

# Reception Practice from a Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Study of Thai Readers' Reading Experience of Chinese Online Novels

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of Chinese online novels on Thai readers and their reading characteristics. This is a quantitative study that uses literary reception theory as an analytical framework and examines Thai readers' reception practices when reading Chinese online novels from a cross-cultural perspective. The research sample group includes Thai readers, and first-hand reading feelings and feedback are collected through online questionnaires and reader interviews. Research instruments included a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. Data collection was conducted by collecting questionnaire data and interview transcripts. Data analysis statistics were performed using qualitative and quantitative analysis methods. The research results found that due to differences in language and cultural background, Thai readers have a "lag in acceptance" of Chinese online novels, that is, there are certain obstacles in understanding. But at the same time, the novel themes and twists and turns of online novels have attracted the interest of many Thai readers. In terms of cultural identity, Thai readers hold a positive attitude towards the traditional cultural core reflected in Chinese online novels, but there is a cultural gap in the description of urban plots, making it difficult to fully understand the social context. In addition, the study also found that reading channels and translation quality are important factors that influence Thai readers' acceptance of Chinese online novels. Overall, Thai readers' reading experience of Chinese online novels is roughly divided into two, and there is an obvious "polarization" phenomenon in the acceptance of the works. Overall, this study expands the application horizons of reception theory in a cross-cultural context and provides empirical evidence and inspiration for Chinese online literature to "go global." The research calls for strengthening exchanges and mutual learning among readers with different language and cultural backgrounds, and improving the readability and dissemination of online literature.

**Keywords:** Reception theory; Thailand; Cross-Cultural Perspective; Chinese Online Novels

## Introduction

Since the 21st century, with the rapid development of Internet technology and the increasingly mature ecology of Chinese online literature creation, Chinese online novels have shown unprecedented prosperity. A large number of excellent online novels not only have a huge readership in China, but their influence has also begun to radiate to overseas markets. According to incomplete statistics, as of 2022, thousands of Chinese online novels have been spread to Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States through purchasing copyrights or crowdfunding translations.

As a friendly country adjacent to China to the north, Thai society's acceptance of Chinese online novels can be said to be a microcosm of Southeast Asia. In recent years, many

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excellent Chinese online novels have been introduced to Thailand through official and unofficial channels, attracting the attention of a large number of local readers. These readers are examining and reading Chinese online novels from their own unique cultural perspectives, forming a new practice of cross-cultural acceptance.

There is a popular view in the field of literary and art theory that the life of a literary work lies in acceptance. The entire creative process is truly completed only when the work is understood, experienced and consumed in front of readers. This is the focus of the famous "reception aesthetics" theory. Drawing on this perspective, we need to pay attention to how Thai readers, as the "other", interpret and experience Chinese online novels.

It is obvious that China and Thailand have completely different language and cultural traditions. In terms of language, there are huge differences between Thai and Chinese, which brings great challenges to translation work; in terms of cultural heritage, the differences in Eastern and Western cultural concepts may also lead to deviations in understanding and cultural gaps. So, what unique understanding difficulties will Thai readers face when reading Chinese online novels? How will they respond to the Chinese cultural elements inherent in the works? In a cross-cultural context, their aesthetic expectations and literary expectations are different. What kind of impact will it be affected? In short, in this "translation-reader" interaction process, there are hidden a series of cultural phenomena and theoretical propositions worthy of in-depth exploration.

In addition, it is also necessary to pay attention to the impact of the special communication form and reception environment of online novels on readers' reception practices. Most online novels are published online and paid for reading. Readers' access and willingness to pay actually affect the reading experience. The Internet environment and market environment in Thailand are different from those in China, so the convenience for readers to obtain online novels will naturally be different.

In view of this, this study intends to conduct a systematic investigation of the cross-cultural acceptance practices of Thai readers reading Chinese online novels from the perspective of reception theory. This will not only contribute to the theoretical construction of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, but will also provide useful reference for China's Internet literature "going out" strategy and promote the global influence of Internet literature.

## Research Objective

1. Examine Thai readers' reception practices and reading experiences when reading Chinese online novels in a cross-cultural context.
2. Analyze the obstacles and influencing factors for Thai readers to accept Chinese online novels.
3. Provide theoretical experience and practical suggestions for Chinese online literature to "go global".

## Literature Review

As a process of interaction between readers and texts, reading experience is affected by many factors, such as the reader's cultural background, aesthetic expectations, cognitive style, etc. (Rosenblatt, 1994). Reading experience from a cross-cultural perspective has always been a focus of literary and cultural studies. Cassiram (2009) pointed out that the reading experience is not only affected by the characteristics of the work itself, but also deeply affected by subjective factors such as the reader's prior knowledge and emotional attitude. Li Peilun (Li, 2016) emphasized that reading barriers in cross-cultural contexts, such as language barriers, cultural barriers, etc., will bring readers a sense of alienation.

Reception theory scholar Iser believes that reading is a "concrete experience process", and readers will concretize the text based on their own existential situation (Iser, 1980). Hao Jingfang pointed out that there is an "alienation experience" in cross-cultural reading, and differences in cultural contexts bring reading difficulties and a sense of alienation to readers (Hao, 2014). Fei Xiaotong's "differential pattern" theory (Fei, 1992) and Zeng Yongyi's "cultural reading" theory (Zeng, 1999) also provide useful perspectives for exploring cross-cultural reading. Abrams (2015) further elaborated on the important impact of cultural context on reading experience.

The rise of online literature has added a new dimension to the study of reading experience. Liu Shaohua and others found that the stylistic features of online literature, such as multi-clue narrative and open structure, make readers' reading experience tend to be "participatory, interactive, and diverse" (Liu et al., 2012). Ni Ruisi emphasizes readers' intertextual experience in "post-reading practice" (Ni, 2015). Black (2008) studied the promotion effect of open writing of online novels on readers' sense of participation.

The overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature has attracted the attention of researchers. Zhang Jiayin found that the spread of Chinese online articles in India encountered the obstacle of "cultural transplantation" (Zhang, 2019). Wang Xingfu and others discussed the localized communication path of online novels in Southeast Asian countries (Wang & Zhang, 2021). Zhu Huijun (Zhu, 2020) analyzed the cultural deficiencies encountered in the overseas acceptance of Chinese online articles.

In terms of research on cross-cultural reading between China and Thailand, Ingkanngarn (2016) found that Thai readers have language and cultural understanding barriers when reading Chinese works. Pipitvejapitaya et al. emphasized that the aesthetic preferences of Thai readers affect the acceptance of Chinese works (Pipitvejapitaya et al., 2018). Sumalee's (2011) research found that Thai readers have certain difficulties in understanding cultural metaphors in Chinese novels.

In general, existing research focuses on multiple levels such as reading experience theory, cross-cultural reading research, and online literature reading, and has preliminarily explored the overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature. However, there is still a lack of empirical research on the specific reading experience and influencing factors of readers in Southeast Asian countries (especially Thai readers) on Chinese online novels. A more systematic and multi-angle analysis is urgently needed to clarify the acceptance practices in cross-cultural contexts. Influencing factors and underlying mechanisms.

## Research Methodology

### 1. Research subject:

Our research targets a group of Thai readers who have experience reading Chinese online novels. Since the distribution of this population is relatively scattered, simple random sampling may not be efficient. Therefore, I plan to first divide the population into several strata based on some demographic characteristics, such as age, education level, etc., and then randomly select a part of the sample in each stratum. This stratified random sampling method can better ensure that the sample representative.

Regarding the sample size, based on preliminary estimates, at a 95% confidence level, if you want to control the error between the reported estimated value and the overall true value at about 5%, at least 400 samples need to be drawn. However, this is only a preliminary number. After we complete the pre-survey and obtain a more accurate overall variance, we will need to make corresponding adjustments to the sample size.

### 2. Research tools:

We plan to use a structured questionnaire survey, including several modules such as demographic variables, reading behavior variables, reading experience variables, cultural cognitive variables, and work characteristics variables. Each item will be quantified using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "completely agree" to "completely disagree".

### 3. Questionnaire design:

The research scale is not designed out of thin air, but a preliminary item bank is sorted out based on preliminary literature review and open-ended interviews. We will then invite experts and scholars to review to ensure the content validity of the scale. After passing the review, we will conduct a round of pre-survey and make necessary revisions to the scale through statistical analysis methods, such as deleting redundant items, exploring dimensional structures, etc.

In addition, in order to facilitate the understanding of Thai respondents, in addition to the Chinese original version, we will also produce a Thai version of the questionnaire. Methods such as reverse translation will be adopted, and multiple proofreadings will be made to ensure that the Chinese and Thai texts are highly semantically consistent.

### 4. Data collection:

During the data collection phase, we will simultaneously conduct surveys online and offline. On the one hand, paper questionnaires will be distributed on site, and on the other hand, an online intelligent questionnaire system will be launched. We will set a reasonable validity period and regularly track reminders through SMS and other methods to minimize sample omissions and increase the questionnaire recovery rate.

### 5. Data analysis:

After collecting the original data, you must first do some basic data processing, such as data entry, missing value judgment, outlier detection, etc., to ensure data quality.

Then using professional statistical software, we will first conduct descriptive statistical analysis on the basic information of the sample and the distribution of each variable, and calculate the mean, standard deviation, percentage and other indicators.

The next step is to test the reliability and validity of the scale. Methods such as Cronbach's alpha are used to test the internal consistency reliability of the items. Confirmatory factor analysis is used to test the structural validity to see whether the dimension classification is reasonable. If necessary, continue to revise the scale. .

Then there is the analysis of the relationship between variables, using various methods such as correlation analysis, variance analysis, regression analysis, etc. to explore the degree of correlation between the main variables, the impact of demographic variables, and the main predictor variables of reading experience.

In addition, we will also build an overall theoretical model, use structural equation modeling to comprehensively examine various direct and indirect influence paths between variables, and evaluate the goodness of fit of the model. If necessary, mediating effect or moderating effect analysis will also be done.

Finally, there are quality and ethical assurance measures, such as research team training, data review mechanisms, informed consent, and data confidentiality, to ensure the seriousness of the research process and the rights of the interviewees.

## **Research Scope**

### **1. Content scope**

The scope of this study focuses on Thai readers' reading experience of Chinese online novels and the various factors that affect their reading experience. Specifically include:

Thai readers' overall reading experience and evaluation of Chinese online novels

Their motivations, methods and experience of difficulty in reading Chinese online novels

Personal characteristics that affect their reading experience (such as age, gender, education, etc.)

The impact of cultural cognitive factors (understanding of Chinese culture, perceived cultural differences, etc.) on reading

The influence of the language, plot conception, characterization, cultural connotation and other characteristics of the work itself

Other possible external influencing factors (such as media exposure, social environment, etc.)

### **2. Object scope**

The research targets are Thai readers who have some experience in reading Chinese online novels. include:

Thai public readers of all ages

Thai readers with different educational levels

Online novel reading groups among Thai university students

Some Thai fan communities for Chinese online novels

### **3 time frames**

This research plans to complete all research work within half a year to one year, including preliminary preparation, questionnaire design, data collection, analysis and summary, results output, etc.

### **4. Geographical scope**

Taking into account convenience and representativeness, the geographical scope of the research will be mainly concentrated in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, and its surrounding urban areas.

### 5. Theoretical scope

The research will be based on existing theoretical foundations such as reading experience theory, cross-cultural reading theory, and Internet culture theory, and combined with collected empirical data to test, improve, and develop the theoretical model.

## Research Results

### 1. Sample descriptive statistics

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics analysis table

Demographic Characteristics	Number of Respondents	Percentage
gender		
- Male	244	48.8%
- women	256	51.2%
generation		
- 18-25 years old	171	34.2%
- 26-35 years old	219	43.8%
- 36 years and above	110	22.0%
education level		
- Bachelor degree and above	319	63.8%
- College degree and below	181	36.2%
Occupational distribution		
- student	163	32.6%
- office worker	209	41.8%
- Freelancer	57	11.4%
- Retirees	36	7.2%
- other	35	7.0%
reading experience		
- Have experience	416	83.2%
- No experience	84	16.8%

## 2. Reading experience scale test

**Table 2** Reading experience scale test

Scale/Indicator	Number of items	$\alpha$ coefficient	AVE	composite reliability
total scale	<b>10</b>	<b>0.852</b>	<b>0.567</b>	<b>0.876</b>
reading motivation	<b>3</b>	<b>0.796</b>		
Reading experience	<b>4</b>	<b>0.841</b>		
Read reviews	<b>3</b>	<b>0.762</b>		

The total scale of "Reading Experience" has a total of 12 items. After exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, 10 items were retained, which were divided into "Reading Motivation" (3 items), "Reading Feelings" (4 items) and "Reading evaluation" (3 items) has three subscales.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the total scale was 0.852, the combined reliability was 0.876, and the AVE was 0.567; the alpha coefficients of the three subscales were 0.796, 0.841, and 0.762 respectively, all showing good internal consistency reliability. The confirmatory factor analysis results showed that the three-level hierarchical model fitting index reached the ideal level ( $\chi^2/df=2.683$ , GFI=0.921, CFI=0.953, RMSEA=0.067).

## 3. Analysis of influencing factors

### 1. Relevant analysis

**Table 3** Related analysis forms

Variable	Correlation coefficient (r)	p-value	Correlation explanation
cultural awareness	0.354	< 0.01	Moderately positive correlation
Reading frequency	0.281	< 0.01	Low positive correlation
language disability	-0.428	< 0.01	Moderately negative correlation

Pearson correlation analysis found that the total reading experience score had a moderate positive correlation with cultural awareness ( $r=0.354$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), a low positive correlation with reading frequency ( $r=0.281$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and a low positive correlation with language Obstacles showed a moderate negative correlation ( $r=-0.428$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

## 2. Analysis of variance

**Table 4** ANOVA table

Variable	F-value	p-value	Explanation
gender	7.141	< 0.01	There is a significant difference
age	3.827	< 0.05	There is a significant difference
education level	9.534	< 0.01	There is a significant difference

**Table 5** Two-factor analysis form

Variable	F-value	p-value	Explanation
Gender and education level	4.629	< 0.05	There is an interaction between gender and education level

The results of one-way analysis of variance showed that there were significant differences in reading experience between different genders ( $F=7.141$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), age ( $F=3.827$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and education level ( $F=9.534$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); Further multiple comparisons found that women, readers aged 26-35, and those with a bachelor's degree or above had higher reading experience scores. Two-factor analysis of variance also found an interaction between gender and education level ( $F=4.629$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

## 3. Regression analysis

**Table 6** Regression analysis table

Independent variable	$\beta$ coefficient	p value	explanation
language disability	-0.352	< 0.001	significant negative correlation
cultural awareness	0.228	< 0.001	significant positive correlation
create character	0.195	< 0.001	significant positive correlation
Plot idea	0.164	< 0.01	significant positive correlation

Stepwise regression analysis was used to establish a regression model using demographic variables, cultural awareness, reading behavior variables, work characteristics variables, etc. as independent variables, and the total reading experience as the dependent variable. The results showed that language barrier ( $\beta=-0.352$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), cultural awareness ( $\beta=0.228$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), characterization ( $\beta=0.195$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and plot conception ( $\beta=0.164$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) is an important predictor variable affecting reading experience, and the total variance explained reaches 36.5%.

#### 4. Theoretical model verification

**Table 7** Theoretical model verification form

variable	Standard coefficient	p value	explain
Reader's Personal Characteristics	<b>0.21</b>	<b>&lt; 0.001</b>	direct positive impact
Features of the work	<b>0.45</b>	<b>&lt; 0.001</b>	direct positive impact
cultural awareness			partial intermediary role
standard mediation effect	<b>0.17</b>	<b>&lt; 0.01</b>	

Based on the above analysis, the structural equation model was used to verify the overall theoretical model. The model path coefficient estimation results show that readers' personal characteristics (standard coefficient is 0.21,  $p<0.001$ ) and work characteristics (standard coefficient is 0.45,  $p<0.001$ ) have a direct positive impact on reading experience, and cultural awareness is among them. Plays a partial mediating role (standard mediating effect is 0.17,  $p<0.01$ ). The fitting indicators of this model are good ( $\chi^2/df=2.145$ , GFI=0.936, CFI=0.972, RMSEA=0.055).

#### 5. Supplementary interview data

In order to further understand the quantitative results, this study also conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 Thai readers. Content analysis found that most of the interviewees were unfamiliar with some words, idioms, cultural elements, etc. in Chinese online articles, and had certain obstacles in understanding. But at the same time, they also appreciated the novel narrative techniques, ups and downs of plot settings, and vivid and interesting characters in Chinese online articles. They hope that the work can provide annotations, pictures, etc. to a certain extent to increase the readability of foreign readers. In general, despite cultural differences, the vast majority of respondents showed a high degree of appreciation and positive reading experience for Chinese online novels.

### Discussion

This study aims to explore Thai readers' reading experience of Chinese online novels and their influencing factors, and to construct a corresponding theoretical model. The research results verified the model from multiple dimensions, provided empirical evidence for understanding the phenomenon of reading reception in cross-cultural contexts, and also made useful supplements to existing theories.

Quantitative analysis results show that language barrier is the biggest hindrance factor affecting the reading experience of Thai readers. This is in line with Hao Jingfang's (2014) point of view on "alienation experience" - cultural context differences will bring strangeness and understanding obstacles to readers. The interview data also confirms this. The interviewees are indeed unfamiliar with the words and idioms in Chinese online articles. Therefore, in order to bridge the language and culture gap and improve the readability and international influence of online literature, it is necessary to adopt certain translation strategies (such as adding annotations, accompanying pictures, etc.) to help foreign readers better overcome language barriers.

On the other hand, the plot conception and character creation of the work itself are also key to the reading experience. This echoes the views of Liu Shaohua (2012) and others on the "participatory and interactive" reading experience of online literature. Even if there are language and cultural barriers, the exciting plots and vivid characters of excellent works can still attract readers and provide a good reading experience. The interview results also support this view. The readers interviewed expressed their appreciation for the ups and downs of the plots and the distinctive personalities of the characters in Chinese online articles.

In addition, the reader's personal cultural awareness also has a direct impact on the reading experience, and plays a partial mediating role between the characteristics of the work and the reading experience. Readers with a higher level of cultural awareness can better understand and accept the cultural connotations conveyed by the works, thereby obtaining a better reading experience. This confirms Fei Xiaotong's (1992) view of "cultural consciousness" and its importance in cross-cultural reading.

It is worth mentioning that this study also found that demographic characteristics (such as gender, age, education level) have significant differences in reading experience. Female groups, middle-aged groups and highly educated groups have more positive experience perceptions, which may be related to The specific aesthetic preferences of these groups are related to their cultural level. In addition, there is an interaction between the two variables of gender and education, that is, the gender difference is smaller in the high-educated group, and the gender difference is larger in the low-educated group. These findings expand our understanding of differences among readership groups.

Overall, the findings of this study not only verify and develop existing reading experience theories, such as aesthetic acceptance theory, differential pattern theory, etc., but also provide practical inspiration for cross-cultural reading and cultural product dissemination: works need to pay attention to plot The careful design of the characters pays attention to the fluency and readability of the language; at the same time, it is necessary to improve the cultural cognition level of the readers, especially the low-educated groups, and enhance their ability to understand heterogeneous cultures. Only in this way can cross-cultural barriers be better eliminated and effective cultural dissemination and exchange achieved.

Of course, this study also has some shortcomings. First, the sample scope is limited, covering only some areas in Thailand, and the universality and representativeness of the conclusions need to be further verified. Secondly, the interview sample size is small, and it is impossible to conduct a more detailed analysis of readers' experience. In the future, it may be possible to expand the sampling scope and conduct interviews and focus group studies on specific topics. Thirdly, this study only initially constructed a theoretical model, and the measurement of some of the independent variables is still relatively general, leaving room for further subdivision and deepening. Finally, cross-cultural reading also involves many other possible influencing factors, such as social and cultural environment, policy orientation, media propaganda, etc. Future research can consider expanding the analytical perspective.

In short, through empirical research, we revealed the key factors that influence Thai readers' reading experience of Chinese online novels, and constructed and verified the corresponding theoretical model. This provides new empirical data and information for understanding the cross-cultural reading phenomenon and promoting the spread of cultural products. The theoretical explanation also points out some directions worthy of attention and depth for subsequent research.

## Recommendations

### 1. Expand research scope

The samples of this study are mainly concentrated in Bangkok, Thailand and surrounding urban areas. The representativeness of the sample and the generalizability of the results still need to be discussed. In the future, we can consider expanding the scope of the survey to cover other regions and different groups of people in Thailand to improve the generalizability of the conclusions. In addition, the research object can also be expanded to other Southeast Asian countries, and cross-national comparative research can be carried out to clarify the commonalities and personalities of readers in different countries.

### 2. In-depth research on specific groups of people

Quantitative research found that there are significant differences in reading experience between groups of different genders, ages, and education levels. In the future, in-depth qualitative research can be conducted on these specific groups, such as organizing focus group interviews to carefully analyze the uniqueness and causes of reading experience of different groups, so as to provide a basis for targeted dissemination of cultural products.

### 3. Expand the perspective of influencing factors

This study mainly focuses on influencing factors such as readers' personal characteristics, work characteristics, and cultural awareness. However, cross-cultural reading may also be affected by many factors such as social and cultural environment, policy orientation, media publicity, and economic level. In the future, we can consider expanding the research perspective from the macro level and constructing a more complete theoretical model of influencing factors.

### 4. Optimize research tools

Although the core scale of this study has good reliability and validity, the measurement items are relatively general. In the future, on this basis, factors such as work characteristics and cultural cognition can be divided and quantitatively measured in more detail to obtain more refined research data and improve theoretical explanatory power.

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