

Transmission of Bayu folk songs in kindergarten education: A case study of Southwest University experimental kindergarten in Chongqing, China

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the transmission of Bayu folk songs in kindergarten education through a case study of the Experimental Kindergarten of Southwest University in Chongqing, China. Focusing on preschool children aged 3–6 and two selected local songs, Huang Si Ma Ma and Pang Xie Ge, the study employed a qualitative case-study approach using field observations, interviews, documentary materials, audio-visual records, and score-based musical analysis. The findings show that kindergarten versions of the songs were developed through a gradual process involving source identification, selection, textual and musical organisation, dialect clarification, adaptation, activity design, repeated practice, and continued use. Children learned the songs through four recurring and interconnected processes: modeling, imitation, repetition, and adjustment. These processes enabled teachers to provide flexible vocal, linguistic, and bodily guidance while helping children build familiarity and participate collectively. Transmission was further sustained through daily collective singing, game- and movement-based activities, collective dance and peer interaction, and presentation and festival activities, which together supported vocal memory, embodied learning, social coordination, and cultural visibility. The study concludes that kindergarten education can function as an active setting for sustaining Bayu folk-song traditions by transforming local cultural materials into flexible educational practices while maintaining their regional musical, linguistic, and cultural characteristics.

Keywords: Bayu folk songs, kindergarten education, cultural transmission, children's folk singing, Chongqing.

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INTRODUCTION

Children's folk singing is an important part of Chinese traditional musical culture and a form of cultural expression closely tied to children's language, play, bodily movement, family life, and everyday experience. Children's folk songs are generally characterized by short melodic and textual structures, repetition, vivid imagery, rhythmic accessibility, and close relationships with oral and participatory practices. At the same time, regional languages and cultural environments shape their melodies, rhythms, lyrics, pronunciation, and singing styles. Consequently, children's folk songs reflect both common patterns of children's musical expression and distinctive local cultural identities (Gong et al., 2024). Their transmission therefore involves more than preserving melodies and lyrics; it also

encompasses the continuation of language, social interaction, bodily practice, and culturally situated forms of participation (Chang et al., 2024).

In Southwest China, children's folk songs provide an important means of expressing and transmitting local language, customs, social relationships, and everyday experiences. The Bayu cultural region, centered on Chongqing and historically connected with the wider Sichuan cultural area, has preserved various children's songs, rhymes, musical games, and other oral traditions (Li and Seekhunlio, 2025). These materials frequently incorporate dialectal expressions, reduplicated words, rhythmic repetition, action-related language, and images drawn from children's everyday lives. These

characteristics support listening, imitation, memorization, singing, movement, and collective participation while also exposing children to regional language and cultural meanings (Yu, 2021). Bayu folk songs can therefore be understood not only as musical materials but also as cultural resources through which regional identity is experienced and reproduced.

Traditionally, children's folk songs and rhymes were transmitted primarily through oral and participatory processes involving listening, imitation, repetition, play, interaction with family and community members, and participation in everyday activities. However, changes in social environments, lifestyles, educational practices, and modes of entertainment have altered many of the contexts in which such traditions were formerly transmitted. Within contemporary preschool education, kindergartens have consequently become important institutional environments for maintaining and transmitting local musical culture (Lyu et al., 2026; Yang and Li, 2025). Folk songs and rhymes can be incorporated into organized singing, musical games, bodily movement, collective dance, classroom activities, and performances, allowing children to encounter traditional materials through repeated and structured participation (Gao, 2021; Su and Jiang, 2021). In this process, teachers serve as important mediators who select, organize, demonstrate, adapt, and repeatedly present local musical materials in forms appropriate to young children.

The transmission of Bayu folk songs in kindergarten education is therefore a dynamic process rather than the simple reproduction of an unchanged musical tradition. Local materials may be collected, selected, reorganized, adapted, and integrated into educational activities before becoming part of children's regular musical experience. In classroom practice, transmission may occur through teacher modeling, children's imitation, repetition, bodily movement, peer interaction, and ongoing adjustment based on children's responses (Wang and Webb, 2024). Through these processes, particular musical, linguistic, and cultural characteristics can be maintained while some aspects are modified to accommodate children's developmental needs and the requirements of collective educational activities. Kindergarten education thus provides a significant setting in which traditional Bayu musical culture can be transformed from locally inherited oral materials into continuously practiced forms of children's musical participation (Chen and Tsai, 2022; Luo et al., 2020).

Although previous studies and educational practices have recognized the cultural and musical value of Bayu children's folk songs, comparatively limited attention has been given to the continuous process through which particular songs are selected, adapted, learned, practiced, and transmitted within a specific kindergarten setting (Sang et al., 2025; Wang, 2025). Further investigation is especially needed into how teacher guidance and children's participation interact during transmission, how

different educational activities contribute to the continuity of local songs, and how distinctive musical characteristics are maintained or adjusted when folk materials enter institutional preschool education. Examining these processes at the level of an actual kindergarten can provide a clearer understanding of how regional musical traditions function as living practices rather than merely as preserved cultural texts (Fang et al., 2025; Li et al., 2020).

Accordingly, this study examines the transmission of Bayu folk songs in kindergarten education through a case study of the Experimental Kindergarten of Southwest University in Chongqing, China. Focusing on preschool children aged 3–6 and two selected local children's folk songs, *Huang Si Ma Ma* and *Pang Xie Ge*, the study has three objectives: (1) to examine the formation and adaptation of Bayu children's folk songs for kindergarten practice, including how regional musical and linguistic characteristics are retained or adjusted; (2) to investigate the learning processes through which children acquire and participate in these songs; and (3) to identify the transmission methods used within kindergarten activities and their roles in sustaining the songs as continuing cultural practices. Through these objectives, the study seeks to clarify the relationship among local folk-song traditions, teacher-mediated educational practice, children's collective participation, and the transmission of Bayu musical culture in contemporary preschool education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This study employed a qualitative case-study design to examine the transmission of Bayu folk songs within the Experimental Kindergarten of Southwest University in Chongqing, China. The study focused on preschool children aged 3–6 and two selected local children's folk songs, *Huang Si Ma Ma* and *Pang Xie Ge*. The case-study approach enabled an in-depth examination of how locally rooted folk-song materials were collected, organized, adapted, learned, practiced, and maintained within an actual kindergarten setting.

Research site and materials

The research was conducted at the Experimental Kindergarten of Southwest University in Chongqing, China, where Bayu children's folk songs were incorporated into regular educational activities. Participants included preschool children aged 3–6 who participated in the selected folk-song activities, as well as teachers and curriculum practitioners who organized, adapted, and taught the songs. The children were observed primarily

within their regular group activities, while the adults provided information concerning the songs' origins, adaptation, organization, pronunciation, and educational use.

The principal research materials consisted of musical scores, lyric sheets, teaching and activity documents, field notes, audio-visual records, and locally related children's rhyme and folk-song materials. Huang Si Ma Ma and Pang Xie Ge were selected because of their recognizable regional characteristics, relevance to children's experiences, suitability for repeated participation, and adaptability to collective kindergarten activities.

Data collection

Data were collected through field observations, interviews, documentary materials, audio-visual records, and musical scores. Field observations were conducted during regular folk-song learning and activity sessions and focused on teacher demonstrations and children's participation in singing, imitation, repetition, movement, games, peer interaction, collective activities, and performance. Field notes and available audio-visual materials were used to document these practices and their development within the kindergarten setting.

Interviews with teachers and curriculum practitioners focused on the sources of the selected songs, their adaptation and organization, dialect pronunciation, teaching procedures, and continued use in kindergarten activities. Documentary materials, including musical scores, lyric sheets, activity plans, teaching documents, and recordings, were examined alongside the observational and interview data. Comparing these different sources made it possible to trace how locally related musical materials were transformed into forms suitable for repeated kindergarten practice.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively through thematic and musical analysis. Field notes, interview information, teaching documents, and audio-visual materials were compared to identify recurring patterns in the transmission process. The analysis focused on three major dimensions: (1) formation and adaptation of the kindergarten versions, (2) children's learning processes, and (3) transmission methods within kindergarten activities. Musical scores and related materials were examined to identify how melody, rhythm, lyrics, dialect pronunciation, repeated structures, and performance features were retained or adjusted during adaptation. The findings were then organized around recurring processes of modeling, imitation, repetition, and adjustment, together with daily singing, movement-based activities, collective dance, peer interaction, and presentation activities.

RESULTS

Formation and kindergarten context of Bayu children's folk songs

The findings reveal that the kindergarten versions of the selected Bayu children's folk songs were formed through a gradual and multi-stage process rather than through a single act of collection or adaptation. Field evidence indicates that this process involved the identification of locally related materials, confirmation of their sources, selection of appropriate content, textual and musical organization, clarification of dialect pronunciation, adaptation for children, activity design, repeated practice, and continued use within the kindergarten. Although the available evidence does not identify an exact starting date for the entire process, it demonstrates that the current versions developed progressively through the interaction of curriculum practitioners, teachers, and participating children.

The two selected songs followed different but related routes into kindergarten practice. In both cases, the original materials were not transferred directly into the kindergarten as unchanged forms of oral tradition. Instead, they were examined, organized, documented, and adapted through the use of musical scores, lyric sheets, pronunciation explanations, recordings, and activity plans. These processes transformed locally derived musical materials into structured forms that could be repeatedly demonstrated, learned, practiced, and recognized within the kindergarten environment.

The first selected song, Huang Si Ma Ma, originated from locally related children's rhyme material in Chongqing. The findings show that the song underwent processes of collection, adaptation, textual organization, musical notation, and curricular integration before becoming an established kindergarten version. Documentary materials included an adapted score, children's rhyme materials, explanations of the song's local source, and evidence of how the lyrics were organized for educational use. Through these processes, the original material was gradually transformed into a recognizable song with a relatively stable textual, musical, and performance structure. The musical score played an important role in stabilizing the melody, meter, lyric sequence, and pronunciation of Huang Si Ma Ma. However, the findings indicate that notation alone was insufficient to sustain the song in kindergarten practice. Teacher demonstration, children's participation, repeated singing, and presentation activities were equally important in maintaining the song over time. The continuity of the kindergarten version therefore depended on the interaction between documented musical materials and repeated human participation.

The second selected song, Pang Xie Ge, developed through a similar process of collection, textual organization, dialect clarification, musical arrangement,

and curricular adaptation. Field materials included a musical score, lyric sheets, recordings, and explanations concerning the source of the song, the organization of its three lyric stanzas, dialect-related expressions, recurring vocables, and selected textual adjustments. These materials demonstrate how a locally transmitted song was reorganized into a form suitable for repeated use in kindergarten activities. The formation of Pang Xie Ge also incorporated remembered childhood material, regional dialect, repeated lyric structures, game-related elements, and organized collective activities. Its transmission therefore depended not only on the preservation of melody and lyrics but also on the organization of bodily movement, roles, partner relationships, and spatial patterns. Classroom observations and activity records indicate that these elements were continuously refined through practice. The kindergarten version was therefore shaped through an ongoing relationship between musical content and participatory activity rather than through a single completed adaptation.

The findings further indicate that the selection of the two

songs was based on both cultural and educational considerations. Regional association alone was not sufficient. The songs also needed to possess recognizable melodic and textual characteristics, relevance to children's everyday experiences, suitability for repeated participation, and flexibility for incorporation into group activities. Consequently, the adaptation process involved decisions about which lyrics, dialect expressions, pronunciation patterns, melodic materials, repeated structures, movements, and activity procedures to retain, clarify, simplify, or reorganize. Importantly, adaptation did not replace local musical identity with newly composed kindergarten material. Instead, it produced practicable versions in which regional language, recognizable melodic content, musical organization, bodily participation, and collective activity could coexist. Musical scores and lyric sheets provided relatively stable references for selected musical and textual elements, while teacher demonstrations, activity plans, classroom practice, and repeated participation enabled these elements to remain active within successive groups of children.

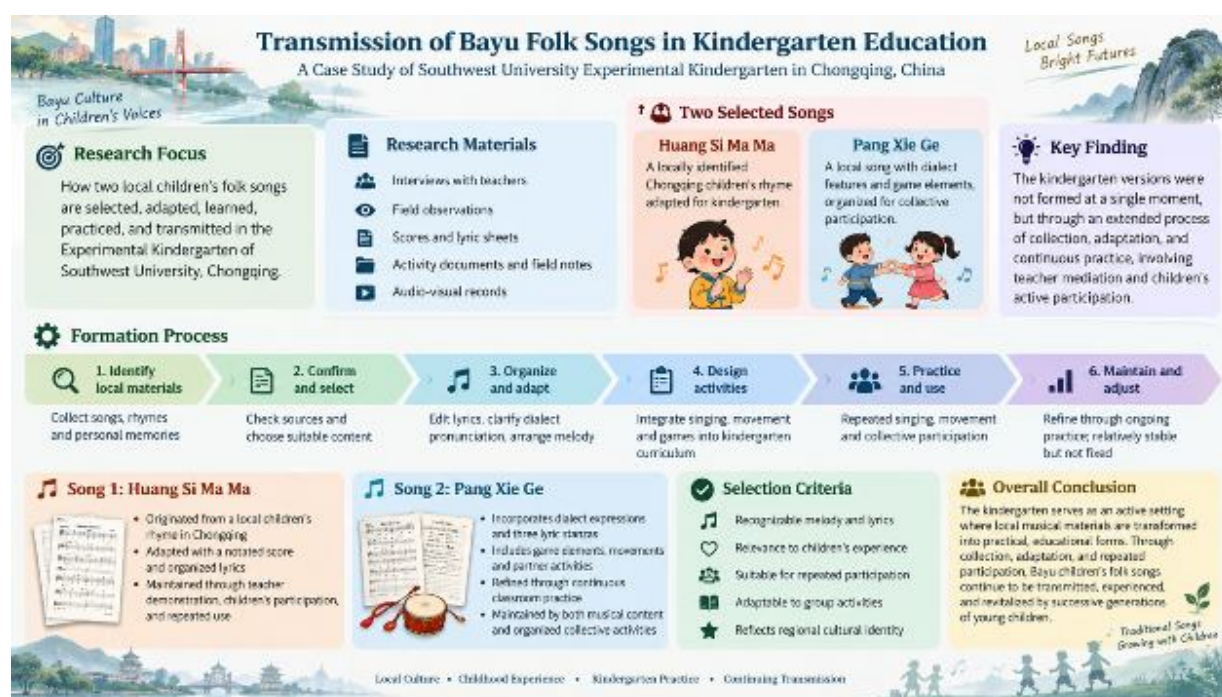


Figure 1. Transmission of Bayu folk songs in kindergarten education.

Figure 1 summarizes how Bayu children's folk songs are transmitted in kindergarten education. Teachers identify, select, adapt, and integrate local songs into singing, movement, games, and group activities. Through teacher guidance and repeated participation, the songs remain flexible educational practices while preserving their regional cultural characteristics.

Learning process of Bayu children's folk songs

The findings reveal that children learned Bayu folk songs in kindergarten through four interconnected processes: modeling, imitation, repetition, and adjustment. These processes did not occur in a fixed linear sequence. Instead, teachers repeatedly returned to modeling when

necessary, while children's responses led to further imitation, repetition, simplification, or reorganization. Through this recurring process, locally rooted song materials gradually developed into recognizable and repeatable collective practices. Children did not initially encounter the songs through musical notation or abstract explanation. They first listened to the teacher's voice, observed pronunciation and bodily expression, and responded through speaking, chant-like repetition, short sung phrases, gestures, and movement. These partial responses were gradually combined into longer vocal and activity sequences. Repeated participation strengthened collective continuity, while variations in pronunciation, entry timing, melodic direction, rhythm, lyric recall, movement, and interaction influenced how subsequent activities were organized.

Modeling

Modeling provided the primary audible and visual reference for learning. Teachers demonstrated the beginning of the song, pronunciation, pulse, phrase continuity, breathing, expressive character, and associated bodily movements. Demonstrations could be

presented as complete performances or divided into shorter verbal, vocal, and movement units according to children's responses. The findings indicate that teacher demonstrations provided relatively stable references for collective entry, pronunciation, phrase sequence, temporal organization, and coordinated endings. Facial expressions, gestures, and movement also supported children's understanding of how the songs were performed within kindergarten activities.

Teacher modeling alternated between spoken and sung forms. Dialect-related or unfamiliar words were first articulated clearly in speech and were then incorporated into rhythmic repetition, short sung phrases, or call-and-response activities. In movement-based activities, vocal cues were coordinated with gestures, roles, movement directions, and partner interaction. Modeling therefore functioned as an integrated vocal and bodily reference rather than merely as a demonstration of melody. The findings further show that teachers modified their demonstrations when children experienced difficulty. Teachers could shorten, slow, clarify, or accompany musical or verbal units with stronger visual and bodily cues. Modeling thus functioned as a flexible pedagogical reference rather than a fixed performance standard (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Teacher modeling and children's collective participation in kindergarten.

Imitation

Imitation was the principal means through which children began to participate in the songs. Children did not

immediately reproduce complete performances. Instead, they responded to short and recognizable units such as spoken words, repeated lyric fragments, chant-like cues, short melodic phrases, gestures, movement directions,

and role-based actions. The vocal learning process commonly moved from listening to verbal and musical response. Children repeated individual words or short phrases, joined familiar phrase endings, and gradually connected these fragments while singing with the teacher and their peers. Although the teacher remained the main reference, peer voices also became important in helping children adjust their timing, pronunciation, volume, and melodic direction.

Imitation also involved bodily and social interaction. Children observed relationships between vocal cues and gestures, movement, roles, partners, and group formations. They therefore learned not only individual sounds or movements but also the relationship among music, body, space, and other participants. The findings indicate that imitation was not purely mechanical. Children adjusted their responses according to what they heard and observed from both teachers and peers. Variations in timing, pronunciation, pitch direction, rhythm, lyric recall, gesture, facial expression, and spatial coordination were evident. These differences became significant mainly when they disrupted the continuity or recognizability of the collective activity.

Repetition

Repetition helped transform partial imitation into more continuous collective participation. Teachers repeatedly presented individual words, dialect expressions, short phrases, song sections, entries, endings, gestures, and movement sequences when additional practice was required. At the vocal level, repetition helped children connect familiar words, lyric fragments, phrase endings, and melodic units with the larger structure of the song. Children did not need to reproduce the complete song independently in order to participate. Instead, they could enter through familiar units and remain engaged with support from the teacher and surrounding group.

At the collective level, repetition strengthened shared entry, temporal continuity, pronunciation, and coordination. Minor differences in articulation, pitch, rhythm, or lyric recall could remain without preventing successful transmission, provided that the group maintained a recognizable beginning, continuation, and ending. Repetition also connected singing with bodily movement, roles, partner interaction, and spatial organization. Repeated associations between vocal cues and particular gestures or movements strengthened embodied memory and allowed different participants to remain within a recognizable activity framework. The findings further show that repetition served not only to reinforce learning but also to identify areas requiring further support. Difficulties became more evident when singing was combined with movement, partner exchange, or spatial organization. Teachers therefore adjusted the amount and form of repetition according to children's

observable responses.

Adjustment

Adjustment occurred when children's responses did not fully support the continuity of the planned musical or activity sequence. It was an integral part of learning rather than a correction applied only after an error. Children's participation continually indicated whether a musical or movement unit needed to be repeated, clarified, shortened, slowed, simplified, or reorganized. Vocal adjustment included renewed modeling, clearer pronunciation, shorter phrases, slower presentation, repeated entries, lyric cues, and the gradual reconnection of separate units into continuous singing. When children remembered only part of a song, familiar fragments were used as points of re-entry rather than requiring immediate reproduction of the entire song.

Adjustments in singing-and-movement activities included renewed demonstration of gestures, temporary simplification of movement, repetition of familiar actions, and modification of partner or spatial arrangements. More complex exchanges or movement patterns could be delayed until children demonstrated sufficient familiarity with the basic activity framework. The purpose of adjustment was not to eliminate all differences among children. Minor variation was acceptable when the group could maintain a recognizable song and activity structure. Teacher intervention became necessary primarily when differences disrupted collective entry, phrase continuity, lyric clarity, rhythmic coordination, movement sequence, or interpersonal interaction.

Figure 3 shows that Bayu children's folk songs are learned through four recurring processes: modeling, imitation, repetition, and adjustment. Together, these processes help children develop familiarity, coordination, and participation while maintaining the songs' regional cultural characteristics.

Transmission methods in kindergarten

The findings show that the transmission of Bayu children's folk songs in kindergarten occurs through four interconnected methods: daily collective singing, game and movement-based activities, collective dance and peer interaction, and presentation and festival activities. These methods are not separate or sequential; instead, they support one another and allow children to experience the songs repeatedly through listening, singing, movement, interaction, and performance. Presentation and festival activities integrate previously learned musical, bodily, and social elements into more continuous performances and extend the songs beyond routine classroom practice. Overall, the four methods collectively support vocal memory, linguistic familiarity, embodied learning, social

interaction, and cultural visibility. Through repeated and interconnected participation, Bayu children's folk songs

remain active, recognizable, and continuously transmitted within kindergarten education (Table 1).



Figure 3. Learning process of Bayu children's folk songs.

Table 1. Transmission methods of Bayu children's folk songs in kindergarten education.

Transmission method	Main activities	Key function	Contribution to transmission
Daily Collective Singing	Listening, singing, repeated group practice	Develops vocal and linguistic familiarity	Maintains melody, lyrics, dialect, and collective participation
Game and Movement-Based Activities	Gestures, movement, imitation, musical games	Builds embodied memory	Connects sound, words, movement, and expression
Collective Dance and Peer Interaction	Partner work, role exchange, group formations	Strengthens social and spatial coordination	Develops peer interaction, role awareness, and group continuity
Presentation and Festival Activities	Rehearsal, performance, public presentation	Integrates learned elements	Enhances continuity, cultural visibility, and shared participation

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study contributes to research on early childhood music education and cultural transmission in three ways. First, it provides empirical evidence of how Bayu folk songs are transformed from local oral materials into practicable kindergarten activities through selection, adaptation, and repeated use. Second, it identifies a cyclical learning

process of modeling, imitation, repetition, and adjustment, showing how teacher guidance and children's responses jointly shape transmission. Third, it demonstrates that kindergarten can function as an active cultural space in which regional music, language, movement, and social interaction are maintained through everyday educational practice. These findings extend existing research by showing that folk-song transmission in preschool

education is not merely preservation but an adaptive, participatory process that connects cultural continuity with children's learning experiences (Gong et al., 2024; Guo et al., 2024; Zhang and Gao, 2025).

The findings demonstrate that the transmission of Bayu children's folk songs in kindergarten education is not a simple process of preserving or reproducing traditional songs in their original form. Rather, it involves the gradual transformation of locally rooted oral materials into practicable educational forms through collection, source confirmation, selection, adaptation, musical and textual organization, activity design, and repeated classroom use. This finding supports the view that children's folk songs function not only as musical materials but also as carriers of regional language, cultural identity, social interaction, and everyday experience (Sun and Saleh, 2024; Tang and Xu, 2025). It also extends previous discussions of folk-song transmission by showing that continuity within a kindergarten depends on a balance between cultural preservation and pedagogical adaptation. The cases of Huang Si Ma Ma and Pang Xie Ge illustrate that melody, lyrics, dialect, and recognizable local characteristics can be maintained while selected elements are reorganized to suit children's participation, movement, and collective learning (Bao and Chuangprakhon, 2025; Hou and Seekhunlio, 2023).

A central finding of the study is that adaptation does not necessarily weaken the cultural identity of traditional materials. Instead, adaptation can help folk songs remain usable and meaningful in contemporary educational settings. The selected songs were retained because they possessed recognizable melodic and textual characteristics, relevance to children's experiences, suitability for repetition, and flexibility for group activities (Pu et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with earlier observations that traditional children's songs and rhymes can be incorporated into kindergarten education through singing, musical games, bodily movement, and collective activities (Jiang, 2025). However, the present study further shows that institutional transmission is not achieved simply by introducing traditional repertoire into the classroom. It requires teachers to mediate between local cultural materials and children's developmental needs through selection, clarification, simplification, and activity-based organization (Zhuang and Pan, 2022).

The learning process also reveals that transmission is fundamentally participatory and cyclical. Children learned the songs through modeling, imitation, repetition, and adjustment, rather than through notation or formal musical explanation. Teacher modeling provided an audible and visible reference, while imitation enabled children to participate through short vocal, verbal, and bodily units (Niu, 2026). Repetition strengthened familiarity and collective coordination, and adjustment allowed teachers to modify pace, pronunciation, movement, and activity complexity according to children's responses. This pattern reflects the oral and participatory nature of traditional

children's musical transmission described in previous literature, in which listening, imitation, repetition, play, and social interaction are central mechanisms of learning (Gong and Wang, 2023; Zhou, 2023). The kindergarten therefore does not replace traditional oral transmission entirely; rather, it reorganizes many of its fundamental mechanisms within a structured educational environment. Another important finding concerns the embodied and social dimensions of transmission. Bayu folk songs were sustained through four interconnected methods: daily collective singing, game and movement-based activities, collective dance and peer interaction, and presentation and festival activities (Ma et al., 2024; Seekhunlio et al., 2024). Daily singing maintained vocal and linguistic familiarity; movement-based activities connected musical sound with bodily memory; collective dance developed peer relationships and spatial coordination; and presentation activities brought these elements together within a broader social context. These findings suggest that the transmission of children's folk songs cannot be fully understood through melody and lyrics alone. Cultural continuity is also produced through gesture, movement, interaction, role relationships, space, and repeated collective participation. In this sense, Bayu folk-song transmission operates as an embodied cultural practice in which musical knowledge is learned through doing, interacting, and participating with others (Shi, 2021; Xia, 2022).

In conclusion, this study shows that the transmission of Bayu folk songs at the Experimental Kindergarten of Southwest University is a dynamic, adaptive, embodied, and participatory process. Local materials are transformed into educationally usable forms without necessarily losing their regional musical and linguistic identity. Children engage with these songs through recurring cycles of modeling, imitation, repetition, and adjustment, while transmission is sustained through singing, games, movement, peer interaction, dance, and presentation activities. The resulting kindergarten versions are relatively stable but not fixed; they remain open to adjustment according to educational contexts and children's participation. Overall, the study demonstrates that kindergarten education can function as an important contemporary setting for sustaining Bayu musical culture by connecting traditional materials with children's everyday learning experiences and allowing regional folk-song traditions to continue as living cultural practices rather than static heritage objects.

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