

Vocational Foreign Language Education for the Belt and Road: A Study of Ceramic Culture Communication through Exhibitions

Huanhuan Feng^{1,a,*}, Lingli Wang^{1,b}

¹*School of Foreign Languages, Jingdezhen Vocational University of Art, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China*

^a164352674@qq.com, ^b1476929884@qq.com

^{*}Corresponding author

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Abstract: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has created new opportunities for international cooperation, cultural exchange, and economic development. Among its various components, vocational foreign language education (VFLE) plays a crucial role in facilitating communication and cultural diplomacy, particularly through sectors like the ceramic industry. This paper explores how vocational foreign language education can enhance the communication of ceramic culture through international exhibitions. By focusing on the integration of vocational education with cultural and linguistic skills, the study examines how exhibitions can serve as platforms for promoting Chinese ceramic art globally while providing vocational students with the necessary language skills for international engagement. The paper proposes an educational framework that connects foreign language teaching with industry needs, aiming to empower students to actively participate in cultural exchange and global trade.

1. Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has fostered a new era of international cooperation, cultural exchange, and economic integration. As a significant part of China's intangible cultural heritage, ceramics have played a central role in global trade and artistic dialogue for centuries. Today, ceramic exhibitions serve as vital platforms for showcasing craftsmanship, cultural narratives, and artistic expression to an international audience. However, effective communication in these exhibitions is often hindered by linguistic and cultural barriers, limiting their potential as vehicles for both cultural diplomacy and economic exchange.

Vocational foreign language education (VFLE) has emerged as a key solution to this challenge, providing students and industry professionals with the linguistic and intercultural skills needed to navigate the complexities of international exhibitions. By equipping vocational students with specialized language training tailored to exhibition contexts, VFLE enhances the ability of ceramic professionals to engage in meaningful cross-cultural interactions, facilitate trade negotiations, and

promote China's ceramic heritage more effectively on the global stage.

Despite its potential, the integration of VFLE into ceramic culture communication at exhibitions remains an underexplored area in both academic research and vocational education policy. Existing literature has examined the role of international trade fairs in fostering cultural exchange and economic cooperation. However, studies focusing on the direct impact of vocational language training on the effectiveness of ceramic exhibitions remain limited. Addressing this gap, this paper explores the role of VFLE in enhancing ceramic culture communication at exhibitions, particularly within the framework of the BRI.

This study aims to achieve three main objectives: (1) to analyze the role of VFLE in facilitating ceramic culture communication at international exhibitions, (2) to identify the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of VFLE in exhibition contexts, and (3) to propose strategies for improving vocational foreign language education to better serve the ceramic industry and cultural diplomacy efforts. Through this analysis, the study highlights how VFLE can strengthen China's cultural influence, enhance the employability of vocational students, and foster deeper global appreciation for ceramic heritage.

2. Literature Review

Research on cultural diplomacy and international trade has consistently emphasized the role of exhibitions as platforms for fostering intercultural dialogue and economic cooperation. International trade fairs, including those focused on ceramics, provide an avenue for cultural exchange, allowing different nations to showcase their artistic heritage and craftsmanship while facilitating trade negotiations. Exhibitions have been identified as key instruments in strengthening global engagement, enhancing mutual understanding, and promoting national soft power [1].

While extensive studies have explored the impact of exhibitions on trade and cultural diplomacy, the role of vocational foreign language education (VFLE) in maximizing their effectiveness remains an underexamined area. Language barriers often hinder the ability of exhibitors and cultural representatives to communicate the historical significance, artistic value, and market potential of ceramics to international audiences [2].

Moreover, the lack of systematic language training tailored to the needs of ceramic exhibitions poses challenges in cross-border trade negotiations and cultural storytelling [3].

In recent years, studies have highlighted the significance of VFLE in bridging these communication gaps, particularly in the context of China's cultural diplomacy initiatives under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Research by Millward [4] and Keane suggests that integrating specialized language training into vocational education can enhance students' ability to engage in international exhibitions, improving both cultural representation and trade opportunities. Additionally, Tišliar has explored how structured vocational training programs can better prepare students for roles in international exhibitions by combining linguistic proficiency with cultural knowledge [5].

Furthermore, scholars have examined the practical applications of VFLE in ceramic exhibitions, particularly in heritage preservation and cultural marketing. Pratama discusses how digital education methods can be integrated into VFLE, offering innovative ways to teach exhibition-based language skills. Similarly, research by Zhao [6] emphasizes the role of regional ceramic culture in shaping global perceptions, advocating for targeted language education programs to enhance the effectiveness of cultural exhibitions.

Despite these advancements, significant gaps remain in the implementation of VFLE for ceramic culture communication. Existing studies have largely focused on general vocational education without considering the specialized linguistic demands of exhibition-based communication [7].

Additionally, challenges such as differences in cultural connotations, lack of industry-specific terminology training, and inadequate exposure to real-world exhibition environments continue to limit the impact of VFLE in ceramic trade and diplomacy [8].

This study builds upon existing research by examining the integration of VFLE into ceramic culture communication within the context of the BRI. By addressing the linguistic and intercultural challenges faced in ceramic exhibitions, the study explores how language education can enhance the effectiveness of these platforms in both cultural promotion and economic engagement. The research aims to fill a critical gap by proposing a structured approach to VFLE that aligns with industry demands, ensuring that vocational students and ceramic professionals are equipped with the necessary language skills to navigate global exhibitions successfully. Through this analysis, the study highlights the intersection of language education, cultural diplomacy, and industry-driven vocational training, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of ceramic culture communication in an international context.

3. Analysis of Exhibition-Based Vocational Foreign Language Education for Ceramic Culture Promotion

As vocational foreign language education (VFLE) gains prominence in the ceramic industry, its role in exhibitions is becoming increasingly significant. Exhibitions serve as international platforms for cultural diplomacy, trade, and artistic exchange, making effective communication a critical factor for success. VFLE provides students and professionals with the necessary linguistic and intercultural skills to navigate these global events, ensuring that Chinese ceramic heritage is well-represented. The following sections explore the multifaceted role of VFLE in exhibitions, highlighting its impact on linguistic proficiency, professional identity, and global employability.

3.1 The Role of Vocational Language Education in Exhibitions

Vocational foreign language education plays a crucial role in ceramic culture exhibitions by equipping students and professionals with the linguistic and intercultural skills necessary for international communication, cultural promotion, and trade facilitation. Given that ceramic exhibitions serve as key platforms for cultural exchange and economic cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, integrating foreign language education into vocational training helps bridge communication barriers, enhance the global visibility of ceramic culture, and create new opportunities for industry professionals. By preparing students for real-world exhibition scenarios, vocational language education strengthens the link between education and industry, fostering a new generation of professionals who can effectively engage with international markets.

3.1.1 Bridging Linguistic Gaps in International Trade and Cultural Promotion

Language barriers often pose significant challenges in international exhibitions [9], limiting effective trade negotiations, cultural storytelling, and audience engagement. Vocational foreign language education addresses these challenges by training students in industry-specific terminology, cross-cultural communication, and real-time translation techniques. Through exhibition-focused language training, students learn to conduct bilingual presentations, provide guided tours, and facilitate business discussions, ensuring that the artistic and commercial value of ceramics is effectively communicated to global audiences. This linguistic competence not only enhances the professionalism of exhibitions but also strengthens cultural diplomacy and international trade cooperation in the ceramic sector.

3.1.2 Developing Professional Identity through Foreign Language Proficiency

Mastering foreign languages fosters a strong professional identity among vocational students by enabling them to actively participate in global ceramic exhibitions and confidently represent their cultural heritage. Proficiency in a second language empowers students to engage with international buyers, scholars, and cultural enthusiasts, positioning themselves as skilled professionals in the ceramic and exhibition industries. Furthermore, foreign language competence enhances their ability to articulate the historical significance, artistic value, and technical aspects of ceramics, reinforcing their credibility in both academic and commercial settings. By integrating language training with exhibition experiences, vocational institutions cultivate professionals who not only excel in communication but also serve as cultural ambassadors in the global ceramic trade.

3.1.3 Enhancing Employability in the Ceramic and Tourism Industries

Vocational foreign language education significantly enhances employability in the ceramic and tourism industries by equipping students with practical communication skills essential for international business and cultural tourism. As ceramic exhibitions attract international collectors, traders, and cultural tourists, the demand for bilingual professionals capable of facilitating business negotiations, providing guided tours, and managing cross-border transactions continues to grow. By integrating foreign language proficiency with industry-specific training, vocational education institutions prepare students for diverse career paths, including roles as exhibition interpreters, cultural tourism guides, ceramic trade consultants, and international business representatives. This language-driven approach to vocational training ensures that graduates are well-positioned to contribute to both the economic and cultural development of the ceramic industry in the global market.

3.2 Culture Promotion through Exhibitions

Ceramic exhibitions serve as crucial platforms for cultural promotion, enabling the global dissemination of China's ceramic heritage while fostering international appreciation of its artistic and historical significance. Within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, exhibitions not only facilitate trade but also contribute to cultural diplomacy by enhancing mutual understanding among diverse nations. Vocational foreign language education plays a pivotal role in ensuring that these exhibitions effectively communicate the cultural narratives behind ceramics, making them accessible to international audiences. By equipping vocational students with language and intercultural communication skills, these exhibitions can bridge cultural gaps, strengthen global engagement, and reinforce China's position as a leader in ceramic artistry.

3.2.1 Exhibitions as Tools for Cultural Diplomacy

Exhibitions function as powerful instruments of cultural diplomacy, creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among countries. Ceramic exhibitions, in particular, highlight the artistic craftsmanship, cultural symbolism, and historical evolution of Chinese ceramics, serving as a bridge for intercultural exchange. When vocational foreign language education is integrated into exhibition training, students and professionals can effectively interpret and communicate these cultural elements, strengthening international relations. The role of multilingual exhibition participants extends beyond translation; they act as cultural ambassadors who facilitate deeper engagement and understanding between China and other nations. By showcasing ceramic heritage in an accessible and engaging manner, exhibitions contribute to the soft power initiatives of the Belt and Road Initiative, reinforcing China's influence in global cultural affairs.

3.2.2 Global Impact of Ceramic Exhibitions

The global impact of ceramic exhibitions extends beyond cultural appreciation to economic and diplomatic spheres. International exhibitions not only attract collectors, scholars, and industry professionals but also foster business partnerships that stimulate trade and investment in the ceramic sector. By leveraging vocational foreign language education, these exhibitions enhance their effectiveness in reaching international audiences [10], ensuring that the historical and artistic value of Chinese ceramics is accurately conveyed. Furthermore, ceramic exhibitions encourage cross-border collaboration in areas such as heritage preservation, sustainable craftsmanship, and market expansion. As vocational students develop language and intercultural skills tailored for exhibition contexts, they contribute to the long-term success of cultural industries, positioning ceramics as both a commercial product and a cultural symbol in the global marketplace.

4. Challenges facing Exhibition-Based VFLE in the context of BRI

While vocational foreign language education (VFLE) plays a crucial role in enhancing ceramic culture communication at international exhibitions, several challenges hinder its full potential within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These challenges arise from linguistic and cultural barriers, gaps in professional training, and issues related to cross-cultural sensitivity.

4.1 Cultural Barriers: Differences in Terminology, Idioms, and Cultural Connotations

One of the primary challenges in exhibition-based VFLE is the complexity of cultural and linguistic differences. Terminology related to ceramics, including specific glazing techniques, historical references, and artistic expressions, often lacks direct equivalents in other languages. Additionally, idiomatic expressions and culturally embedded meanings may not translate seamlessly, leading to potential misinterpretations. These language disparities can create barriers in negotiations, storytelling, and cultural engagement, reducing the effectiveness of ceramic exhibitions. To address this, VFLE programs must incorporate cross-cultural communication training and emphasize the adaptation of ceramic-related terminology for international contexts.

4.2 Lack of Professional Training: Insufficient Preparation for Exhibition Interactions

Despite the growing emphasis on vocational education, many existing programs do not adequately prepare students for real-world interactions in international exhibitions. Training often focuses on general language skills rather than exhibition-specific competencies such as live interpretation, business negotiations, and guided tours. Additionally, the lack of practical exposure to exhibition environments means that students may face difficulties when engaging with international buyers, scholars, and cultural tourists. To bridge this gap, vocational institutions must develop specialized curricula that integrate language training with industry practices, ensuring that graduates are equipped with both linguistic proficiency and professional exhibition experience.

4.3 Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Issues: Misinterpretations of Ceramic Symbolism

Ceramic art carries deep cultural symbolism, often reflecting philosophical, historical, and regional influences [11]. However, these symbolic meanings may not be universally understood, leading to misinterpretations in international exhibitions. For example, certain patterns, colors, or motifs that hold auspicious meanings in Chinese culture may be perceived differently—or even negatively—by audiences from other cultural backgrounds. Without adequate training in cross-cultural sensitivity, vocational students may struggle to explain these elements effectively,

potentially diminishing the impact of ceramic exhibitions. Therefore, VFLE must go beyond language instruction to include training in cultural intelligence, enabling students to navigate diverse cultural perceptions and enhance the reception of ceramic heritage on a global scale.

5. Pathways for Enhancing Exhibition-Based Vocational Foreign Language Education for Ceramic Culture Promotion

To improve VFLE in ceramic exhibitions, a structured and industry-driven approach is essential. This section outlines strategies such as refining VFLE frameworks, integrating language and cultural training, leveraging digital tools, and fostering collaboration. By optimizing VFLE programs, ceramic exhibitions can become more effective platforms for cultural exchange, trade, and international engagement under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

5.1 The Construction of the Exhibition-Based VFLE Framework in the Context of BRI

A well-designed VFLE framework is essential for equipping vocational students with the linguistic and intercultural skills needed for international ceramic exhibitions. This framework should align with the objectives of the BRI by focusing on practical language applications in trade and cultural exchange. It must integrate real-world exhibition experiences, industry collaboration, and cross-cultural training to prepare students for active participation in global ceramic promotion.

5.1.1 Curriculum Design for Vocational Foreign Language Education

A well-designed curriculum is critical for effectively preparing vocational students for international ceramic exhibitions. The curriculum must align closely with industry demands, emphasizing domain-specific vocabulary related to ceramic production techniques, materials, artistry, and market trends. It should integrate targeted language instruction focused on trade negotiations, guided tour communications, and bilingual presentation skills. Practical exercises such as simulated exhibition scenarios, role-playing business negotiations, and structured workshops on professional etiquette should be incorporated regularly. Additionally, analyzing case studies of successful ceramic exhibitions can provide valuable insights, enabling students to contextualize their linguistic skills within actual trade interactions. Through this comprehensive, industry-aligned approach, students will achieve linguistic fluency and acquire essential professional competencies.

5.1.2 Integrating Language and Cultural Knowledge

Effective VFLE must incorporate extensive cultural education alongside language instruction. Students must gain an in-depth understanding of ceramic heritage, historical contexts, and contemporary artistic expressions. This comprehensive knowledge enables students to convey not only the technical aspects of ceramics but also their cultural significance to diverse international audiences. Vocational institutions should facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations, inviting ceramic artists, cultural historians, and international communication specialists to co-develop training modules. Exposure to real-world cross-cultural scenarios—such as participation in local and international ceramic exhibitions—will significantly enhance students' ability to navigate complex intercultural exchanges. This dual emphasis on linguistic proficiency and cultural literacy ensures vocational students become effective cultural ambassadors in global ceramic contexts.

5.2 Leveraging Digital Tools and AI Translation Technologies in Exhibitions

Advancements in digital tools and artificial intelligence (AI) translation technologies offer

unprecedented opportunities to support VFLE in ceramic exhibitions [12]. Vocational training should incorporate instruction in utilizing AI-powered language assistance tools, real-time translation applications, and interactive virtual exhibition platforms. Mastering these technologies enables students to effectively manage multilingual interactions and address language barriers dynamically during international events. Furthermore, vocational programs should leverage immersive technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to enhance visitor engagement and understanding of ceramic heritage. For example, AR can visually demonstrate ceramic crafting processes, while VR can offer virtual tours of historical ceramic sites or museums, greatly enriching the exhibition experience.

5.3 Policy Recommendations for Vocational Education Institutions and Industry Stakeholders

For VFLE to achieve its full potential, coordinated action by policymakers, vocational institutions, and industry stakeholders is essential. Policymakers should prioritize funding for VFLE programs, particularly those integrating international exhibition experiences, advanced digital tools, and intercultural training. Vocational education institutions should forge robust partnerships with ceramic enterprises, industry associations, and international exhibition organizers, offering structured internships, mentorships, and practical exposure to industry realities. Industry stakeholders should actively participate in curriculum development by contributing authentic case studies, facilitating industry visits, and supplying bilingual materials to enhance practical learning. Furthermore, policies should promote international exchange opportunities for students and educators, thereby fostering global competencies and cross-cultural awareness. Such multi-stakeholder collaboration ensures that VFLE significantly advances the ceramic industry's global engagement and cultural diplomacy objectives.

6. Conclusion

The integration of vocational foreign language education (VFLE) into ceramic culture communication at international exhibitions plays a crucial role in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, fostering global engagement, and enhancing economic opportunities within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This study has demonstrated how VFLE can empower vocational students and industry professionals by equipping them with the necessary linguistic, intercultural, and professional skills to effectively participate in ceramic exhibitions. These exhibitions not only serve as platforms for cultural diplomacy but also facilitate trade negotiations and promote China's ceramic heritage on the global stage.

However, several challenges hinder the full realization of VFLE's potential in exhibition contexts, including linguistic complexities, inadequate professional training, and cross-cultural sensitivity issues. Addressing these challenges requires a structured approach that integrates language education with industry-specific training, interdisciplinary collaboration, and exposure to real-world exhibition scenarios. Additionally, leveraging digital tools and AI translation technologies can enhance multilingual communication, making ceramic exhibitions more accessible to international audiences.

To ensure the effective implementation of VFLE in the ceramic industry, vocational education institutions, policymakers, and industry stakeholders must work together to develop specialized curricula, expand internship opportunities, and strengthen international collaborations. By fostering a multi-stakeholder approach, VFLE can play a more significant role in shaping a globally competent workforce, promoting ceramic culture internationally, and supporting China's cultural diplomacy efforts under the BRI. Moving forward, continued research and policy innovation are necessary to further optimize VFLE's role in ceramic culture communication, ensuring that

vocational education remains aligned with the evolving demands of global trade and cultural exchange.

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