

## Enhancing Literacy Transmission of Elunchun Chinese Folk Songs through Community Engagement

Lili Yan\*, Sayam Chuangprakhon, Weerayut Seekhunlio, Akapong Phulaiyaw

College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Corresponding author: Lili Yan, E-mail: 65012061042@msu.ac.th

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: December 02, 2024

Accepted: March 12, 2025

Published: March 31, 2025

Volume: 13 Issue: 2

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

Elunchun Chinese folk songs represent a vital aspect of the cultural and musical heritage of the Elunchun ethnic group, indigenous to Northeast China. However, modernization, urbanization, and linguistic shifts have posed significant challenges to their transmission. This study explores how community engagement can enhance the literacy transmission of Elunchun folk songs, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Using a qualitative research design, the study employs ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to examine the role of intergenerational learning, formal education, digital documentation, and cultural events in sustaining folk song literacy. The research conducted in the Elunchun Autonomous Banner engages five key informants, including elderly folk singers, community organizers, music educators, and cultural researchers. The findings highlight the effectiveness of integrating folk songs into school curricula, utilizing digital technology for preservation, and promoting cultural festivals as platforms for participatory learning. The study recommends formalizing folk song education, strengthening community-led music programs, expanding digital archiving efforts, and implementing policies for cultural preservation. These strategies provide a sustainable framework for enhancing folk song literacy transmission and preserving the musical heritage of the Elunchun ethnic group.

**Key words:** Elunchun Folk Songs, Literacy Transmission, Community Engagement, Cultural Preservation, Traditional Music Education

### INTRODUCTION

Elunchun Chinese folk songs represent an invaluable cultural and historical legacy, passed down for generations as oral traditions among the Elunchun ethnic group in Northeast China. These songs are not merely artistic expressions but serve as living records of the Elunchun people's way of life, history, and spiritual beliefs. Rooted in the region's hunting culture, their melodies, and lyrics reflect themes of nature, survival, and communal identity (D'everlyn & Post, 2022; Kim, 2019). Traditionally, the transmission of these songs relied on intergenerational learning, where elders would pass their knowledge to younger community members through oral storytelling, performances, and daily life practices. However, this transmission mode is under threat with rapid modernization, urbanization, and cultural shifts. Younger generations, increasingly influenced by globalized entertainment and digital culture, are less interested in their ancestral folk songs. As a result, many traditional songs risk fading into obscurity. The decline in their transmission not only threatens the preservation of Elunchun music but also weakens the cultural literacy of the community, limiting future generations' connection to

their heritage (Jiayang Li & Su, 2024; Xiaozhi, 2024; Yu & Chuangprakhon, 2025).

Broader socio-economic changes further compound the problem of declining literacy transmission in Elunchun folk songs. As many Elunchun people have transitioned from a hunting-based lifestyle to modern occupations, the cultural context in which these songs were once embedded has also changed. In the past, folk songs played a crucial role in rituals, celebrations, and everyday life, making them an integral part of the community's social fabric. Today, however, reduced engagement in traditional practices and a shift toward Mandarin as the dominant language in education and communication have led to a weakening of the oral tradition that once ensured the survival of these songs (Brocken, 2022; Ping et al., 2024; Xiaozhi, 2024). Moreover, limited institutional support for the preservation of Elunchun music has meant that folk songs have yet to be formally included in school curricula or government-backed cultural initiatives systematically. Without structured preservation and community engagement efforts, these musical traditions face the risk of being forgotten within a few generations. Thus, it is crucial to explore effective methods for revitalizing the

transmission of Elunchun folk songs, ensuring that they remain relevant and accessible to future generations (Greene, 2023; Kemal & Shah, 2024; Van der Hoeven, 2018).

This study aims to examine the role of community engagement in enhancing the literacy transmission of Elunchun Chinese folk songs. Specifically, it investigates how community-led initiatives, intergenerational learning, and educational interventions contribute to sustaining the transmission of these songs. The study also seeks to identify effective strategies for strengthening community involvement in folk song literacy, including integrating traditional music into formal education, leveraging digital technology for archiving and dissemination, and promoting public performances and cultural events (Onyeji & Onyeji, 2023; Zhang & Thotham, 2024). By exploring these strategies, this research provides insight into how Elunchun folk songs can be revitalized in a modern context while maintaining their cultural authenticity.

The significance of this research extends beyond the preservation of Elunchun folk songs; it highlights the broader importance of community-driven cultural literacy initiatives in safeguarding intangible heritage. Understanding the role of community engagement in folk song transmission provides valuable lessons for other indigenous and minority groups facing similar challenges in preserving their musical traditions (Del Soldato & Massari, 2024; Stefano, 2021; Woodhead, 2023). Additionally, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on cultural literacy, demonstrating how participatory learning, collective memory, and social involvement play a fundamental role in the transmission of oral traditions. By emphasizing the need for collaboration between community members, educators, cultural organizations, and policymakers, this research advocates for a holistic approach to cultural preservation—one that empowers local communities to take an active role in safeguarding their traditions. Through these efforts, the study aims to support the continued vitality of Elunchun folk songs, ensuring that their rich history, meaning, and artistry endure for generations to come.

### Research Question

- How does community engagement contribute to the literacy transmission of Elunchun Chinese folk songs, and what strategies can enhance its effectiveness?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The Elunchun ethnic group's folk song literacy is vital for preserving their cultural identity and artistic traditions. It involves understanding melodies, rhythms, and cultural contexts learned through oral storytelling. However, modernization, urbanization, and cultural shifts are putting this literacy at risk. Community engagement is a vital mechanism to sustain and enhance this transmission, ensuring younger generations remain connected to their cultural heritage. This literature review explores the role of literacy transmission in folk song culture, the impact of community engagement on cultural preservation, challenges faced in transmitting Elunchun folk songs, and strategies for ensuring their effective continuity.

### Literacy Transmission in Folk Song Culture

Folk song literacy is a complex process that involves oral traditions, musical performance techniques, and cultural knowledge. It is rooted in communal learning, where individuals learn lyrics, melodies, and rhythms through social participation rather than formal education. The cultural transmission theory suggests that cultural knowledge, including music and storytelling, is inherited through repeated exposure and imitation. In the Elunchun community, elders have historically taught younger members folk songs through everyday activities. However, as lifestyles shift away from communal living, natural exposure to folk songs has diminished, leading to a decline in literacy transmission (Gilbas & Gamba, 2023; Hewlett et al., 2024; Wisuttipat, 2020). In response to these challenges, new strategies are emerging that integrate formal educational models and digital tools with oral traditions. While prior studies highlight the decline in oral transmission, this study expands upon this understanding by exploring innovative methods of preserving literacy, such as hybrid learning models, structured mentorship programs, and interactive folk music education initiatives.

### Community Engagement in Cultural Preservation

Community engagement is crucial for the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage, such as folk music. The social capital theory suggests that strong community networks contribute to knowledge-sharing and cultural sustainability. Traditional societies distribute responsibility for preserving cultural heritage among elders, educators, and younger generations. Festivals, public performances, and communal gatherings offer intergenerational opportunities for literacy transmission, reinforcing cultural pride and a sense of belonging. Modern technology has expanded engagement possibilities, allowing Elunchun folk songs to reach a wider audience. Participatory learning theory supports the role of community engagement in cultural transmission, as folk song literacy thrives in interactive settings (Trung & Van, 2020; Wang & Thotham, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). This study refines previous understandings of community engagement by exploring how structured community-led programs, such as folk song documentation projects and digital archives, contribute to literacy transmission beyond oral traditions. Additionally, the study identifies key elements of successful engagement models, such as mentorship structures, community music schools, and cross-generational performances that reinforce literacy among younger members.

### Challenges in the Transmission of Elunchun Folk Songs

Despite their cultural significance, Elunchun folk songs face several challenges in their transmission. Urbanization and lifestyle changes have decreased participation in traditional music practices as people migrate to urban areas for education and employment. Linguistic shifts within the Elunchun community, such as Mandarin becoming the dominant language, have created a disconnect between traditional music

and contemporary youth, causing the loss of deeper meanings, metaphors, and historical narratives. Furthermore, the lack of formal integration into educational curricula weakens the transmission process, leaving younger generations with limited access to their cultural heritage. This burden falls solely on community elders, whose numbers are declining. Technological influence and digital entertainment have shifted younger generations' musical interests towards mainstream music genres, reducing interest in traditional folk songs (Gao & Karin, 2023; Liu et al., 2025; Songzi, 2024). While these factors contribute to the declining transmission of Elunchun folk songs, this study explores how integrating folk music literacy into school curricula and creating immersive digital platforms can counteract these challenges. Additionally, it identifies best practices from other indigenous communities that have successfully revitalized their musical traditions through targeted policy interventions and educational initiatives.

### Strategies for Effective Literacy Transmission

To maintain the literacy of Elunchun folk songs, communities should integrate cultural heritage into modern education and social structures. Schools can incorporate folk songs into curricula, encourage performances, and invite folk song practitioners as guest educators. Intergenerational learning programs can bridge generational gaps and reinforce oral transmission methods. Technology and digital archiving can help preserve folk songs with digital songbooks, online platforms, social media campaigns, podcasts, and video tutorials attracting younger audiences. Community-led cultural events, such as folk song festivals and cultural heritage days, can strengthen folk song literacy and encourage community participation in cultural preservation (Hanmore-Cawley & Scharf, 2018; Jian et al., 2024; Trujillo-Torres et al., 2023). This study refines the understanding of effective literacy transmission strategies by assessing the long-term impact of these methods in different cultural contexts. Analyzing case studies of folk song revitalization efforts highlights the effectiveness of blending traditional mentorship models with contemporary digital strategies. It also presents a framework for policymakers and educators to implement sustainable literacy transmission practices that align with cultural preservation goals and modern educational standards.

## METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore how community engagement contributes to the literacy transmission of Elunchun folk songs. Using ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, the research aims to understand the processes involved in preserving and passing down folk song literacy (Biddison et al., 2018; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). This approach allows for an in-depth examination of the role of community initiatives, traditional learning methods, and modern adaptations in the transmission of Elunchun folk songs.

### Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen to capture the experiential, social, and cultural dimensions of Elunchun folk song literacy transmission. The study combines multiple qualitative research techniques to gather rich, detailed, and contextualized data, as shown in Table 1.

### Research Site

The study was conducted in the Elunchun Autonomous Banner, Northeast China, a region known for its rich Elunchun cultural heritage. The study focused on the transmission of traditional folk songs, their integration into educational programs, and their role in intergenerational knowledge transfer. Five key informants were involved: Elder Folk Singers, Community Organizers, Music Educators, and Cultural Researchers. These informants contributed to the study by contributing to folk song literacy, ensuring oral transmission and teaching, facilitating cultural events, integrating folk songs into school curricula, and developing preservation strategies. Their diverse perspectives provide a holistic view of how Elunchun folk songs are transmitted across generations and within different community structures.

### Data Collection

The study employed multiple data collection methods to gather in-depth insights into the transmission of Elunchun folk song literacy, as shown in Table 2.

### Data Analysis

Data from interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that identifies patterns and relationships within qualitative data, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 1.** Research design overview

Research Approach	Purpose	Implementation
Ethnographic Fieldwork	Observe and document folk song literacy practices within the community	Conducted in-depth field visits to Elunchun communities
Semi-Structured Interviews	Capture perspectives of key informants on the role of community engagement in transmission	Conducted interviews with five key informants
Participant Observation	Understand the role of performance and oral transmission in folk song literacy	Attended folk song workshops, local festivals, and educational programs
Document Analysis	Examine historical and educational records on Elunchun folk songs.	Reviewed archival texts, song transcriptions, and teaching materials

**Table 2.** Data collection methods

Methods	Purpose	Participants
Semi-Structured Interviews	Understand community perspectives on folk song transmission.	Conducted interviews with five key informants
Participant Observation	Observe folk song learning in natural settings.	Attended live performances, workshops, and local festivals
Document Analysis	Examine historical and educational materials related to folk songs.	Reviewed song lyrics, archival records, and teaching manuals

**Table 3.** Data analysis

Theme	Description
Intergenerational Learning	How elders and families contribute to oral folk song transmission
School-Based Transmission	The role of educational institutions in promoting literacy in Elunchun folk songs
Digital Integration	The impact of technology and online platforms on folk song preservation
Community-Led Initiatives	How cultural festivals and workshops enhance literacy transmission.

## RESULTS

Understanding the role of community engagement in the literacy transmission of Elunchun folk songs requires examining the various ways in which knowledge is shared, learned, and preserved. This study highlights the impact of intergenerational learning, the role of educational institutions, and the barriers to effective literacy transmission. Additionally, it explores innovative strategies that have been introduced to revitalize Elunchun folk song literacy. The findings provide valuable insights into how community-driven efforts contribute to the sustainability of this rich musical heritage and what measures can enhance its transmission in contemporary society.

### Community-Based Learning as a Key Transmission Method

The findings of this study indicate that community participation plays a central role in sustaining literacy transmission in Elunchun folk songs. The oral traditions and informal learning environments established within the community contribute significantly to preserving and passing down the musical heritage of the Elunchun people. This process of folk song literacy extends beyond simply learning melodies and lyrics; it includes understanding the historical and cultural significance embedded in the songs. The knowledge passed from one generation to the next ensures that folk songs remain relevant within the community, reinforcing the collective identity of the Elunchun people.

Through community-based learning, elders act as the primary transmitters of folk song literacy. According to

one informant (Key Informant 1, interview, August 2024), “Our songs are not just music; they are stories of our ancestors, lessons about nature, and reflections of our emotions. Without passing them down, we risk losing our way of life.” This statement underscores the broader literacy function of folk songs—not only preserving musical knowledge but also serving as an oral repository of cultural wisdom. These learning experiences typically take place in informal settings, such as family gatherings, seasonal festivals, and communal events, where the act of singing becomes a literacy practice in itself.

Observations from community engagement activities, as shown in Figure 1, further reinforce this finding. During cultural events, younger members of the community gather around elders who sing traditional songs while explaining their meanings. These moments of shared storytelling and singing enable intergenerational learning, fostering folk song literacy in an interactive and participatory manner. The communal aspect of these learning settings ensures that folk song literacy is not limited to a specific group but remains accessible to all members of the Elunchun community. Additionally, some community initiatives encourage children to participate in folk song performances, further strengthening their engagement with cultural literacy transmission.

One challenge mentioned by another informant (Key Informant 2, interview, August 2024) is that, while many elders are willing to teach folk songs, fewer young people actively seek to learn them. “Our children listen to pop music now,” the informant noted. “If we don’t encourage them early, they won’t see the value in our songs.” This highlights the importance of structured engagement strategies that promote folk song literacy as a living tradition rather than a historical relic. To sustain this process, community elders, parents, and local organizations must continue fostering interactive spaces where young learners feel motivated to acquire and maintain their literacy in traditional Elunchun music.

### Role of Schools and Educational Institutions

The role of schools and educational institutions in enhancing literacy transmission of Elunchun folk songs is critical, as formal education serves as an additional mechanism for preserving and revitalizing traditional music. Findings from this study indicate that integrating folk songs into school curricula provides structured opportunities for students to engage with their musical heritage while strengthening their understanding of cultural literacy. Schools that incorporate folk songs into music education programs have observed increased awareness and appreciation among students regarding their cultural identity.

One informant (Key Informant 3, interview, August 2024) highlighted the impact of folk songs in classroom settings: “When students learn Elunchun songs in school, they not only learn to sing but also gain an understanding of the historical and cultural messages embedded in the lyrics. This is more than music; it is literacy transmission that connects them to their ancestors and traditions.” This statement underscores how folk song literacy extends beyond musical

performance to include cultural literacy, historical awareness, and linguistic proficiency.

Observations from school-organized cultural activities, as shown in Figure 2, further emphasize the importance of education in folk song literacy transmission. During an Elunchun Birch Bark Boat Making Competition, traditional songs were performed as part of the event, linking music education with hands-on cultural experiences. Such initiatives demonstrate how schools can integrate folk song literacy into a broader educational framework, allowing students to connect traditional music with other aspects of their heritage. By linking folk song literacy with practical, engaging activities, schools can foster a more dynamic and meaningful learning experience.

Music teachers play an essential role in ensuring that literacy transmission of Elunchun folk songs is effectively incorporated into school programs. One teacher (Key Informant 4, interview, August 2024) noted, “Teaching traditional folk songs is about more than melody and lyrics; we teach students the stories, customs, and values behind the songs. This enhances their literacy skills in music and culture simultaneously.” In some cases, guest lecturers, including folk song practitioners and cultural experts, are invited to share their knowledge with students. These sessions provide a direct link between oral traditions and formal education, reinforcing the importance of community engagement in folk song literacy transmission.

Despite the positive outcomes, challenges remain in ensuring that literacy transmission through schools is

sustained. One school administrator (Key Informant 5, interview, August 2024) pointed out, “While we have introduced folk song lessons in our school, we still face challenges in making it a consistent part of the curriculum. There is limited time, and students are also drawn to mainstream music.” This reflects the broader issue of balancing folk song literacy with modern educational priorities. To address this, some schools have integrated folk song literacy programs into extracurricular activities, providing students with voluntary spaces where they can engage in learning and performance without disrupting academic requirements.

### Innovations in Folk Song Transmission

To counteract the challenges threatening folk song literacy transmission, various community-led initiatives have embraced innovative strategies to revitalize the teaching, learning, and promotion of Elunchun folk songs. These innovations leverage digital technology, media outreach, and cultural festivals to sustain and expand engagement with traditional music. Findings indicate that digital documentation, multimedia promotion, and cultural events have become essential tools in fostering folk song literacy, ensuring its continuity across generations.

#### *Digital documentation: recording and archiving folk songs*

One of the most impactful innovations in folk song literacy transmission has been the establishment of digital archives containing recorded performances, transcribed lyrics, and historical explanations of Elunchun folk songs. Traditional oral transmission, while culturally significant, poses a risk of loss over time. To mitigate this, community members and cultural researchers have undertaken projects to record and catalog folk songs in both audio and video formats. A key informant (Key Informant 1, interview, August 2024) shared insights into this initiative, stating, “We have started documenting folk songs and creating an online library where younger generations can access them. This not only preserves the songs but also allows people to learn at their own pace.” This initiative enhances literacy transmission by providing learners with structured materials that supplement traditional oral learning.

Moreover, the digitalization of Elunchun folk music has facilitated collaboration with cultural institutions and researchers, ensuring that these musical traditions are systematically preserved. Public access to these resources has also expanded beyond the Elunchun community, increasing awareness and appreciation of their cultural heritage on a broader scale.

#### *Multimedia promotion: engaging a wider audience through technology*

The rise of social media and online content-sharing platforms has provided new avenues for promoting folk song literacy among younger generations. Community members have embraced short-form video platforms, live streaming,



**Figure 1.** Elunchun culture into community activities  
Source: Lili Yan, provides photos from Li Gaoyang (2024)



**Figure 2.** School-organized cultural activities  
Source: Lili Yan, provides photos from Li Gaoyang (2024)

and interactive content to make traditional music more accessible and engaging. A local music teacher (Key Informant 2, interview, August 2024) emphasized the role of digital platforms, stating, “We have seen a surge in interest when we upload folk song performances online. Many young people find it easier to connect with these songs through digital formats rather than through traditional gatherings.” This shift has made folk song literacy transmission more dynamic, allowing younger individuals to learn and engage with traditional music in ways that align with their digital habits.

Additionally, mobile applications that teach folk song lyrics, pronunciation, and melodies have been developed, incorporating interactive learning modules to support literacy-based learning. These efforts make folk song literacy more accessible to learners who may not have direct access to community elders or traditional learning environments.

### ***Cultural festivals: celebrating and promoting elunchun music***

In addition to digital innovations, cultural festivals have become a major platform for promoting folk song literacy transmission. These festivals provide an immersive environment where community members, musicians, and researchers come together to celebrate and learn about Elunchun folk music. As shown in Figure 3, illustrates the impact of cultural festivals, highlighting the 4<sup>th</sup> Elunchun Folk Culture Festival, where traditional folk music performances, educational workshops, and competitions were organized to engage audiences in folk song literacy. These events not only serve as a means of transmission but also reinforce cultural pride and identity among participants.

An elder and folk song performer (Key Informant 3, interview, August 2024) remarked, “Festivals are important because they bring our music to life. Younger generations see the joy and cultural importance of our songs, and this inspires them to learn and carry forward our traditions.” By integrating performances, storytelling, and participatory singing, festivals create a lively and interactive learning experience that engagingly fosters folk song literacy.

Furthermore, these events have garnered support from educational institutions and cultural organizations, leading



**Figure 3.** The 4<sup>th</sup> elunchun folk culture festival  
Source: Lili Yan, provides photos from Li Gaoyang (2024)

to collaborations that enhance the sustainability of literacy transmission efforts. Schools and universities have begun incorporating festival activities into their music education programs, ensuring that folk song learning is both structured and community-driven.

### ***Sustaining folk song literacy through innovation***

The combination of digital documentation, multimedia promotion, and cultural festivals demonstrates how modern approaches can effectively complement traditional methods of folk song literacy transmission. These strategies not only preserve Elunchun folk songs but also adapt them to contemporary learning environments, making them more relevant and accessible to new generations.

As communities continue to innovate and adapt, the literacy transmission of Elunchun folk songs is likely to become more sustainable. By embracing technology while maintaining the cultural essence of folk music, these efforts ensure that Elunchun’s musical heritage remains a vibrant and integral part of cultural identity and education.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study highlight that community engagement plays a crucial role in the literacy transmission of Elunchun folk songs, reinforcing intergenerational learning and cultural sustainability. The results are consistent with the cultural transmission theory, which posits that oral traditions and musical literacy are preserved through repeated exposure and participation within a communal setting (Hewlett et al., 2024). This study demonstrates that elders remain the primary transmitters of Elunchun folk songs, passing down musical knowledge through storytelling, performances, and informal gatherings. However, as Gilbas and Gamba (2023) argue, shifting lifestyles and urban migration have disrupted this traditional learning environment, posing challenges for maintaining folk song literacy. The present study corroborates these concerns, emphasizing the necessity of structured community-led initiatives to sustain oral traditions.

This study builds upon previous research by demonstrating how community engagement provides a structured framework that enhances folk song literacy beyond traditional oral transmission. While prior studies have largely focused on intergenerational transmission within family units (Jiayang Li & Su, 2024; Wang & Thotham, 2024), Music educators play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between traditional oral learning and modern pedagogical methods. However, this study found that schools often face challenges incorporating folk song literacy due to time constraints and the dominance of mainstream music education. This finding aligns with Liu et al. (2025), who argue that institutional support for folk music education remains inconsistent, requiring further policy intervention to formalize its integration into national curricula. Additionally, this study revealed that guest lectures, cultural workshops, and extracurricular activities serve as effective alternative methods for enhancing literacy transmission in educational settings.

Another significant contribution of this study is its exploration of digital documentation and multimedia promotion as innovative strategies for folk song literacy transmission. The findings are consistent with the work of Onyeji and Onyeji (2023), who highlight the effectiveness of digital archives in preserving intangible cultural heritage. By recording and cataloging Elunchun folk songs, communities can ensure that their musical traditions remain accessible to future generations. Furthermore, the study found that social media and digital platforms are powerful tools for engaging younger audiences. This finding aligns with Songzi (2024), who noted that online music dissemination fosters cultural retention among minoritized communities. However, challenges persist, particularly in ensuring folk songs' authenticity and contextual integrity when adapted to digital formats (Zhang et al., 2024).

The research also underscores the importance of cultural festivals and community-led events in revitalizing folk song literacy. Findings indicate that interactive and participatory experiences, such as public performances and intergenerational storytelling, create meaningful learning environments that strengthen folk song literacy. This supports the participatory learning theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and community involvement in educational processes (Trujillo-Torres et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the sustainability of these initiatives remains a concern, as external funding and institutional support are often limited. This finding is consistent with Stefano (2021), who stresses that cultural heritage preservation requires long-term policy frameworks and active governmental support to remain viable.

Despite the positive outcomes, challenges in folk song literacy transmission remain. This study found that the dominance of Mandarin as the primary language in education and communication has led to a gradual decline in the use of Elunchun languages, resulting in a weakened oral tradition. This linguistic shift is widely documented in previous studies on indigenous music preservation (Gao & Karin, 2023; Yu & Chuangprakhon, 2025). To address this, the study suggests a dual approach: reintegrating Elunchun folk songs into early childhood education and promoting bilingual education policies that support Indigenous languages alongside national curricula.

However, while these strategies present promising avenues for folk song literacy transmission, this study also identifies several challenges that must be addressed. One major limitation is the reliance on elderly folk singers as primary knowledge holders, making the oral transmission process vulnerable to generational shifts. Additionally, the integration of folk songs into formal education is hindered by limited curriculum flexibility and an increasing emphasis on standardized music education (Liu et al., 2025). Furthermore, although digital technology offers new possibilities for accessibility, it may inadvertently exclude older community members who lack digital literacy, thus creating an intergenerational divide. These challenges underscore the need for more adaptive, inclusive, and community-centered approaches that ensure sustainability while maintaining cultural integrity.

This study underscores the importance of community engagement in sustaining the literacy transmission of Elunchun Chinese folk songs. By examining the role of intergenerational learning, formal education, digital innovations, and community-led initiatives, the research highlights the challenges and opportunities in preserving this rich oral tradition. The findings reaffirm existing theoretical frameworks, including cultural transmission theory, social capital theory, and participatory learning theory, demonstrating how literacy in folk music is deeply intertwined with communal participation and identity formation.

The study also reveals key areas requiring further attention. Integrating folk songs into formal education presents both opportunities and obstacles. While school-based music education enhances awareness and appreciation, the lack of structured curriculum policies limits its long-term effectiveness. The research also highlights digital technology as a transformative force in folk song literacy transmission, with online platforms and digital archives providing innovative avenues for preservation. However, balancing authenticity with modern adaptations remains a critical issue.

Future efforts should focus on hybrid models that merge oral traditions with contemporary dissemination methods, ensuring that folk song literacy transmission remains relevant across generations. Further research should investigate the impact of integrating folk songs into school curricula over an extended period and assess the effectiveness of emerging digital tools such as AI-assisted music analysis, virtual reality simulations, and mobile applications in folk song education. Comparative studies between Elunchun folk songs and other minority music traditions can offer broader insights into global best practices in literacy transmission. Finally, exploring how youth perceive and engage with traditional folk music in a digital age will be essential for developing strategies that enhance their participation and appreciation of cultural heritage.

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