



Constructing Intercultural Teaching Competence in an Omni-Media Environment: A Case Study of University Workshops on Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage in Malaysia

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Abstract. In response to initiatives promoting international cultural exchange, this study examines a critical question in higher education: how can university teachers develop the necessary competencies to effectively facilitate cross-cultural understanding in a digitally connected world? Focusing on a series of hands-on workshops conducted in Malaysian universities, this research investigates the professional growth of teachers who designed and led practical sessions on Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), such as paper-cutting and calligraphy. Utilising an “education-media” integrated approach, the workshops served as a unique site for participatory action research. Data gathered from observations, teacher interviews, reflective journals, and workshop-generated media content reveal a discernible developmental trajectory. Participating teachers progressed from initially adapting content for a new audience, to skilfully integrating ICH techniques with multimedia tools, and ultimately to co-creating cultural narratives with participants. This process was underpinned by a “micro-circulation” model of dissemination, which prioritised deep, interactive engagement over broad broadcasting. The study concludes by proposing a practical Resource-Context-Reflection (RCR) model, which outlines how targeted resources, the specific workshop environment, and structured reflective practice interact to foster teachers’ roles as cultural mediators. The findings offer a replicable framework for professional development programs aiming to equip educators with the intertwined skills of digital pedagogy, cultural translation, and intercultural facilitation.

Keywords: Intercultural Teaching Competence; Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Education; Omni-Media Pedagogy; Teacher Professional Development; Cross-Cultural Workshop; Higher Education

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The international landscape of cultural exchange is undergoing a profound transformation, shifting from state-centric diplomacy to decentralized, educationally-grounded encounters. This evolution is amplified by China's Belt and Road Initiative, which explicitly champions "people-to-people bonds" as a core objective, thereby elevating cultural and educational collaboration to a strategic priority [1]. Within this context, Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) – including practices such as paper-cutting and calligraphy – is increasingly framed not as static folklore for preservation, but as a living medium for dialogue. Its international transmission is now seen as a process of collaborative meaning-making, demanding pedagogical innovation beyond mere exhibition [2].

Concurrently, the digital turn in education has precipitated the rise of "omni-media" environments. These environments demand that educators synthesize diverse media platforms—from social media to digital storytelling tools—into coherent pedagogical narratives. This synthesis moves beyond simple technology use, requiring teachers to become architects of integrated learning experiences where media is both a channel for and a constituent of cultural content [3]. Consequently, university teachers involved in cross-cultural ICH projects face a complex new mandate. They must navigate a triple imperative: mastering the cultural content itself, designing pedagogically sound and engaging experiences around it, and leveraging omni-media strategies to facilitate and amplify these experiences for international audiences. This convergence positions the teacher not as a passive conduit, but as an active cultural-pedagogical mediator, a role for which existing training models offer limited preparation [4].

1.2 Research Gap

While studies exist on ICH dissemination and teacher digital literacy separately, few While the constituent domains of this study-ICH transmission, teacher digital competence, and intercultural pedagogy-have garnered scholarly attention, their critical intersection remains underexplored. Existing research on ICH "going out" often operates at a macro level, analyzing policy frameworks or the institutional role of bodies like Confucius Institutes, with less focus on the micro-dynamics of classroom or workshop enactment and the teacher's agential role within it. Similarly, studies on integrating ICH into education predominantly examine curriculum design or learner outcomes in domestic settings, sidestepping the unique challenges and developmental processes teachers undergo in foreign, culturally distinct environments [5].

In the field of teacher education, influential frameworks like Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) provide a robust lens for understanding technology integration [6]. However, they often treat "content knowledge" in a generic sense, failing to account for the particular complexities of cultural-heritage content. Such content is inherently value-laden, context-bound, and subject to interpretive negotiation, demanding a layer of intercultural translational skill that TPACK does not

explicitly address [7]. Although scholars have called for blending technological and intercultural competencies [8], there is a scarcity of empirical, process-oriented research that investigates how teachers actually construct this blended expertise in real-time practice. How do they experiment, adapt, and refine their approaches when faced with the immediate task of teaching Chinese ICH through omni-media to a Malaysian student audience? This gap regarding the in-situ development process forms the core impetus for the present study.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

RO1: To build a theoretical framework for the development of intercultural teaching competency in omni-media-facilitated ICH transmission.

RQ1: During the "creation-dissemination-identification" workshop cycle, what competences do educators exhibit and acquire?

RQ2: How is this developmental process shaped by the interaction of the "educational" and "media" dimensions?

1.4 Significance

This research carries significant implications for theory and practice. Theoretically, it seeks to advance knowledge by bridging disconnected scholarly conversations. By empirically tracing the competency development of teachers at the nexus of ICH, omni-media, and intercultural instruction, the study aims to generate a dynamic, process-based model of teacher learning. This model has the potential to refine and extend existing frameworks like TPACK by formally incorporating and operationalizing the Intercultural (I) dimension, proposing a more holistic TPACK-IC construct that better reflects the demands of global digital education.

Practically, the findings are poised to inform the design of more effective professional development for educators engaged in cross-cultural digital knowledge exchange. The proposed Resource-Context-Reflection (RCR) model, grounded in empirical data, can serve as a blueprint for training programs, helping teachers navigate the interplay between technological tools, cultural content, and pedagogical strategy. For cultural institutions and universities forging international partnerships, this study offers a validated, workshop-based methodology for ICH outreach that prioritizes pedagogical depth and sustainable engagement over superficial exposure. On a policy level, it underscores the necessity of investing in teacher capacity building as foundational, long-term infrastructure for cultural diplomacy, arguing that the effectiveness of "people-to-people" initiatives ultimately hinges on the prepared-ness and reflective ability of the educators at the front line.

2 Literature Review & Conceptual Framework

This research integrates three domains: ICH as pedagogy, intercultural teaching competence, and omni-media strategy. The proposed “Education-Media Dual-Driven” model guides the empirical inquiry.

2.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as Pedagogical Content

The safeguarding paradigm for ICH has shifted from preservation to participatory transmission, recognizing its living, processual nature [9]. This renders ICH a potent resource for experiential learning and identity formation [10]. Within China, integrating ICH into education often focuses on domestic cultural identity [5]. However, its cross-cultural transmission demands a pedagogy of “cultural translation” [2], a nuanced process insufficiently explored in current literature.

2.2 Intercultural Teaching Competence

Intercultural teaching competence (ITC) encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to facilitate learning across cultures, positioning the teacher as a critical mediator [11]. It requires “critical interculturality”—avoiding cultural essentialism and focusing on fluid, negotiated encounters [12]. While TPACK addresses technology integration [6], it lacks an explicit dimension for this critical intercultural mediation, a gap recent scholarship begins to address [4].

2.3 Omni-Media in Education

“Omni-media” denotes the strategic integration of multiple platforms to create seamless narratives and learning ecologies [3]. In heritage education, it enables immersive storytelling and global dialogue [13]. This demands “omni-media pedagogical competence”—the ability to curate, create, and disseminate content strategically—an emergent area in teacher education [14].

2.4 Synthesis: The “Education-Media Dual-Driven” Model

Our conceptual framework posits that effective ICH transmission is propelled by two synergistic engines:

1. **The Education-Driven Core:** This represents the foundational pedagogical process centered on deep, meaningful, and reflective learning. It involves the careful design of workshops that facilitate authentic engagement with ICH through hands-on creation and foster a community of practice. The goal is to move beyond spectatorship to experiential learning and personal meaning-making, which lays the groundwork for cultural identification.

2. **The Media-Driven Amplification:** This represents the strategic use of omni-media channels to document, narrate, and extend the reach of the educational core. It involves

content creation (e.g., short videos, documentaries), strategic dissemination across platforms, and fostering online interaction to scale the impact and create a durable digital legacy.

The model emphasizes that these two "drives" are not sequential but synergistic and iterative. The educational activity generates rich content for media narratives, while the anticipatory and reflective processes of media planning can deepen the pedagogical design. The teacher's developing competence lies in orchestrating this synergy to facilitate cross-cultural understanding of ICH. As illustrated in Figure 1, this dual-driven model conceptualizes the dynamic interaction between educational depth and media amplification in cross-cultural ICH transmission.

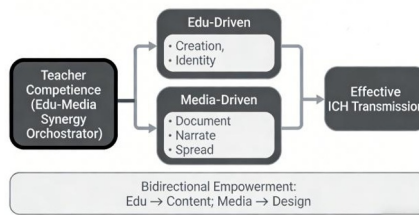


Fig. 1. "Education-Media Dual-Driven" Model

3 Methodology

This study employs participatory action research within a series of Chinese ICH workshops (paper-cutting, calligraphy) conducted at Malaysian universities. Participants included 12 Chinese university teachers from arts, education, and media disciplines. Data collection triangulated semi-structured interviews (pre-, mid-, post-workshop), participant observation, teacher reflective journals, and analysis of workshop-generated multimedia artifacts. Data analysis followed an inductive approach using thematic analysis for qualitative data and multimodal discourse analysis for media artifacts.

4 Findings & Discussion

4.1 A Three-Stage Developmental Trajectory

Analysis revealed a non-linear but discernible trajectory in teacher competence:

Stage 1 (Adaptive): Teachers grappled with translating cultural concepts and selecting basic media tools, primarily acting as cultural explainers.

Stage 2 (Integrative): Teachers began blending ICH techniques with cultural storytelling using more sophisticated media, evolving into pedagogical designers and media curators.

Stage 3 (Transformative): Teachers facilitated participant-led meaning-making and co-created cross-cultural narratives, fully embodying the role of cultural-pedagogical mediators.

4.2 The Resource-Context-Reflection (RCR) Model

This trajectory is best explained by the iterative interplay of three elements. The structural logic of this interplay is visualized in Figure 2:

Resources: Access to ICH content, media tools, and pedagogical templates.

Context: The immediate, cross-cultural workshop setting in Malaysia, which presented both constraints and catalysts for innovation.:

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Context: The immediate, cross-cultural workshop setting in Malaysia, which presented both constraints and catalysts for innovation.

Reflection: Structured (via guided debriefs) and personal (via journals) reflection, which was crucial for translating experience into competence.

The “micro-circulation” of the workshop format provided a safe yet authentic context for this RCR cycle to operate effectively.

Resource–Context–Reflection (RCR) Model

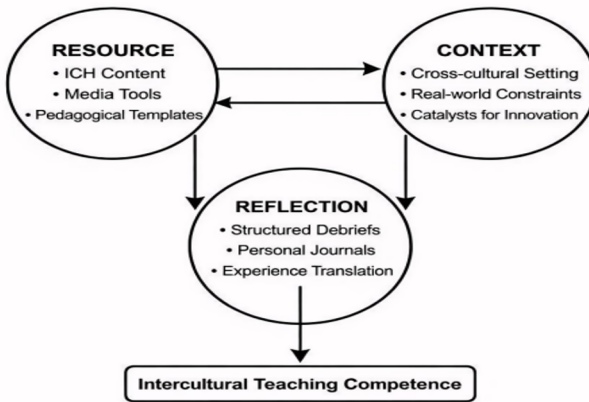


Fig. 2. The Resource-Context-Reflection (RCR) Model

4.3 Reconceptualizing Teacher Knowledge

The findings challenge the compartmentalization of knowledge in models like TPACK. Teachers’ developed expertise was hybrid, blending technological knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge of ICH, and critical intercultural understanding. We propose this integrated expertise as Intercultural Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (I-TPACK), where the intercultural dimension critically informs all other components in cross-cultural digital teaching.

5 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that omni-media-facilitated ICH workshops serve as a powerful crucible for developing university teachers’ intercultural teaching competence.

The proposed Education-Media Dual-Driven model and the RCR framework illuminate the dynamic, situated process of this development. The major theoretical contribution is the articulation of I-TPACK, which provides a more holistic lens for understanding teacher expertise in global digital education. Practically, the research underscores the need for professional development that moves beyond siloed skills training, instead creating immersive, reflective, and context-rich learning experiences for educators tasked with cultural bridge-building. Future research should investigate the long-term impact of such competence and explore the model's applicability in other cultural and disciplinary contexts.

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