effective class management are integrated to satisfy Gen Z students' appeal.

Keywords: cultural heritage, media convergence, millennium generation's appeal, content presentation

1   Introduction

Various multimedia tools are employed to convert texts, symbols, images, audios, videos and animation into teaching resources, which proves to be a trend in media-assisted teaching. Meanwhile, social networking as a new way of sharing information, building a learning community, and organizing school tasks greatly enhances learning process. For example, Bilibili (China's largest online video platform and youth-oriented video streaming and sharing giant) is dubbed as "Teacher B" by the cultural community composed of Gen Zers (born between 1995 and 2009). It features real-time "Danmu " or "bullet chat", a form of displaying streams of text messages and commentary sent in by the audience because this type of annotation not only creates a cultural identity but also retains interest in information sharing. Even traditional educational institutions incorporate such multiple-media convergence into teaching programme. Typical examples include online OpenCourseWare platform (e.g.Xuetang X, Chinese Moocs, Zhihui Shu, Rain Classroom), online, interactive newspaper (e.g. China Daily),podcasts(e.g. Himalaya FM service),Video Series(e.g Growing Up with Chinese),database(e.g.SoJump),web-based or mobile tools for learning.

M.D. Abdulrahaman, et al. (2020) surveyed accessible multimedia tools in education and provides a comprehensive understanding on effectiveness of media-aided teaching. [1]As is shown in his study, 65% tools are standalone. Based on his study, how to integrate learning resources accessible online and thus produce high-quality content poses a challenge to today's teachers, especially in terms of content synthesis. Thus, a team from Wuhan University of Science and Technology intends to study on promoting Beijing Opera via content synthesis.

China Daily(2024) reported, "... Douyin (Tik Tok) has been inviting well-known artists to create short videos on its platform since 2019...On social media platform Sina Weibo(microblog), the hashtag 'Traditional Chinese operas' has generated more than 21 million views. " [2]Besides technical giants, professionals draw on their expertise to impart Beijing Opera knowledge. Cao Yuehua (2022)made a case study on Wang Peiyu, a famous Beijing Opera performer to illustrate how to carry forward Beijing Opera by means of diversified communication platforms, changing the traditional mode of stage communication.[3]Although traditional mass media like CCTV-11(drama channel) still serve as bastions of Beijing Opera heritage, Gen Z opera fans are more likely to be cultivated by new media such as the official microblog of CCTV Opera Channel and Beijing Opera art community with over 50,000 registered members.

Nationwide, media transformation in Chinese modern and contemporary art is partly achieved by cross-media communication, media fusion and media extension. Wang, Xiaoyu (2023) contended that multiple-media convergence is a three-dimensional concept: the technical support of media platforms themselves, the curriculum resources by teachers in the cloud, and interactive presentation between teachers and students.[4] A typical example is the emergence of short videos of Chinese Opera in bilibili.com. Taking cross-media model of operas as the core, the reproduction and consumption of short videos by a new generation of opera fans, the opera community at bilibili.com is

characteristic of participation of Gen Z opera fans whose dual identity are fans and bloggers. (Lou Xuejing 2023) .[5]

In the process of attracting the attention of young users and cultivating their cultural identity through short video, Beijing Opera undergoes enhances young users' sense of identity and and participation, and a consensus is achieved that "we are both communicator of Peking Opera art" (Wang Xiuming 2023).[6]

The present studies on applying multiple media to promoting Beijing Opera heritage provides guidelines for art education, providing an innovative prospective for teachers in class activities, meaningful interaction & feedback, interest retention, and in-depth involvement.

One practice is Community-Based Art Education (CBAE) in schools,which enhances students' sense of sociocultural identity and contextual learning about local art and culture. (Luo, N. and Lau, C.Y,2020). [7]Another practice is Sharing session + paid live broadcast of opera performance. Tianjin Daily reported that such an event hosted by Media Center of North Performing Arts Group(Tianjin) on Oct.10th, 2022 attracted 52000 viewers in the course of two hours. This event starring class-A Beijing Opera performers popularized basics of Beijing Opera through interactions, demonstrations and micro teaching. Still another is passing on Beijing Opera knowledge with the help of group chat on QQ and Wechat. Li Feifei shared her school's successful experience in Beijing Opera education in the cloud. (2021)[8]

In summary, promotion of Beijing Opera as a kind of art education has been boosted by means of media convergence. However, few research is conducted regarding teachers' roles as content producers and cultural community managers against the background of multiple media convergence.

2   Research Methods

Three phases of research serve as a test on students' levels of interest in Beijing Opera, all of which are facilitated by multiple media. Prior to the course, students are required to complete a questionnaire conducted through the platform of www.sojump.com (questionnaire link: https://www.wjx.cn/vm/QEM8zIc.aspx), and their basic understanding, intensity of interest as well as motives to promote this heritage are assessed. Then, during a five-week in-class instruction, students are exposed to comprehensive materials about Beijing Opera, including its history, schools of performance, styles of performance, four main role categories, representative repertoire and music,facial make-up &costumes. All of the content presentation is an integration of multiple media, with teachers serving as presenters. Students are actively involved because their credit is partly based on their participation in online quizzes, in-class improvises, and after-class investigation, etc. The second phase aims to testify that an effective promotion of cultural heritage can be achieved through multiple media convergence whilst teachers no longer dominate the class. In the last stage, students' feedback and achievements are assessed via the platform of www.yuketang.cn. Another survey is conducted, checking against the previous one.

This study employs various research methods with the help of modern technology(e.g. online teaching platforms, social networks and short videos). A comparative study is conducted on two surveys, before and after a five-week optional course named *Art Appreciation of Beijing Opera*(autumn semester,2023), open to all the students of Wuhan University of Science and Technology, combined with a follow-up interview conducted among previous students who show strong interest in Beijing Opera. This study aims to answer two research questions: 1. How can multiple media be converged to promote students' interest in Beijing Opera? 2. How can teachers act as content presenters with the help of media convergence, and thus explore an effective path for innovation in art education?

3　Research Procedures

3.1　Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 16 questions, mainly investigating students' levels of interest, knowledge,and expectation concerning the course. 131 students report that they are interested in Beijing Opera, as against 6 displaying intensive interest. However, their interest is evidently not based on their knowledge of this art. 132 students have very limited or little knowledge of it. The majority of them come into contact with Beijing Opera through mass media, with TV programs (40%)and Internet(31%) serving as major channels. Noticeably, 17 students know of Beijing Opera by going to the theatre. Books and family members also introduce this art to younger generations, with 17 students mentioning them in their response. 118 students are radically unfamiliar with the history of Beijing Opera, and 143 students believe they don't have easy access to it. Basically, they have positive impression on Beijing Opera since 39 students regard it as high art and 79 think of it as art for both refined and popular taste. As to the transmission of Beijing Opera, 121 students, accounting to 83% of respondents, suppose that Beijing Opera can be effectively promoted among GenZ students by means of converged media. They expect a Beijing Opera class based on multiple media, with 107 students mentioning an artistic skills instruction+media convergence model, 93 mentioning introducing performers+media convergence model, and 84 mentioning a classic appreciation+media convergence model.

In summary, the questionnaire points out a viable path to promoting Beijing Opera among Gen Z students. Seeing that students virtually are the uninitiated, teaching Beijing Opera is expected to focus on two areas, namely, content to be presented and multiple media to be converged.

3.2　Media-aided Teaching Material Synthesis

During a five-week course, students are exposed to comprehensive materials about Beijing Opera, including its history, schools of performance, styles of performance, four main role categories, representative repertoire and music, facial make-up &costumes. All of the content presentation is technically supported by an integration of multiple media. Teachers are supposed to take a new role of content presenters in this

course, based on data collected from the questionnaire. Teaching strategies, covering in-class instruction and after-class management and tutorial, are adopted to testify whether media convergence serves as an innovative method in art education.

First of all, teachers prepare teaching material via trans-medium and cross-platform channels. By combining learning content with multiple online learning platforms, great synergies are achieved. A host of online learning resources are accessible, so teachers act as data miners who are responsible for exploiting them and transforming them into teaching material.

Three categories of content are utilized by teachers. The first and most authoritative type is produced by professional Beijing Opera performers and teachers. Examples of such content include WeChat Video Channels/blogs of Beijing Opera performers, CCTV-11(drama channel)programs, official accounts/blogs of theaters, and Beijing Opera programs of online radios(e.g Ximalaya). PGC(professionally-produced content) accounts for the majority of teaching resources due to its high quality and artistic standard.

The second type of teaching resource is generated by users. UGC(user-generated content) proves to enjoy more popularity among Gen Zers. Images, videos and reviews are posted by Beijing Opera fans, after they go to the theatre, watch a Beijing Opera performance, or participate in an opera performance as fans. UGC, despite lack of expertise, is more friendly to fans and opera laymen. Teachers take UGC as teaching material, hoping to establish rapport with GenZ students Huge amount of such material prevails in WeChat Video Channels/blogs of Beijing Opera fans, Bilibili, podcast Douyin (Tik Tok),and other social media networks. In this study, teachers make use of short videos by popular uploaders, like Jun Di XIjing, Beijing Ximi, etc.

The last type of teaching material is generated by teachers, who can be either teachers from opera schools, training centers or colleges teachers who offer optional Beijing Opera courses for students on campus. Such OGC(occupationally-generated content) differs from the previously-mentioned types in terms of teaching aims. College teachers are expected to pass on cultural values and ethical principles entailed in Beijing Opera. Therefore, OGC can be obtained from an association named League of Liberal Education of Chinese Colleges. As a nonprofit group that supports liberal arts education in China, this association has hosted annual seminars as well as Beijing Opera performance contests for over 17 years. Teachers take advantage of this platform to exchange teaching material and experience.

In brief, media convergence opens up a new door for synthesis of teaching material . Innovation of education, is of great benefit such as high integration of information, interactive channels of teaching resources and decentralized authority in class instruction.

3.3   Media-aided Teaching and Management

Various media converged in this course greatly improve class efficiency, students' interest, and meaningful interaction. Starting from 2007, the course has attracted an average of 300 students per year. A "5I" teaching strategy (imagine, immerse, interact,

identify with, innovate) has been adopted. In recent years, as Gen Zers become the majority of students, this strategy keeps upgraded with the help of media convergence.

The first facet is to stimulate students' imagination. For example, teachers are replacing traditional teaching aids (e.g. flashcards, pictures, realia) with media-assisted ones. Now, 3D animation, VR and AR techniques offer students better visual experiences. Their imagination is stimulated when the stage is enlivened via new techniques.

The second facet is to get students actively immersed in the context of Beijing Opera. Unlike opera fans of older generations, who would rather go to the theatre to watch a play, Gen Zers are used to enjoy short videos extracting the most exciting parts. Teachers make full use of Tiktok to help students immersed in the context of Beijing Opera. For example, Tiktok produces special effect props by extracting elements of Beijing Opera. Every student can play a role of an opera character in role- playing games, just with one click in the app.

The third is to achieve the meaningful interaction between teacher and students. Gao Yan, the founder of the course in WUST, summarized her teaching experience in a paper published in 2014. In her teaching, interaction is mainly unidirectional or bidirectional, taking forms of question-and-answer, tutorial,and instruction as well. Her contribution also lies in establishing a students' association of Beijing Opera, where Gao Yan trains students fans more intensively in her spare time. Over 16 years, a constructive and productive interaction has been kept between two or three generations of Beijing Opera fans on campus. In recent years, two younger teachers took over the course and adopted converged media in building a multidimensional network of interaction. For example, an online education platform, Rain Classroom, is employed in the whole process of teaching. As a smart toolbox for teaching, which integrates software, apps, MOOC and Wechat social network, enable students to switch learning modes--- interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual, and auditory. Interaction occurs among teachers and students, aided by bullet-screen, personalized analysis for students, and labeling. When classroom interaction is facilitated by digital technology, teachers and students exchange knowledge of Beijing Opera, promote spiritual communication, and more importantly, spread positive cultural messages in the exploration of classical theatre.

The fourth is to help students identify themselves with Beijing Opera performers or characters. To regain and retain young generation's interest in Beijing Opera, a strategy is to publicize its cultural icons and idols. Unlike traditional storytelling, data storytelling is employed in this course to effectively communicate insights from a dataset. Take visualizations for example. Charts, graphs, diagrams, pictures, or videos help to put data insights into context and inspire action from students. A commonly used teaching activity goes like this: while teachers play videos of Mei Lanfang's(the king of Beijing Opera performance) life story , students are given handouts listing his masterpieces, lifeline, feats etc. in the form of graphs and charts. Meanwhile, students are encouraged to upload their ideas synchronously through We Chat, QQ, or other social networks. This innovative narrative evokes an emotional response and transforms short-term memory into long-term memory.

The fifth is to implement an innovative management system to enhance teaching efficiency and assessment. Besides tracking student attendance, releasing preview

assignments, sharing learning material, and checking student participation, class report cards and comments for students can be efficiently accomplished with apps and education platforms. For example, students are actively involved in this course because their credit is partly based on their participation in online quizzes, in-class improvises, and after-class investigation, etc. For both students and teachers, AI or Chat GPT can immediately be accessed to answer questions, retrieve information or do translation.

3.4   Findings

After the course, a survey is conducted by means of interviews, to test whether media convergence, if exploited by teachers in art education, effectively promotes Beijing Opera heritage among GenZ students. 60 of 145 students are required to write reports on what they've learned in the course. Consistent with the questionnaire, their reports include their knowledge about Beijing Opera, intensity of interest, and learning outcome. The following are excerpts from their reports.

First of all, the course is acclaimed by the majority of them. Students appreciate the course because of three reasons:1. It brings back meaningful and cherished memory of childhood. 10 students claim that they choose the course because of their grandparents--older generations of Beijing Opera fans. 2. It helps establish emotional connections. 50 students write in the report about their love for this traditional art, their appreciation of performers skills, traditional heritage and endeavor of Beijing Opera fans. 3. All of them enhance their understanding of Beijing Opera, and their interest in this art is greatly promoted.

Second, they tend to pay more active attention to Beijing Opera due to this course. For example, one student writes in the report that he used to catch a glimpse of Beijing Opera on TV or radio programs, being a passive recipient. After the course, he actively searches for performances of Beijing Opera from various media, like Tiktok, Bilibili. 11 students mention uploaders, podcast, bloggers who share resources of Beijing Opera, which are not included in teachers' references.

Third, all of them thank the teacher for the sake of the course. 45 of them regard this as an amazing cultural exploration, an interesting cultural experience, or a rewarding learning experience. According to them, the teacher acts as a guide rather than a monopoly on knowledge. One student even suggests that in the future, students should get more chances to make comments and feedback in the course of the class , by means of mobile phones.

Fourth, all of them report that they enjoy a combination of traditional teaching with media convergence, with teachers act as a content writer and information integrator. All the students use words like the teacher "shows us", "presents sth." or "I happily participate..." This is evidence that students welcome such a teaching mode as teachers conduct teaching by employing media-aided teaching material synthesis, teaching strategy and management.

4   Conclusion

Art education, especially transmitting cultural heritage by means of in-class instruction, is of greater significance in an era of decentralized communication. Taking a Beijing Opera course as an example, this paper explores a viable path of promoting students' interest in Beijing Opera via multiple media convergence where teachers act as content presenters. During the teaching process, teachers prepare teaching material with the help of media such as online Open CourseWare platform, online, interactive newspaper ,podcasts, video series, blogs,

web-based or mobile tool for learning. Class management and assessment can also be effectively accomplished via online apps and software. In general, students' interest in Beijing Opera is greatly improved, and their knowledge on this art is enhanced when teachers employ media-aided teaching material synthesis, teaching strategy and management.

References

1. M.D. Abdulrahaman, et.al. Multimedia tools in the teaching and learning processes: A systematic review, Heliyon, Volume 6, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e05312.
2. Traditional opera takes a tech turn - Chinadaily.com.cn,2024.02.24.
3. Cao Yuehua. Research on Wang Peiyu's Peking Opera Promotion and Dissemination Activities. DOI:10.27777/d.cnki.gynxy.2022.000034.
4. Wang, Xiaoyu. The Media Convergence Communication Form of Traditional Chinese Opera. Innovation Humanities and Social Sciences Research, Volume 9, 2023.
5. Lou, Xuejing. A Study on the Cross-media Production and Dissemination of Chinese Opera——An Analysis Based on the Short Video of Chinese Opera In Bilibili (2011-2023). MA thesis. doi:10.27040/ d.cnki.ggzdu.2023.001688.
6. Li, Feifei. Study on Cloud Education of Constructing Huizhou Opera and Peking Opera Art from Perspective of Aesthetic Education [J]. Anhui Education And Research, 2021(25):1-2.
7. Wang, Xiuming. Research on Multimodal Narrative Strategies and Cultural Identity in Short Video of Traditional Chinese Opera---Take the Short Video of TikTok Peking Opera as an Example. MA thesis, DOI:10.27272/d.cnki.gshdu.2023.004317.
8. Luo, N., & Lau, C.-Y. (2020). Community-based art education in China: Practices, issues and challenges. The International Journal of Art & Design Education, 39(2), 445-460. doi: 10.1111/jade.12287.