



A Theoretical Framework for a Pedagogical Model in Lacquer Art Education Focusing on Cultural Knowledge and Artistic Skills

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Abstract

As an intangible cultural heritage with more than 8000 years of history, lacquer art now faces threats in sustainability because the sustainability of lacquer art depends on the continuance of human activities around this art form within the community. In response to the call to action by UNESCO and the Chinese government to sustain lacquer art in the field of education, we identified the problem of developing pedagogical models with a balanced attention to cultural knowledge and artistic skills in lacquer art as the research focus. Methodologically guided by the design phase of a design and development research, this paper discusses a theoretical framework which can ground pedagogical models in lacquer art education. Discussion of results explains and justifies the integration of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Multiliteracies Pedagogy in a theoretical framework that provides design principles and implementation suggestions for pedagogical models targeted at lacquer art, focusing on the Chinese context. It is hoped that future research can adopt or adapt this theoretical framework to design pedagogical interventions that promote cultural knowledge and artistic skills in lacquer art. Specific educational and training programs interested in sustaining intangible cultural heritage through formal and non-formal educational systems can also use this theoretical framework as a point of reference.

Keywords: art; culture; lacquer; quality education; sustainability

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INTRODUCTION

Tracing back thousands of years in China, lacquer art can be considered one of the oldest and most revered forms of expression in Asian culture. Archaeological discoveries indicate that this form of artistry has existed for over 8000 years in China (Song et al., 2019). The traditional craft of lacquer was initially developed to protect wooden or bamboo woven utensils

from moisture and insect damage. Two representatives of Chinese lacquer art are carved lacquer and bodiless lacquer. The historical splendour and cultural significance of lacquer art should not be underestimated (Song et al., 2019). Lacquer art techniques spread to neighboring countries via trade routes from China. Korea and Japan, for example, were among the earliest nations to emulate the Chinese model before developing their own uni-

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que designs (Kopplin, 2002a). For instance, Korea is known for the inlay technique, with the intricate and detailed production of mother-of-pearl lacquerware. The Japanese Maki-e technique is a refined adaptation of the Chinese Tang Dynasty's gold and silver Taka Maki-e technique.

Although lacquer art has yet to be included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, its threatened importance cannot be overlooked. As early as 1996, the convenance of a UNESCO meeting in Yangon, Myanmar alerted the world of the challenges that lacquer art faces with its sustainability (Kopplin, 2002b). One concern raised is that documentation of existing work and procedures related to lacquer art should be intensified to ensure its preservation. In 2006, the Chinese government announced its first batch of national intangible cultural heritage to receive attention in sustainability efforts, which included seven items related to lacquer art: Carved Lacquer Technique, Chengdu Lacquer Art, Fujian Bodiless Lacquerware, Yangzhou Lacquerware, Decoration Technique of Pingyao Polished Lacquerware, Xiamen Lacquer Thread Sculpting Technique, and Tiantai Mountain Dry Lacquer with Ramie Technique (Central Government of China, 2006).

As an intangible cultural heritage, lacquer art faces threats to its sustainability, which may be greater than those to the sustainability of tangible cultural heritage. According to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) refers to various social practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, and associated tools, objects, handicrafts, and cultural spaces that communities, groups consider, and sometimes individuals, as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003). Thus, the existence and sustainability of ICH revolve around human production and activities (Varutti, 2015). Compared to tangible cultural heritage, ICH's transmission is more susceptible to vulnerabilities, contingencies,

and selectivity, making its intergenerational transfer more prone to interruption (Fatorić & Seekamp, 2017). Research data reveals that every minute, one cultural relic and one piece of ICH are lost (Jacobs, 2016).

In writing this paper, we are responding to the call to action to sustain ICH in the educational field. Article 14 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), for instance, emphasizes the role of specific educational and training programs in sustaining ICH through the integration of ICH into formal and non-formal educational systems. In 2021, the Ministry of Education of China officially included the protection of ICH as a new undergraduate major with lacquer art as one of the Chinese protected ICH (Yang et al., 2022).

The efforts by higher education institutions in China to digitize different forms of ICH are commendable, but more educational innovation should still be anticipated (Su et al., 2022). Although there have been clear top-down efforts in sustaining ICH through education, more systematic and sustainable efforts can be developed and implemented through art education as a crucial stakeholder in maintaining ICH, such as lacquer art, which has national value and global significance.

Current efforts in sustaining lacquer art as an ICH in education in China revolve around explorations of more effective teaching methods and discussions on materials and techniques in lacquer art. There are empirical studies on engaging e-learning to promote lacquer art (Fan et al., 2020) and interdisciplinary integration of lacquer art with other disciplines, such as electronic information science and art design (Jiang & Malecdan, 2023). In addition, there has been no shortage of discussions of the materials and techniques of lacquer art (e.g., Chen, 2019; Peng & Zhang, 2019; Lin, 2020; Wang et al., 2018) which are concerned with the relevance and resilience of lacquer art in the contemporary world. In fact, conversations have begun on continuous innovation and involving more sta-

keholders from the public (Yan & Li, 2023).

Despite the existing explorations with teaching methods and expert deliberations over the materials and techniques that best suit lacquer art, one concern that has been raised is the problem of developing pedagogical models with balanced attention towards both cultural knowledge and artistic skills required in lacquer art. The knowledge of the historical and cultural background of an ICH is crucial for its sustainability, especially in a multi-ethnic society like China with a diverse cultural background (Yang et al., 2018). As an intangible art form which has been traditionally sustained through apprenticeship, teachers are known to focus too much on traditional techniques in a lacquer art course to the extent of neglecting the cultural and historical contexts of lacquer art and its relevance to contemporary art and design (Chen, 2021; Ji et al., 2019). This is worrying, considering art education in a globalized context is tasked with preparing students for life in a multicultural environment (Ishmuradova & Ishmuradova, 2019).

In summary, although there are clear efforts from UNESCO and the Chinese government to sustain lacquer art as an ICH through educational initiatives, the literature review shows the need to develop pedagogical models with balanced attention to cultural knowledge and lacquer art skills despite existing explorations with teaching methods and discussions about the most effective materials for lacquer art. Hence, this paper presents part of a bigger study that aims to design and develop a pedagogical model that can assist in sustaining lacquer art within the context of Chinese higher education.

In this paper, we focus on discussing a theoretical framework that can ground pedagogical models in lacquer art education in principles that are responsive to cultural heritage and identity and promote active development of skills. The aim is to address this central question: What theories and principles can inform pedagogical models in lacquer art education that focus

on cultural knowledge and skills development? We hope the resultant theoretical framework can be adapted to inform the integration of ICH into formal and non-formal educational systems, which UNESCO and the Chinese government anticipate.

METHOD

The theoretical framework which can ground pedagogical designs in lacquer art education was developed through the design phase of a design and development research (DDR). The seminal study that established DDR as a valid methodology was first contributed by Richey and Klein (2007) who defined DDR as “the systematic study of design, development and evaluation processes with the aim of establishing an empirical basis for the creation of instructional and non-instructional products and tools and new or enhanced models that govern their development” (p. xv). We adopted the DDR methodology to develop a pedagogical model that can guide the development of cultural knowledge and skills in lacquer art.

The design phase of DDR focuses on drafting principles to guide the design of the intended intervention (Herrington et al., 2007). We reviewed the literature to identify initial indicators of the problems in sustaining lacquer art in education that needed to be addressed pedagogically. Then, we reviewed culturally responsive teaching and multiliteracies pedagogy as two theoretical approaches that can provide the principles for developing a theoretical framework that can address the pedagogical gaps in lacquer art education. The findings of the design phase of DDR are discussed in the next section.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Considering lacquer art’s cultural richness and technical complexity, the theoretical framework developed through literature review in the second phase of DDR is an integration of Culturally Responsive

Teaching (CRT) and Multiliteracies Pedagogy (MP). The discussion will explain basic principles of CRT and MP that relate to art education separately before justifying their integration in a theoretical framework that can ground pedagogical models in lacquer art education in China.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Our review of the literature conveyed that CRT has strong and direct relevance to art education, which aims to sustain cultural knowledge and ways of being. CRT has grown from the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy which was introduced by Ladson-Billings in the 1990s (Civitillo et al., 2019). One fundamental assumption of CRT is that among the various factors affecting student learning, the cultural factor encompassing diverse ethnic and cultural values significantly impacts teaching and learning (Gay, 2002). In education, CRT can inform curriculum content, instructional strategies, achievement assessment, as well as classroom climate (Gay, 2018). Being a research interest that has accumulated decades of research, the following is a list of general agreement on CRT's conceptualization despite possible differences that may arise among the scholars (Civitillo et al., 2019, p. 342). In general, CRT is a pedagogy that:

- uses students' cultural experiences and knowledge; supports students in maintaining their cultural identity, native language, and connections to their culture;
- provides multiple opportunities to demonstrate what students learn;
- incorporates different perspectives and
- empowers students with sociopolitical consciousness.

Gay (2018) identified five fundamental components of CRT which teachers can apply in classroom practices:

- Incorporate a strong knowledge base about cultural diversity into teaching
- Develop a culturally diverse and relevant curriculum
- Assist students in achieving academic success while validating their cultural

identities

- Appreciate different communication styles
- Connect students' prior knowledge and cultural experiences with new knowledge

The expected outcomes of successfully implementing CRT are achieving academic success through valuing diverse cultures and developing multicultural competencies and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2021). These outcomes are made possible through incorporating multicultural resources and materials into all the skills typically taught in schools (Hutchison & McAlister-Shields, 2020). In addition, having students from different cultural backgrounds involve their personal experiences and stories in their work can increase their cultural knowledge and confidence through the creative process and interactions (Abacioglu et al., 2020).

Existing studies indicate the exploration of CRT for a myriad of issues and diverse disciplines, although the implementation of CRT in art education is still few and far between, especially in China. CRT is known for being adaptable to any educational context or objective beyond cultural education (Igu et al., 2020). For instance, there are studies that explore CRT for teaching international students (Cunningham, 2019), and in areas such as social justice (Cho & Gay, 2021), English language teaching (Diamond & Bulfin, 2021) and medical research (Rockich-Winston & Wyatt, 2019). Despite existing studies being more often situated within the American context (Sleeter, 2012), we observe the alignment of CRT's principles with China's policies and multicultural composition. Hayhoe (2019) underlined that China's educational policy is based on principles of social justice which embraces acknowledgements of diverse cultural practices and beliefs to provide equal opportunities to all students. Adopting CRT to teach lacquer art can promote it as a traditional Chinese heritage while enriching students' understanding and respect for diversities in Chinese cultural heritage. Although Han

culture is China's mainstream environment, China is a multi-ethnic country that will benefit from more implementations of CRT to connect with minority cultures (Liu et al., 2020; Ye, 2022).

This study drew inspiration from a few studies that attempted to implement CRT in the visual arts. Maaruf et al. (2021) implemented CRT in the development of visual arts teaching tools to enhance artistic skills and increase multicultural awareness. Working under similar motivation for innovating art education, Maaruf and Basri (2019) emphasized the importance of integrating cultural diversity into art education through their study of the cross-cultural practices of tie-dye art.

Review of the literature on CRT has suggested that there is promising potential in adopting CRT for lacquer art education in China because of its emphasis on students' understanding of and respect for their cultural traditions beyond their own, yet implementations of CRT in art education are just emerging. Hence, we echo Gay (2018)'s reminder that the success of CRT demands serious planning and implementation of instructional programs by first figuring out how CRT can be adapted to develop a theoretical framework to inform a pedagogical model in lacquer art education. We definitely want to avoid misappropriating CRT as a hook for student attention or assimilation (Evans et al., 2020).

Multiliteracies Pedagogy (MP)

Another theoretical approach that respects cultural diversity is the Multiliteracies Pedagogy (MP). MP has been expanding in principles and applications since The New London Group's (1996) proposed the multiliteracies framework which promotes an inclusive and technology-aware approach to contemporary literacy education. The multiliteracies framework stresses the importance of considering cultural and linguistic diversity in literacy education. After accumulating decades of empirical data and theoretical adjustments, the importance of cultural diversity has remained a focus in MP (Cope & Kalantzis,

2023). MP recognizes the range of communication mediums, cultural diversity, and linguistic variations in our interconnected world by advocating for an expanded view of literacy that encompasses diverse cultural backgrounds and languages encountered by students.

Incorporating MP in art education can avoid over-dependence on a singular mode of communication of the concepts and skills. Awareness and development of multimodal literacy is an attractive affordance of MP (Lim et al., 2022; Papadopoulou et al., 2018), considering many art educators have not fully utilized multimodal modes in curriculum planning and teaching practices, over-emphasizing the visual mode (Becker, 2020). This issue is particularly relevant in the field of lacquer art education, as it requires not only visual skills but also the ability to manipulate materials and utilize tactile and kinesthetic senses. Art educators in this field must provide opportunities for students to explore and experiment with different textures, tools, and techniques, and incorporate various modalities into the teaching and learning process. MP can guide this provision, allowing students to develop their skills and knowledge in lacquer art through different senses and modes of expression (Chen, 2020; Törmälä & Kulju, 2023). Through MP in art education, students' engagement with lived experience, critical thinking, and multimodal literacy reinforce each other (Kwon, 2020). Existing research indicates the potential of MP in providing a holistic learning experience that promotes a deeper understanding and appreciation of art in addition to the development of skills through multimodal engagement.

In addition to multimodal engagement and expression, MP can promote the development of cultural knowledge and appreciation. Cultural knowledge cannot be imparted solely through one-sided explanations by the teacher but should be developed through interactive construction between teachers and students. In lacquer art classes, teachers are required to conti-

nually create conditions and opportunities in the classroom to cultivate a cultural atmosphere and enliven the classroom environment, allowing students to learn craft skills and cultural knowledge in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere and to perceive the cultural connotations (Chen, 2020). It has been pointed out in MP that multimodal communication and expression are not universally implicit but are products of specific cultures (Cope & Kalantzis, 2023). Learning through MP may help students who may feel invisible in traditional cultures, such as those in China, find their own voices and ways of learning while expressing them. A systematic review of MP in English language education has highlighted that MP is compatible with principles of cultural responsiveness (Lim et al., 2022). At the same time, teachers using multiple modes can provide students with the maximum possible range of resources (Lim et al., 2021; Tandiana et al., 2020).

One aspect of MP we found applicable to art education is the design of pedagogy through what the theory refers to as Knowledge Processes. In the Knowledge Processes of MP, students are key participants in their learning, actively engaging in knowledge creation through experiential, conceptual, analytical, and applied learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2023). Experiential learning involves hands-on activities like experiments, while conceptual learning empowers students to develop disciplinary concepts independently. Analytical learning encourages critical thinking about how things function, and applied learning transforms theory into practical application. The framework of multimodality, which is essential in the context of multiliteracies, involves various modes of meaning-making beyond traditional literacy by incorporating visual images, audio, gestural, and spatial elements in addition to linguistic aspects. MP equips students to effectively engage in a multifaceted world by emphasizing the importance of understanding and making meaning across multiple semiotic modes of representation to achieve successful communication in con-

temporary society. With the evolving communication landscape, embracing diverse modes of representation is crucial for navigating today's cultural and technological shifts so that learners can develop a better worldview, understanding and participation in a globalized society.

All in all, if incorporated in art education, MP is compatible with a culturally responsive framework such as CRT while providing systematic and applicable suggestions for pedagogy design in the form of Knowledge Processes that teachers can incorporate in the planning and implementation of the teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Although MP has not been extensively reported in empirical research in art education, there is sufficient data in other fields such as English language education to convince us that it can be considered for a theoretical framework for lacquer art education.

Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and Multiliteracies Pedagogy (MP)

Considering the cultural richness and technical complexity of lacquer art, the theoretical framework that is developed through literature review in the second phase of DDR is an integration of CRT and MP to enhance its effectiveness. In designing a pedagogical model for lacquer art education, we propose CRT as the theoretical basis for design principles, while MP serves as the guiding theory for implementation.

CRT emphasizes considering and respecting multicultural backgrounds in the educational process (Gay, 2018), which is particularly important for lacquer art education in China, as lacquer art itself is a product of multiple cultural intersections. By incorporating lacquer art's history, cultural significance, and diverse applications into the course content, students can gain a deeper understanding of this art form and appreciate its aesthetic value from a multicultural perspective.

In specific, our interpretation of CRT produced these grounding principles in

theory for a pedagogical model for lacquer art education to be culturally responsive:

- Integrate multicultural lacquer art course content
- Design diverse learning activities
- Provide materials of lacquer art from diverse types of cultural heritage in China
- Encourage hands-on student participation and reflection
- Respect and be open to different interpretations of lacquer art

MP has four knowledge processes - experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying - representing unique ways of acquiring knowledge and skills (Cope & Kalantzis, 2023). In educational settings, MP aims to maximize student engagement and understanding by intentionally designing opportunities for multiple ways of learning across modalities. Through these four knowledge processes, a pedagogical model for lacquer art education can be implemented in this way:

(1). Experiencing: Use authentic samples of lacquer art and images and videos of artifacts of lacquer art from different historical periods and regions in China. This will offer students and experience of the cultural diversity and history of lacquer art.

(2) Conceptualizing: To scaffold students' cultural and technical knowledge of lacquer art, video tutorials and live demonstrations by Chinese lacquer art masters are involved.

(3). Analyzing: Once students have acquired some basic knowledge and skills, teachers can guide students to analyze and reflect on their work, comparing it with lacquer art samples from Chinese masters to identify areas for improvement.

(4). Applying: Students apply the knowledge and skills they have learned to create original lacquer art pieces inspired by China's cultural heritage.

Therefore, the theoretical framework we are proposing for pedagogical models in lacquer art education has a two-pronged aim to support the development of technical skills and build a rich understanding

of the cultural background of lacquer art (Figure 1). Using a CRT-enhanced multiliteracies pedagogy in lacquer art education can transform how students engage with and understand the art form.

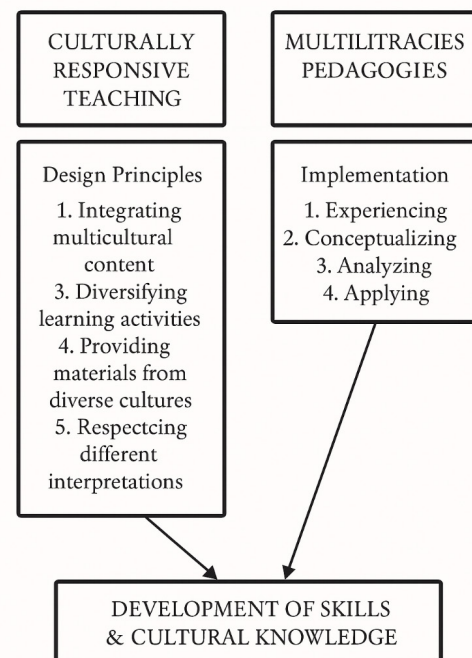


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

CONCLUSIONS

This study acknowledges that education can be a major stakeholder which contributes to sustaining lacquer art. To address the lack of pedagogical models in lacquer art as a problem that requires intervention, this study proposed a theoretical framework that can ground pedagogical models in lacquer art education in principles that are responsive to cultural heritage and identity and promote active development of skills. As part of a bigger study guided by DDR, the next phase in the research will validate a pedagogical model that is informed by the theoretical framework through the assessment by subject matter experts for its usability and content validity (Tracey and Richey, 2007). We hope that the proposed theoretical framework which integrates Culturally responsive teaching with Multiliteracies Pedagogy, has the potential to inform pedagogical models that promote both cul-

tural sensitivity and artistic skill development. In terms of larger implications, we envision adopting or adapting the proposed theoretical framework in educational and training programs in formal and non-formal educational systems motivated to sustain intangible cultural heritage.

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