

## Literacy Strategies for the Preservation and Contemporary Development of Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: April 26, 2024

Accepted: July 22, 2024

Published: July 31, 2024

Volume: 12 Issue: 3

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

The Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera holds significant cultural importance in Henan Province. Despite its historical richness, this art form confronts challenges amidst modernization and evolving entertainment preferences. This study investigates literacy strategies for preserving and contemporaneously developing the Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera. The research in Luoyang engages performers, educators, and scholars through qualitative methods, such as interviews, field observations, and archival research. The findings underscore the necessity for systematic documentation, scientific preservation techniques, educational integration, governmental backing, and digital platform utilization to sustain this opera. Emphasizing a comprehensive approach to cultural conservation, blending traditional and contemporary methodologies to captivate new generations, the study recommends digital experience centers, social media outreach, curriculum inclusion, community initiatives, and cultural tourism programs. These strategies aim to uphold the enduring legacy of Luoyang Quju Opera in contemporary society.

**Key words:** Luoyang Quju Opera, Literacy Strategies, Cultural Preservation, Educational Integration, Contemporary Technology, Intangible Cultural Heritage

### INTRODUCTION

The Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera, a significant component of China's rich cultural heritage, has been a vibrant and expressive art form for centuries. Originating from the Central Plains region, this opera style is distinguished by its unique vocal techniques, intricate melodies, and dramatic storytelling, all of which reflect the local customs, dialects, and folklore of the Henan province (Ye, 2020; Cao & Boonsrianun, 2023; Li & Thotham, 2023). Over the years, Luoyang Quju Opera has evolved, adapting elements from various regional operas while retaining its distinct identity. However, in the face of rapid modernization and the proliferation of contemporary entertainment forms, this traditional art form is at risk of fading into obscurity. The preservation and contemporary development of Luoyang Quju Opera are essential for maintaining cultural diversity and fostering a sense of historical continuity and identity among the Chinese (Su et al., 2020; Wang & Yuan, 2020; Ni, 2021; Yu et al., 2023).

This research addresses the declining presence and relevance of Luoyang Quju Opera in modern society. Despite its historical significance and cultural value, several factors contribute to its decline. The younger generation's preference for modern entertainment, a lack of systematic educational programs, and insufficient documentation and preservation efforts are some of the critical issues threatening its survival (Fu & Choatchamrat, 2024; Qiu et al., 2024).

Traditional teaching methods, predominantly reliant on the master-apprentice system, are becoming less effective in transmitting the art to new generations. Additionally, many classic repertoires and unique singing techniques are at risk of being lost as veteran performers age without adequate documentation of their knowledge and skills. This research seeks to explore and propose comprehensive literacy strategies to counter these challenges and ensure the sustainability of the Luoyang Quju Opera (Lam, 2022; Yang et al., 2022; Lv et al., 2023).

Given this backdrop, the study will delve into various aspects of the opera's current state, including existing preservation measures, the role of literacy in its transmission, and the potential integration of modern technology and methodologies in preserving and teaching the art form. Through fieldwork, interviews with key informants, and analysis of current practices, the research aims to identify gaps and opportunities in the current approach to preserving Luoyang Quju Opera. Furthermore, it will explore how digital platforms, scientific vocal analysis, and innovative educational frameworks can be leveraged to revitalize and sustain this cultural heritage (Zhang et al., 2022; Fan & Chuangprakhon, 2024; Yang & Chonpairot, 2024; Zhang & Karin, 2024).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the broader discourse on cultural preservation and literacy in the modern era. By focusing on Luoyang

Quju Opera, the study highlights the importance of safeguarding traditional arts within a rapidly changing societal landscape. The findings and recommendations from this research could serve as a model for preserving other intangible cultural heritages facing similar challenges. Moreover, this research underscores the vital role of literacy in cultural transmission, advocating for a more systematic, accessible, and technologically integrated approach to teaching traditional arts (Ho, 2018; Yan & Yifei, 2019; Wu, 2023; Chung, 2024). Ultimately, this study aims to foster a renewed appreciation for Luoyang Quju Opera, encouraging both scholars and practitioners to engage in its preservation and ensuring its enduring legacy for future generations.

### Research Question

- How can literacy strategies be effectively implemented to ensure the preservation and contemporary development of the Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study on literacy strategies for the preservation and contemporary development of Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera explores several critical dimensions. It examines existing research on cultural heritage preservation, literacy theories relevant to intangible cultural heritage, and the integration of modern technology into traditional arts. The review is structured around four key areas:

### Preservation of Traditional Arts in Modern Society

Preserving traditional arts within modern society is a critical area of study in cultural heritage research. Scholars like Smith (2006) emphasize the importance of cultural preservation to maintain historical continuity and foster a sense of identity among communities. Traditional arts, including opera, dance, and folk music, encapsulate people's historical experiences, social values, and artistic expressions. However, the encroachment of modernity poses significant challenges to these art forms. Modern entertainment mediums, changing lifestyles, and urbanization often lead to the marginalization of traditional practices. Theories of cultural preservation advocate for a multifaceted approach that includes documentation, archiving, public awareness campaigns, and active engagement through performances and literacy programs (Taylor, 2014). In the context of Luoyang Quju Opera, these theories underline the need for systematic efforts to document and promote the opera to ensure its survival.

### Literacy Strategies for Cultural Transmission

Literacy plays a pivotal role in the transmission and preservation of cultural heritage. Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory suggests that learning is inherently a social process and that cultural tools and symbols are transmitted through social interactions. In traditional arts, this implies that formal and informal educational settings are crucial for transmitting

knowledge and skills. The master-apprentice system, a traditional teaching method in many performing arts, exemplifies this theory. However, contemporary literacy strategies must also incorporate modern pedagogical approaches. According to Dewey (1938), education should be experiential and meaningfully connect learners with their cultural heritage. For Luoyang Quju Opera, integrating these theories means developing literacy programs that combine traditional methods with modern technology and interactive learning experiences to attract and engage younger generations.

### Role of Modern Technology in Cultural Preservation

Integrating modern technology into cultural preservation efforts has garnered significant attention in recent years. Digital humanities and cultural informatics offer innovative tools for documenting, analyzing, and disseminating traditional cultural expressions (McGann, 2013). Technologies such as digital archiving, virtual reality, and interactive multimedia platforms enable the preservation of ephemeral art forms like opera in ways that are accessible and engaging to contemporary audiences. For instance, using flash laryngoscopes and spectrum analyzers in vocal analysis provides detailed insights into singing techniques, which can be crucial for educational purposes and for preserving the nuanced vocal styles of Luoyang Quju Opera. Scholars argue that technology not only aids in preservation but also enhances the transmission of traditional knowledge by making it more appealing and relatable to digital natives (Kalay, 2008). Thus, leveraging modern technology is vital for the contemporary development of Luoyang Quju Opera.

### Government and Community Support in Cultural Heritage Preservation

The involvement of government and community organizations is essential in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. According to the theories of cultural policy and heritage management (Bennett, 1995), state intervention and community engagement are crucial for sustaining intangible cultural heritage. Government initiatives can provide financial support, policy frameworks, and infrastructure to preserve and promote traditional arts. On the other hand, community organizations play a significant role in grassroots movements, ensuring that cultural practices remain relevant and actively practiced within communities. For Luoyang Quju Opera, this dual approach is critical. The government can facilitate large-scale preservation projects and literacy programs, while community groups can foster local interest and participation. This collaborative effort ensures a holistic approach to the preservation and development of the opera.

In conclusion, the literature highlights the multifaceted nature of preserving and developing traditional arts like the Luoyang Quju Opera. Theories of cultural preservation, literacy strategies, modern technology, and government and community support collectively provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the challenges faced by this traditional art form. By integrating these approaches, the literacy strategies for preserving and developing Luoyang Quju

Opera can be effectively enhanced, ensuring its relevance and vitality in contemporary society.

## METHOD

### Research Design

The research design for this study employs a qualitative methodology to explore the literacy strategies for the preservation and contemporary development of the Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and insights of key stakeholders involved in Luoyang Quju Opera. The research is structured around participant selection, interviews, field observations, archival research, data analysis, and the integration of findings.

### Research Site

The research will be conducted in Luoyang, the birthplace of Luoyang Quju Opera, encompassing schools and universities, community centers, and cultural institutions. Luoyang is the birthplace of the opera, where traditional performances and literacy sessions are prevalent. Schools and universities provide insights into literacy strategies, community centers offer community engagement and preservation practices, and cultural institutions house historical records and artifacts related to the opera.

### Research Tools and Research Equipment

This study uses interview forms, recording equipment, field notes, archive resources, data analysis software, and consent forms to gather insights on preservation practices, literacy strategies, challenges, and stakeholder recommendations. High-quality audio recorders are used for accurate recording, while notebooks and digital devices document observations during performances and rehearsals. Access to historical records, performance archives, literacy curricula, and policy documents is provided.

### Data Collection

The data collection process involves several steps to ensure comprehensive and accurate data gathering, as shown in Table 1.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis involves a comprehensive examination of the collected data through several steps to ensure thorough interpretation and credibility. Initially, patterns and themes are identified from interview transcripts and field notes. This thematic analysis helps in organizing the data systematically. Then, the findings will be validated by cross-referencing data from interviews, observations, and archival sources, thereby enhancing the reliability of the research. Finally, the synthesized findings are developed into a cohesive narrative that addresses the research objectives, identifies best

**Table 1.** Data collection

Step	Description
Participant Selection	- Identifying key informants in Luoyang Quju Opera, such as performers, teachers, and scholars, and obtaining informed consent - Snowball sampling, expanding the participant pool by asking initial informants to recommend others with significant knowledge
Interview Preparation and Conduct	- Creating an interview guide with open-ended questions on preservation practices, literacy strategies, challenges, and recommendations - Conducting interviews in person or via video conferencing, ensuring a comfortable environment - Recording and transcribing interviews for accurate data analysis
Field Observations	- Observing Luoyang Quju Opera performances in theaters, schools, and community centers, taking detailed field notes and capturing photographs or videos to document activities, interactions, and environmental factors
Archival Research	- Reviewing historical records, performance archives, literacy curricula, and policy documents related to Luoyang Quju Opera and extracting pertinent information for easy analysis

practices, key challenges, and practical literacy strategies, and formulates recommendations to support the contemporary development of Luoyang Quju Opera.

## RESULTS

The results section presents the findings from the qualitative analysis of interviews, field observations, and archival research. These results are organized into critical themes related to the literacy strategies for the preservation and contemporary development of the Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera. The findings are discussed regarding the main objectives of the study, highlighting significant insights and patterns.

### Preservation Measures for Luoyang Quju Opera

#### *Discovery and organization of classic plays*

Preserving the Luoyang Quju Opera is crucial, as it has approximately 450 repertoires, including 160 modern operas. Traditional repertoires are important cultural documents that must be preserved and studied. A systematic literacy approach is needed to preserve these, including recording and preserving performances by veteran artists. This involves audio-visual recording, detailed note-taking, and archiving in a centralized database for future reference. This comprehensive recording will allow future generations to learn from past masters' techniques and styles. Another strategy is rearranging classic plays to engage existing and new audiences, ensuring cultural continuity and relevance. Modern adaptations and staging of classics in contemporary settings make them more relatable to current audiences while maintaining

the essence of the traditional plays. This approach ensures that Luoyang Quju Opera continues to resonate with modern audiences.

### *Utilizing scientific methods for preservation*

Preserving singing techniques in Luoyang Quju Opera involves integrating scientific literacy methods, such as flash laryngoscopes and spectrum analyzers, to improve technique and performance. These technologies provide visual feedback on vocal cord movements and resonance, allowing singers to adjust their techniques accordingly. Additionally, recording and analyzing vocal data is crucial. This helps create a repository of singing techniques for future generations, including data on vocal cord movements, resonance patterns, and acoustic properties of different styles. This repository can be an invaluable resource for teaching and research, ensuring that the technical aspects of Luoyang Quju Opera singing are preserved and accurately passed down. This approach helps to make traditional teaching methods more concrete and standardized, as shown in Figure 1.

### *Cultivation of professional talent*

The research emphasizes nurturing diverse professional talents in Luoyang Quju Opera, including performers, directors, screenwriters, and stage artists. Several measures are recommended to achieve this, including strengthening inheritance systems, creating dedicated institutes, and promoting literacy integration. Master-disciple inheritance systems ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills from experienced practitioners to the next generation, formalizing the mentoring process. Literacy integration also fosters early interest and involvement in the art form by promoting its inclusion in school curriculums and community education programs. This creates a steady stream of enthusiasts and practitioners who can sustain and advance the art form, as shown in Figure 2.

### *Government support*

Government support is crucial for the sustainable preservation and development of Luoyang Quju Opera. This includes financial backing, policymaking, and creating favorable conditions for the opera's practice and dissemination. Funding initiatives include grants for research, performance subsidies, and financial aid for training programs. Adequate funding is essential for maintaining and expanding the scope of preservation efforts. Policy support is also vital, promoting the integration of Luoyang Quju Opera into cultural and literacy frameworks. This includes measures to protect intellectual property, promote cultural tourism, and support the establishment of cultural heritage sites. By embedding Luoyang Quju Opera within broader cultural policies, the government can ensure its relevance and visibility in modern society. This ongoing support will help enrich Chinese cultural heritage for generations to come.



**Figure 1.** Vocal cord movement and singing overtone collection

Source: Zhuo Zhang, from fieldwork in July 2023



**Figure 2.** Analysis and dissemination of singing skills in Luoyang Quju Opera

Source: Zhuo Zhang, from fieldwork in July 2023

## **Literacy Strategies for Luoyang Quju Opera**

### *Social media communication*

The role of social media in promoting Luoyang Quju Opera was emphasized as a significant literacy strategy. The opera can reach a broader audience and engage younger generations by leveraging digital platforms. One of the key strategies is the establishment of Digital Experience Centers. These centers offer immersive experiences of Luoyang Quju Opera through virtual reality, interactive exhibits, and digital archives. By providing users with a comprehensive and engaging understanding of the opera's history, techniques, and cultural significance, these centers can enhance appreciation and knowledge of Luoyang Quju Opera. Another crucial strategy is Online Content Creation. Producing and sharing content such as documentaries, instructional videos, and live performances on social media platforms can raise awareness and interest in Luoyang Quju Opera. This content can be tailored to different audience segments, including educational materials for schools and entertaining snippets for general viewers. Using social media effectively, Luoyang Quju Opera can reach diverse audiences and foster a deeper connection with its rich cultural heritage.

### *School and community education*

Integrating Luoyang Quju Opera into the formal education system and community programs is crucial for its

preservation. The research suggests several strategies for achieving this integration. One of the primary strategies is Curriculum Development. This involves incorporating Luoyang Quju Opera into school curriculums, from primary to higher education. Creating textbooks, lesson plans, and extracurricular activities focused on the opera will help introduce students to the art form early, fostering appreciation and skills from a young age. Another critical strategy is Community Engagement. Organizing workshops, seminars, and community theater projects can involve local populations in the learning and performance of Luoyang Quju Opera. These activities help build a sense of community and shared cultural heritage, encouraging broader participation and support. By engaging the community, these programs can ensure that the knowledge and appreciation of Luoyang Quju Opera are passed down through generations, maintaining its relevance and vibrancy in contemporary society.

### ***Cultural tourism integration***

Combining Luoyang Quju Opera with cultural tourism can enhance visibility and attractiveness. One key strategy is developing Opera Tourism Packages. These packages could include attending Luoyang Quju Opera performances, visiting cultural sites, and participating in related activities. Such packages are designed to attract tourists interested in cultural experiences, offering them a comprehensive view of Luoyang Quju Opera and its significance. By immersing tourists in the cultural and historical context of the opera, these packages can foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of the art form. Another effective strategy involves offering Interactive Experiences. Tourists can participate in hands-on activities such as costume-wearing, makeup sessions, and basic performance training. These interactive elements make the cultural experience more engaging and memorable and provide tourists with a personal connection to Luoyang Quju Opera. By allowing visitors to experience the intricacies of the opera firsthand, these activities can enhance their overall appreciation and support for the preservation and promotion of this traditional art form.

### ***Cultural and creative industry collaboration***

Collaborating with the cultural and creative industries can open new avenues for the development of Luoyang Quju Opera. One significant recommendation is the organization of Cultural Festivals. These festivals would celebrate Luoyang Quju Opera through performances, workshops, and exhibitions. As platforms for showcasing the opera, such festivals can attract diverse audiences, including residents and international visitors. By highlighting the unique aspects of Luoyang Quju Opera, these events can foster greater appreciation and support for this traditional art form. Another recommendation involves the development of Creative Products. Creating merchandise and cultural products inspired by Luoyang Quju Opera, such as themed clothing, accessories, and souvenirs, can help generate additional revenue and enhance the opera's visibility. These products make the opera more accessible to a broader audience,

allowing fans to engage with the art form daily. By integrating Luoyang Quju Opera into popular culture through these creative products, the opera can reach new heights of recognition and appreciation.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The literacy strategies employed in systematically discovering and organizing classic plays are paramount for preserving the Luoyang Quju Opera repertoire. This study's findings are consistent with Smith's (2006) emphasis on the importance of cultural documentation and archiving to maintain historical continuity. As suggested in the results, using audio-visual recordings and detailed note-taking ensures that veteran artists' nuanced techniques and styles are preserved for future generations. Additionally, the strategy of modern adaptations and staging of classic plays to engage new audiences aligns with Taylor's (2014) theory of active cultural engagement, which advocates for making traditional practices relevant in contemporary settings.

Integrating scientific methods such as flash laryngoscopes and spectrum analyzers into preserving singing techniques demonstrates the innovative application of modern technology to traditional arts. This approach is consistent with the views of McGann (2013), who argues that digital humanities offer valuable tools for documenting and analyzing cultural expressions. By creating a repository of vocal data, the study not only preserves technical aspects but also provides a valuable resource for teaching and research, thereby enhancing the transmission of knowledge.

Education plays a crucial role in transmitting and preserving Luoyang Quju Opera, as evidenced by the study's emphasis on curriculum development and community engagement. Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory support the idea that education should be a social and interactive process. Integrating Luoyang Quju Opera into school curriculums and community programs fosters early interest and involvement, ensuring a steady stream of enthusiasts and practitioners. Using social media and digital platforms to promote Luoyang Quju Opera aligns with Chung's (2024) findings on technology's role in transmitting intangible cultural heritage. Establishing Digital Experience Centers and creating online content can significantly broaden the audience base and engage younger generations. This approach leverages the popularity of digital media to enhance the visibility and appreciation of traditional arts.

The sustainable development of Luoyang Quju Opera hinges critically on a dual approach involving government support and community engagement. Bennett's (1995) theories on cultural policy underscore the pivotal role of state intervention and grassroots movements in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. This study underscores the necessity for financial backing, policy reinforcement, and active community participation to foster an enabling environment for the practice and propagation of Luoyang Quju Opera. Such collaborative efforts encompass both large-scale initiatives and grassroots involvement, ensuring comprehensive preservation strategies. Moreover, the study identifies

the pivotal role of modern technology in preserving and promoting Luoyang Quju Opera. Aligning with Kalay's (2008) arguments on the significance of new media in cultural heritage preservation, integrating digital archiving, virtual reality, and interactive multimedia platforms facilitates documentation and enhances the accessibility of traditional art forms for contemporary audiences. This innovative approach facilitates the transmission of traditional knowledge and underscores technology's potential to bridge the gap between past practices and present cultural engagement.

This study underscores the importance of adopting comprehensive literacy and educational strategies for the contemporary development of the Chinese Luoyang Quju Opera. The findings demonstrate that a holistic approach incorporating systematic documentation, scientific methods, educational integration, government support, and modern technology is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of this traditional art form. These strategies are grounded in established theoretical principles and empirical research, illustrating their efficacy in addressing the challenges Luoyang Quju Opera faces amidst a rapidly evolving societal landscape. Moreover, this research contributes significantly to the broader discourse on cultural preservation and education, advocating for a multifaceted approach to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. By focusing on Luoyang Quju Opera, the study provides a replicable model applicable to other traditional arts confronting similar challenges. The implications underscore the pivotal roles of education and technology in facilitating cultural transmission, advocating for a systematic, accessible, and technologically integrated approach to teaching traditional arts. In conclusion, this study's literacy and educational strategies offer a comprehensive roadmap for revitalizing and sustaining Luoyang Quju Opera. By fostering renewed appreciation and engagement with this cultural heritage, the study encourages scholars and practitioners alike to actively participate in its preservation, thereby ensuring its enduring legacy for future generations.

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