

A Study on the Impact of Media Differences on Literature Acceptance

The first author: Yu Zhao^{1, a}, The second author: Siyu Zhao^{2, b},
The third author: Dantong Wang^{3, c*}, The fourth author: Yongqi Wang^{4, d}

^ae-mail: 2671491398@qq.com

* Corresponding author: Zhao Yu

¹School of Chinese Language and Literature, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Jiangning, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

²School of Chinese Language and Literature, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Jiangning, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

³School of Chinese Language and Literature, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Jiangning, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

⁴School of Chinese Language and Literature, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Jiangning, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Abstract. Since 20th century, with the expansion and rise of media, the constructiveness of media to human society and culture has become more and more significant. At present, many researchers agree that different channels of literary sources will affect literary activities, and help to get rid of the thinking inertia of confrontation between print media and new media, and theoretically explore the possibility of dialogue, integration and overall generation. This research is to try to find out the role of media in perceiving, judging and understanding literary activities through reading experiments of the same text in different media and channels, so that literary activities can become an important cultural form for improving our intellect and independence and a resource for perfecting human nature in the collision of media.

Keywords: media; literature acceptance; reading experiments; meta-media

1 Introduction

The study on the impact of media on literature comes together with media studies. It is generally believed that media is the carrier of information, knowledge and content, so media has not been valued for being an important influencing factor in literary studies for a long time. With the development of science and technology, the media is becoming more abundant, the speed of communication is getting faster, the scope of distribution is getting wider, and the relationship with people is getting closer. Since the 20th century, with the expansion and rise of media, the constructiveness of media to human society and culture has become more and more significant. From Frankfurt School, Chicago School, Toronto School, Birmingham School to American Communication School, scholars from all over the world have made theoretical explorations on it from different perspectives.

Based on the integration of Chinese society, technology and market with the rest of the world and the development status of literature and culture, the relationship between media and literature was gradually noted by Chinese literature researchers in the late 1990s, especially after the publication of Hillis Miller's article "Will Literary Study Continue to Exist in the Era of Globalization" (2001), which aroused strong repercussions in China. Therefore, the media started to be noticed by our literary researchers, and for the relationship between literature that has existed in print media for a long time and new media forms, literary researchers have put forward many hypotheses from different angles. Some of them take "literature termination theory" as the register to discuss why literature exists under the thinking frame of language-picture confrontation. Some suggest expanding literary capacity and reshaping the views on literature and literature reading in the era of technological media. Nowadays, in the context of media convergence, we seek the way of integration of print media and other new media from the source of thinking and symbols.

To sum up, at present, many researchers agree that different channels of literary sources will affect literary activities, and help to get rid of the thinking inertia of confrontation between print media and new media, and theoretically explore the possibility of dialogue, integration and overall generation. However, they are more speculations and conjectures concerning the impact, degree of impact and threshold of impact of different sources in literary activities. For example, compared with linear print media, new media represented by film and television, radio and Internet are not suitable for deep reading. Our research is to try to find out the role of media in perceiving, determining and understanding literary activities through reading experiments of the same text in different media and channels, so that literary activities can become an important cultural form for improving our intellect and independence and a resource for perfecting human nature in the collision of media.

2 Design and experiment

Physicists in the 20th century put forward a basic research method, which enable nuclei with known structures to bombard nuclei with unknown structures. Similarly, we drive paper literary texts carried in printed media to bombard other media, so that we can clearly see the texture of literary texts under the mutual influence of old and new media. Using this method, we have conducted multi-media reading experiments on literary texts.

2.1 Selection of testing texts

Four groups of subjects were selected to listen to, watch and read literary works with almost the same amount of information once published in print media through radio, movies and the Internet. The selected literary works which were published in print media should not have obvious differences in content when transmitted by the other three types of media, and the delivery should not favor one over the other. Of course, each type of media has its own unique ways of presenting content, which we speculate that these ways will affect the recipient's perception, determination and understanding of literary activities.

The research team finally chose Liu Heng's novel named "Happy Life of Talkative Zhang Damin" published by Huayi Press in 1999. This book was made into a film named "A Tree in the House", which was directed by Yang Yazhou and starred by Feng Gong. Except for the film's

narrative language, the character language, background, storyline and narrative rhythm of the film are basically faithful to the original work. The broadcast version of “Happy Life of Talkative Zhang Damin” used Mr. Ai Baoliang’s works in Himalaya. Compared with the original work, there is almost no change except some extra explanations. Online works are mainly different in physical forms.

2.2 Control of subjects

“Control” is to ensure the objectivity of the experimental results as much as possible, and to ensure that except the media differences, other factors that will make the results deviate should remain stable. In the experiment, relatively speaking, there are more uncertainties for the subjects, such as knowledge reserve, acceptance ability, and willingness for the test. For this reason, measures have been taken to keep the impact factors stable in the selection, arrangement and preaching of subjects.

First of all, the subjects with similar horizon of expectations for text acceptance are selected, and they take the same lessons, in the same class, with the same age group. Secondly, the difference of academic ability can easily affect the objectivity of results, and the hypothesis that the test scores of subjects with good grades are higher than those with poor grades should be supported. We considered this problem when grouping subjects according to different media, ranked all subjects in order of academic achievements, and then grouped them in an S-shaped way, which basically ensured that each group had almost the same average score. Then, it is necessary to arouse the participants’ willingness to actively complete the test, and the test scores should be included in the academic achievements to a certain degree. In order to avoid the impact of media differences on the scores of each test group, each group is classified into three grades: A \ B \ C, and each group of the same grade has the same score when included into the academic achievements.

As for social capital, economic capital, cultural and educational capital, and familiarity with new media of different people, we did not try to control them, mainly because the academic achievements of each group were controlled, and the academic achievements were related to the above-mentioned factors. Nevertheless, the line spacing of homogeneous text should set to be single-spaced as much as possible.

2.3 Design of test paper

The design of the test paper should take the following factors into account: the nature of literary texts, the subtle differences in the amount of information in various media, and the scores prone to quantification.

As far as the content and connotation of the text are concerned, according to Ingarden’s hierarchy theory of text structure, this study mainly examined the object representation layer, which is the core layer of the text structure. In Ingarden’s view, the object representation is as follows: “it involves both things and characters, also involving all possible processes, events, situations and actions taken by characters. At the same time, this representation layer also includes non-nominal intentions, especially those created by pure verbs. [1] At this layer, all kinds of people, things, environments, actions, etc. are real objects, which are presented in the way of objective existence in literary works, showing the nature of objective existence. In addition, the object

reproduces with a peculiar way of existence, which indeed exists, but it is indeterminate, including many “points of indeterminacy”. These “points of indeterminacy” require readers to supplement in the framework of determining objects. Therefore, the test questions are divided into three categories: supporting details, summaries and comprehension.

In order to avoid the subtle differences in information caused by the nature of various media, the members of the research group should be familiar with the texts of various media first. After the test paper is ready, researchers should do the test first, and then eliminate those contents that are not presented by a certain media, such as the death cause of Zhang Damin’s father, which were not presented in the movie, and deleted in the official test version. From the objectivity of scoring, objective questions are certainly the best, but considering the characteristics of literature acceptance, this study adopts the form of questions and answers. The questions move from being objective to subjective, with a total of 24 questions, including 12 objective questions, 4 subjective questions and 8 questions in between the two. The quantification of subjective questions evaluation is realized through detailed scoring rules. In order to ensure that the evaluation is as objective as possible, the subjective questions are scored by each member of the research group and the average value is taken.

In order to avoid the deviation of the test, from the end of learning to the beginning of the test, the subjects are guaranteed to receive a single medium with similar time intervals. Because of the differences in media, the duration of learning texts of each medium is different, and each group of subjects, after entering the classroom, start learning at different time, end learning at the same time, and start the test at the same time.

During the test, subjects should not bring in any reference materials, including notes from previous learning. The duration of the test is 40 minutes, and the first part, namely “supporting details” is set for 10 minutes, which is in different test paper from the other two parts and will be collected right in 10 minutes. Since subjects may be prompted during the answering process when answering the subjective questions followed, the measure of accuracy is to write down the answer immediately, instead of recalling it.

The Impact of Media Differences on Literature Acceptance Test Paper

Group Name

Channel of information

Completion Time

I. Supporting details (2 scores for each question, 24 scores in total)

1. What are the occupations of the five brothers and sisters of the Zhang family? (0.5 score of each point)

Damin: worker of a vacuum flask factory; Ermin: Cleaner for pork intestines; Sanmin: Postman; Simin: nurse of Obstetrics & Gynecology; Wumin: student-civil servant

2. What is the identity of Li Yunfang’s ex-boyfriend?

Technician of a towel factory-studying abroad (2 scores of each point)

3. What are the common difficulties encountered by Damin and Sanmin when they want to get married?

The housing area is small and the population is large, so it is difficult to set up a wedding room.

4. Where did Mother Zhang sleep after Damin got married?

A bed made up with two boxes.

5. Who did Ermin marry?

Li Mushao, a Shanxi native who worked as a temporary worker in a meat processing plant.

6. Why did Zhang Damin's son have the word "tree" in his name?

Because he was born in a house with a tree in the middle of the bed.

7. Which university was Wumin admitted to?

Northwest Agricultural University

8. Why did Ermin come back home after getting married?

She quarreled with her husband because they had no child.

9. What's the matter with Simin?

He got Leukemia.

10. What does Mother Zhang like to eat?

She likes ice.

11. In the Zhang family, who has the closest relationship with Little Tree other than parents?

Simin-heavy snow

12. How did Zhang Damin take his mother up the mountain when traveling?

He carried his mother on his back.

II. Summaries (6 scores for each question, 48 scores in total)

13. Why did Li Yunfang marry Zhang Damin?

They are childhood sweethearts.

Damin is talkative but considerate for her.

He has an optimistic attitude toward life.

He has a tough character and strong sense of responsibility (answer at least two points)

14. What means did Zhang Damin resort to for successfully building a new house?

He stimulated the neighbor with words to fight with him, exaggerated his injuries and made the neighbor feel guilty. (Two points are needed)

15. What details show Simin's pursuit of purity? (Summarize two points)

She has no boyfriend.

She is neat freak.

16. Why was Zhang Damin detained?

He had a conflict with the demolition office in order to win a room for his sister who has just died. (a complete answer is needed)

17. What details in the book can reflect Zhang Damin's careful calculation and strict budgeting? (Summarize at least three points)

He carefully calculated overtime payment.

He set up the wedding room for his two brothers.

He was in charge of household budget expenses.

He planted pomegranate trees in the house.

He carried his mother up the mountain to save the cable car fee.

18. What are the main aspects reflecting Zhang Damin's "being the eldest brother but like a father"? (Summarize at least three points)

He settled the wedding room for Sanmin.

Most of the money of Wumin who went to college in northwest China was sent by him.

He helped Ermin deal with family conflicts caused by having no child.

He took care of the sick Simin.

He fought for a room for deceased Simin.

He took good care of the mother.

19. How did Zhang Damin face his rival in love?

Before confirming the relationship with Li Yunfang, he was forbearing and good at comforting himself. When Li Yunfang was lovelorn, he ridiculed and satirized her ex-boyfriend's mercilessness.

After getting marriage, as his rival in love returned to China to show off, he made the rival in love feel embarrassed to retreat with the attitude of boasting as the master, which not only preserved his dignity, but also gave a blow to his rival in love.

20. What are the personalities of the five brothers and sisters of the Zhang family? (Write about the complexity of characters' personalities)

Zhang Damin: with the spirit of victory, he shows a sense of responsibility, optimism and tenacity.

Zhang Ermin: she is straightforward, with a hot temper and dares to face challenges in real life head on.

Zhang Sanmin: he is wimpy, and takes the world as it is.

Zhang Simin: she is gentle and sensible, pure, kind-hearted and stubborn.

Zhang Wumin: he is diligent, fate-unyielding, utilitarian, and indifferent.

III. Comprehension (7 scores for each question, 28 scores in total)

21. What are the pathological manifestations of the Zhang family?

Zhang Damin: talkative; Ermin: mean; Sanmin: inconstant; Simin: neat freak; Wumin: em-plo-maniac; Mother: ice-loving.

22. What was the change of Zhang Damin's attitude towards Ermin before and after she got marriage?

Before marriage: he didn't agree that Ermin married a temporary worker from rural foreign areas, and had the sense of superiority as Beijingers, urban people and regular workers, with acrimonious words.

After marriage: he persuaded brother-in-law with empathy, enthusiastically helped brother-in-law cure diseases, and was not greedy for success.

This change reflects the sense of responsibility of Damin, but what remains unchanged is the superiority of spiritual victory.

23. Please analyze the language features of the work through examples.

It is talkative, which can relieve the burden of life of yourself and others in a long-winded and relaxed way. (3 points)

It set examples with the general idea being correct, such as chatting up Yunfang and persuading Yunfang who was lovelorn. (4 points)

24. How should we understand the relationship between "talkative" and "happiness"?

Being talkative can release inner pressure through language.

Being talkative can relieve the burden of life.

Being talkative can gain spiritual superiority (considering Zhang Damin's situation, write about the significance of being talkative to his life.)

3 The Results and Analysis

In order to realize the purpose that the test results can further reflect the actual situation, the answers to the corresponding subjective questions in the test paper were jointly negotiated by the team members, and a variety of possible answers were determined to the part of summarization and generalization as well as to the one of understanding and comprehension. Each research member scored independently for the test paper, after which the average score was calculated based on the ones given by them.

The differences in the scores show that the differences in media does affect the overall acceptance of literature, which is consistent with our prediction. However, in terms of the impact of each medium, there are obvious differences not only with the results of Levinson's experiment of the influence of media on learning 60 years ago, but also with the internal experimental results of the research group. In Levinson's experiment, the TV group performed the best, while the reading group performed worse than expected, ranking only before the studio group. On the

other hand, in the experiment of the research group, the group of the electronic reading performed the best, which was the same with the experimental results, while the reading group of paper texts ranked the second, and the TV and the voice books ranked the third and fourth, respectively.

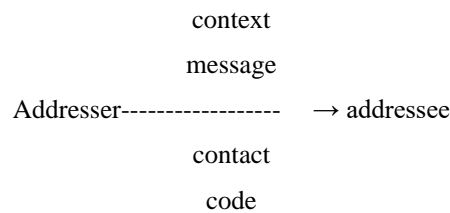
It was confusing to compare the results of the following two tests and one experiment. Especially in our experiment, we even doubted whether there was any problem in the experimental process. For this reason, some of the experimental subjects were investigated in this experiment. The students in the film group and in the electric reading group both reflected that the watching and the e-reading were conducted on the Internet, and there were discussions and screenplays in those processes. These links can not only enhance interest, but also provide details, supplement information and help to get a good understanding.

Why does the Internet's intervention have such a great impact on the results of acceptance? Is it an accidental factor or an inevitable influential factor of the experiment?

After discussion, the research group believed that the current Internet had become the main factor affecting the results of literary acceptance. Most important of all, it relates to the characteristics of the Internet. The Internet, known as "the meta-medium", namely "the medium of media", combines the past modes of transmission and media to make itself reappear on the platform in various special channels or virtual forms. On the one hand, "meta" embodies its inclusiveness. Some scholars pointed out that the most conspicuous feature of such new-media platforms was that all the existing media and their modes of transmission could coexist on such platforms, such as paper media, radio media and film and television media, which were now parasitic on the Internet. On the other hand, more striking is the productivity of the Internet. This productivity implies that the effectiveness of the media is enhanced, and the collision between new and old media will naturally occur in the process of the media technology's development. In his representative works *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan repeatedly stressed that "the media effectiveness is strong because it is given another medium as its 'content'" and "The 'content' of any medium is another medium. The content of the text is the speech, just as the text is the content of the printing, while the printing is the content of the telegraph." [2] In these examples cited by McLuhan, the text is the meta-medium of the speech, and the printing is the meta-medium of the text. Following this look, the television and the broadcasting are the meta-media of the printing, and the Internet is the meta-medium of all of them.

The Internet is more productive than traditional meta-media. As the medium of media, it is not only a new medium for the traditional media to spread on new platforms, but also a place where new media platforms such as social networks emerge. With the help of the meta-medium as the bridge, the new interaction among the audiences has been realized in the process of information dissemination, and the cross-domain communication between production and acceptance has become more direct and faster. At the same time, the information receiver has also completed the identity transformation at the other end of the meta-medium, and has become the driver of the secondary signification process of the symbolic information. It not only maintains the role of the single-direction receiver of media information, but also becomes a positive chooser and communicator of information. When they accept the already formed group's thoughts, they will also actively create a new round of culture.

The rise of the Internet's influence in the experimental results is also related to the particularity of literary acceptance. The texts used in Levinson's experiment was of the discourse and explanation type with relatively definite signification, and the certainty of signification can be affected by many factors. In 1958, at an important semiotics conference at Indiana University, Jacobson put forward the famous method of analyzing the signification process by six factors, showing that a symbolic text contains these six factors at the same time.[3] The six factors and their relationships are shown as follows:



Jacobson's theory of six factors is not novel, and his main contribution lies in his pointing out that these six factors are imbalanced in the text acceptance. When one of them becomes the dominant factor of the text, it will lead to the corresponding interpretation of a special meaning. The factor of "contact" in the six factors shall be highlighted when the text is imbedded into the Internet. In Jacobson's view, "the symbol shall have a strong 'phatic' sense when its signification focuses on the contact, and this discourse seems to be designed solely to keep the smooth communication, or to keep contact." [4] On the meta-media platform of the Internet, the communication between the sender and the receiver is no longer single-directional, but dual-directional and interactive; the receiver is no longer a loner with a book in hand, but within a multi-voice chorus with more receivers; the text is not fixed, but will explode from the inside and expand its territory. Therefore, the text receivers in the Internet will mobilize their own meta-language set or interpret the set of the community to interpret and re-disseminate the symbolic text, according to the different types of meta-language factors shown in the symbolic texts. In Bateson's view, "the concept of 'the meta-communication' goes beyond the meta-language of the code system and goes into the generalized symbol-pragmatic category. Therefore, the scope of meta-language should be expanded in combination with the pragmatic environment of new media."

Compared with the result of the text which was also embedded into the Internet, why was the one of the voice books not ideal? With the help of the Internet, the voice books can become more convenient, and it is available for readers to listen anytime and anywhere to kill the fragmented time, but the defects of them are also obvious. First of all, the speech of them is linear and temporal. It is necessary to hear a sentence from the beginning to the end in order to understand its meaning, which not only affects the integrity of acceptance, but also tends to distract attention. Second, audio books are arranged according to texts and with reading skills, which will then be more or less influenced by the speaker's subjective will. Compared with the texts on the Internet, the voice books are single-directional and one-way. Third, the efficiency of the voice books is low, and the audiences are mainly senior citizens and children who are not high in their degree of participation into the text expansion. The text for the voice books we tested is broadcasted by Baoliang AI. Although the speaker has a certain degree of visibility, and the voice and intonation of the broadcast is properly adjusted, only a dozen listeners participated into the discussion.

As for the images, by analyzing the two tests and one experiment, it can be found that in the experimental group which had been used to text reading and had higher cultural achievements, the ranking was backward. While in Levinson's experiment and our group's experiment, due to the large number of people and their uneven cultural results, the ranking was high. Generally speaking, in our current education system, those with high cultural results will be better at words reading. In our experiment, many students in the book-reading group showed their emotion of boredom with paper books. In addition to the thickness of the paper books, except the fact that the non-adjustable dense and numb bytes would frighten them, it is undeniable that they have gradually become accustomed to rapid page-turning online reading with the cursor. Some students said, in addition to the textbooks, usually they read other materials in the electronic version. Due to the fact that our tested text has a certain sense of age, some of the background description of the original version cannot be understood, which further resulted in reading obstacles. Although classical philosophers, such as Aristotle and Hegel, have elevated the status of vision, and what they called vision also includes text reading. In the modern sense, the establishment of the discourse power of the visual culture was accompanied by the arrival of the landscape society and the context of the globalization. Because there were certain differences in the language and culture of various nationalities in various countries, it is difficult for the abstract language symbols based on languages to spread in different national backgrounds of different countries. However, image symbols can get rid of this obstacle. For the visual symbols of images, people in different language backgrounds can also obtain better communication, cognition, communication and understanding. [6] So Nicholas Mirzoeff, an American scholar, pointed out directly: "Vision, not text, is increasingly becoming the main way we understand the contemporary world." [7]

It is undeniable that the main force in the Internet, pictures and videos, namely images or icons, has become the main source of people's daily information acquisition. However, in literary acceptance, text symbols can obtain richer signification through the Internet and become the optimal form of reception.

4 Conclusion

As to the impacts of media on literary acceptance, the effectiveness of the four media shall be ranked as follows: the electric books, the movies, the voice books and the paper books. This result is far from our prediction. Due to the discovery of a variable factor, the Internet, as a meta-medium in the experiment, the effectiveness of the experiment was improved by historical verification and logical deduction.

There is no doubt that an experiment cannot draw a completely universal conclusion. Our participants are the undergraduate students majoring in Chinese. Will the results be the same, if the people of different ages, different cultural accomplishments and different occupations participate in the experiment? Will the results be different if the text carrier cannot access to the Internet platform?

Although the validity of this experiment remains to be further explored and expanded, whether in the realm of literature or education, the cultivation of media literacy is where the meaning lies, which demands not only the use of the media texts, but also the experience, the judgement and the interpretation of them as well as the production of them. As James Potter says, the media

literacy “means a perspective that we actively use to reach out to the media and explain the meaning of the news we encounter.” [8]

4.1 The Figure and the Table

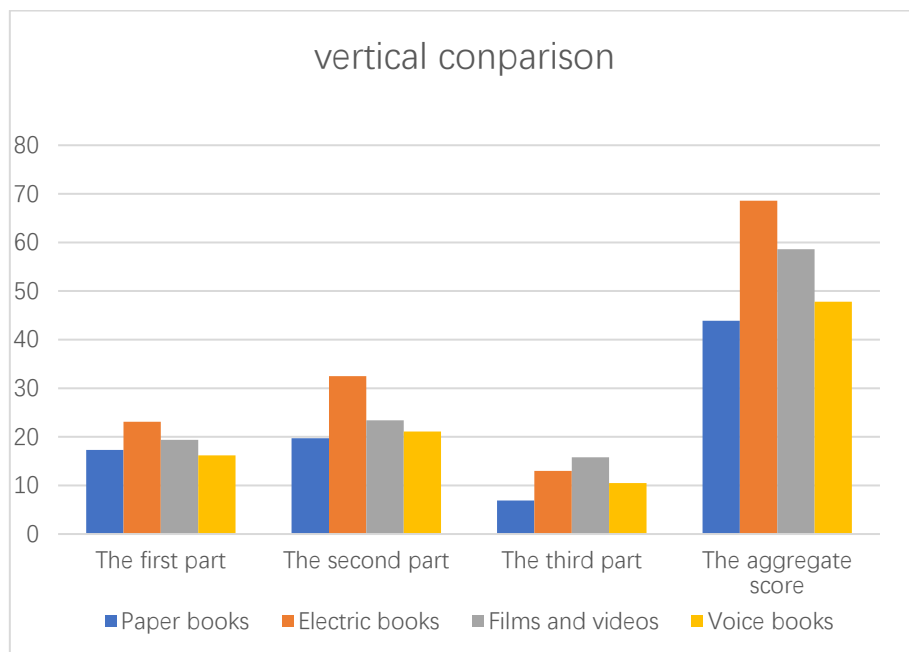


Fig. 1. Bar chart of the test scores of each part of the influence of media on literary acceptance

Table 1. The Test Results of the Influence of Media on Literary Acceptance

Media	The first part: Details of facts	The second part	The third part: Summarization and generalization	Score
Paper books	17.3	19.7	6.9	43.9
Electric books	23.1	32.5	13	68.6
Films and videos	19.4	23.4	15.8	58.6
Voice books	16.2	21.1	10.5	47.8

Acknowledgements

Phased Achievements of the National Social Science Fund Project: The Research on the Literary Activities “Based on the Literary Subjects in the Field of Media” (Project Approval No.: 17BZW049)

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