SPS Student Cover Sheet / Feedback Sheet

*Exam number	B212833
*Course	Sociology 2B
*Essay title	In what ways does online culture impact the interest in literature amongst young people in China?
*Word count	**1953**
Marker's name	E Qvist

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NOTE: <mark>Essay marks are reviewed by another member of staff prior to being returned to students</mark>

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This Section is for office use.

Initial Research Proposal mark	68
Word count penalties	
Lateness penalties	
Adjusted mark	
Feedback exercise mark	100

Feedback exercise mark	

Overview

Aspect of performance	+		Avg		-
Thinking skills (criticism, analysis, interpretation, logic, argumentation, evaluation, use of comparison, anticipating counter-arguments, etc.)		x			
Comprehension (accuracy in facts, details and representation of author's views, breadth of reading, grasp of major issues, etc.)		x			
Writing skills (structure and organisation, clarity, precision, grammar/spelling, referencing, use of illustration, style, etc.)		x			

Major advice to student

Main strength(s) of the essay	A well-structured proposal that makes a good effort to outline relevant literature and build a feasible research design.
Main weakness(es) of the essay	At times, some key terms and points are not fully elaborated and at times, the wording is not entirely specific.
This and future essays could be improved by…	Make sure to spell out terms, statements, and reflections to ensure specificity – many good reflections in this proposal but these are, at times, not fully spelt out. Overall good effort on considering the different elements of the proposal.

In what ways does online culture impact the interest in literature amongst young people in China?

Abstract

At present, the influence of Chinese Internet culture on Chinese people is growing due to various social factors(Yan, 2021). Young people are an essential user group of the Internet and are vulnerable to its influence (He et al., 2019), and studies have now identified the impact of online culture on the language skills of young Chinese people. While the existing literature has described the impact of the Internet on young people's reading styles and content, no research has attempted to identify the attitudes of young Chinese towards literature in this internet age. This study will use both quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate how and to what extent young Chinese people's attitudes towards literature have been changed by online culture.

The study consists of quantitative data collection in the form of an offline distribution questionnaire and subsequent qualitative semi-structured interviews. After collecting a sample of questionnaires from various locations in China, the sample will be screened to improve the quality of the interviews. Both questionnaires and interviews will be conducted offline over a period of approximately six months.

This study is of great importance as it relates to the learning and growing health of young people in China, as well as to the development and changes in the Chinese language and literature(Hockx, 2015, p186).

Introduction

Nowadays, Chinese online culture is becoming more and more embedded in the lives of Chinese people, especially the young(Yan, 2021). The fast-paced nature of online reading has profoundly changed the structure of young people's reading and poses potential risks (Loan, 2012). Although there is now research that demonstrates the degradation of Chinese youth literacy and language skills due to the influence of online culture (Wang et al., 2019), sociology has not attempted to investigate how online culture has influenced young people's attitudes towards Chinese literature. The research will use mixed methods, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather information to investigate the question "In what ways does online culture impact the interest in literature amongst young people in China?". Interviewees will be sampled from the survey respondents to ensure the quality of the interviews. The research will be conducted in China, and it is under the category of "An example of global digital culture".

> **Commented [EQ1]:** Elaborate point.

Literature Review

The literature informing this research can be broadly divided into three categories:

- literature on the development of internet culture and literature in China
- the investigation into the impact of the Internet on reading
- investigation into the impact of the Internet on the language skills of young people in China

For social reasons such as less social mobility, cramped living space, and rebellion against mainstream notions of success, the Chinese Internet is becoming more widespread and deeply embedded in people's lives and has become an essential part of Chinese media culture(Yan, 2021). Yan's (2021) study investigated popular Internet language from 2010 to 2021 and suggested that Chinese Internet buzzwords are a 'simplification and fusion of complex meanings', i.e. their quality of simplified meanings. In online media reading, 43.1% of all Internet users in China read Internet literature (Feng et al., 2017). At the same time, Chinese Internet literature is perceived as 'less like the works of literature' and less innovative, stylising and low quality(Hockx, 2015, p186). Moreover, many online literature platforms face problems of management and profitability(Hockx, 2015, p189).

The impact of the Internet on young people's reading and language skills is corroborated by many studies of online texts. In one research, Loan (2012) used the survey method of questionnaires to quantitatively analyse the impact of the Internet on the reading choices and reading habits of young people at university. Loan's research (2012) showed that the Internet reduces students' sequential reading, concentrated reading and in-depth reading, and the decrease in literary reading was significant among the changes to the reading structure of university students. In another quantitative survey (Wang et al., 2019), data showed that 76.5% of young Chinese respondents felt their language was getting poorer, mainly in not speaking verse and not using rhetorical devices. Of these, 65.4% of respondents attributed this to an online climate of homogenous expression and repetitive language (Wang et al., 2019).

Today, the media that includes the Internet is no longer limited to the concept of a tool, but has a profound effect on young people's reading and writing skills and literacy(Buckingham, 2015). While research can demonstrate both the impact of the Internet on young people's reading style and the impact of internet culture on their language skills, there is almost a gap in the research and literature on young Chinese people's attitudes towards literature in the internet age. In another qualitative study of the influence of online texts on university students in Chinese universities, researchers noted in broader tones that online culture "has had a huge impact on young people's literacy, values, worldviews and habits" (He et al., 2019). However, in similar studies, there is no actual

Commented [EQ2]: What does this mean and what implications does this have?

sample or data collected from young people with research methods. Young Chinese people's awareness and attitudes towards literature have not really been discovered. Young people are the leading user group of the Internet and are also more susceptible to change by it(He et al., 2019). As online culture continues to develop among young people in China, the simplification of language will become more pronounced and will impact the literary level and enthusiasm for literature of young people. This study will focus on the attitudes and self-perceptions of young people and attempts to map the state of young Chinese people's attitudes towards literature in this Internet era.

Research questions&hypotheses

The research question for this proposal is 'In what ways does online culture impact the interest in literature amongst young people in China?'. The study of the development of literacy among young people in the Internet age is of great importance to sociology, not only concerning the ideology of young people(He et al., 2019), but also concerning the development of the Chinese language and literature and even for the way the government approaches Chinese Internet culture (Hockx, 2015, p186). It will explore the following aspects:

1. Young Chinese people's exposure to online culture; their knowledge of online language/literature; the potential relationship between their exposure to the Internet and their region
2. Young Chinese people's perceptions of their own literacy and language skills; their views on how the Internet is changing the literacy of the younger generation
3. Young Chinese people's enthusiasm for literature and literary activities; attitudes toward the future development of Chinese literature.

Research design

The study will be conducted through a survey in the form of a questionnaire and a follow-up semi-structured interview. The survey component will take approximately two months and the qualitative interviews will take approximately four months. Each interview will take approximately one hour. The sampling will be spread across various cities in China. As we need to implement a more comprehensive survey, samples will need to be from cities of different sizes and schools with good and bad grades on average. They need to be young students who have Chinese nationality and have lived in China for a long time (this is because the vast majority of young Chinese people in this age group are students) and have the ability to communicate in Chinese.

A sample of 400 subjects from different cities in the South and North, half male and half female, aged between 16 and 24 (which covers high school and undergraduate ages) is

planned to complete the survey. The questionnaire should not be posted directly on the Internet, as the sample obtained in this way will only include young people who have taken the initiative to go online and take the survey and interfere directly with the subject of the study (De Vaus 2002: 3). Therefore, this research plans to send the questionnaires directly to schools in different regions by means of offline delivery. In the survey questionnaire, participants are asked to fill in their age, gender, region, family situation (e.g. family composition, financial situation), approximate access to the Internet (e.g. time spent online, smartphone ownership) and general attitude towards the Internet.

Next, the study will use stratified sampling to screen the subjects, which will not only control the sample size and make the subsequent interviews more efficient but will also allow for a more accurate and representative sample to be drawn from the screened sample (De Vaus 2002: 3). The criteria for stratified sampling were living area(city or rural) and household income, as research has shown that the impact of the Internet on teenage students and their use of the Internet in China is not significantly related to factors such as gender, but rather to the living area and household economic status(Li et al., 2019).

An attempt will be made to select a representative sample of 40 participants from the 400 valid questionnaire results and identify them for interview. Such a method will remove similar samples and improve the quality of the interviews (De Vaus 2002: 3). The subjects selected should cover the different results for each questionnaire to ensure the comprehensiveness of the research. At the same time, having prior knowledge of the basic information about the interviewees will help to develop more appropriate and effective questions in the semi-structured interviews(O'Reilly, 2011: 121).

In the next step of data collection, the research will use a qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews. For my topic, semi-structured interviews not only allowed the interviewees room to express themselves and give sufficient information(Robson & McCartan, 2016: 285 & 290-293), but also allowed for freer questions to enhance the interviewer's understanding of the interviewees in order to draw better conclusions. Interviews will be conducted one-on-one in the region where the participants live. The entire interview is divided into three stages. In the first stage, interviewees will be asked straightforward questions about their personal information and life situation to build trust with the interviewers before steering the conversation toward the topic (O'Reilly, 2011: 148). Next, the interviewees will be asked about their internet habits and literary activities. Finally, the interviewees will be allowed to express their views on some open-ended questions about the impact of the Internet on literature and the future of Chinese literature. The semi-structured interview questions will allow participants to express more opinions and their own social experiences and backgrounds, providing comprehensive data for the behavioural analysis(De Vaus 2002: 3). In order to reduce bias from the interviewer's own

position, the interviews should be recorded and analysed with additional staff. At the same time, the interviewer should express and ask whether the subject agrees with the conclusions of the output.

This qualitative interview will hardly involve ethical and moral aspects. In the questionnaire, participants can choose not to give out information that they do not feel comfortable revealing, such as their family's financial status.

> **Commented [EQ5]:** Some good reflections here.

Rejected data collection methods

Some research methods were rejected because they were not feasible or interfered with experimental data.

In fact, ethnography can be used for research on this topic. Ethnography is one of the methods of analysis used in qualitative research. (Burnard, 1995) Moreover, it helps to critically reflect on the broader social context and influence social change and is also suitable for gaining a deeper understanding of the participants(Gaggiotti et al., 2017). However, the ethnographic approach is not feasible because the sample is too geographically dispersed and we may have difficulties accessing places such as schools and homes.

As mentioned earlier, the web-based questionnaire format would have limited the sample to young people who had direct access to the web and actively participated in the online survey(De Vaus 2002: 3), which would have directly harmed the rationality of our sampling and altered the results of the study. Off-line distribution of the questionnaire would have ensured a diverse sample.

Positionality & Reflexivity

I myself am a young man who grew up and has lived in China for a long time and loves literature and writing. The research question comes mainly from my observations and reflections on the current status in China, and I am subjectively inclined towards the idea that the Internet is harming the literacy of young people. I have to reflect on my position, and my identity is beneficial to my interviews (the ability to more quickly understand the subjects' mastery and perceptions of literature), but it also poses a challenge to the reflections and conclusions that I will draw(Mann, 2006).

It is also worth noting that interviewees may feel a sense of psychological oppression and embarrassment if they are made aware of my relative expertise in literature and my subjective views. Also, the subjects felt emotional discomfort if they felt they were "being educated".

Taking the above two factors together, I think I should try to express some of the information and conclusions I have drawn using verbal formulations and ask the interviewee if they agree with my formulation(Mason, 2002: 514).

Incorporating Feedback

1. My research question initially was "To what extent has the Internet buzzwords in China influenced the expressive communication skills of young Chinese people? "The feedback from teachers and peers was mainly related to two issues: the meaning of buzzwords was not clear and the question was not "sociologically researchable". Therefore, I changed the direction from "the impact of buzzwords on communication" to "the impact of internet culture on literary attitudes" and paraphrased the research question. The final question is more amenable to analysis using qualitative sociological research methods.

2. In the research design, I initially planned to adopt a direct qualitative interview approach. However, this approach may face the problems of poor interview quality and excessive sample size. After reflecting on the feedback and reviewing literature about similar situations, I decided to add the step of first collecting a large sample of data through a questionnaire(the survey section) and screening the interviewees from it.

3. Although I took care not to make the interview questions appear subjective, however, both the peer evaluation and the feedback from the teachers pointed out some issues regarding some questions appearing leading. In response, I revised the question outline and improved my position reflection, in which I suggested possible ways I can use in the interview to reduce subjectivity.

4. I have only used citations extensively for the first time this semester, and I have improved the completeness and accuracy of my citations from the tips in the feedback.

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