

# Digital Intelligence Empowers Cultural Heritage: Integrating Yichang's Intangible Cultural Heritage with English Speaking Courses

Chunyan He\*

College of Science and Technology of China Three Gorges University, Yichang ,443002;

**Abstract:** Globalization has led to significant changes in education, particularly in the realm of English language instruction. Traditional English speaking courses often face challenges such as monotonous content and a lack of real-world application, which can hinder students' motivation and language output capabilities. Yichang, known as the “Hydropower Capital” of China, is rich in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) resources, including Qu Yuan culture, Qinglin riddles, Yangtze River ecological culture, and citrus culture. These resources offer a unique opportunity to revitalize English speaking courses by incorporating authentic cultural content, bridging the gap between language education and cultural preservation. This study introduces a series of innovative teaching activities—ranging from bilingual short video production, cross-border e-commerce simulations, to English speech competitions—all framed by Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and the Production-Oriented Approach (POA). By integrating ICH into English speaking courses, the study examines how this approach not only enhances students' language proficiency but also cultivates intercultural communication skills and cultural confidence. Through the use of digital intelligence, the course fosters a symbiotic relationship between language learning and cultural dissemination.

**Keywords:** Intangible Cultural Heritage; English Speaking Teaching; OBE; POA; Digital Intelligence; Yichang Culture

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## 1 Introduction

In the context of globalization, the role of English as a global communication tool has never been more critical. Traditional English speaking courses, however, face the challenge of being overly reliant on textbook-based instruction, often neglecting practical applications and real-life contexts. This lack of relevance can stifle students' enthusiasm for learning and hinder their ability to use the language effectively in cross-cultural settings. To address this issue, integrating the rich intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of Yichang into English language instruction offers an innovative and practical solution. Yichang's cultural assets, including Qu Yuan's literary legacy, Qinglin riddles, Yangtze River ecological culture, and local citrus culture, provide abundant material for revitalizing English speaking courses.

This study seeks to explore the potential of combining Yichang's ICH with English speaking instruction through digital intelligence and innovative teaching methodologies. The aim is not only to improve students' language proficiency but also to foster a deeper understanding of cultural heritage and enhance students' ability to communicate confidently in diverse cultural contexts. By leveraging Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and the Production-Oriented Approach (POA), the research examines how these pedagogical frameworks, supported by digital tools, contribute to students' overall development in language, culture, and technology.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Outcome-Based Education (OBE)

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is a student-centered educational philosophy that focuses on the desired outcomes of learning. It emphasizes the achievement of clear, measurable learning goals that guide both course design and student assessment. In the context of this study, OBE serves as the backbone for course development, ensuring that students are

equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage with both the English language and Yichang's cultural heritage. Through OBE, students are expected to meet specific outcomes such as effectively introducing Yichang's ICH in English and engaging in cross-cultural dialogue with global peers. These measurable outcomes align with the overarching goals of the course to improve both language proficiency and cultural awareness.

## 2.2 Production-Oriented Approach (POA)

The Production-Oriented Approach (POA) is a task-based language teaching methodology that focuses on language output through real-world, practical tasks. POA integrates language input with output in a way that encourages students to produce language actively. The three-phase model of POA—motivation, facilitation, and evaluation—serves as a guide for structuring the course activities. Activities such as producing bilingual short videos, simulating cross-border e-commerce live streams, and engaging in speech competitions allow students to practice language production in realistic and contextually rich environments. POA's emphasis on practical, output-driven tasks ensures that students not only learn the language but also use it in culturally relevant and meaningful ways.

## 2.3 Digital Intelligence in Language Learning

The integration of digital intelligence—such as AI language assistants, virtual guides, and other technological tools—has transformed language learning. Digital tools provide personalized feedback, foster engagement, and offer immersive cultural experiences. These technologies not only support language learning but also enhance students' ability to navigate digital platforms and interact with global audiences. In this study, digital intelligence is used to support OBE and POA by providing real-time feedback, enabling self-paced learning, and promoting immersive, culturally enriching activities. The use of AI platforms and virtual guides allows students to explore Yichang's cultural heritage in a dynamic and interactive way, thereby enhancing their language learning experience.

# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Course Design

The course, titled "English Speaking 3-4", is carefully structured to combine 40 hours of theoretical teaching with 24 hours of practical, hands-on activities. The design of the course is rooted in three major thematic areas: cultural creativity, cultural dissemination, and cross-border e-commerce. These themes are strategically chosen to foster a well-rounded understanding of language learning while simultaneously enhancing students' intercultural communication abilities and broadening their global perspectives. Through this multifaceted approach, the course aims not only to improve students' speaking skills but also to prepare them for real-world applications of English in both cultural and business contexts.

A key component of the course is the ICH Short Video Production project, where students engage in creating bilingual videos that highlight various aspects of Yichang's rich intangible cultural heritage (ICH). For example, students produce videos focusing on Qu Yuan's poetry, the cultural significance of Qinglin riddles, and the local traditions surrounding citrus cultivation in Yichang. By engaging with these cultural topics through the medium of short videos, students are not only practicing their English language skills but are also immersing themselves in the cultural fabric of their region. This innovative project encourages students to blend language learning with cultural exploration, fostering both linguistic and cultural competence in a creative and practical context.

Another significant element of the course is the Cross-Border E-Commerce Simulations. In these simulations, students participate in live-streaming sessions where they promote local products from Yichang, such as its renowned citrus fruits and culturally significant ICH-related goods. Through these live-streams, students practice business English in a global e-commerce setting, preparing them for the growing demands of digital marketing, international business communication, and the rapidly expanding world of cross-border trade. This aspect of the course emphasizes the practical use of language in the contemporary business world, where English serves as the primary tool for communication across borders.

The third primary activity involves English Speech Competitions, where students are tasked with preparing and delivering speeches on topics tied to Yichang's cultural and ecological heritage. For instance, students may be asked to deliver speeches on subjects such as "Introducing Yichang to the World," in which they highlight key cultural elements,

local history, or environmental initiatives. These speech competitions provide a platform for students to practice their public speaking skills while deepening their understanding of the local cultural landscape. By engaging in such competitions, students not only enhance their fluency and confidence in English but also gain experience in presenting complex cultural narratives in a clear and engaging manner.

The course integrates these practical activities into a comprehensive learning experience that aims to develop the students' ability to express themselves fluently in English, while simultaneously fostering a deep connection to their cultural heritage. This pedagogical approach ensures that students not only improve their language proficiency but also gain valuable insights into cultural preservation and global communication.

### 3.2 Data Collection

To assess the effectiveness of the course, data is collected through a combination of performance evaluations, surveys, and digital tool usage assessments.

Student performance is evaluated across multiple activities, including the production of short videos, participation in cross-border e-commerce simulations, and involvement in speech competitions. These performance metrics are critical for gauging the students' language proficiency, as well as their ability to incorporate cultural content into their English presentations. By measuring students' achievements in these practical activities, the course design aims to ensure that students meet both language and cultural learning objectives.

Additionally, surveys are administered to gather feedback from students about their experiences in the course. These surveys focus on students' levels of cultural confidence, their attitudes toward intangible cultural heritage, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the digital tools employed in the course. By collecting this qualitative and quantitative data, the course facilitators gain insights into how well students are engaging with the cultural material and whether the integration of digital tools enhances their learning experience.

Furthermore, the use of digital tools is carefully tracked to measure their impact on the students' learning. As the course makes extensive use of technologies such as AI language assistants, virtual guides, and digital media platforms, understanding the frequency and effectiveness of these tools provides valuable feedback for improving course delivery. The tracking of digital tool usage also helps evaluate how these technologies support both language learning and the exploration of cultural content, ensuring that they align with the course's objectives of fostering digital literacy alongside language proficiency.

## 4 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Student Achievements

#### 4.1.1 Showcasing Cultural Heritage Through Award-Winning Short Video Projects

The integration of Yichang's intangible cultural heritage into the English speaking curriculum has proven to be highly successful in terms of student achievement. One of the most notable outcomes is in the short video production project, where students created several award-winning videos that showcased their language skills and cultural understanding. For instance, students focused on the culture of Qu Yuan, Qinglin riddles, and the culture of Three Gorges immigrants, conducting field research to deeply explore these intangible cultural heritages. Guided by instructors in scriptwriting and video editing, students used digital intelligence tools to create bilingual short videos that not only practiced their English language skills but also highlighted the richness of Yichang's culture.

The students' efforts culminated in the production of several award-winning videos, such as "Yichang: Meeting Qu Yuan" and "Smart Riddles of Qinglin: The Fusion of Tradition and Technology," which won first place in the Hubei Province for two consecutive years at the "Use Foreign Languages to Tell Chinese Stories" competition organized by the Higher Education Press. Additionally, their video "Digital Time Machine: Connecting the Past and Future of Three Gorges Immigrants" won the gold medal in the Hubei Province and the bronze medal at the national level in the "Understanding Contemporary China" English Short Video Competition organized by FLTRP (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press). Another video, "Fish Flying in the Vast River: Technology Protecting the Future," was awarded the silver medal at the

provincial level.

These videos not only served as an outlet for practicing English but also showcased students' ability to connect cultural content with language skills, resulting in a project that resonated both academically and culturally. The recognition received at both provincial and national levels reflects the success of the course in achieving its dual goals of improving students' language proficiency and promoting the preservation and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage. Through these projects, students not only gained practical language skills but also developed a deeper connection to their local cultural heritage, enhancing their cultural confidence and intercultural communication abilities.

#### 4.1.2 Elevating Language and Culture Through Speech Competitions

As part of the course's focus on integrating Yichang's intangible cultural heritage into the English-speaking curriculum, students were tasked with introducing Yichang to the world through the theme "Promoting Yichang to the World." They were encouraged to present the city's rich intangible cultural heritage, key tourist attractions, and urban development using English. This task not only helped students refine their language skills but also gave them the opportunity to engage deeply with Yichang's cultural history and contemporary growth.

To support students in this endeavor, teachers provided training on speech writing and public speaking techniques through the Chaoxing platform. In addition, offline sessions were organized where students could practice their presentations, receive feedback, and refine their skills before competing in speech contests. These practical exercises were designed to help students develop their confidence in public speaking and ensure they could effectively communicate complex cultural topics in a foreign language.

Several outstanding students participated in high-level competitions such as the FLTRP-Guocai Cup and the "Understanding Contemporary China" English Speech Competitions. Their dedication and hard work paid off, as they earned impressive results, including two silver awards, two bronze awards, and two excellence awards at the provincial level in Hubei. These achievements not only highlighted the students' fluency and eloquence in English but also underscored their ability to engage deeply with cultural topics and present them persuasively to a wider audience.

The impact of these competitions went beyond just student success. The speeches not only enhanced students' public speaking abilities but also sparked significant attention to Yichang's culture both within the school and the broader community. The recognition these students received helped draw attention to the city's intangible cultural heritage, tourism resources, and urban development, creating a platform for broader discussions on how Yichang can be further promoted internationally. These competitions, therefore, served as a powerful tool for cultural exchange, strengthening students' language proficiency while simultaneously contributing to the promotion of Yichang's unique cultural identity on a larger scale. Through these experiences, students not only gained valuable academic skills but also played a role in fostering greater cultural awareness and appreciation both locally and globally.

#### 4.1.3 Building Real-World Skills through Cross-Border E-Commerce Simulations

The cross-border e-commerce simulations offered students valuable real-world experience in international trade and marketing. Through participation in live-streamed sales events and Alibaba's foreign trade training, students gained hands-on exposure to the operational processes of cross-border e-commerce. They learned how to use English to promote Yichang's local products, such as the city's famous citrus fruits and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) items. Teachers provided support in writing live-stream scripts and guiding product presentations, while students worked in teams to simulate live-streaming events and interact with customers.

These simulations not only enhanced students' business English skills but also equipped them with a solid understanding of cross-border e-commerce operations, including product introduction, customer communication, and effective online marketing. By engaging in these exercises, students developed essential professional skills that are highly relevant in today's globalized economy.

The practical experience gained from these simulations has already influenced students' career trajectories. Some students have begun designing bilingual product copy and preparing for careers in cross-border e-commerce. This real-world training has laid a strong foundation for students to pursue careers in international trade, helping them bridge the gap between classroom learning and professional practice. Through this integration of e-commerce skills with cultural

promotion, students are well-prepared for the growing field of global commerce.

## 4.2 Cultural and Technological Impact

The course's successful integration of Yichang's ICH with digital tools has had a profound impact on students' cultural pride and technological literacy. The "Digital Tour Guide" project, which employs smart technologies to guide international tourists, is a prime example of how digital intelligence can be used to promote cultural tourism. This project not only demonstrated the potential of digital tools in preserving and promoting cultural heritage but also allowed students to gain hands-on experience with innovative technology. By participating in these projects, students were able to see how technology can bridge cultural divides and foster international communication.

Furthermore, the integration of digital tools into the curriculum has enhanced students' technological literacy. Through the use of AI platforms and virtual guides, students have become more adept at using technology to explore and present cultural content. This technological competence will undoubtedly serve them well in an increasingly digital world, where the ability to leverage technology for communication and cultural exchange is becoming ever more important.

## 5 Challenges and Future Directions

### 5.1 Challenges

While the course has seen substantial success, there are several challenges that need to be addressed moving forward. One of the most significant challenges is the need for interdisciplinary collaboration. The integration of language instruction, cultural content, and digital technology requires effective coordination between language educators, technologists, and cultural experts. Achieving this collaboration is crucial for ensuring that the course maintains a cohesive structure and maximizes the potential benefits of each discipline.

Another challenge is ensuring the sustainability of the course. To continue to engage students and provide meaningful learning experiences, there must be ongoing investment in both the content and the digital tools used in the course. This includes regular updates to the cultural material, as well as the integration of emerging technologies to keep the course relevant and engaging.

### 5.2 Future Plans

Looking ahead, one of the most exciting developments for the course is the integration of Zhaozhao Smart Chain technology to further empower students' cultural confidence through the protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The Zhaozhao Smart Chain, a cutting-edge blockchain-based platform, offers a unique opportunity to digitally preserve and disseminate cultural knowledge in a secure and transparent manner. By incorporating this technology into the curriculum, students will gain hands-on experience with modern digital tools that enhance both cultural preservation and the global dissemination of ICH.

This platform will allow students to engage directly with the ICH of Yichang—such as Qu Yuan's culture, Qinglin riddles, and Yangtze River ecological heritage—by recording and archiving cultural content in an immutable digital format. Through this process, students will learn about the intersection of technology and culture, understanding how blockchain can play a crucial role in safeguarding intangible cultural assets for future generations.

Furthermore, the use of Zhaozhao Smart Chain will facilitate the development of digital cultural tourism. Students will be able to create virtual exhibits, digital guides, and interactive platforms that can be accessed globally, promoting Yichang's rich cultural heritage on an international scale. These interactive platforms can serve as both educational tools and digital marketing resources, allowing students to promote Yichang's culture to the world while gaining practical skills in digital entrepreneurship, blockchain technology, and cross-cultural communication.

Additionally, this innovative model developed in Yichang will be shared with other regions, enhancing global cultural exchange and improving language learning worldwide. By incorporating Zhaozhao Smart Chain technology into the course, we aim to create a more connected world where students not only gain proficiency in English but also become advocates for the protection and global sharing of cultural heritage. As the course continues to evolve, it will serve as a model for other institutions, fostering greater intercultural communication and building a global network of students empowered by

both language skills and cultural confidence.

## 6 Conclusion

This study demonstrates the powerful potential of integrating Yichang's intangible cultural heritage with English speaking courses through the use of digital intelligence and innovative pedagogical methods like OBE and POA. By combining language learning with cultural exploration, the course helps students improve their language proficiency while simultaneously fostering cultural pride and intercultural communication skills. The success of the course offers a replicable model that can be applied to other educational contexts, contributing to both the promotion of cultural heritage and the development of global citizens capable of effectively navigating an interconnected world.

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