

Research on Literary Communication from the Perspective of Cultural Capital: Analysis of Channel Differences and Group Behaviors

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Abstract: This study takes the cultural capital theory as the framework, focusing on three major literary communication channels: traditional publishing, digital reading platforms, and social media. It explores the usage characteristics of groups with different levels of cultural capital on each channel and their acceptance mechanisms for emerging channels. Through literature review and theoretical integration, it reveals the dynamic action mechanism of cultural capital in the field of literary communication, providing a new perspective for understanding the contemporary literary communication ecology.

Keywords: Cultural Capital; Cultural Communication; Channel Differentiation; Group Behavior

1. Introduction

In the contemporary era, the literary landscape has undergone profound transformations, largely driven by technological advancements and changing social dynamics. Literary communication, once confined to traditional print-based channels, now spans across a diverse range of platforms, from digital reading applications to social media networks. This rapid evolution has not only changed the way literary works are disseminated but has also reshaped the power structures and social interactions within the literary field.

Cultural capital, a concept first proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, has become an increasingly important analytical tool in understanding these changes. It offers a framework to explore how social and cultural resources influence individual and group behaviors, especially in the context of cultural production and consumption. In the realm of literary communication, cultural capital plays a crucial role in determining which works

gain prominence, how audiences engage with literature, and the overall distribution of symbolic power.

This research aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by systematically analyzing the relationship between cultural capital, literary communication channels, and group behaviors. By focusing on traditional publishing, digital reading platforms, and social media, this study will investigate how groups with different levels of cultural capital interact with these channels, and how these interactions shape the contemporary literary communication ecology. The findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play in literary communication, and provide valuable insights for cultural policy-makers, publishers, and literary practitioners.

2. Theoretical Foundation: The Theoretical Integration of Cultural Capital and Knowledge Communication

2.1 The Core Connotations of Cultural Capital Theory

Bourdieu (1986) proposed that cultural capital can be divided into three forms: the embodied form, such as an individual's cultural accomplishment and aesthetic ability; the objectified form, including cultural products like books and artworks; and the institutionalized form, such as academic qualifications and professional certifications[1]. This theory emphasizes the mutual transformation among cultural, economic, and social capital, uncovering the power structure and social stratification mechanisms underlying cultural practices. In the literary field, elements such as authors' cultural reputation, publishers' brand value, and readers' reading tastes are crucial for cultural capital accumulation.

2.2 The Extended Application of Knowledge Communication Theory

Drawing on the theory of the sociology of knowledge, literary communication represents a process of transforming "private knowledge" into "social knowledge" (Jiang Hua, 2021)[3]. As a key knowledge carrier, the publication and circulation of books essentially constitute the production and redistribution of cultural capital. This process not only involves text dissemination but also constructs and spreads social values. The integration of cultural capital theory and knowledge communication theory offers a dual-analytical framework for understanding power dynamics, resource allocation, and audience segmentation in literary communication.

3. Research Methods: A Multidimensional Analytical Framework for Literary Communication

3.1 Historical Dimension: The Experience Reference of Traditional Communication Models

By examining the dissemination paths of ancient Chinese literature (Li Jianzhong, 2015)[2], we find that cultural capital stratification already existed in traditional media like oral transmission, writing, and printing. For instance, the scholar-bureaucrat class accumulated institutionalized cultural capital through the imperial examination system and reproduced embodied cultural capital via poetic exchanges. This historical analysis helps us understand the continuity and transformation of cultural capital operation in contemporary literary communication.

3.2 Text and Audience Analysis: An Empirical Approach to Cross-Cultural Communication

The study on the English translation of Zhang Wei's novels (Wang Ning, 2020) uses text analysis and reader reception theory to reveal the reconstruction of cultural capital in cross-cultural literary communication. This method can be applied to research on contemporary literary communication channels[4]. We will analyze user comments and reading data from different platforms, using sentiment analysis and data mining techniques. For example, by counting the frequency of professional literary terms in user comments, we can measure the cultural capital level of the

commenters and analyze how it affects their reading choices.

To further enrich the cross-cultural analysis, this study will also incorporate an examination of non-Chinese cultural contexts. For Western readers on platforms like Goodreads, a popular book-review and social networking site for book lovers, their behaviors can provide unique insights. Goodreads users often engage in activities such as rating books, writing detailed reviews, participating in book clubs, and following other readers with similar tastes. High-cultural-capital Western readers on Goodreads may focus on in-depth literary analysis in their reviews, recommend classic and critically-acclaimed works, and participate in intellectual discussions about literary theory and historical context. Medium-cultural-capital readers might be more influenced by best-seller lists and recommendations from popular reviewers, and they tend to write more personal and emotional reviews sharing their reading experiences. Low-cultural-capital readers may rely on simple star ratings, short comments expressing basic likes or dislikes, and discover new books through word-of-mouth within their social circles on the platform. Analyzing these behaviors can help understand how cultural capital manifests differently in a Western-oriented digital literary communication environment, and how it impacts the dissemination and reception of literary works.

3.3 The Perspective of Media Criticism: The Functional Deconstruction of Emerging Channels

Based on media cultural criticism theory (Lu Yang, 2018)[5], we will analyze the technical logic and cultural functions of emerging media such as social media and digital reading platforms. For example, we will study how algorithm-based recommendation systems reshape the power structure of literary communication. By analyzing the algorithms' input variables (e.g., reading history, popularity, and genre preferences), we can understand how certain works gain more exposure, potentially marginalizing others. Additionally, we will explore how user-generated content (UGC) challenges the monopoly of traditional cultural capital, through case studies of successful UGC-based literary dissemination events.

4. Analysis of Group Behaviors Based on

Different Cultural Capital Levels

4.1 High-Cultural-Capital Group Behaviors

High-cultural-capital groups, characterized by their extensive cultural knowledge, refined aesthetic sensibilities, and often high levels of educational attainment, tend to have distinct behaviors in literary communication. On traditional publishing platforms, they actively seek out works with academic or literary value, often relying on the reputation of publishers and the endorsement of literary critics. For example, they are more likely to purchase classic literature published by well-established academic publishers. In the digital age, although they may also use digital reading platforms, they are more discerning about the quality of content, preferring e-books of literary masterpieces or in-depth non-fiction works. They are less likely to be influenced by algorithm-based recommendations on digital platforms and may instead use these platforms to access specialized literary resources or participate in high-level literary discussion groups.

On social media, high-cultural-capital groups typically use these platforms to engage in intellectual exchanges related to literature. They may share in-depth literary analyses, participate in academic-oriented literary discussions, or promote literary events that align with their cultural tastes. However, they are often critical of the fragmented and entertainment-oriented nature of much social media literary content, and may view it as a less serious form of literary communication.

4.2 Medium-Cultural-Capital Group Behaviors

Medium-cultural-capital groups, which make up a large portion of the literary audience, show different patterns of behavior. On digital reading platforms, they are the main consumers of online literature. Attracted by the convenience, vast quantity of content, and personalized recommendations, they enjoy reading serialized novels, especially in popular genres such as romance, fantasy, and science fiction. They are more likely to be influenced by the popularity of works on these platforms, as indicated by best-seller lists and high-rating reviews.

In the context of traditional publishing, medium-cultural-capital groups may purchase mainstream commercial fiction or self-help books. They value the convenience of physical

books for leisure reading but may also be deterred by the relatively high cost and slower dissemination speed compared to digital alternatives. On social media, they actively participate in literary discussions related to popular works. They may share book reviews, engage in discussions about trending literary topics, and are more likely to be influenced by the viral spread of literary content on these platforms.

4.3 Low-Cultural-Capital Group Behaviors

Low-cultural-capital groups, often with limited exposure to formal literary education, have unique ways of interacting with literary communication channels. Social media serves as a primary access point for them to engage with literature. They are attracted to the short, fragmented, and easily digestible literary content presented in the form of short videos, memes, or short book summaries. User-generated content on social media, especially content that is humorous, relatable, or tied to current trends, has a strong appeal to this group. They may also use social media to discover new literary works through word-of-mouth recommendations from their peers.

Digital reading platforms also offer an accessible way for low-cultural-capital groups to consume literature, especially when content is available for free or at a low cost. However, they may face challenges in navigating the vast amount of content and may rely more on simple and intuitive search functions or popular recommendations. In contrast, traditional publishing has relatively limited appeal to this group due to factors such as high cost, complex content, and limited accessibility.

5. The Characteristics and Research Value of the Three Major Communication Channels

5.1 Traditional Publishing: The Authoritative Carrier of Cultural Capital

Traditional publishing, centered around printed books, relies on publishing houses and bookstores to form a strict screening mechanism. It features high professionalism and authority, preferentially disseminating works with academic endorsement or literary awards. This makes it an important arena for high-cultural-capital groups to accumulate and showcase their capital. However, its slow dissemination speed and high entry barriers pose

challenges in terms of communication efficiency and audience reach in the digital era. For example, Penguin Books, a well-known traditional publisher, has faced difficulties in adapting to the rapid-paced digital reading market, where readers demand instant access to content.

5.2 Digital Reading Platforms: The Popular Extension of Cultural Capital

Digital reading platforms reduce the time and economic costs of literary consumption through vast resources, convenient interaction, and personalized recommendations. Dominated by online literature, the content production is typified and fast-food-style, attracting a large number of medium-cultural-capital groups. While its technology-enabled model breaks the time-space limitations of traditional publishing, it also raises concerns about content quality and cultural capital devaluation. For instance, platforms like Webnovel have a large number of user-generated works, but only a small portion receive professional editing and quality control, leading to inconsistent content quality.

5.3 Social Media: The Democratic Reconstruction of Cultural Capital

Social media, with user-generated content and fission-style dissemination at its core, creates a decentralized literary communication ecosystem. Forms such as short videos, book reviews, and topic discussions bring literary communication closer to daily life. This channel empowers low-cultural-capital groups with the right to express, diversifying literary evaluation criteria. However, it also exacerbates the risks of information fragmentation and cultural capital dilution. For example, on TikTok, literary content is often presented in short, fragmented forms, which may not fully convey the depth of literary works, and the popularity of content may be more influenced by entertainment factors rather than literary value.

5.4 Research Value

Comparative analysis of these three channels reveals the operation logic of cultural capital in different media environments. Traditional publishing embodies the elite precipitation of cultural capital; digital reading platforms demonstrate the popular penetration of capital; and social media shows the democratic deconstruction of capital. This

multi-dimensional comparison helps identify new laws of literary communication, providing a theoretical basis for cultural policy-making and industry development.

6. Realistic Background: The Contradictions and Opportunities of Literary Communication

6.1 The Infiltration of Capital and Power

Controversial events in the literary field, such as the case involving Jia Pingwa and his daughter, reflect the alienation of cultural capital (Li Gongming, 2023)[6]. Some works gain dissemination advantages through the collusion of power and capital, undermining the fairness of the literary field and triggering public doubts about the legitimacy of cultural capital. Specifically, certain works may receive excessive promotion due to personal connections or non-literary factors, overshadowing more deserving literary creations.

6.2 Transformation Opportunities in the New Media Environment

Literary Gazette (2022) pointed out that cross-media transformation has become a new trend in literary communication[7]. Forms such as literary IP adaptation, audiobooks, and interactive reading expand the value-added paths of cultural capital. Meanwhile, the public's cognitive differences regarding literary functions (e.g., the debate between the "uselessness theory" and the "realistic value" perspective) reflect the demand variations among different cultural capital groups, offering directions for targeted communication strategies.

7. Conclusion and Prospects

This study, through theoretical integration and channel-based comparison, has revealed several specific findings regarding the role of cultural capital in literary communication. Firstly, across the three major channels of traditional publishing, digital reading platforms, and social media, groups with different levels of cultural capital exhibit distinct usage behaviors. High-cultural-capital groups tend to seek out high-value literary works on traditional publishing platforms and are more discerning on digital platforms, while using social media mainly for intellectual exchanges. Medium-cultural-capital groups are the primary consumers of popular content on digital reading

platforms and are influenced by trends on social media, and also engage with mainstream commercial works in traditional publishing. Low-cultural-capital groups rely heavily on social media for accessible and fragmented literary content and use digital reading platforms mainly for free or low-cost options, with limited interest in traditional publishing.

Secondly, when comparing the behaviors of different cultural capital groups on the same channel, significant differences emerge. For example, on social media, high-cultural-capital groups focus on in-depth discussions, medium-cultural-capital groups are driven by popularity, and low-cultural-capital groups are attracted to relatable and trendy content. These differences highlight how cultural capital shapes not only the choice of channels but also the nature of engagement within each channel.

In future research, we plan to conduct large-scale surveys among different cultural capital groups. Using stratified sampling, we will distribute questionnaires to measure their usage frequency, preference factors, and satisfaction levels on the three major channels. Additionally, we will analyze big data from platforms, including click-through rates, reading durations, and sharing behaviors, to empirically verify the differences in usage behaviors.

Regarding the impact of emerging technologies, we will closely monitor how the metaverse and AI writing reshape literary communication. For example, in the metaverse, virtual literary events

and immersive reading experiences may redefine the role of cultural capital. AI-generated content may also challenge traditional concepts of literary creation and evaluation. By studying these aspects, we aim to contribute to the construction of a literary communication theory system in the digital age.

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