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Research on the Construction and Communication of Wu Dialect Cultural and Tourism IP Empowered by Digitalization

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Abstract

Under the combined influence of globalization, urbanization and digital technology, the Wu dialect, a living fossil of Wuyue culture, is facing unprecedented inheritance challenges, with problems such as aging of inheritors, limited offline communication, weak international influence and prominent intergenerational disconnect gradually emerging. Against this background, our research team takes the construction and communication of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP as the research object, combines the national policies on the inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture and the construction of Digital Chinese, and takes Lasswell's 7W Model as the main analytical framework to explore the integration of three types of IP: cultural resource-based, creative experience-based and digital communication-based. Digital technology empowerment is the key to solving the inheritance dilemma of the Wu dialect. It not only provides theoretical and practical solutions for its living conservation, but also guides the Wu dialect from niche inheritance to mass communication, ultimately realizing the sustainable development of regional linguistic culture.

Keywords

Wu Dialect; Cultural And Tourism IP; Digital Communication; Cultural Inheritance; Cross-Cultural Communication

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

The current situation of Wu dialect inheritance has become increasingly evident. As a primary dialect of Chinese, the Wu dialect is widely spoken in the Yangtze River Delta region including Zhejiang Province, southern Jiangsu Province and Shanghai. Behind its more than 80 million speakers, it serves as the linguistic carrier of intangible cultural heritages (ICH) such as Pingtan, Yue Opera and Kunqu Opera, and is the emotional anchor and cultural identity of the people in the Wuyue area.

However, the pressures of modernization and linguistic standardization are eroding its living space, accompanied by a host of prominent problems.

First, the intergenerational inheritance disconnect is worsening, with an alarmingly low proficiency in the Wu dialect among teenagers in Wu-speaking areas: a mere 2.2% in Shanghai, 4.6% in Ningbo and less than 5% in Hangzhou, far lower than that in Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking areas. Most students can only understand a few simple dialect sentences but are reluctant to speak the dialect openly (See Figure 1 Survey on Dialect Usage Among Native-born Residents in Various Regions).

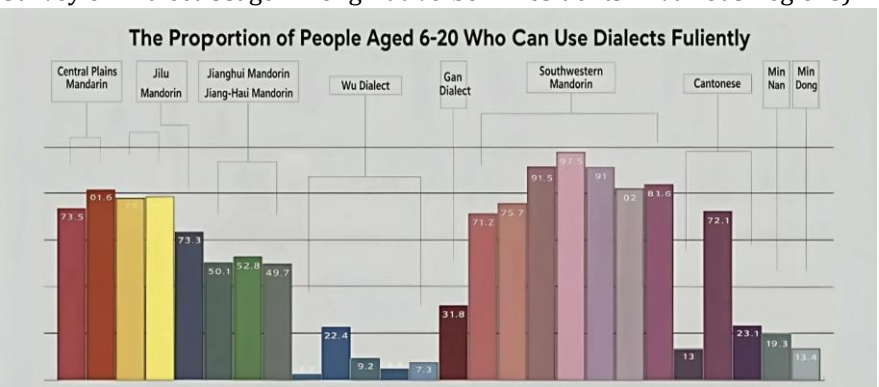


Figure 1. Survey on Dialect Usage Among Native-born Residents in Various Regions.

Second, there are flaws in the external communication methods. The Wu dialect relies on a single communication channel, with fewer and fewer speakers among overseas Chinese and a declining sense of identity among young overseas Chinese descendants—there is still a gap between its communication and the requirements of cultural and people-to-people connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition, there are few representative film and television works featuring the Wu dialect (See Figure 2). Is the Wu dialect doomed to fade away and eventually disappear in the river of history? The answer is clearly no. The rapid development of digital technology is injecting new vitality into the inheritance of the Wu dialect. Digital methods such as dialect emojis on social platforms, immersive dialect experiences in scenic spots, and the initially formed multilingual digital communication matrix have proven that digitalization can make the Wu dialect more youthful and fashionable, and take it to a bigger stage. The support of relevant national policies further underpins these efforts. The relevant policies and regulations are as follows: the “Opinions on Implementing the Project for the Inheritance and Development of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture” (2017) explicitly incorporated dialect culture into the protection system; the “Opinions on Promoting the Construction of Digital Chinese” (2025) further emphasized the integration of linguistic culture and information technology. Against this background, our research team takes the Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP as the carrier to study how to take digital technology as the driving force to solve the inheritance dilemma of the Wu dialect and promote its living inheritance and

innovative communication. (See Figure 2 Related Dialect Films and Television Works)

Dialect Category (Order Irrelevant)	Representative Films
Sichuan Dialect	Let the Bullets Fly
Chongqing Dialect	Chongqing Hot Pot, The Beneficiary
Guizhou Dialect	The Wild Goose Lake, Summer of Changsha
Shanxi Dialect	Xiao Wu, Mountains May Depart, A Touch of Sin
Hebei Dialect	Mr. No Problem
Tangshan Dialect	Devils on the Doorstep
Wuhan Dialect	The Wild Goose Lake
Qinghai Dialect	Kekexili: Mountain Patrol
Xinjiang Dialect	No Man's Land
Nanjing Dialect	The Flowers of War
Shaanxi Dialect	Dog Thirteen, The Story of Qiu Ju
Beijing Dialect	Mr. Six
Northeast Dialect	The Piano in a Factory
Tibetan Language	The Cow
Henan Dialect	Back to 1942

Figure 2. Related Dialect Films and Television Works.

1.2. Research Status

Foreign Western scholars began researching the Wu dialect as early as the mid-19th century. In the early stage, from the mid-19th century to around 1940, most researchers, though lacking systematic linguistic training, left a wealth of precious materials for the study of the Wu dialect's history. Scholars such as Edkins, von Möllendorff and Pott conducted detailed research on the Wu dialect. William Edward Soothill, a British missionary, compiled the "Ouyin Phonetic Script" based on the pronunciation rules of the Wenzhou dialect during his stay in Wenzhou and completed the full Wenzhou dialect translation of the “New Testament”. In the middle stage, from the end of World War II to the mid-1960s, most researchers received formal training in modern linguistics, and although the number of research results published was relatively small, their quality was extremely high. For example, William Ballard, a renowned American scholar of the Wu dialect, whose works “A History of Wu Phonology” (1969) and “Wu Tone Sandhi” (1979) have become important documents for Wu dialect research. These foreign scholars applied various theories of modern linguistics to the study of the Wu dialect, providing theoretical and material support for it. Some scholars also explored the changes of the Wu dialect under the background of urbanization from the perspective of sociolinguistics, but there is basically a lack of applied research on transforming Wu dialect cultural resources into cultural and tourism IP.

The records of domestic research on the Wu dialect can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods. The term "Wuyu" (Wu songs) in Qu Yuan's “Zhao Hun” (Summons of the Soul) and Zuo Si's “Ode to the Wu Capital” is the earliest written record of Wu songs. From the Han to the Song Dynasties, Guo Maoqian

quoted the “Book of Jin·Treatise on Music” in his “Anthology of Yuefu Poems” to record the origin of Wu folk songs and compiled some Wu songs in “Wu Sheng Qu” under “Clear and Commercial Tunes”. In the Ming Dynasty, Feng Menglong compiled and commented on “Gua Zhi'er” (Branch Songs) and “Shan Ge” (Folk Songs), which truthfully recorded the folk songs and popular tunes in the Suzhou area. In modern times, Gu Jiegang, Liu Fu, Zhou Zuoren and others edited and published “Wu Ge Jia Ji” (First Collection of Wu Songs), “Wu Ge Yi Ji” (Second Collection of Wu Songs) and other works, and Gu Jiegang also collated and wrote a preface for “Shan Ge”.

Modern research on the Wu dialect takes Zhao Yuanren's “A Study of the Modern Wu Dialects” (1928) as a benchmark and now covers multiple disciplines such as linguistics, education, sociology and tourism studies. Linguists focus more on the phonetic differences and evolution of the Wu dialect, educators pay attention to the introduction of dialects into campuses, and tourism scholars attempt to combine Wu dialect culture with the cultural and tourism industry—however, most of the above studies remain at the theoretical level, and practical discussions on the in-depth integration of digital technology with the construction and communication of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP are still rare, with few operable solutions. Compared with the mainstream development of Sichuan-Chongqing dialects, the IP development of the Wu dialect is quite backward. Sichuan-Chongqing dialects have formed a mature industrial communication model through film and television dramas, short videos and other means, but there are not many cultural products related to the Wu dialect, with only a small number of opera works spread among a niche audience. There is still a long way to go for the IP development and large-scale promotion of the Wu dialect.

The Wu dialect carries the thousands of years of historical memory and cultural heritage of the Wuyue area and is a living fossil of the inheritance of regional culture. The narration and singing of folk stories and ancient ballads, as well as traditional art forms such as Pingtan and Yue Opera, all take the Wu dialect as the core carrier. Studying the Wu dialect can help dig deep into its folk culture, traditional craftsmanship and other contents, preserve precious cultural heritage for future generations, enhance the regional identity and sense of belonging of local residents, and guard the cultural root of the Wuyue area.

1.3. Research Significance and Innovations

This study attempts to integrate the theories of linguistics, tourism management, digital communication and other related disciplines with a multi-disciplinary analytical approach of "dialect + cultural tourism + digitalization". It not only expands the research perspective of linguistic cultural inheritance and fills the research gap in the digital communication of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP, but also aligns with national cultural protection plans at the practical level, providing useful references for the implementation of Wu dialect inheritance, and also offering a replicable

implementation model for the protection and communication of other endangered dialects. The innovations of this study are as follows: taking the dialect's breakthrough into the mainstream as the starting point, overcoming the defect of overemphasizing theory over practice in existing cultural research and filling the practical gap in the industrialization and IP development of Wu dialect culture; supported by digital technology and the systematic operation thinking of IP, breaking the boundaries of traditional communication regions and forms, and building a multi-channel, three-dimensional communication matrix to make the communication of the Wu dialect more effective; taking the dialect's breakthrough into the mainstream as the starting point, breaking the single inheritance model, adapting to the social communication of young people and the cognitive habits of international audiences, and seeking a way of Wu dialect inheritance that emphasizes keeping pace with the times and cross-border communication, turning the Wu dialect from a niche memory into a mass trend. Ultimately, it promotes the living inheritance and innovative communication of the Wu dialect.

2. Construction Logic and Practical Path of Wu Dialect Cultural and Tourism IP

Based on Lasswell's 7W Model as the analytical framework, our research identifies the content of each communication link, clarifies the Wu dialects such as the Shaoxing dialect and the underlying Wuyue culture as the communication content, and targets four types of audiences: domestic and foreign dialect lovers, cultural and tourism consumers in the Yangtze River Delta, young people who pursue trendy culture, and overseas Chinese seeking cultural identity. Based on the needs of different audiences, we use digital technology to create three types of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP with digital technology as the means: cultural resource-based IP links the Wu dialect with regional celebrities, folk symbols, ICH craftsmanship and other elements to develop cultural and creative products such as Wu dialect trendy blind boxes, celebrity emojis and place name culture handbooks, transforming the abstract dialect into a concrete cultural carrier; creative experience-based IP takes Lanting, Lu Xun's Hometown and other scenic spots as carriers to develop interactive Wu dialect teaching corners, immersive dialect script murder games, ICH opera experience workshops, homestays, catering and other consumption scenarios, creating an integrated dialect experience space of "accommodation, dining, study and travel"; digital communication-based IP builds a new media matrix of "official WeChat accounts + short videos + live streaming", and at the same time develops a Wu dialect audio database, a multilingual translation mini-program and a dialect check-in and level-breaking platform, breaking the constraints of time and space. The three types of IP form a closed loop of "resource excavation - scenario experience - digital communication - audience feedback", and continuously optimize IP content and communication forms through feedback data, ultimately realizing a complete

development path for the Wu dialect from living conservation to innovative inheritance and then to cross-border mainstream popularity. (See Figure 3 Example of the 7W Model)

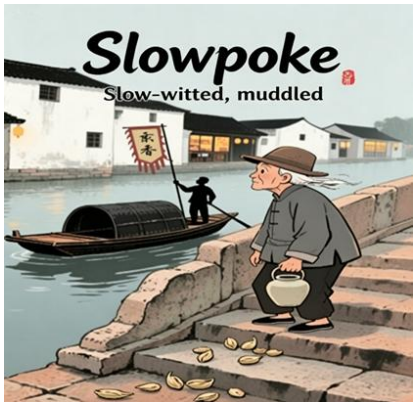
WHO	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	WHY	HOW	WHOM
Who	Research Subject	When to launch	Where	Purpose	Methods & Approaches	Beneficiaries
People who love and wish to promote Wu dialect	Wu dialect (taking Shaoxing dialect as an example)	The first half of 2025 and beyond	Major domestic and international communication platforms such as WeChat, Twitter, etc.	Broaden the scope of Wu dialect communication to help it break the circle	Build Wu dialect IP through digital empowerment	Groups of people interested in Wu dialect at home and abroad

Figure 3. Example of the 7W Model

2.1. Cultural Resource-based IP: In-depth Integration of the Wu Dialect and Regional Cultural Symbols

The key to cultural resource-based IP is to ground the abstract Wu dialect, organically integrate it with specific figures, folk customs, landscapes and intangible cultural heritages, transform it into tangible, perceptible and communicable cultural products, and integrate the Wu dialect into daily life—in daily use lies inheritance, which we believe is the most sustainable way of inheritance.

The development of cultural and creative products should focus on the three keywords of "practicality, fun and cultural connotation", bringing Wu dialect elements into people's daily lives. We can design Wu dialect learning cultural and creative products: for example, trendy blind boxes attached with dialect learning cards that include high-frequency words such as "Adada" (where) and "Jiaoqi Niansan" (unreasonable and argumentative), with pronunciations and life-oriented example sentences marked. Young people can easily come into contact with the Wu dialect while opening the blind boxes; there are also Wu dialect nursery rhyme picture books with illustrations of the Jiangnan water towns, and users can scan the QR code to listen to professional dialect recitations, combining fun with knowledge. (See Figure 4, Figure 5)



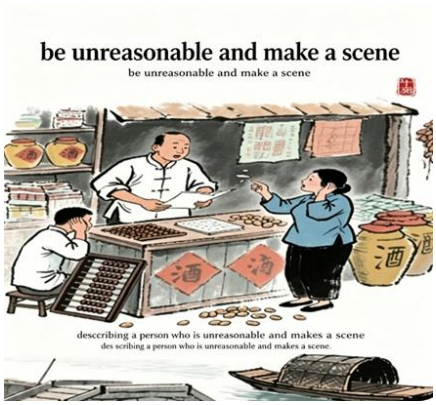


Figure 4 &5. Regional Cultural Symbols (1&2)

Daily decorative cultural and creative products are also indispensable. Refrigerator magnets printed with Wu dialect words such as "Naore" (lively) and "Jiaogaohao" (very good), with patterns incorporating iconic Jiangnan landscapes such as black-awning boats and Lanting; canvas bags in the shape of white walls and black tiles, printed with characteristic phrases such as "Shaoxingning" (people of Shaoxing) and "Laojiu Mimi" (sipping yellow rice wine), which have both regional characteristics and practicality. ICH-integrated cultural and creative products can be more refined: launch Wu dialect bookmarks containing classic arias from Yue Opera such as “The Butterfly Lovers” and “A Dream of Red Mansions”, allowing users to feel the phonetic beauty of the Wu dialect while reading books—these small cultural and creative products can make the Wu dialect omnipresent. (See Figure 6, Figure 7)





Figure 6 &7. Regional Cultural Symbols (3&4)

The excavation of celebrity symbols can enhance the recognizability of the Wu dialect. Leveraging Shaoxing's characteristic as a "hometown of famous scholars", designing a series of Wu dialect emojis around historical figures such as Lu Xun, Wang Yangming, Lu You, Qiu Jin and Cai Yuanpei is an excellent approach. Translate the classic quotes of celebrities into vivid and colloquial Shaoxing dialect: Lu Xun's "Fierce-browed, I coolly defy a thousand pointing fingers; Head-bowed, I like a

willing ox serve the children" is translated into Shaoxing dialect as "Hengqi meimao, lengleng duizhe qianban zhize, dixitou xin ganqingyuan zuo laobaixing ge niu"; Wang Yangming's "Attain one's innate goodness" is literally translated as "Ze liangzi", paired with illustrations of him giving lectures to enhance the visual effect. We can also launch dynamic emojis with original dialect audio to greatly enhance their appeal. (See Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11)



Figure 8, 9, 10 &11. Regional Cultural Symbols (5-8)

In addition, Wu dialect place names are also cultural resources. We can sort out the names of old streets, ancient bridges and waterways in Shaoxing and the Yangtze River Delta to compile the “Wu Dialect Place Name Culture Handbook”, and develop cultural and creative maps marking the pronunciations and historical origins of Wu dialect place names such as "Cangqiao Straight Street" and "Eight-Character

Bridge"—allowing tourists to enjoy the scenery and learn the dialect at the same time, experiencing the connection between the dialect and the region.

2.2. Creative Experience-based IP: Interactive Upgrading of the Wu Dialect and Immersive Scenarios

Creative experience-based IP breaks the concept of one-way output. Only active participation can make the audience get closer to the Wu dialect, remember it, further deepen their identification with Wuyue culture, and achieve the effect of "one experience, a lasting memory". Scenic spots are the focus of experience scenarios. Setting up Wu dialect interactive zones in key Shaoxing scenic spots such as Lanting, Shen Garden and Lu Xun's Hometown, and designing multi-level experience projects can let tourists feel the charm of the Wu dialect in the experience process; at the basic level, set up interesting teaching corners to teach common phrases such as "Hello", "Thank you" and "Take care" in the form of homophones and doggerels, and present small gifts through Q&A g

ames to enhance tourists' initiative; launch the "Jiangnan Blessing" voice postcard service, where tourists record Wu dialect blessings to generate QR code postcards, and relatives and friends can scan the code to listen; at the advanced level, create a stronger immersive experience by launching Wu dialect-themed script murder games with backgrounds of typical Jiangnan cultural elements such as the private tutor culture, the legend of Xi Shi and the Lanting Literary Gathering, such as “The Private Tutor Judging a Case” and “The Love Dream in Shen Garden”. Players must use Wu dialect lines to advance the plot (i.e., learn the Wu dialect through role-playing and regional culture); carry out ICH experience workshops, inviting Pingtan and Yue Opera artists to guide tourists to sing a few Wu dialect arias on site, letting them feel the rhythm of Wu dialect singing—personal participation is more memorable than mere listening.

Promote the penetration of a "Mandarin + Wu dialect + English" broadcasting system in public spaces, and implement it in transportation, scenic spots, shopping malls, campuses and other scenarios, allowing citizens and tourists to come into contact with the Wu dialect inadvertently. For example, transportation radio: "Kaiche ge shiguang, manyanyan, lulang chezi duosha, fu yao qu qiangdao, anquan diyi" (Drive slowly when driving, there are many cars on the road, do not cut in line, safety first); subway: "Xia yizhan, Luxun Guli, yao xia che ge chengke, diqian zou dao chemen bianxiang zhunbei" (Next stop, Lu Xun's Hometown, passengers who are getting off please move to the door in advance). Daily penetration allows the Wu dialect to gradually integrate into people's lives without deliberate learning.

Extend the experience scenarios to the homestay and catering industries. Build Wu dialect-themed homestays with Wu dialect services, Wu dialect learning materials placed inside, and dialect stories played at night, allowing tourists to feel the Wu dialect atmosphere during their stay; open dialect-featured restaurants, with the Wu

dialect names and pronunciations of dishes marked on the menu, and waiters introducing the origin of dishes in the Wu dialect—such as the Wu dialect pronunciation of "drunk shrimp" as "TSuiHo", paired with the allusion of the Jiangnan flavor of drunk shrimp, letting tourists experience the charm of the Wu dialect in all aspects of accommodation, catering and travel.

2.3. Digital Communication-based IP: Empowerment of the Wu Dialect Through Linkage with the New Media Matrix

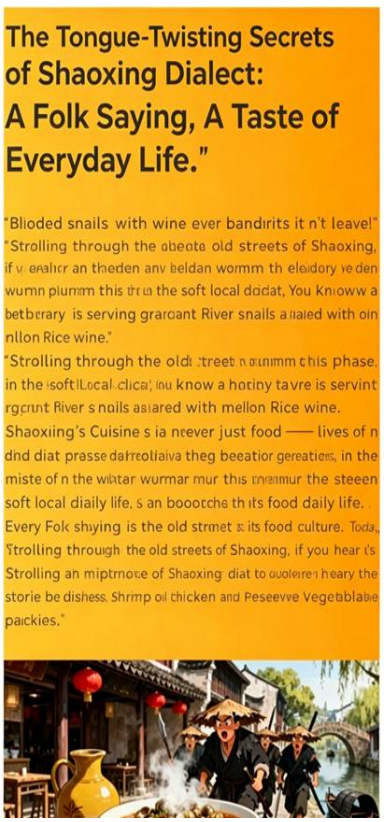
The ultimate goal of digital communication-based IP is to make the Wu dialect break into the mainstream and spread far and wide. Taking new media platforms as the main position and building a multi-platform, multi-form and multilingual communication matrix with digital technology is the way to achieve this goal.

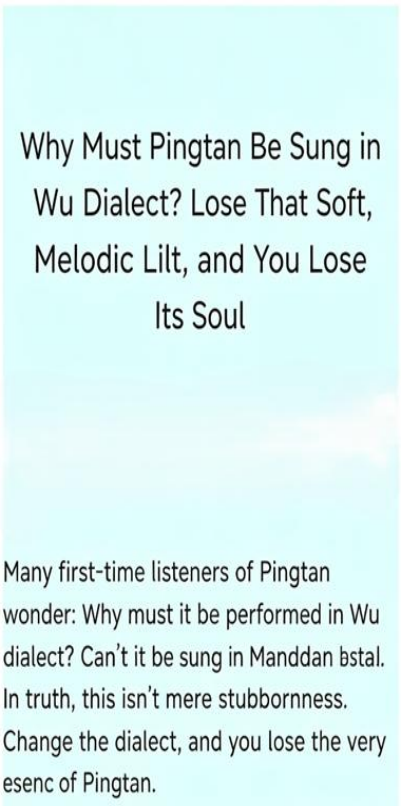
Build a new media matrix of "official WeChat accounts + short videos + live streaming", and create targeted content for different platforms. Official WeChat accounts focus more on in-depth content, launching columns such as “Wu Dialect Allusions” and “Vocabulary Origin” to analyze the culture behind the dialect. For example, the proverb "Luoyu xuexue, wu li Shengxian" (Never leave Sheng County in rain or snow) is closely related to the local climate and farming culture, paired with Wu dialect audio to allow users to read and learn the pronunciation, meeting the needs of different audiences; short video platforms (Douyin, Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu) can take a lightweight and life-oriented approach tailored to the audiences of different platforms, in line with public aesthetics. The content can include daily conversations, cultural and tourism check-ins, and dialect teaching scenarios, such as bargaining in a market: "Ge jiadian tai gui zai, pianyi yan hao fa?" (This price is too expensive, can you make it cheaper?); eating in Shaoxing: "Sa da ge huangjiu bingbing, tianzizi, hai you laojiu ge xiangwei, jiaogaohao shi" (This yellow rice wine popsicle is sweet with the fragrance of yellow rice wine, it's delicious), which can recommend food and teach Wu dialect phrases at the same time. It is important to note that the videos should be equipped with Chinese and English bilingual subtitles to cover both domestic and international audiences.

For content innovation, we should combine riding the trend with original creation. Select classic film and television clips such as “The Bund” and “Fortress Besieged”, as well as popular works such as “Chinese Folktales” and “Ne Zha”, to produce Wu dialect dubbed versions—leveraging the traffic of existing IP to attract more people's attention to the Wu dialect; at the same time, create original short drama series “The Soft and Melodious Wu Dialect Talks About Jiangnan”, which interprets daily life scenarios in the Wu dialect with backgrounds of family, workplace and campus, showing the charm of the Wu dialect and the warmth of Jiangnan to arouse audience resonance—this combination of riding the trend and original creation can greatly improve the communication effect.

The development of digital tools is an important support for communication. Build a

Wu dialect audio database that collects standard pronunciations from Shaoxing, Shanghai, Suzhou, Ningbo and other regions, covering words, phrases, nursery rhymes, operas and other contents, providing authoritative and comprehensive materials for the research and learning of the Wu dialect; develop a Wu dialect-Mandarin-English translation mini-program that supports voice and text input, facilitating communication for tourists and learning for international users; attempt to launch a Wu dialect check-in mini-program with functions such as daily learning, graded tasks and dialect level-breaking, where users can exchange Wu dialect cultural and creative products with points—stimulating people's enthusiasm for learning the Wu dialect in a fun way. At present, we have compiled a number of official WeChat accounts. (See Figure 12, Figure 13, Figure 14, Figure 15)





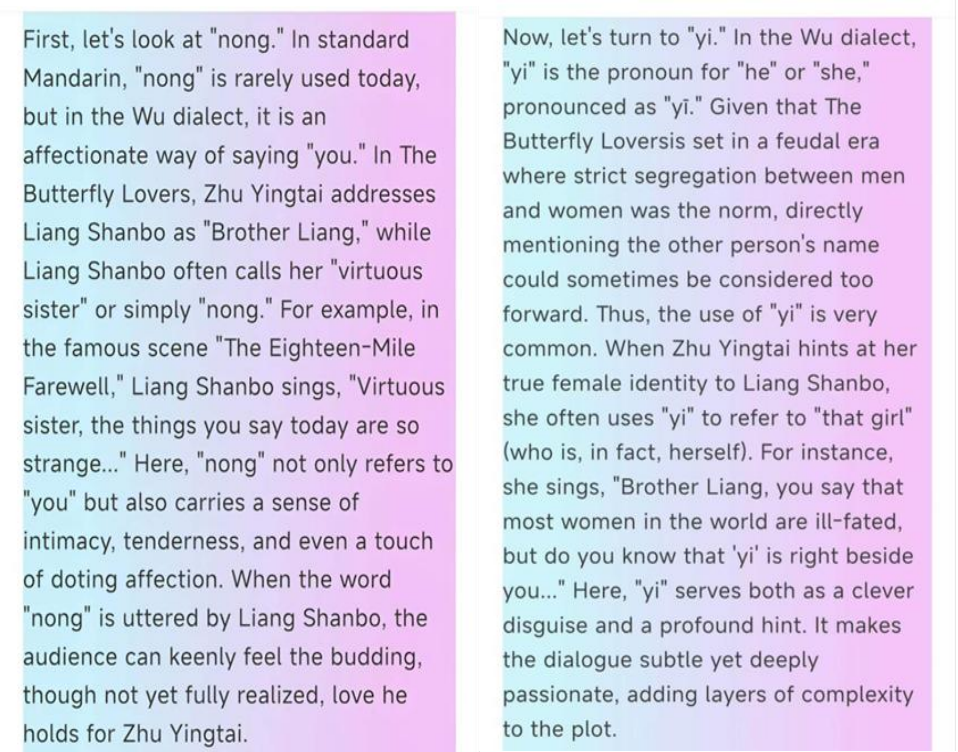


Figure 8. 9. 10 &11. Examples of WeChat moments (1-4)

3. Communication Effects and Value Realization of Wu Dialect Cultural and Tourism IP

3.1. Shaping Urban Cultural Business Cards

Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP has transformed the Wu dialect from a mere written and spoken language into a visible, audible, perceptible, experienceable and shareable cultural product—no longer a niche language, but a sound symbol of the Yangtze River Delta region, greatly enhancing the regional recognition and influence of Wu-speaking areas. Products such as celebrity emojis and Wu dialect cultural and creative products have enriched local tourism products, and immersive experience zones in scenic spots have highlighted the cultural and tourism characteristics of cities such as Shaoxing. More importantly, the IP has promoted the linkage of cities in the Wu-speaking areas of the Yangtze River Delta. Combining their own Wu dialect characteristics, various regions have created exclusive IPs and promoted the establishment of a "Wu Dialect Cultural and Tourism Alliance". This linkage has integrated the Wu dialect culture into a joint force, providing support for the coordinated development of regional cultural and tourism industries. From the perspective of communication effects, the number and spread volume of Wu dialect-related content are constantly increasing, and Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP has become a bright cultural brand of cities in the Yangtze River Delta.

3.2. Promoting the Youthful Inheritance of the Wu Dialect

Young people are the key to the inheritance of the Wu dialect. In the past, the Wu dialect was associated with aging and niche popularity, making it difficult to attract the attention of young people; however, Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP has captured the interests of young people—blind boxes, emojis, script murder games and short videos have stripped the Wu dialect of its traditional labels, turning it into a symbol of both culture and fashion, and narrowing the distance between the Wu dialect and young people.

Data speaks the loudest: the interaction volume of Wu dialect-related content on short video platforms has been continuously increasing, and more and more young people are learning and creating Wu dialect content on short video platforms; the cumulative number of registered users of the Wu dialect check-in mini-program has exceeded 100,000, with 78% of registered users aged 18-35; more and more universities have set up Wu dialect societies to carry out dialect learning and exchanges, forming a sound atmosphere of conscious learning and spontaneous communication. This model has brought youthful vitality to the Wu dialect and resolved the embarrassment of intergenerational disconnect. Only when young people are willing to learn and pass it on can the Wu dialect truly live on.

3.3. Facilitating Cross-cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication is an inevitable path for the Wu dialect to spread further. The bilingual communication model of "Wu dialect + foreign languages", coupled with the global coverage of the digital matrix, has provided strong support for the cross-cultural communication of the Wu dialect. On the one hand, overseas Chinese can access the Wu dialect through short videos, Wu dialect learning mini-programs and other means—a familiar dialect narrows the emotional distance with their ancestral home; on the other hand, presenting the Jiangnan life, traditional ICH and other contents with the Wu dialect as the carrier can show the international audience a real and vivid picture of Chinese regional culture, allowing the world to better understand Jiangnan and China.

At present, Wu dialect-related short videos have been viewed more than 500,000 times on overseas platforms such as TikTok, attracting the attention and interaction of a large number of international users, which proves that Wu dialect culture is not an esoteric art appreciated by only a few, but is also worthy of acceptance and love by the international community—this is the value of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP.

3.4. Improving the Dialect Protection System

Empowerment by digital technology has transformed the protection of the Wu dialect from the traditional oral inheritance model to a systematic, standardized and sustainable development model. The Wu dialect audio database records the phonetic, lexical and cultural information of the Wu dialect in various regions, preventing the

Wu dialect from being lost or distorted in intergenerational transmission; IP-based operation has attracted the investment of enterprises and social capital in cultural products—changing the traditional dialect protection model that only relies on the government and academic circles, and realizing a closed loop of "creation - communication - feedback - optimization".

The joint development of cultural resource-based, creative experience-based and digital communication-based IP has closely integrated the protection of the Wu dialect with the cultural and tourism industry, realizing both social and economic benefits. In terms of social benefits, the living inheritance of the Wu dialect has been realized, and the regional cultural identity has become increasingly strong; in terms of economic benefits, Wu dialect cultural and creative products and experience projects have driven the development of related industries, providing sustainable financial support for dialect protection. This integration of protection and development has made the protection of the Wu dialect no longer a passive guardianship, but an active development.

4. Current Challenges and Future Prospects

4.1. Facing Challenges

Although the construction and communication of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP have achieved continuous results, it has to be admitted that there are still deficiencies—these problems restrict its further development. First, the communication channels are not rich enough. Wu dialect-related content is mainly concentrated on mainstream platforms such as WeChat and Douyin, with insufficient layout on platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Bilibili and TikTok, failing to achieve omni-media coverage. Second, the depth of experience is insufficient. The existing experience projects are all shallow interactions, lacking systematic dialect learning content, and it is difficult to meet the audience's demand for in-depth understanding and learning of the Wu dialect. Third, the industrialization level of IP is low. Wu dialect cultural and creative products lack characteristics and innovation; the commercial transformation capacity of experience projects is poor, and a complete industrial chain has not been formed, making it difficult to achieve sustainable development. Fourth, the internal differences of the Wu dialect bring communication dilemmas. There are differences in pronunciation and vocabulary of the Wu dialect in various regions of the Yangtze River Delta, and how to organically combine the standardization of the Wu dialect with the characteristics of various regions and realize coordinated communication in IP construction is still a difficult problem. Fifth, there is a shortage of interdisciplinary talents. There are few talents who are proficient in the Wu dialect, cultural and tourism management and digital technology at the same time—the lack of talents directly restricts the innovative development of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP.

4.2. Optimization Paths

To address the above problems, we need to make targeted efforts and promote optimization from five specific aspects to boost the high-quality development of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP.

First, expand the communication matrix. Strengthen the content construction of platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Bilibili and TikTok, and create characteristic content in accordance with the characteristics of each platform—for example, Bilibili focuses on popular science of Wu dialect culture, Xiaohongshu on cultural and creative products and experience check-ins, and TikTok on daily life phrases; strengthen cooperation with tourism bloggers, dialect KOLs and overseas Chinese creators to promote the communication of Wu dialect IP.

Second, enrich in-depth experience. Develop graded Wu dialect learning courses and carry out online and offline training classes; design systematic experience projects combining theory and practice to meet the diverse learning needs of the audience.

Third, promote industrial upgrading. Strengthen the differentiated and serialized development of Wu dialect cultural and creative products, create core IP cultural and creative products and avoid homogenization; expand the sales channels of cultural and creative products and experience projects, integrate Wu dialect IP into various consumption scenarios such as scenic spots, hotels and catering, improve commercial transformation capacity and improve the industrial chain.

Fourth, build a coordinated communication mechanism. Formulate basic standards for the communication of Wu dialect IP and standardize the use of pronunciation and core vocabulary; at the same time, respect the characteristics of the Wu dialect in various regions, promote resource sharing and joint promotion in the Wu-speaking areas of the Yangtze River Delta, and form a joint communication force.

Fifth, accelerate talent training. Cultivate interdisciplinary talents with a solid foundation in the Wu dialect, tourism operation capabilities and digital technology through school-enterprise cooperation and special training; invite dialect experts and ICH inheritors to participate in IP construction and content creation to ensure the professionalism and accuracy of the content.

4.3. Future Prospects

Technologies such as AI, virtual digital humans and the metaverse will drive the development of Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP, leading the inheritance of the Wu dialect towards digitalization and intellectualization. At the technical level, develop Wu dialect virtual tour guides to provide 24-hour Wu dialect explanations in scenic spots and exhibition halls, and develop Wu dialect learning applications based on speech synthesis; build a virtual Wu dialect ancient town relying on metaverse technology to restore the historical living scenes of Jiangnan, allowing users to travel through time and space to experience Wu dialect culture and Jiangnan customs; at the communication level, strengthen cooperation with

overseas Confucius Institutes and cultural institutions, introduce Wu dialect IP into external cultural publicity channels, and let Wu dialect culture spread to more countries and regions, becoming an important carrier of Chinese culture's external communication. At the industrial level, form an industrial ecosystem of "Wu dialect IP + cultural tourism + cultural creativity + education". The cultural and tourism industry can drive the development of cultural creativity, education and other industries, develop Wu dialect textbooks, online courses, characteristic cultural and creative products and other products, and maximize the cultural and economic value of Wu dialect culture. It is believed that the Wu dialect will surely become a carrier connecting history and the future, and linking the local and the world.

5. Conclusion

The Wu dialect has always been more than just a language; it is the reconstruction of cultural identity of Wuyue, the safeguard of the diversity of Chinese culture, and the embodiment of national cultural soft power. Led by digital empowerment and supported by cultural and tourism IP, our team has established cultural resource-based, creative experience-based and digital communication-based cultural and tourism IP, and conducted a feasible study on the path of living conservation and innovative communication of the Wu dialect. History has proven that the Wu dialect is not an outdated language. As long as we adhere to the IP-based, youthful and international communication methods and use digital technology to help solve the inheritance bottlenecks, the Wu dialect will surely move from niche inheritance to mass communication. In the future, Wu dialect cultural and tourism IP will further deepen the integration of technology and culture, continuously improve content and communication methods, perfect the industrial operation model, and solve the dilemmas in development. At the same time, taking the Wu dialect as the starting point, we will drive the development of Wuyue culture, let more people understand Jiangnan, and make the soft and melodious Wu dialect, a pearl of Chinese culture, shine in the digital age, contributing the power of the Wu dialect to the inheritance and development of excellent traditional Chinese culture.

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