



**PERCEPTIONS OF THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON  
CHINESE POPULAR CULTURE IN LEARNING  
CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

**BY**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates Thai university students' perceptions of using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language (CFL), with a focus on their preferred engagement methods, perceived opportunities, and intercultural challenges. A mixed-methods approach combining questionnaires (N=202) and semi-structured interviews (n=15) was employed, with stratified and purposive sampling ensuring representative insights. Findings revealed that digital platforms, particularly TikTok (72.28%) and YouTube (68.81%), served as primary channels for accessing Chinese popular culture, with short-form videos favored for their contextualized language input. Students reported significant opportunities in vocabulary acquisition (mean=4.46), listening comprehension (mean=4.41), and intercultural understanding, such as grasping social norms (mean=4.30). However, challenges included cultural dissonance (mean=3.90), non-standard language structures (mean=3.92), and difficulties in interpreting idioms or dialects. Qualitative insights emphasized the need for guided cultural contextualization to mitigate misunderstandings. The study concludes that integrating Chinese popular culture into CFL curricula enhances learner motivation and linguistic skills but requires pedagogical scaffolding to address cultural and linguistic complexities. Recommendations include leveraging digital platforms for immersive learning, fostering cross-cultural exchanges, and incorporating critical media literacy to navigate stereotypes. These findings contribute to optimizing CFL instruction through culturally responsive pedagogies.

(Total 165 pages)

Key Words: Chinese Popular Culture, Chinese as a Foreign Language, Thai University Students

Student's Signature .....Thesis Advisor's Signature .....

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presented the background of this study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, basic assumptions, conceptual framework, significance of this study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms.

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Cultural exchanges between China and Thailand have a long history, dating back over 2,000 years (Baker, C., Baker, C. J., & Phongpaichit, 2022), and have intensified significantly in the 21st century. In Thailand, Chinese cultural elements have become ubiquitous and deeply integrated into Thai society, ranging from Confucius Institutes to the popular tales of Romance of the Three Kingdoms, traditional Chinese cuisine, traditional Chinese medicine, martial arts, poetry, and music. While these traditional cultural symbols have maintained their iconic status, the turn of the century has witnessed a surge in contemporary Chinese cultural products, driven by digital globalization. This has included movies, television shows, and mobile games. Similarly, Thai culture has become increasingly familiar in China, with unique Thai cuisine, the recent popularity of Thai movies and television shows, and the widespread appreciation of Thai massage techniques. Princess Sirindhorn of Thailand has played a pivotal role in fostering cultural understanding between the two countries. As a child, she studied the Chinese language and culture, mastering Pinyin, Mandarin, and simplified Chinese characters. She has authored books and has delivered speeches aimed at introducing Chinese culture to the Thai public, thereby igniting a "Chinese culture fever" in Thailand (Lin, 2011). Her efforts have not only enhanced cultural understanding between the two countries but also laid the foundation for the widespread interest in Chinese language and culture among Thais.

Chinese language education in Thailand has entered a period of prosperous development. At present, Chinese language learning ranks only second to English language learning in Thailand (Manomaiviboon, 2004). China's participation in Thailand's foreign trade cooperation has increased, and it has become the largest trade cooperation country in Thailand, with more and more business activities requiring the use of Chinese as an intermediary language (Pungsirijaroen, 2021). Thailand tourism has been favored by many Chinese tourists; in 2023, the number of Chinese tourists to Thailand was about 2.7 million (The Nation, 2023). The influx of Chinese tourists has not only boosted Thailand's tourism industry but also created a practical need for Thai tourism professionals to acquire Chinese language skills, further fueling the demand for Chinese education. Along with the development of the Internet and e-commerce and digital industry in China in recent years, Chinese companies such as Alibaba, Huawei, OPPO, Vivo, and Xiaomi have set up their Thailand market and have established their Southeast Asian company headquarters in Bangkok. Statistics from the Board of Investment of Thailand (BOI) showed that China invested 848 billion baht in Thailand in 2023, ranking first among all countries investing in Thailand (Bangkok Post, 2024). These deepening economic interdependencies have created tangible demands for Chinese proficiency, translating into institutional responses within Thailand's education system. Zhu (2019) suggested that improving and developing Chinese language education in Thailand is conducive to creating more opportunities for business cooperation and promoting close cooperation and rapid development of the Sino-Thai economy.

There have been some Thais who learned Chinese purely out of personal interest and wished to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. Chen's (2016) survey showed that 15.5% of Thai learners chose to learn Chinese because of their interest in Chinese culture.

With the development of Internet technology and the increase of communication channels, Chinese popular culture has gradually ascended to the world stage, and it has become easier and easier for Chinese learners to get in touch with Chinese popular culture. Since its launch in China in 2017, TikTok has created a "short-

video social wave" around the world, and data from 2023 showed that the user penetration rate in Thailand was as high as 49.3%. The algorithmic nature of these platforms has not only disseminated cultural content but also created immersive linguistic environments through user-generated interactions. With the explosion of TikTok, more and more Chinese songs have been disseminated overseas. Chinese video platforms such as WeTV, IQiyi, Youku, and Mango TV have launched overseas services and have chosen Thailand as a major region for their business operations, with a large number of Chinese Xianxia Fantasy Dramas, sweet romance dramas, talent shows, entertainment programs, and variety shows popping up in Thailand. In addition to these, Chinese food culture has also spread further in Thailand, particularly the Mala flavor. More and more Sichuan hotpot and Chinese food restaurants have been appearing on the streets of Thailand, and Thais have scrambled to try these restaurants. This export of Chinese pop culture has attracted many Thais to learn more about Chinese culture and to learn the Chinese language.

The number of Chinese language learners in Thailand has been increasing, their learning needs have been becoming more and more diversified, and the age of students has been trending downward. How to make the process of Chinese language learning abundant and interesting in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, in order to improve the acceptance and motivation of Chinese language learners, and ultimately to enhance the learning effect of Chinese language learners, has been the direction that many teachers of Chinese as a foreign language have been endeavoring to work towards. Research has shown that popular culture helps to reduce stress levels and language learning anxiety levels, which facilitates language learning and develops motivation (Placer, Ngo, Nano, & Calambro, 2024). Popular culture, with its engaging and immersive nature, provides a low-stakes environment where learners can practice language skills without the pressure of formal classroom settings. This, in turn, reduces language learning anxiety and enhances intrinsic motivation. It also allows learners to access desirable imagined communities (Norton, 2011).

Chinese language teaching for foreigners is teaching Chinese as a second language. As a language teaching, it must involve cultural contents, and there are

various kinds of cultures, but one of them is showing more and more powerful vitality with the change of time, which is popular culture. Pop culture, represented by popular music, film, and television, popular novels, and internet culture, has become an essential part of our lives. From the perspective of language teaching, culture can also assist language learners to master the language in a subtle way. As a significant force driving the "Chinese learning boom", "Chinese popular culture" is the most external and intuitive expression of Chinese culture. It contains both popular culture and traditional Chinese culture packaged in modern forms.

Popular culture has proved to be universally appealing to people of all nationalities and ethnicities (Yuan, 2021). People live almost exclusively in pop culture. The prevalence of the Internet has made the spread of popular culture even more rapid, and young people are undoubtedly the largest group of popular culture recipients. As a generation growing up in a universal and global pop culture environment, they rely heavily on non-media means such as mobile phones and the Internet, and have become accustomed to being exposed to a variety of cultural influences. It should be said that pop culture has had a significant impact on the values, aesthetics, and ideology of young people, especially Generation Z.

Popular culture has played a significant role in driving the popularity of the Chinese language. Firstly, popular culture can enhance students' interest in learning Chinese. Because of its sensory stimulation function, popular culture can arouse students' curiosity and imagination with the freshness brought by rich audio-visual elements, thus arousing students' interest in the Chinese language. For example, a large number of Xianxia Fantasy Dramas and sweet romantic dramas, talent shows, entertainment programs, and variety shows are popularly broadcast in Thailand, attracting many viewers, and some students are interested in learning Chinese because they love a certain actor or actress. Secondly, popular culture is one of the motives that inspire students to learn. For Thai university students, their behavior of learning Chinese belongs to learning a foreign language rather than acquiring a foreign language. If these students want to learn Chinese well, they must be supported by strong external motivation. Popular culture is a kind of extrinsic motivation that inspires

international students to learn Chinese, and the use of popular culture elements such as Chinese songs, Chinese films, and TV dramas in the classroom is more likely to arouse students' interest in learning Chinese.

In addition, popular culture can enrich the content and form of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teaching content and teaching methods need to keep pace with the times. For Chinese learners, the teaching content should be both interesting and knowledgeable, otherwise students' enthusiasm for learning will be easily dampened. Popular culture can solve this problem. Combining popular culture with Chinese teaching content can reduce the difficulty of learning, eliminate the fear of students, and help students master Chinese better. For instance, incorporating popular Chinese songs into the classroom can help students practice pronunciation and vocabulary, while analyzing scenes from popular TV dramas can provide context for understanding everyday conversation and cultural nuances.

Given the pervasive influence of Chinese popular culture in Thailand, this study examines the integration of popular culture into Chinese language learning among Thai university students, identifying both opportunities and challenges. Specifically, this study investigates the perceptions and preferences of Thai university students regarding the use of popular culture for Chinese language learning, explores the opportunities and challenges involved in this process, identifies effective strategies, and provides recommendations to address potential challenges.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

With the deepening of China's internationalization, the status and requirements of the Chinese language in the world have increased, and the number of overseas Chinese language learners is continuously rising. Thailand has the largest number of Chinese language learners among less-developed countries (Xu, Zhang, Sukjairungwattana, & Wang, 2022). Learning Chinese has gradually become a trend,

and Chinese language courses have been progressively introduced into Thai schools as a foreign language option.

At present, Chinese language education in Thailand has entered a period of prosperous development. Chinese has become the most popular second foreign language in Thailand (Weerasawainon, 2019). The growing interest of Thais in learning Chinese as a foreign language necessitates not only an improvement in Chinese language education but also the need to find ways to enrich the learning experience and enhance learners' linguistic competence.

To enhance students' language comprehension and application in Chinese as a foreign language, it is essential to focus not only on the teaching of language fundamentals but also on the integration of cultural education. The international Chinese language education community has generally reached a consensus on the importance of spreading Chinese culture to promote the Chinese language (Jia, 2024). In the teaching process, how to utilize various educational tools, integrate teaching resources, and adopt appropriate teaching methods to incorporate cultural content has been recognized as key to improving the quality of Chinese as a foreign language education.

While macro-level policy frameworks have been well documented, investigations at the micro-level regarding how learners engage with educational content remain conspicuously absent. Despite the increasing interest in Chinese popular culture among Thai learners, there is limited research on how it influences their language learning experiences. However, popular culture, as a powerful cultural attraction, has not been fully explored in its role within language learning.

From an educational perspective, popular culture is not only a catalyst for learning but also a tool that can stimulate learners' intrinsic motivation and interest (Werner & Tegg, 2020). By providing rich contextual and diverse language input, popular culture can help learners acquire language naturally in informal settings. However, despite its significant potential in language education, research and

application in this area remain in their infancy. Popular culture is ubiquitous and plays an important role in the everyday lives of many language learners, especially young learners. Surprisingly, the use of relevant artifacts and their language in applied linguistics and language education has not been well theorized and researched (Werner, 2020).

According to several researchers, Chinese language learners' motivation to start learning Chinese stems from their profound interest in Chinese culture (e.g., Wen & Piao, 2020; Pai & Duff, 2020). Some learners are initially exposed to Chinese popular culture rather than basic Chinese language courses. For these learners, their interest in Chinese popular culture often serves as the impetus for beginning their language studies. Popular culture is highly relevant to learners' daily lives, regardless of their social and linguistic backgrounds. As a result, most daily literacy practices, especially among adolescents, are connected to popular culture in some way (Liu & Lin, 2017; Rothoni, 2017).

With advancements in technology, learners now have increasingly convenient access to popular Chinese culture. Digital convergence has not only transformed the patterns of cultural capital acquisition but also presents new opportunities and challenges for language education (Liu & Lin, 2017). In this context, teachers need to utilize transmedia literacy to design more interactive and engaging learning activities that better meet learners' needs. Chinese language teachers can use richer ways to introduce Chinese culture in the teaching process. In the past, teachers in Chinese classrooms usually tended to present traditional Chinese culture, such as calligraphy, Chinese painting, Peking Opera, and other activities. In recent years, many young teachers have begun to incorporate elements of popular culture, such as online games and short videos, into their classrooms to stimulate students' interest in learning. However, these attempts often remain at the practical level, lacking systematic theoretical support and evaluation of their effectiveness. Therefore, researching the impact of popular culture on Chinese language teaching practices is crucial for optimizing educational strategies.

Available research focuses on individual popular culture elements such as popular songs, TV series and movies, and a large number of researchers have chosen the English language as the object of their research, and not many studies have been published on the use of popular culture in Chinese language learning. Nunan (2012) emphasizes that popular culture artifacts should be taken seriously as both content providers and important entry points for learner-centered instruction. Therefore, this research aims to investigate Thai university students' perceptions of the use of Chinese popular culture in their language learning, analyzing the challenges and opportunities they encounter in this process, while providing targeted teaching suggestions and strategies. Through this research, we hope to offer theoretical support for teaching Chinese as a foreign language and provide more practical guidance for educators.

In summary, this research explored how Thai university students perceive and utilize Chinese popular culture in their Chinese language learning, identifying both challenges and opportunities.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1.3.1 To identify the preferred ways through Thai university students' engagement with Chinese popular culture in Chinese Language Learning.

1.3.2 To explore Thai university students' opportunities for using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language.

1.3.3 To discuss intercultural challenges encountered by Thai university students towards the use of Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language.

## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions of the study are:

1.4.1 What are the preferred ways by Thai university students to access Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning?

1.4.2 What opportunities do Thai university students gain through using Chinese popular culture in their Chinese language learning process?

1.4.3 What do the participants consider challenges in learning Chinese as a foreign language through using Chinese popular culture?

## 1.5 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

It is assumed that the majority of Thai university students prefer to engage with Chinese popular culture as a means of learning Chinese. They are exposed to Chinese culture through diverse channels, including watching Chinese TV dramas, anime, and movies; listening to Chinese popular songs; reading Chinese novels; browsing Chinese short videos; and playing Chinese mobile games. Exposure to Chinese popular culture is believed to enrich their vocabulary and provide them with authentic expressions not typically found in textbooks. This exposure also offers insights into the perspectives of Chinese people, thereby enhancing their comprehension of Chinese language structures. Given its entertaining nature, Chinese popular culture is also assumed to alleviate academic stress among university students.

However, several potential challenges are anticipated. First, some students may focus excessively on the entertainment aspects of popular culture, which could detract from their learning efficiency. Second, cultural conflicts may arise for some students when integrating Chinese popular culture into their language learning. Additionally, a small number of students may lack basic knowledge of Chinese culture. In an effort to fully understand Chinese popular culture, they may spend considerable

time studying cultural backgrounds, social customs, and current events, which could increase their learning burden.

## 1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study was anchored in a tripartite conceptual framework examining Thai university students' engagement with Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning (CFL). As illustrated in the accompanying framework diagram, the study systematically investigated: 1) preferred modes of cultural engagement, 2) pedagogical opportunities derived from cultural consumption, and 3) intercultural challenges in this learning context. The research design employed a sequential mixed-methods approach to address these dimensions. Phase One utilized a comprehensive questionnaire. Phase Two conducted semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants. This dual-phase design enabled both breadth of understanding across the student population and depth of insight into individual learning trajectories, while maintaining clear alignment with the study's three core objectives.

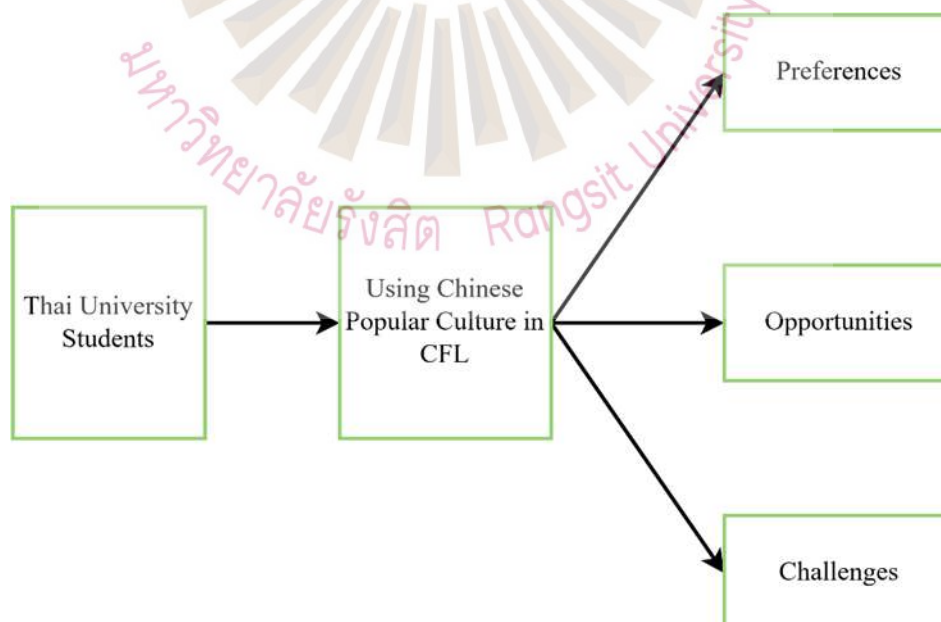


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

### **1.6.1 Data Collections Methods**

Data were obtained from students studying Chinese language at a Thai university. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

### **1.6.2 Data Analysis Methods**

The researcher conducted descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequency, percentage, and standard deviation to analyze the questionnaire responses. For the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, the researcher used Lichtman's 3Cs Model to facilitate the analysis process.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to provide valuable insights for both learners and teachers to incorporate Chinese popular culture into learning Chinese. By doing so, it sought to enhance the learning experience in a more engaging and logical way.

First, the results helped teachers understand the types of popular culture that university Chinese learners currently preferred. This could inspire teachers to innovate instructional methods and update course contents, and provide resources that were more in line with their interests and needs.

Secondly, the study discussed the challenges learners faced when using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese. By highlighting these, the researcher enabled learners to better understand the difficulties they encountered, and develop more learning strategies. Additionally, it provided teachers with references to participate in and address these challenges, minimizing learners' difficulties in the learning process.

Finally, the results revealed the new opportunities experienced from integrating Chinese popular culture into language learning. This encouraged more educators to

explore this area and further develop the potential of Chinese popular culture as a tool in Chinese language teaching and learning.

## **1.8 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS**

### **Popular Culture**

This study defined popular culture as the culture that was freely created by people and was widely spread by the public. It encompassed three key characteristics: 1) liked by many people, 2) the culture that was prevalent at a certain time in modern society, and 3) distinguished from highbrow culture (the "Capital C Culture"), which typically referred to elite artistic productions such as classical music, literature, and fine arts that appealed to specialized audiences.

### **Chinese Popular Culture**

Chinese popular culture in this paper includes Chinese popular music, Internet pop culture, film and television works, popular novels, animation, mobile games, etc. Highbrow Chinese culture such as Peking Opera, calligraphy, paper-cutting, etc. are not included.

### **Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL)**

According to Gil (2011) in linguistics, Chinese is a group of language variants that includes not only Mandarin but also several other languages. In this paper, Chinese as a foreign language refers to non-native speakers of Chinese learning Standard Chinese, primarily Mandarin, and learning simplified script for use in written form to represent Chinese.

### **Thai University Students**

In this study, "Thai university students" specifically refers to undergraduate students majoring in Chinese language programs (first to fourth year) at private universities in Thailand.

### **Use of Popular Culture**

In this study, the "use of popular culture" refers to the integration of various forms of popular culture—such as movies, TV shows, music, short videos, anime, novels, and mobile games—into the language learning process..

## **1.9 THE LIMITATION OF STUDY**

This study acknowledges three inherent limitations beyond the researcher's control:

### **1) Cultural Interpretation Bias**

The interpretation of Chinese popular culture content (e.g., slang in dramas, socio-political references) may be inherently filtered through Thai cultural lenses, creating unavoidable interpretation variances even among proficient CFL learners

### **2) Temporal Validity Constraint**

The rapidly evolving nature of popular culture (e.g., viral trends on TikTok) means findings may reflect only a transient phase of China's cultural landscape (2024-2025).

### **3) Instrumentation Limitations**

Self-reported data on sensitive topics (e.g., cultural stereotypes) may be subject to social desirability bias, despite anonymity assurances.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This Chapter commenced with an exploration of the symbiotic relationship between language and culture, shedding light on their interconnected nature and mutual influence. Following this, the focus shifted to the theory of cultural integration in language learning, which underscored the significance of blending cultural elements into the language learning process. The discussion transitioned to Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) in Teaching, examining its development, current situation in Thailand, and the challenges encountered. Subsequently, the Chapter delved into the perspectives and research on popular culture in language learning, highlighting its potential to enhance learner engagement and communication skills. Finally, the Chapter synthesized relevant research findings to deepen the understanding of utilizing popular culture in CFL learning, while also presenting a comprehensive literature review of CFL learning theories and associated research.

#### **2.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

Language and culture are intertwined, they shape our understanding of the world together (Oxford & Gkonou, 2018). Learning a language without its culture is like appreciating a faded painting—outlines are visible, yet color variations and brushstroke warmth are missed. In the process of language learning, understanding the cultural context of a language can lead a fuller understanding of the nuances and complexities. Cultural values and beliefs influence language use and meaning (Cain, Surbone, Elk, & Kagawa-Singer, 2018). By exploring the interplay between language and culture, learners can develop a deeper appreciation for the language they are learning and become more proficient in using (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Kim, 2020). This section will focus on the theoretical foundations of this relationship, revealing how language both reflects and is quietly shaped by culture.

### 2.1.1 Language is the Reflection of Culture

Language serves as a reflection of culture, reflecting the beliefs, values, and practices of a society (Kramsch, 2014). It includes words, phrases, and expressions that are unique to a culture. It reflects its history, traditions, and social norms. Understanding this relationship is crucial for various fields, including linguistics, anthropology, sociology and education (Ahearn, 2021). As it informs how we approach language learning, cultural studies, and intercultural communication (Corbett, 2022).

From proverbs that carry historical memories to kinship terms that map social structures, every word is a carrier of cultural genes. For instance, Chinese idioms like "画蛇添足" (drawing legs on a snake) as a metaphor for an unnecessary action, and behind it is the farming civilization's admiration for the pragmatic spirit. "杯弓蛇影" (mistaking the reflection of a bow for a snake) conveying a profound reflection on caution and misjudgment in Chinese culture. These expressions not only enrich vocabulary but also teach learners about the cultural attitudes and historical stories behind them. Such culture-bound linguistic phenomena serve dual pedagogical purposes: expanding learners' metalinguistic awareness while providing historical context (Banasiak et al., 2020).

If we look at the system of relative titles, we can see the subtle interaction between language and culture. The careful distinction between "表姐" (maternal female cousin) and "堂姐" (paternal female cousin) in Chinese is actually a reflection of the Confucian patriarchal system in language – the difference between patrilineal and matrilineal relatives reflects the importance placed on the transmission of bloodlines in traditional society. This cultural imprint has even penetrated modern educational scenes: multilingual teaching methods encourage learners to use their mother tongue as a bridge to understand the deeper logic of a new language through comparison (Catalano, Shende, & Suh, 2018). When Thai students discover that the Thai language only uses the word "พี่" (phi) to refer to all older members of the same

generation, the complex Chinese kinship system becomes a vivid teaching aid for understanding Confucian ethics.

Additionally, language reflects societal priorities and lifestyles (Banasiak et al., 2020). In Chinese, kinship terms such as "民以食为天" (food is of primary importance to the people) and "家和万事兴" (harmonious peaceful family brings prosperity) emphasize the importance of family relationships, showing how Confucian values influence language.

Understanding the connection between language and culture helps learners grasp the deeper meanings behind words and phrases. Without this understanding, language learning can become superficial, with students missing out on the nuances of expression. Hartono, Suparto, & Hassan (2021) explored the relationship between language and culture, particularly how language reflects culture, and applying this concept to English teaching. Based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the authors discuss the practical application of the hypothesis in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), particularly in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching and cross-cultural understanding (CCU). They conclude that different language communities have unique worldviews, teachers need to help students understand and appreciate the uniqueness of other cultures and be able to accept them in the context of TEFL and CCU. By exploring how language reflects culture, educators can encourage students to engage more deeply with the language and its people.

The above scholars have all provided profound insights into the relationship between language and culture. They all generally agree with the view that language is a reflection of culture, and have based their research on this. As language reflects culture, the relationship between the two becomes even more apparent when we consider their intertwined nature. This connection reveals how they influence each other in shaping communication and thought processes.

Therefore, the task of the teacher is not only to teach grammatical rules, but also to guide students through the surface of the language and touch the warmth of the cultural texture. As scholars agree: language is a mirror of culture, but this mirror is always renewed through interaction with the times.

### **2.1.2 Language and Culture Are Intertwined**

Language and culture are deeply interconnected, with each shaping and reinforcing the other. Cultural values influence language use, while language provides a medium for transmitting culture across generations. The two are like symbiotic trees—the cultural roots nourish the growth of the language branches and leaves, while the growth rings of the language silently record the changes in culture. Culture, as an "implicit curriculum" in language learning, not only conveys the values and social norms of the target language country, but also provides a broad learning context and practice platform for learners through its rich forms of expression, such as literature, art, customs, etc., thus imperceptibly influencing the language acquisition process and results of the learner.

This dynamic interaction is particularly evident in language teaching: a high-quality Chinese class is not only an analysis of grammatical structures, but also an experience of tea ceremony etiquette, and a discussion of the social philosophy behind WeChat emoticons. In teaching and learning contexts, this intertwined relationship highlights the importance of addressing both linguistic and cultural aspects to ensure comprehensive education. Many researchers have given their opinions when discussing the complex relationship between language and culture.

Brdarić (2016) stated that the main purpose of foreign language teaching is to develop students' awareness of cultural otherness and effective cultural communication.

Byram (2020) suggested that the core of foreign language teaching is communication. The significance lies not only in the practice of linguistic communicative competence, but also in the relationship between language and the cultural practices and beliefs of a group.

This interconnectedness also means that cultural misunderstandings can arise if learners are unaware of the cultural norms embedded in the language. For example, a direct "no" may be perceived as rude in Chinese culture, where people often prefer indirect refusals to maintain social harmony. Language learners must therefore understand not only how to construct sentences but also how to use them appropriately in different cultural contexts.

Jovitasari and Erlangga (2023) proposed language is the main method of communication in social life, it is closely linked to culture, which is inseparable from communication in the development of the individual. Language acquisition is essentially a process of constructing cultural identity. When Thai students imitate the short video expressions of Chinese KOLs, they are not only practicing pronunciation, but also unconsciously internalizing Chinese youth culture in the digital age.

The view of the interconnectedness of language and culture has been widely recognized. The discussion of the relationship between culture and language naturally leads to the concept of intercultural communication. Understanding this concept is essential for creating effective language education programs that prepare students to interact successfully in a globalized world.

The symbiotic relationship between language and culture has also driven innovations in teaching paradigms. In traditional classrooms, culture is often relegated to supplementary notes in textbooks. By contrast, modern pedagogical approaches emphasize integrating cultural elements into all facets of language training. For example, by analyzing the collective heroic story in *The Wandering Earth*, students can not only master advanced vocabulary such as "危机" (crisis) and "牺牲" (sacrifice), but also gain insight into the sense of family and country in contemporary Chinese science fiction. This kind of teaching design, in which "culture is the context", is the best practice of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory—knowledge takes root and flourishes in authentic communicative scenarios (Wang, Derakhshan, & Zhang, 2021).

From the beginning of the 20th century to the present day, scholars and experts have explored the topic in a step-by-step manner. Scholars have expressed their unique opinions on the status and role of cultural teaching, and have raised expectations for the systematic teaching of cultural knowledge in foreign language learning. The academic community has now reached a consensus on the necessity of cultural teaching in foreign language teaching. The next question to be debated is what culture content should be used and how to teach culture.

## **2.2 CULTURE AS A CARRIER IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Culture plays a crucial role in language learning by providing the contextual foundation for language use. This section explored how cultural context enhances language learning and the importance of integrating cultural elements into language education.

### **2.2.1 The Importance of Cultural Context**

The importance of culture in foreign language education cannot be overstated. Culture, as an "implicit curriculum" in language learning, not only conveys the values and social norms of the target language country, but also provides a broad learning context and practice platform for learners through its rich forms of expression, such as literature, art, customs, etc., thus imperceptibly influencing the language acquisition process and results of the learner. Scholars have argued about the importance of cultural factors in foreign language teaching from different perspectives. Culture has been recognized as a critical component of foreign language education because it provides the contextual foundation for language use (Li, 2017).

Language and culture are interconnected, and the process of learning a foreign language is deeply influenced by cultural understanding. As Byram and Wagner (2018) emphasized, understanding cultural aspects is essential for achieving intercultural and international dialogue, which should be a goal of language learning. Their research highlights that teaching languages without integrating culture risks creating learners

who may know grammar and vocabulary but lack the ability to communicate effectively in real-life intercultural situations. This involves helping learners understand cultural values, traditions, and communication styles embedded in the language. For instance, in Chinese, polite expressions like "麻烦您" (excuse me) reflect the culture's emphasis on politeness and humility. Without understanding these cultural nuances, learners may struggle to use the language appropriately in social interactions.

Learning a foreign language is not just about mastering grammar and vocabulary but also understanding the cultural norms, values, and traditions associated with the language. This cultural-linguistic interplay extends to pragmatic competence. In Chinese, the greeting "吃了吗?" (Have you eaten?) encodes cultural values of hospitality and communal care, illustrating how language mirrors social practices (Kramsch, 2014). Such examples highlight that language learning transcends linguistic mechanics; it demands engagement with the cultural frameworks shaping meaning (Jovitasari & Erlangga, 2023).

### **2.2.2 Integrating Culture into Language Teaching**

Language cannot be just a meaningless "empty shell", the content of the language is often associated with some specific cultural content. Language's functions are also naturally related to the content of language. The proposal of language function and concept naturally introduces "cultural content" into foreign language teaching, which is a substantial change and a new milestone in language and culture teaching.

Technological tools have further bridged these cultural gaps by providing authentic cultural experiences in the classroom. As Kessler (2018) demonstrates how virtual exchanges and multimedia resources—such as Spanish-language films or online interactions with native speakers—offer authentic cultural immersion. For example, explaining the symbolism of Chinese New Year traditions (e.g., red envelopes, lion dances) not only enriches vocabulary but also deepens learners' cultural appreciation. These strategies align with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles, where activities like creating cultural vlogs foster practical language use (Kennedy, 2020).

Notably, the cultural curriculum continuum spans both traditional and contemporary manifestations. While classical art forms like Peking Opera remain valuable for advanced learners, digital popular culture (e.g., TikTok trends, web dramas) provides low-anxiety entry points for novices (Yuan, 2021). This dual approach addresses diverse learner needs while fulfilling Byram's (1997) intercultural competence framework.

Despite these advancements, integrating culture into language classrooms remains complex due to various challenges. Getie (2020) cautions that while exposure to target cultures (e.g., Japanese festivals or cuisine) enhances motivation, learners may struggle with cultural dissonance when norms conflict with their own. Teachers must address this by cultivating inclusive classrooms that celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). For instance, beginner students might explore culture through storytelling, while advanced learners analyze literary texts to critique cultural narratives (Kim, 2020).

English language learners who do not understand the culture of English-speaking countries miss an important part of learning. Learning the culture of the target language is essential because it helps learners understand the language's nuances (Tafari & Kamaludin, 2023). This shows that mastering vocabulary and grammar alone is insufficient for foreign language learning. Intercultural understanding plays a key role in ensuring smooth communication between people from different cultural backgrounds.

This holistic perspective aligns with Kim's (2020) cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), which posits that a new approach to language learning, viewing it as a tool for students' holistic development rather than just a way to teach grammar and vocabulary. He emphasizes that language teaching should encourage intercultural understanding and empathy. Using cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), Kim suggested that integrating language and culture in teaching not only enhances learning but also supports students' overall development.

Jovitasari and Erlangga (2023) stated that language reflects a community's values, beliefs, and practices. Therefore, language education must consider cultural context. Teachers must address the cultural dimensions of language teaching to create inclusive and effective practices. Including cultural awareness in language learning promotes academic success, empowers individuals, and fosters intercultural dialogue. While scholars widely agree on the importance of culture in second language education, there is ongoing debate about which cultural elements should be included in classrooms. Teachers' beliefs significantly affect how culture is integrated into lessons.

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) highlighted the importance of teacher training programs focusing on cultural competence. Teachers need the skills and knowledge to teach cultural aspects effectively and adapt their methods for diverse learners. For instance, beginner students might learn culture through simple storytelling, while advanced students could analyze literature or engage in cultural debates.

A paradigm shift toward popular culture offers fresh opportunities. To harness the potential of popular culture, teachers require targeted training. Yuan (2021) argues that digital platforms like TikTok democratize cultural access, allowing learners to engage with contemporary expressions (e.g., the phrase "躺平" lying flat, critiquing societal pressure). Such content lowers entry barriers for beginners compared to classical forms like Peking Opera (Pai & Duff, 2020).

Cultural integration in language education extends beyond traditional "high culture" (e.g., calligraphy, Peking Opera) to encompass popular culture, which offers immediate and authentic linguistic input (Yuan, 2021). Unlike classical art forms requiring advanced proficiency, popular culture (e.g., TikTok trends, web dramas) provides accessible entry points for beginners. For instance, Thai students exposed to Chinese variety shows like Hello Saturday (你好星期六) not only acquire colloquial expressions (e.g., "很好看") but also observe nonverbal cues (e.g., gestures in comedic skits), enhancing their pragmatic competence (Pai & Duff, 2020). Teachers leveraging such resources can reduce learning anxiety by aligning content with students' interests (e.g., using idol interviews to teach self-introductions). This approach exemplifies how

popular culture bridges the gap between textbook grammar and real-world communication, fulfilling Byram's (1997) vision of intercultural communicative competence.

Ultimately, the interplay between language and culture underscores a cyclical relationship: cultural values shape language, while language perpetuates cultural norms. While understanding the importance of culture in language education is foundational, it is also necessary to examine how language itself reflects culture. This reflection highlights the deep connection between linguistic structures and cultural values.

## **2.3 CULTURAL INTEGRATION THEORY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Language learning has long been viewed as more than a mechanical process of memorizing vocabulary or grammar rules. At its heart, it is a deeply human endeavor to bridge cultural divides and construct meaningful connections. Cultural integration in language learning stems from the interdependence of language and culture, rendering it indispensable for developing communicative competence. This integration transcends mere juxtaposition of cultural facts and grammar rules; it requires cultivating a dynamic environment where language and culture co-evolve through exploration, such as analyzing Chinese TV dramas, music, or social media trends to contextualize linguistic patterns. This perspective is anchored in five foundational theories that collectively illuminate how language, culture, and identity intertwine.

### **2.3.1 Claire Kramsch's Third Space Concept**

Claire Kramsch's concept of the Third Space advocated for a space where learners transcend binary oppositions between their native and target cultures—a principle exemplified when Thai students engage with Chinese popular idols or viral TikTok trends, negotiating their local identities with globalized Mandarin-mediated content. By creating this "Third Space", learners critically engage with both their own culture and Chinese popular culture, fostering nuanced understandings of cultural differences and similarities, such as contrasting Thai politeness norms with the direct

humor in Chinese variety shows. Kramersch's theory aligns with the Thai context, where learners often reconcile their admiration for Chinese entertainment with local values, demonstrating that language learning should not isolate the target culture but encourage interaction and reflection.

### **2.3.2 Michael Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Framework**

If Kramersch's theory maps the where of cultural integration, Michael Byram's *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (1997) defines the how, providing a structured approach to analyze Thai learners' engagement with Chinese popular culture. His framework provides a structured framework for developing the skills needed for effective cross-cultural communication. The model includes four key dimensions: knowledge (understanding cultural practices and products), attitudes (openness and curiosity), skills (interpreting and relating cultural information), and critical cultural awareness (reflecting on one's own and others' cultural perspectives). Byram's work highlights that language proficiency alone is insufficient for successful communication in a globalized world; learners must also develop the ability to navigate and respect cultural differences.

### **2.3.3 Lev Vygotsky's Social Nature of Language Learning**

Lev Vygotsky's *Mind in Society* (1978) posited that language learning is inherently social. Consider a novice learner attempting to order food in a Parisian café. With scaffolding (Vygotsky's term for guided support from teachers or peers), the learner not only master French phrases but also absorbs cultural scripts of politeness. For instance, they learn contextual differences between formal "s'il vous plaît" and casual "merci". His Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory underscores that cultural knowledge, like language, grows through collaborative interaction rather than isolated study. A process mirrored when Thai learners collaboratively translate Chinese meme culture or role-play scenarios from historical dramas, guided by peers or instructors. This means that cultural content introduced through social interactions can enhance language acquisition. For example, learners might engage in conversations or

collaborative tasks that require understanding cultural nuances, thereby deepening their language skills and cultural awareness simultaneously.

#### **2.3.4 John Schumann's Language Socialization Perspective**

Building on Vygotsky's social lens, John Schumann's research on language socialization (1986, *Research on the Acculturation Model for Second Language Acquisition*) reveals a profound truth: learning a language is an act of cultural belonging. Learners not only acquire linguistic structures but also internalize the cultural norms and values associated with the target language. Schumann's work suggested that the social environment plays a crucial role in language acquisition. For instance, immersion in a community where the target language is spoken can accelerate both language learning and cultural adaptation. This theory underscores that language learning is inherently a social process, where cultural competence develops alongside linguistic competence. Thailand's vibrant Chinese popular culture fandom accelerates language acquisition, as learners mimic idol vlogs or participate in fan-subbed drama forums, merging linguistic practice with cultural participation.

#### **2.3.5 Bonny Norton's Identity and Investment Theory**

Bonny Norton's groundbreaking work, *Identity and Language Learning* (2000), shifts the focus from mere linguistic competence to the dynamic interplay of identity and power in language acquisition. This is crucial for Thai learners whose engagement with Chinese popular culture often reflects aspirations to join transnational fandoms or access China's creative industries. She introduces the concept of investment, arguing that learners commit to language learning not just for instrumental goals (e.g., job opportunities) but to assert their desired identities in social contexts. Norton emphasizes that learners' investments are shaped by their access to symbolic resources (e.g., respect, recognition) and material resources (e.g., education, social networks). Norton's work challenges traditional views of identity as static, instead positing that identity is fluid and shaped by social, cultural, and political factors. She emphasizes the need to consider

the broader social environment and power dynamics that affect language learning and identity development.

### **2.3.6 Synthesizing the Theories for Application**

Collectively, these theories form a framework to analyze Thai learners' experiences: Kramersch and Byram provide tools to decode cross-cultural media engagement, Vygotsky and Schumann explain the social mechanisms of pop culture-driven learning, and Norton exposes how identity investments drive Thai students' participation in Mandarin-mediated fandoms. Together, they argue that to teach a language is to invite learners into a living tapestry of histories, values, and identities—a vision far richer than any grammar drill. They highlight the importance of creating learning environments where language and culture are not taught in isolation but are instead explored together, preparing learners to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries. This theoretical foundation underscores the necessity of integrating Chinese TV, music, and digital trends into pedagogy, preparing Thai learners to navigate both linguistic and cultural landscapes in a globalized Sinosphere

## **2.4 CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (CFL) IN TEACHING**

This section introduced the development process of CFL and an overview of research on CFL teaching in Thailand.

### **2.4.1 Development of CFL**

Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) has grown significantly in recent decades, driven by China's increasing global influence. Institutions like Confucius Institutes have played a major role in promoting Chinese language and culture worldwide. This growth reflected a growing interest in learning Chinese for academic, professional, and personal reasons. CFL refers to non-native speakers of Chinese learning Standard Chinese, primarily Mandarin, and learning simplified script for use in written form to represent Chinese. CFL teaching practice began relatively

early, but as a specific subject, its research history is not long. In March 1978, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences put forward the view that "teaching CFL is a subject". In 1983, the establishment of the Chinese Society of Education's Teaching CFL Research Association marked the official birth of the CFL teaching subject (Liu Zhang, & Sun, 2017).

In the early stages, CFL education focused primarily on rote memorization of characters and grammar. However, modern approaches emphasize communicative competence, incorporating activities like conversational practice and cultural immersion. The use of technology, such as language apps and virtual reality, has further enhanced the effectiveness of CFL teaching. In the 21st century, scholars began to pay attention to teaching models and methods, textbook compilation and assessment, language acquisition and cognition. In recent years, with the development of the Internet and the rise of Chinese as an international language, the research hotspots in CFL teaching have turned to intercultural communication, culture teaching, the application of modern technology in teaching CFL, online teaching, etc.

#### **2.4.2 Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) Teaching in Thailand**

With the growing popularity of learning Chinese, known as "Chinese fever," in Thailand, an increasing number of teachers and volunteers are teaching Chinese there (Ewe & Min, 2021). This has led to a rise in academic research on Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teaching in Thailand (Chan, Woore, Molway, & Mutton, 2022). The country has become a leader in Southeast Asia for CFL education due to collaboration between the Thai and Chinese governments, which has resulted in the establishment of numerous Chinese language programs in schools and universities (Zheng, 2023). Thai students are motivated to learn Chinese due to economic ties, cultural exchanges, and career opportunities (Cao & Tananuraksakul, 2023).

CFL teaching in Thailand faces unique challenges, such as linguistic differences between Chinese and Thai (Liang, 2023). Educators address these challenges by incorporating Thai culture into lessons to make learning more relatable.

For instance, outdated teaching materials, unreasonable curricula, and inconsistency in teaching methods (Li, 2020; Luo, 2023). They also noted that low student motivation, with learners often studying Chinese due to parental expectations rather than personal interest. Chen and Du (2022) analyzed various factors affecting CFL teaching in different schools, such as outdated facilities, varying student levels, and inadequate teacher training. These studies revealed that CFL teaching often lacks effective curriculum design and engaging materials. Liu and Chen (2024) observed that many students only wanted to learn about Chinese culture rather than mastering the language itself. Meng (2021) highlighted the benefits of external support, experienced teaching staff, and extracurricular Chinese activities, which have contributed to the success of some CFL programs in Thailand.

Compared to studies on primary and secondary schools, research on Thai university students learning Chinese is relatively limited. Most studies focus on traditional teaching methods, materials, and motivation. Weerasawainon (2019) investigated learning strategies among Thai university students, identifying four main strategies: media use, communication practice, self-learning, and classroom activities. Female students and intermediate learners tended to use more strategies. Wei and Weerasawainon (2024) evaluated teaching materials at major Thai universities, revealing dissatisfaction with the textbooks' practicality and engagement, with students preferring topics like food, travel, and shopping. Sirisuwilai (2021) applied Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at Khon Kaen University, finding significant improvements in listening, speaking, and writing skills but limited progress in reading, which was attributed to unengaging materials. Task-based teaching methods have also been explored. Liu and Li (2023) reported similar findings, highlighting the need for better task design to enhance its effectiveness.

Several studies have examined factors influencing student motivation. Lepinoy, Lo, and Vanderlinde (2022) found that intrinsic interest, social responsibility, and personal development were key motivators among students at the Royal Police Cadet Academy. Dai, Thipatdee, and Metjiranont (2024) highlighted the potential for further improvement in task design and implementation to meet the needs of diverse

learners. The study aimed to refine the model through its application in a classroom setting. These findings suggest that cultural interest plays a crucial role in encouraging students to learn Chinese.

From these studies, it is evident that interest in Chinese culture can significantly boost student motivation, while formal textbook content often fails to engage learners or enhance practical language skills. Thai university students and teachers are seeking more effective learning strategies, particularly those that integrate popular Chinese culture into teaching.

## **2.5 POPULAR CULTURE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

Popular culture, which includes modern media like music, movies, television shows, and online trends, plays a vital role in shaping how language is learned and taught in the modern classroom. This section will explore the significance of popular culture in language education and its potential to enhance engagement and communication.

### **2.5.1 View of Popular Culture in Language Learning**

Popular culture is a subject that most people are familiar with and exposed to on a daily basis (Edensor, 2020). The use of popular culture in the language classroom began to be advocated in the late 1980s, as a result of globalization and teachers prioritizing authenticity and practical use of language in their teaching materials (Warner & Dupuy, 2018). A growing body of theory and research suggests that popular culture has a positive impact on foreign language learning, motivation, engagement, and student achievement outcomes (Noels et al., 2020; Javaid, Andleeb, & Rana 2023; Wang, Derakhshan, & Zhang, 2021). There is also evidence that the use of popular culture in the foreign language classroom strengthens the bond between teachers and students. Many educators now use multimedia tools to create immersive and interactive learning environments (Cheney & Terry, 2018). For instance, incorporating clips from popular Chinese TV shows allows students to practice listening and speaking while

learning cultural norms, such as how to address elders or handle formal situations. Hall and Whannel (2018) concluded that popular culture helps students to understand the material and is more interesting and engaging than high art. However, the linguistic and conceptual features of popular culture are underrepresented in textbooks. The author suggest that teachers should be made more aware of the advantages of using popular culture in the language classroom. Textbooks should contain more linguistic and conceptual features of popular culture, in order to increase the authenticity of the instructional material and educate the students about the current trends in society.

Task-based activities are another effective way to incorporate popular culture into CFL education (Kennedy, 2020). For example, students may be asked to create a vlog about a Chinese festival or write a review of a Chinese movie. These activities require learners to use the language in meaningful and practical ways. Lee (2018) studied the effects of exposure to Korean popular culture on Korean language learning, and found that the data showed that exposure to Korean popular culture increased learners' motivation and participants' initiative to envision target communities. Gu, Wang and Zhang (2021) found students showed positive responses to the use of popular culture materials as learning aids to teach Chinese between native and nonnative pre-service teachers of Chinese as a second/foreign language (CSL/CFL), it be able to stimulate students' interest and motivation. It was also found that the use of popular songs and other popular culture materials could satisfy students' needs for autonomy, sense of competence, and relevance, consequently increasing motivation to learn.

Moreover, technology plays a critical role in integrating popular culture into CFL teaching. Apps like WeChat enable students to communicate with native speakers, while platforms like Bilibili offer a wealth of user-generated content that students can explore. In order to improve students' English listening through popular culture. Damanik, Nasution, Hasibuan, & Gintings (2023) designed a listening practice application based on Android system, aiming to improve students' English listening skills through popular culture. By means of testing and validation, it is known that the App is suitable for students as a platform for practicing listening skills outside the classroom. The integration of popular culture content can increase students' motivation

and provide an authentic and contextualized listening experience. These tools make learning more engaging and help students develop real-world communication skills.

Despite its potential, using popular culture in CFL teaching comes with challenges. Teachers must carefully select materials to ensure they are culturally relevant and suitable for learners' proficiency levels. Additionally, integrating popular culture requires teachers to be familiar with current trends, which may demand extra time and effort.

### **2.5.2 The Application of Popular Culture in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning**

Teachers can integrate popular culture into foreign language classrooms in various ways. For instance, using movie clips or TV series as teaching materials can improve listening and comprehension skills. Sari and Sugandi (2015) suggested that there are some benefits of using English films in English language teaching, such as maintaining students' interest in learning English, enhancing their speaking and writing skills. However, there are also some terrible effects or disadvantages, watching a film takes a long time, and students pay more attention to the actors than to the teaching objectives, fictional films can provoke students to illogical thinking. They also gave appropriate suggestions to help teachers overcome the bad effects of films. Students may be asked to analyze dialogues, summarize storylines, or discuss characters, which enhances their speaking and critical thinking skills.

Similarly, music is a powerful tool for language learning. Teachers can use song lyrics to teach vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure. Karaoke activities, for example, not only make learning fun but also encourage shy students to participate actively in speaking exercises. Tegge (2017) discussed the implications of using songs in ESL and EFL classrooms. By analyzing two corpora of popular songs, concluding that popular songs can be used as authentic texts at beginner level. But teachers need to look for appropriate songs according to the different levels of learners, careful evaluation of song texts can ensure that the vocabulary profile is more suitable

for the target learners. Werner (2020) explored the potential of popular song lyrics to illustrate grammar. The author argues that the use of popular songs is also a useful approach, as they are authentic and meaningful input for contextualized grammar teaching. The author concludes from a universal survey that popular lyrics can be used well to introduce grammar in a contextualized way, using it to introduce grammar is superior to traditional grammar teaching methods.

A number of scholars have already verified the effectiveness of video games in language learning by research, agreeing with the view that video games can improve vocabulary levels. Winaldo and Oktaviani (2022) investigated the relationship between playing video games and English language proficiency and concluded that video games have a positive impact on language acquisition. Video games offer a broader scope than traditional classroom instruction. They are particularly effective for improving vocabulary and pronunciation. However, researchers caution that video games currently cannot serve as a primary tool for language learning.

As a form of popular culture, some scholars claim that comics are a useful medium for language teaching and learning. Comics can improve students' critical thinking skills, provoke discussion among students, as well as motivate them to learn and enhance their interest in the language they are learning (Clark, 2017; Robbani & Khoirotunnisa, 2021; Wijaya, Suwastini, Adnyani, & Adnyani, 2021).

Issa (2020) integrated comics as popular culture into Arabic foreign language classrooms in the United States, discussing how comics can provide opportunities for students to improve their Arabic language proficiency. It is worth re-emphasizing that teachers need to be selective about the specific comics and cartoons they choose. This will help students to deal appropriately with these texts and visual representations, so that they produce the desired output. Themelis and Sime (2020) believed that the visual narratives of comics can provide new methods of communication, thereby providing for the development of more inclusive language learning and helping people with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. By using comics for multimodal, transmedia activities, both students and teachers can improve writing instruction. Castillo-Cuesta and

Quinonez-Beltran (2022) divided 262 high school students from Ecuador into control and experimental groups. The experimental group having the opportunity to practice EFL vocabulary using digital comics, and the control group using only textbooks published by the local Education Department. The results of the experiment showed that the experimental group showed significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition. The experimental group also showed positive perceptions of using digital comics to improve EFL vocabulary. The benefits of using comic strips to improve language components and skills such as vocabulary, grammar, reading skills and writing skills are obvious.

In addition to its benefits, comic have their challenges in language teaching and learning. The first challenge of using comics in language teaching is that some people do not believe that comics are a relevant strategy for language learning. The second challenge is the literature on the use of comic in language learning is quite limited and many teachers do not realize the benefits of comics in language learning (Chaikovsk, 2018).

As can be seen from the above literature, the integration of popular culture into language learning and teaching is widely regarded as a valuable tool. It can increase learner engagement, motivation and a sense of achievement. Popular culture comes in many forms, such as music, film, comics and video games (Becker, Rigaud, & Epstein, 2023). It offers authentic and engaging content that resonates with learners' interests, making language learning become a more enjoyable and effective process. Despite its advantages, integrating popular culture into teaching requires careful planning (Fenaughty, 2019). Teachers must ensure that materials are age-appropriate and align with curriculum goals (Becker et al., 2023). Additionally, it is essential to provide guidance on interpreting cultural elements to avoid misunderstandings or stereotypes. Yet the use of popular culture in language education is not without its challenges. Educators and curriculum developers still need to work together to continue to explore this area in depth in order to maximize the impact of popular culture on language learning.

## **2.6 RELATED STUDIES**

Numerous studies have explored the role of popular culture in language education and its impact on learners' motivation, engagement, and overall proficiency. This segment reviewed relevant literature, summarizing them from two perspectives: the mainstream views on popular culture in CFL and researchers' explorations of application of teaching CFL.

### **2.6.1 Popular Culture in CFL**

In traditional CFL classrooms, cultural teaching often relied on elements of "elegant culture," such as the Chinese zither, Chinese chess, calligraphy, and traditional painting. While these art forms reflect the depth and beauty of traditional Chinese culture, they present significant challenges. These practices require a solid foundation of skills and knowledge, as well as consistent effort, which may not suit all students. Additionally, elegant culture often demands advanced Chinese proficiency and a deep understanding of the culture, which makes it inaccessible to beginners or students with limited interest. Research has shown that popular culture can significantly enhance the learning experience for CFL students. Chinese music, dramas, and social media platforms like TikTok and WeChat are frequently used by students to improve their Chinese language skills. These resources expose learners to colloquial expressions and cultural practices, which are often missing from traditional textbooks. In contrast, Chinese popular culture offers a more accessible and engaging alternative for CFL classrooms. Popular culture strikes a balance between elegance and popularity, making it more appealing to a broader range of learners. Many scholars have begun to explore the rational use of popular culture as an effective tool in CFL education.

Research has highlighted the potential of Chinese popular culture to enhance CFL teaching. Mao (2018) explored the use of online cultural teaching resources and found that integrating popular cultural elements into CFL classrooms could diversify teaching content and improve accessibility. By using digital platforms, teachers can incorporate modern cultural resources that resonate with students.

Wei (2020) argued that introducing Chinese popular culture into CFL education is not only feasible but beneficial. However, she noted that internet-based popular culture, characterized by its youthfulness, entertainment value, and commercial appeal, requires careful selection. Teachers need to distinguish meaningful content from trivial or inappropriate material to ensure the classroom benefits from positive cultural influences.

Yuan (2021) further emphasized the importance of incorporating popular culture into CFL teaching. Her practical studies revealed that well-chosen popular culture elements could enhance classroom dynamics and stimulate students' interest in learning Chinese. For example, using culturally relevant music, movies, or TV shows can create a more relatable and engaging environment.

Pai and Duff (2020) expanded on the theoretical foundation for integrating popular culture into education. They criticized traditional methods for presenting culture in a superficial and stereotypical manner. Instead, they advocated for the use of popular culture, which allows students to engage more deeply with both the language and its contemporary cultural context. Their research provided examples of integrating popular culture into CFL programs, including the use of digital games, virtual reality, music videos, and cooking tutorials. These approaches foster creativity and practical language use. However, Pai and Duff also highlighted the need for further research to assess the long-term effectiveness and specific outcomes of popular culture in language teaching.

The integration of popular culture into CFL education represents a shift toward more dynamic and engaging teaching methods. Over time, this approach has gained recognition for its ability to enhance student interest and participation. Research highlights the importance of carefully selecting popular culture elements that align with learning objectives and avoid superficiality.

## 2.6.2 Application of Teaching CFL

In the previous section, we reviewed the relevant research on popular culture in CFL from a macro perspective. The following shows the specific application of popular culture in the CFL teaching, using film, television media, short videos, and songs as carriers.

### 2.6.2.1 The Application of Film and Television Media in Teaching CFL

Task-based activities are another effective way to incorporate popular culture into CFL education. For example, students may be asked to create a vlog about a Chinese festival or write a review of a Chinese movie. These activities require learners to use the language in meaningful and practical ways. In CFL teaching, cultural teaching is always a significant and complex topic. Some researchers have begun to try to introduce film and television works into teaching. Hoping to enhance students' understanding and perception of language and culture through visual and auditory stimuli. The following is an overview of the research of several scholars in this field. They have explored the application and effectiveness of film and television works in teaching CFL.

Zhang (2017) thought that the current use of film and television works in cultural teaching is not ideal, so specifically analyzed the principle of the application of documentaries as an auxiliary teaching tool in cultural teaching. Introducing excellent cultural documentaries by categorizing them and designed a lesson plan for teaching culture. Both scholars start by classifying the documentary and then designing the teaching plan based on the differences in content.

Li (2019) applied Chinese cartoon films to CFL classes, designed rich teaching activities based on the cartoon film "Big Fish & Begonia", and looked forward to further research on and prospects for this new teaching method.

Qu (2019) used film as a means to assist cultural teaching, applying films as listening materials, enriching the teaching means of teaching culture to mobilizing students' enthusiasm for learning. The cinema " Song of the Phoenix " is designed as an example, which proves the feasibility of applying film works in CFL culture teaching.

But the feasibility of using film to carry out listening teaching activities in actual Chinese listening classes is not particularly high.

Xu (2021) analyzed the applicability of variety shows in senior oral language classes. Taking the variety show *Informal Talks* as an example to design a complete pedagogical and provide some specific teaching suggestions.

Taking the film *Goodbye Mr. Loser* as an example, Yan (2021) draw on the theories of cultural triangles and levels of film interpretation to divide the teaching content into three levels: linguistic symbols, stories and meanings. Applying these theories in content design not only helped achieve the cultural communication purpose, but also provides ideas for the standardized development of using film or television in CFL culture courses.

The above studies all applied TV shows or movies to real CFL classrooms, and explored the feasibility of popular culture based on specific lesson plans and teaching experiments. These studies not only enhanced learners' understanding of Chinese culture, but also provided new methods and suggestions for CFL teaching. Nevertheless, with the emergence and development of other short video media (such as TikTok), there is still untapped potential for research in the teaching of CFL.

#### 2.6.2.2 The Application of Short Video in Teaching CFL

With the rapid development of self-media, online short videos as a new form of media are loved by netizens at home and abroad. People watch short videos almost every day. Short video has emerged along with the development of mobile internet technology, and is a form of video that is played and shared on new media platforms. Short video has the advantages of fast updating and pushing, can be watched in a short time leisure state, mobile state, and has a high sharing and dissemination characteristics, is one of the important ways of people's daily communication.

The most prominent feature of short videos is that they are updated frequently. When teaching Chinese language and culture to foreigners, teachers can use short video resources related to Chinese culture to assist their teaching. Choosing recently updated short video to let CFL learners come into contact with fresh information about China, so that the cultural contents can be closer to the actual life of young people in contemporary China.

TikTok, as an original Chinese short video APP, is very popular among users at home and abroad. Zeng (2020) took into account her experience of teaching Chinese in South Africa using TikTok short videos, examines the advantages and shortcomings of TikTok in teaching CFL. An attempt was made to create a corresponding teaching sample using TikTok short video materials. The effectiveness of using TikTok for teaching CFL was verified through questionnaires and interviews. Yuan (2022) affirmed the advantages of short videos by comparing the application of traditional videos and TikTok short videos in CFL. Guo (2022) discussed the feasibility of using short videos in CFL from three aspects: the characteristics of short videos themselves, their practical value, and their theoretical basis.

Liu (2022) also used TikTok short videos as a teaching tool. The questionnaire shows that 85% of Belarusian primary school students have already used TikTok as a tool for teaching Chinese culture, but they have limited Chinese language proficiency and poor self-discipline, which makes it easy for them to become addicted to TikTok if they use it for too long. It is not easy for students to distinguish between learning and entertainment, which sometimes greatly reduces the efficiency of Chinese language learning. Using TikTok short videos for learning requires strong self-discipline among students. Learners often struggle to differentiate between educational content and entertainment, and this ambiguity can significantly reduce the efficiency of language acquisition.

Using short video in teaching CFL does not always lead to positive feedback, and researchers have identified a number of shortcomings. Wang (2022) claimed that in CFL applications, the following problems exist: (1) the content of short videos is not targeted or too difficult; (2) the usage rate of short videos in key content is low; (3) students' attention is not concentrated when watching short videos; (4) the use of short videos to prompt students to submit homework has minimal effect; (5) there is no teacher's explanation when short videos are played.

Despite the potential of short videos as an innovative teaching resource, there are still some challenges in practical application. Some scholars have also proposed solutions to these problems through practice in order to improve the effectiveness of CFL teaching. Li (2020) pointed out that online short videos have the characteristics of fun, timeliness and interactivity. The author suggested that the

selection of online short videos should be based on the characteristics of the teaching audience, the content and quality of the short videos.

Zhang (2021) summarizes the selection and application principles applicable to short videos. (1) For learners at the elementary stage with poorer foundation, CFL teachers should pay attention to giving up some cultural theme contents which are too niche and have thick cultural meanings when selecting short videos. (2) Teachers should select more popular, less costly and practical cultural videos for beginner learners, which will not impose too heavy a learning burden on beginner learners. On the contrary, it will bring them closer to Chinese culture. (3) For intermediate learners, who already have a better understanding of Chinese culture. Teachers can try to use videos to introduce less popular Chinese culture. When teachers use the videos for intermediate students, they should do a good job of secondary processing and creation of the teaching videos in the lesson preparation stage. Suggesting that teachers should combine the explanation of cultural knowledge and grammar points at this stage, and pay attention to cultivating students' communicative ability in Chinese in the process of practice.

Xu (2023) suggested that the selection of short videos is crucial for effective teaching. Teachers should consider three key factors when choosing these videos: First, they need to match the learners' Chinese language proficiency level. Second, the content should respect cultural values, language norms, and student needs. Finally, the videos must be high-quality and produced in standard Mandarin. Ding (2023) proposed that short videos for CFL teaching should be enriched in content. For example, vocabulary instruction could include word analysis, definitions, and usage. Some subject areas also need expansion to cover a broader range of topics. Currently, most short videos for CFL teaching are designed for beginners and focus on basic content. While many videos concentrate on Chinese characters and phonetics, there is a lack of resources in other areas such as vocabulary, grammar, and reading instruction. This imbalance highlights the need for more diverse and comprehensive content in CFL short videos.

The studies on the use of short videos in teaching Chinese as a foreign language are still in the exploratory stage in general. Most of the studies are focused on analyzing the advantages of using short videos in teaching culture and the precautions

for teaching, and noting the value of using short videos in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. However, very few scholars have made specific teaching designs for the use of short videos in teaching Chinese as a foreign language and examined the actual teaching situation of short videos in teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

#### 2.6.2.3 The Application of Popular Songs in Teaching CFL

Popular music is a relative concept and its connotation changes with the social environment and the times. Songs that were popular in the past may not necessarily be popular now, while songs that were not popular in the past may be very popular now. For example, the 37-year-old Chinese song *Yi Jian Mei* suddenly became a hit on TikTok in the spring of 2020, reaching the top of all major music charts in Europe and the United States, and has become popular music again. We can see from this phenomenon that it is not only music with simple lyrics, catchy melodies and a large audience that is popular music, but also music that is based on the paradigm of classical Chinese music or that uses elements of traditional Chinese folk music and incorporates the characteristics of popular music. It can also be a fusion of popular singing styles with ethnic, American or other singing styles, "Chinese style" music with distinctive Chinese characteristics, or music sung in Chinese dialects.

Deng (2018) puts forward the theoretical basis for the application of Chinese songs in Chinese-foreign language classrooms from the perspectives of learning motivation and learners' psychological development. Chen and Guo (2018) illustrate the feasibility and necessity of applying Chinese songs in teaching Chinese as a foreign language through Krashen's "affective filtering hypothesis" and "input hypothesis". The introduction of Chinese songs injects vitality into the boring language learning, effectively reduces students' affective filters, and Chinese songs can become effective and comprehensible teaching contents.

Chinese songs can also help spread Chinese culture, Quan (2019) believe that Chinese songs are representative of the ability to inherit and carry forward Chinese culture, but also absorbed a lot of foreign elements, so many foreign friends will find Chinese songs very friendly and want to learn Chinese language and understand Chinese culture. Chen (2019) believed that some young people will take singers as their idols because of Chinese-style music, which will motivate and interest in learning Chinese. Hontarenko and Osmachko (2024) believed that songs have a positive effect on

mobilizing the classroom atmosphere and students' motivation, enriching the teaching objectives and introducing cultural inculcation.

Some scholars have also put forward different views on what kinds of Chinese songs are suitable to be introduced into teaching CFL. Cai (2017) and Zhang (2023) believed that songs should be of appropriate difficulty, conform to grammatical rules, be rich in various genres, be clear in pronunciation, be practical, and have certain cultural connotations and positive contents. In addition, it is important to choose songs with medium and slow speeds because they do not make students feel intimidated and are more conducive to learning and memorization. According to Yang (2024), the lyrics of the songs contain typical knowledge points, and the songs should be chosen according to the students' language level and physical and mental development. Deng (2018) believes that lyrics and songs should have enough repetitions so that they can be memorized. Guo and Chen (2018) believed that when using songs to teach culture, the songs selected should have Chinese cultural elements.

As a popular culture with popularity and contagiousness in Chinese popular culture, popular songs are close to the needs of target language teaching because of their contemporary linguistic expressions and cultural factors, which are not too demanding in terms of teaching conditions, and they are of great interest to students and can help to improve students' Chinese language learning in many ways. Many scholars have reached a consensus that the introduction of popular music into Chinese as a foreign language can help to teach Chinese culture and effectively improve students' motivation to learn, but it is necessary to follow certain principles of song selection.

Studies on CFL teaching methods emphasize the importance of combining traditional techniques with innovative approaches like popular culture. By doing so, educators can create a balanced curriculum that meets diverse learning needs.

Although existing research emphasizes the need for cultural integration, the following gaps remain: (1) there is a lack of longitudinal studies on the long-term teaching effectiveness of popular culture in CFL; (2) the application of new media tools such as short videos mostly remain theoretical discussion, and empirical support is urgently needed; (3) the development of cultural competence in teacher training has not yet been systematized.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study aimed to examine the perceptions of Thai university students regarding the use of Chinese popular culture in learning CFL and to identify the challenges faced by these learners with a view to informing subsequent teaching of CFL. This chapter outlined the research design, ensuring a systematic and comprehensive approach to the study.

#### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study used a mixed-methods approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Creswell (2009) noted that surveys can describe attitudes within a research sample. However, questionnaires alone may not fully capture the complexity of the research phenomenon. Lund (2012) argued that combining qualitative and quantitative methods enhances result quality.

This study used questionnaires to assess Thai university students' views on using Chinese popular culture in CFL learning, as well as the challenges and opportunities they encounter. Since questionnaires alone couldn't provide in-depth data, semi-structured interviews were added to address these limitations.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH SITE**

This study was conducted at a university located in Bangkok, Thailand. This university was among the top academic performers among Thai universities, and its Chinese language program had built close relationships with several leading universities

in China. In addition to courses taken in Thailand, the university offered a semester-long study abroad program in China, where students spent a semester at one of the top universities in China, such as Beijing University. The university offered a wide variety of Chinese language programs, providing not only basic language courses but also rich and varied course content such as Chinese trade and investment, Chinese e-commerce and marketing, Chinese media and entertainment, Chinese art and architecture, etc. These diverse courses gave learners the opportunity to immerse themselves in both language study and cultural experiences.

### **3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

Wang and Cheng (2020) suggested that the main advantage of cross-sectional studies was that they were relatively quick and inexpensive. Cross-sectional studies collected data from a population at a specific point in time. They could provide useful insights into the characteristics of the population and identify correlations for further research.

Kelly, Bourgeault, and Dingwall (2010) proposed purposive sampling to select respondents who were most likely to provide appropriate and useful information. Researchers were allowed to select participants in a targeted manner, ensuring the data collected was rich and directly related to the research objectives. Purposive sampling was used in this study to conduct in-depth interviews, which helped to draw more meaningful and focused findings.

The researcher used a Thai university as the research location and divided Chinese language students into four groups according to the academic year of enrollment. A cross-sectional dataset was obtained by randomly selecting 49 students from each academic cohort to investigate their perceptions of using popular culture to learn CFL. To complement quantitative findings, 15 students who participated in the questionnaire survey were selected by purposive sampling to attend a semi-structured interview. Participants were selected based on questionnaire response content.

### 3.3.1 Population

The target population consisted of 400 undergraduate students enrolled in a Chinese language program at a university in Bangkok. Participants were distributed across four academic cohorts (Years 1–4), with ages ranging from 17 to 24 years and varying durations of Chinese study. Inclusion criteria required:

- (a) Current enrollment in core Chinese language courses
- (b) No extended residence (>3 months) in Chinese-speaking regions

### 3.3.2 Sample

This cross-sectional study utilized stratified random sampling to examine undergraduate Chinese majors (N=400) from four academic years (100 students per year). Stratification by enrollment year controlled for two key variables: 1) curricular progression in Chinese language proficiency, and 2) cumulative cultural exposure duration. Sample size determination followed Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) parameters for a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, yielding 196 total participants (49 per stratum). This equal allocation enabled: 1) Direct comparison across academic levels. 2) Sufficient statistical power for subgroup analyses. 3) Operational feasibility within research constraints.

To ensure adequate sample size while accounting for potential attrition in online surveys, we distributed 208 questionnaires (52 per stratum) via the Wenjuanxing platform, exceeding the calculated minimum requirement of 196. This oversampling strategy yielded 202 complete questionnaires. The oversampling strategy succeeded in compensating for expected attrition while maintaining the stratified structure's integrity.

Stratified sampling enhanced the accuracy of estimates by reducing variability within strata and allowed for targeted analysis of the intercultural opportunities and challenges that students encounter at various academic levels (Ahmad, Arslan, Khan, & Shabbir, 2021). Furthermore, it optimized resource allocation by focusing on

relevant subgroups without necessitating an excessively large overall sample size—an advantage in cross-sectional designs (Iqbal, Raza, Mahmood, & Riaz, 2024). Overall, stratified sampling provided a robust and reliable framework that aligned with the research objectives, facilitating the investigation of students' perceptions and experiences with Chinese popular culture in their language learning.

### 3.3.2.1 Sample Size Calculation

Pandey, P. and Pandey, M. (2021) proposed that in social sciences, it is impractical to collect data from every respondent relevant to the study, so a smaller, representative sample is selected. This study calculated the sample size based on the formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), considering a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The calculations are as follows:

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP (1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1) + X^2P (1 - P)} \quad (3-1)$$

S= Require sample size

X<sup>2</sup>= Chi-square value for one-degree freedom at the desired level of confidence (3.841)

N= Population size

P= Proportion of the population (assumed to be 0.50 for the maximum sample size)

d= Accuracy degree expressed as a proportion (0.05).

Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size, for a population of 400, this study employed stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness across academic years. The study divided the population into four homogeneous subgroups based on enrollment year (Year 1 to Year 4). The stratification process was as follow:

1) Population Division: The total population (N=400) was divided into four equal strata, each representing one academic year (100 students per year).

2) Sample Allocation: The total required sample size (196) was equally distributed across the four strata, yielding 49 students per year (196 ÷ 4 = 49).

3) Random Selection: Within each stratum, 49 participants were randomly selected to ensure unbiased representation.

The equal allocation (49 per stratum) was chosen because: (1) It allowed direct comparison of Chinese language proficiency and cultural exposure across academic years. (2) It provided sufficient statistical power for subgroup analysis. (3) It maintained operational feasibility within research constraints.

### 3.3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interview Participants

The semi-structured interview participants were selected through stratified purposive sampling, ensuring representation across varying levels of cultural engagement. This approach combined quantitative stratification (based on questionnaire scores) with qualitative purposive selection to capture diverse perspectives (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Using a composite index of 5-point Likert scale responses (items 10-19 in the survey), Participants were ranked by their total scores and divided into three strata:

High engagement: Top 30% scorers (n=5)

Moderate engagement: Middle 40% scorers (n=5)

Low engagement: Bottom 30% scorers (n=5)

From each stratum, participants were purposively selected to ensure diversity in gender, age, and academic year, avoiding overrepresentation of any subgroup. Final interviewees were invited based on voluntary participation and availability, ensuring ethical considerations were met.

By stratifying based on engagement levels, the study captured a spectrum of attitudes toward Chinese popular culture. The quantitative data provided an objective basis for stratification, reducing researcher bias in participant selection (Creswell & Clark, 2018). While the sample size (n=15) was small for generalization, it allowed rich qualitative insights into how engagement levels influenced language learning experiences.

### 3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

This mixed-methods study utilized complementary data collection instruments—a self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interviews—following a sequential exploratory design. In this approach, quantitative data informed subsequent qualitative probing (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D., 2017). This design enabled a comprehensive understanding of Thai university students' perceptions, challenges, and opportunities they encountered when using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language.

This study used questionnaires as the primary data collection tool due to their ease of preparation and administration (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). However, relying solely on questionnaires limited the depth of insights obtained. They provided only a superficial understanding of respondents' perceptions. To address this limitation, semi-structured interviews were employed. This method allowed for a two-way exchange of opinions and information, offering a more nuanced understanding of participants' experiences (Galletta & Cross, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were particularly advantageous. They enabled researchers to gather in-depth information and evidence, providing a richer context for the study's findings (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Syam, 2022).

#### 3.4.1 Questionnaire

This study took a stratified random sampling approach to conduct a simple, targeted, small-scale questionnaire survey on different grades of Chinese-language student groups at a university. The questionnaire used in this study was designed to capture a comprehensive understanding of Thai university students' engagement with Chinese popular culture and its impact on their Chinese language learning. It consisted of four main sections: Basic Demographic Information, Engagement Preferences, Perceptions, Opportunities, and Challenges.

Table 3.1 The Structure of the Questionnaire

Dimensions	Location
Basic demographic information	Part 1 Q1~Q4
Engagement Preferences	Part 2 Q5~Q9
Perceptions	Part 3 Q10~Q19
Opportunities and Challenges	Part4 Q20~Q33

Part 1 collected basic demographic information to provide context for the study. Participants were asked to identify their gender, first language, year of study, and current Chinese language proficiency level as measured by the HSK (Chinese Proficiency Test) scale. This section established a foundational understanding of the participant cohort.

Part 2 of the study explored participants' preferences and habits regarding Chinese popular culture. Respondents were asked to indicate their interests in various cultural forms such as music, movies, TV series, online games, short videos, novels, anime, food and drink, clothing, and festivals. The section also investigated the digital platforms they used to access this content, including YouTube, Bilibili, WeTV, iQiyi, and TikTok, as well as the average weekly time spent engaging with Chinese popular culture. Additionally, it examined how students integrated popular culture into their language learning practices, such as learning vocabulary from song lyrics, imitating dialogues from TV shows, or participating in fan communities. This section aimed to capture the diverse ways students engaged with Chinese popular culture and its role in their language learning process.

Part 3 of the questionnaire used a multidimensional framework to measure learners' cognitive and affective responses to Chinese popular culture in language learning. A 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) was employed to evaluate three core dimensions: 1) perceived linguistic benefits in vocabulary acquisition and pragmatic competence, 2) affective engagement levels through cultural content consumption, and 3) perceived challenges in pedagogical integration. The data provided empirical evidence for curriculum optimization,

showing how learners' self-reported experiences aligned with or differed from theoretical assumptions about popular culture's educational impact. Key constructs such as cognitive appraisal, motivational drivers, and implementation barriers were presented in Table 3.2, enabling cross-dimensional analysis of cultural resource utilization.

Table 3.2 The Key Dimensions Explored in Part 3

Dimension	Description
Motivation and Interest	Assessing whether exposure to Chinese popular culture increases motivation and interest in learning Chinese, and helps reduce learning anxiety.
Language Skills Improvement	Investigating perceptions of how Chinese popular culture affects language skills, including speaking frequency, vocabulary expansion, and understanding of common expressions.
Cultural Understanding	Evaluating the role of popular culture in enhancing understanding of Chinese social norms, values, and cultural nuances.
Challenges and Misunderstandings	Identifying potential difficulties, such as cultural misunderstandings, distractions due to entertainment value, and the reinforcement of stereotypes.

Part 4 of the questionnaire examined the dual effects of using Chinese popular culture in foreign language acquisition among Thai university students. It evaluated both the benefits and challenges of this approach. The section used a balanced analytical framework to: 1) Assess the pedagogical applications of cultural resources in Chinese language education, 2) Identify advantages such as increased engagement and contextual learning support, and 3) Address practical constraints like cultural barriers and curriculum integration difficulties. This analysis provided educators and curriculum developers with strategies for effectively integrating popular culture into teaching while addressing challenges. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 presented key dimensions, allowing for a comparison of motivational benefits and implementation barriers. This

offers a roadmap for developing teaching methodologies that are sensitive to contextual needs.

Table 3.3 Opportunities in Using Chinese Popular Culture for CFL

Opportunity	Description	Question Number
Teacher Integration	Teachers introduce popular culture in teaching.	Q20
Practical Application	Students apply vocabulary and expressions from popular culture in assignments.	Q21
Active Engagement	Students actively learn new words and expressions through popular culture.	Q22
Cultural Insights	Enhanced understanding of Chinese social norms, values, and regional differences.	Q23, Q24, Q25
Social Interaction	Connecting with Chinese-speaking friends and communities through shared interests.	Q26
Cross-Cultural Discussions	Participation in cross-cultural discussions facilitated by popular culture.	Q27

Table 3.4 Challenges in Using Chinese Popular Culture for CFL

Challenge	Description	Question Number
Cultural Conflicts	Culture shock and misunderstandings due to differences in values and norms.	Q28, Q29

Table 3.4 Challenges in Using Chinese Popular Culture for CFL (Cont.)

Challenge	Description	Question Number
Entertainment Distractions	Distraction from critical analysis due to entertainment value.	Q30
Stereotypes	Reinforcement of cultural stereotypes through popular culture.	Q31
Non-Standard Language	Learning non-standard language structures and words.	Q32
Cultural Misunderstandings	Misunderstandings arising from different cultural habits and manners.	Q33

To ensure that participants understand every item, the questionnaire will be translated into Thai. Overall, the questionnaire is designed to provide a balanced mix of quantitative and qualitative data, offering a nuanced understanding of how Chinese popular culture influences Thai university students' Chinese language learning experiences.

### 3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview has been referred to as a "conversation with a purpose" (Burgess, 2002). The semi-structured interview protocol was to understand the perception and understanding of a social group on a particular thing through in-depth conversation with the respondents, and to propose reasonable methods and ideas to solve problems based on the results of the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were specialized for their flexibility; this type of interview gave the researcher the freedom to question the respondent, let them elaborate, or follow a new line of inquiry introduced based on what the respondent had said. At the same time, respondents were free to express their opinions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Based on these characteristics, semi-structured interviews were used in this study. The interview guide included the

following questions:

Table 3.5 The Semi-Structured Interview Question

1	What kind of Chinese popular culture do you like most?
2	What are the benefits of integrating Chinese popular culture into Chinese language learning?
3	In your opinion, what language skills have been improved most significantly from your experience of learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture?
4	What kind of opportunities do you get from integrating Chinese popular culture into your Chinese language learning?
5	What challenges have you faced in learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture?
6	What suggestions do you have for those who want to use Chinese popular culture as a source to learn Chinese language?

### 3.5 INSTRUMENT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity and reliability were vital factors to be considered in a study, and researchers minimized biases and maximized the quality of the data collected by improving the study design. This chapter described the measures and efforts taken by the researcher to guarantee the validity and reliability of the study.

#### 3.5.1 Validity

To validate the research instruments, the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was employed to numerically assess content experts' evaluations of items (Crocker & Algina, 2008). The designed questionnaires (Appendix A) and semi-structured interview (Appendix B) questions were presented to three experts with extensive knowledge in Chinese language teaching and Chinese popular culture for an Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index evaluation. Involving multiple experts enhanced the reliability of the assessment results, and their discussions and feedback

helped reach a consensus.

Experts evaluated each item based on its alignment with each research objective. Each item was rated on a scale of 1 (clearly measures), -1 (clearly does not measure), or 0 (unclear measurement). To maintain the independence of the assessors, experts were not informed of the specific objectives each item was intended to measure. After completing the evaluations, the ratings were combined to provide indexes of item-objective congruence for each item.

The index calculated by the following equation (Rovinelli and Hambleton, 1976):

$$I_{ik} = \frac{(N - 1) \sum_{j=1}^n X_{ijk} - \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^n X_{ijk} + \sum_{j=1}^n X_{ijk}}{2(N - 1)n} \quad (3-2)$$

Where:

$I_{ik}$  = index of item-objective congruence for item k on objective i

N= the number of objectives (i = 1, 2, ..., N)

n=the number of content experts (j= 1, 2, ..., n)

$x_{ijk}$ =the rating (1, 0, -1) of item k as a measure of objective i by content experts j

The consistency index value of each question needed to be at least 0.5 or higher to be accepted (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1976). The final IOC scores ranged from 0.67 to 1.00 (M=0.82), exceeding the 0.50 threshold. Given these results, the research instruments were deemed valid. Consequently, 33 questions in the questionnaire and the six interview questions were retained for use in the study, deleting 1 question from the questionnaire (See Appendix D).

After completing the content validity check, the researcher translated the questionnaire into Thai and distributed it to the target respondents in Thailand. To ensure the semantic equivalence of the translated questionnaire, the researcher implemented Brislin's (1986) back-translation protocol, involving two bilingual

linguists who independently verified the accuracy and equivalence of the translation.

### 3.5.2 Reliability

The questionnaire used in this study was in the form of a Likert scale score. The researcher employed Cronbach's Alpha to assess the reliability of the instruments. "There are different reports about the acceptable values of alpha, ranging from 0.70 to 0.95" (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). George and Mallery (2019) summarized values of coefficient Cronbach's Alpha as the following:

Cronbach's Alpha( $\alpha$ ) $\geq$  0.9 Excellent

Cronbach's Alpha( $\alpha$ ) $\geq$  0.8 Good

Cronbach's Alpha( $\alpha$ ) $\geq$  0.7 Acceptable

The values of Cronbach's Alpha less than 0.7 are considered questionable, poor and unacceptable.

In this study, the researchers calculated the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient as 0.945 based on the collected data. According to the criteria proposed by George and Mallery (2019) ( $\alpha \geq 0.9$  indicates "Excellent"), this value demonstrated that the questionnaire's internal consistency reliability was at an "Excellent" level. The reliability assessment results are presented as follows:

Table 3.6 The Cronbach's Alpha Value of the Questionnaire

Item	Sample	Cronbach's Alpha( $\alpha$ )
24	202	0.945

### 3.6 Data Collection

Data were obtained from students studying Chinese language at a Thai university. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The first step involved distributing the questionnaire online to 208 Thai university students, with the plan to collect all questionnaires within one week. The second step was a semi-structured interview with a subset of 15 who participated in the questionnaire. These students were selected based on their perceptions regarding the use of Chinese popular culture for Chinese language learning. The interview was conducted via VOOV Meeting, allowing for in-depth discussion of their points of view.

Participants were selected through stratified purposive sampling based on cultural engagement scores derived from questionnaire data. Using composite scores of 5-point Likert items (Q10-19), three strata were created:

High engagement: Top 30% (n=5, M=4.6)

Moderate engagement: Middle 40% (n=5, M=3.2)

Low engagement: Bottom 30% (n=5, M=1.8)

Each student will be given 15-20 minutes to answer the questions.

### 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to analyze data using integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches. The framework aligned with the research objectives, focusing on the role of Chinese popular culture in the experiences of Thai learners of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL). The following matrix illustrated the alignment of each research question with the appropriate data instrument, type of data to be collected, and the corresponding data analysis method.

Table 3.7 Alignment of Research Questions with Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Research Question	Data Instrument	Type of Data	Data Analysis Method
Preferred ways	Questionnaire (Part 2: Engagement Preferences) & Semi-	Quantitative & Qualitative	Descriptive Statistics

Table 3.7 Alignment of Research Questions with Data Collection and Analysis Methods (Cont.)

Research Question	Data Instrument	Type of Data	Data Analysis Method
	structured Interviews (Question 1)		(Frequency, Percentage) & Thematic Analysis (using Lichtman's 3Cs Model)
Perceptions	Questionnaire (Part 3: Perceptions) & Semi-structured Interviews (Questions 2, 3)		
Opportunities and Challenges	Questionnaire (Part 4: Opportunities and Challenges) & Semi-structured Interviews (Questions 4, 5)		
Suggestions	Semi-structured Interviews (Question 6)	Qualitative	Thematic Analysis (using Lichtman's 3Cs Model)

### 3.7.1 Quantitative Analysis

The collected questionnaire data were coded and examined by the researcher using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage and standard deviation are used to analyze the questionnaire responses.

#### 3.7.1.1 Basic Demographic Information (Part 1)

Gender, First Language, Year of Study, Current Chinese Language Level: Frequency and percentage distributions were calculated to describe the sample characteristics.

### 3.7.1.2 Engagement Preferences (Part 2)

The analysis of engagement preferences employed a mixed-methods approach to examine participants' interaction with Chinese popular culture. For multiple-choice questions (e.g., preferred cultural forms and platforms), frequency and percentage distributions were calculated to identify trends in consumption patterns. For single-response items (e.g., time spent, and interaction style), mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) were computed to assess central tendency and variability.

### 3.7.1.3 Perceptions (Part 3)

Agreement Levels: Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize participants' perceptions of using Chinese popular culture in language learning. This included items related to motivation, interest, and perceived benefits.

### 3.7.1.4 Opportunities and Challenges (Part 4)

Agreement Levels: Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) summarized participants' views on the opportunities and challenges associated with using Chinese popular culture in language learning.

## 3.7.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were systematically analyzed using Lichtman's 3Cs Model (Coding → Categorizing → Conceptualizing), as outlined in Figure 3.1. This three-stage process began with coding raw interview transcripts to identify salient phrases and patterns, followed by categorizing these codes into thematic clusters that reflect shared characteristics. Finally, conceptualizing elevated the categorized themes to abstract constructs anchored in theoretical frameworks, thereby generating actionable insights.

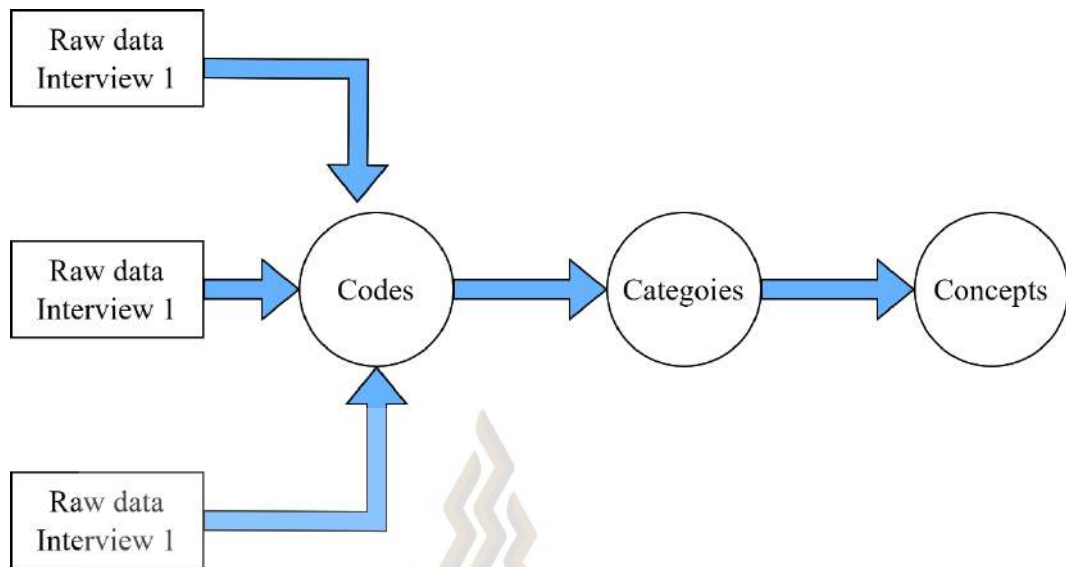


Figure 3.1 Lichtman's 3Cs Mode

The data analysis process involved a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data, and thematic analysis for qualitative data. This integrated approach provided a comprehensive and robust analysis, aligning with the research objectives and questions. The findings offered valuable insights into the role of Chinese popular culture in the language learning experiences of Thai university students.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Adherence to ethical principles was fundamental to protecting human participants and ensuring the integrity of research (Arifin, 2018). Any lapse in ethical conduct could compromise the validity and credibility of the study. To uphold ethical standards, the following measures were meticulously implemented:

#### 3.8.1 Ethics Approval

Prior to data collection, the research proposal and all study instruments underwent formal ethical review. The researcher obtained official approval from Rangsit University's Ethics Research Board (Certificate No. RSUERB2025-043; see

Appendix F), confirming that the study design and methodology complied with the institution's ethical standards and guidelines.

### **3.8.2 Informed Consent**

Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Written informed consent was obtained prior to their participation, ensuring they understood and voluntarily agreed to take part in the study.

### **3.8.3 Right to Withdraw**

Participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits to which they would otherwise be entitled.

### **3.8.4 Secure Data Management**

Personal information and response data were collected and stored securely, using encrypted databases and restricted access protocols to prevent unauthorized access.

### **3.8.5 Confidentiality**

Participants' private information was strictly protected. Data were anonymized, and any identifying information was removed or coded to ensure confidentiality.

### **3.8.6 Data Usage**

The collected data was used exclusively for research purposes, as outlined in the study protocol. Data remained confidential and was not disclosed or published in any form that could identify individual participants.

### 3.8.7 Data Deletion

All collected data was securely deleted within one year after the publication of the study, ensuring that participants' information was not retained longer than necessary.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter discussed the key findings of the research conducted on the topic, Thai University Students' Perceptions of Chinese Popular Culture in Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language. A mixed-methods research approach was adopted by the researcher to analyze the data from three research objectives. The first was to identify the preferred ways through which Thai university students engage with Chinese popular culture in their Chinese language learning. The second was to explore Thai university students' challenges of using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language. The third was to discuss the intercultural opportunities encountered by Thai university students towards the use of Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to data analysis. Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were systematically analyzed to address all three research objectives. Complementing this, qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews underwent thematic analysis, providing deeper insights that enriched understanding of each research objective.

#### **4.1 ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA (QUESTIONNAIRE)**

The required sample size for this study was calculated as 196 participants using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table. However, during the survey implementation phase, a total of 202 valid responses were successfully collected. All 202 questionnaires met predefined inclusion criteria (e.g., completeness, internal consistency, and adherence to response protocols) and were subsequently retained for final analysis. This minor deviation from the theoretical sample size (196 vs. 202) does not compromise statistical validity but marginally enhances the study's power, thereby

reducing the likelihood of Type II errors. Transparency in reporting the actual sample size aligns with methodological rigor and ensures reproducibility of findings.

A questionnaire was administered to all 202 (N=202) study participants. The quantitative data analysis process involved several key steps. First, we examined the sample group's demographic characteristics and conducted frequency analysis (Part 1). Then, we performed an analysis on the three dimensions of the questionnaire, including engagement preferences (Part 2), perceptions of Chinese popular culture in language learning (Part 3), and opportunities and challenges (Part 4). Survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation).

#### 4.1.1 Mean Scores of Questionnaire Dimensions

A questionnaire was administered to all 202 (n =202) study participants. Survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). The questionnaire was administered to 202 participants, with responses analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results indicate that overall engagement with Chinese popular culture in language learning is at a high level across all three dimensions. Part 2 (Engagement Preferences) had a mean score of 4.21, showing strong interest in Chinese popular culture and active participation. Part 3 (Perceptions of Chinese Popular Culture in Language Learning) received the high mean score of 3.65, highlighting the belief that integrating Chinese popular culture significantly enhances language learning. Part 4 (Opportunities and Challenges) had a mean score of 3.73, suggesting that while opportunities are widely recognized, some challenges such as culture shock and misunderstandings also exist. The overall mean score of 3.90 suggests that Thai university students exhibit a strong positive attitude toward using Chinese popular culture as a learning tool. From the table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire of the Sample Group

Section	n	Mean	Interpretation
Part 2: Engagement Preferences	202	4.21	Strongly Agree

Table 4.1 Questionnaire of the Sample Group (Cont.)

Section	n	Mean	Interpretation
Part 3: Perceptions of Chinese Popular Culture in Language Learning	202	3.65	Agree
Part 4: Opportunities and Challenges	202	3.73	Agree
Total	202	3.90	Agree

#### 4.1.2 Frequency Distribution of Basic Demographic Information

Table 4.2 Gender Distribution

1. Gender					
		Frequency	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	91	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Male	80	39.6	39.6	84.7
	Non-binary	15	7.4	7.4	92.1
Valid	I prefer not to say	16	7.9	7.9	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The sample group consists of 202 participants, with a fairly balanced gender distribution. Female respondents make up the largest proportion at 45.0%, followed by male respondents at 39.6%. A smaller percentage identifies as non-binary (7.4%), while 7.9% preferred not to disclose their gender. The relatively high representation of female students may reflect a broader trend in language studies, where female learners often outnumber males. The inclusion of non-binary respondents and those who chose not to disclose their gender suggests a recognition of gender diversity in the dataset. This balance is important as it ensures a more inclusive understanding of how different gender identities engage with Chinese language learning.

Table 4.3 First Language Distribution

2. First Language					
		Frequency	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Thai	70	34.7	34.7	34.7
	English	80	39.6	39.6	74.3
	Chinese	52	25.7	25.7	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The data reveals that the majority of participants have English (39.6%) or Thai (34.7%) as their first language, while 25.7% are native Chinese speakers. The presence of a significant number of native Chinese speakers may influence overall language proficiency levels within the group. Meanwhile, English-speaking participants might benefit from more extensive global Chinese-learning resources, whereas Thai speakers may experience additional linguistic challenges due to structural differences between Thai and Chinese. This diversity suggests that language-learning experiences within the group could vary significantly based on linguistic background, potentially affecting engagement with Chinese popular culture as a learning tool.

Table 4.4 Year of Study Distribution

3. Year of Study					
		Frequency	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Year 1	46	22.8	22.8	22.8
	Year 2	55	27.2	27.2	50.0
	Year 3	50	24.8	24.8	74.8
	Year 4	51	25.2	25.2	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The sample is well-distributed across different academic years, with Year 2 students forming the largest group (27.2%), followed by Year 4 (25.2%), Year 3 (24.8%), and Year 1 (22.8%). The relatively even distribution suggests a balanced

representation of students at different stages of their academic journey. This allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how engagement with Chinese language learning may evolve over time. Senior students may have had greater exposure to Chinese and more advanced skills, whereas first-year students are likely at the beginning of their learning journey, which could influence their approach to using popular culture for language acquisition.

Table 4.5 Current Chinese Language Level

4. Current Chinese Language Level					
		Frequency	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	HSK2	36	17.8	17.8	17.8
	HSK3	40	19.8	19.8	37.6
	HSK4	61	30.2	30.2	67.8
	HSK5	17	8.4	8.4	76.2
	HSK6	20	9.9	9.9	86.1
	Haven't taken HSK test	28	13.9	13.9	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The majority of participants have an intermediate level of Chinese proficiency, with 30.2% at HSK4, followed by 19.8% at HSK3. More advanced learners (HSK5 and HSK6) account for only 18.3% of the sample, while 17.8% are at the beginner level (HSK2). Additionally, 13.9% have not taken an HSK test yet, which could indicate varied learning pathways or informal learning experiences. The dominance of intermediate-level learners suggests that many students are in the process of strengthening their language abilities, making them well-positioned to benefit from exposure to Chinese popular culture. However, those at lower levels may struggle with comprehension, particularly regarding idiomatic expressions, while higher-level learners may require more advanced content to maintain engagement.

### 4.1.3 Analysis of Questionnaire Part 2: Engagement Preferences

Table 4.6 evaluates the participants' engagement with Chinese popular culture in terms of content preferences, platform usage, time spent, learning methods, and interaction styles. The overall mean score of 4.21 indicates a high level of engagement. The highest-scoring item is interest in various forms of Chinese popular culture (4.42), demonstrating a broad appeal among students. Platform preference and incorporation into language learning also received high scores (4.35), indicating active participation in digital content consumption and application in language learning. However, time spent engaging with Chinese popular culture (3.98) shows slight variation, suggesting that while many students dedicate time to it, some engage less frequently. The data underscores that Thai university students are deeply immersed in Chinese pop culture, integrating it into their language learning routines.

Table 4.6 Part 2: Engagement Preferences

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Interest in Chinese popular culture (various forms)	4.42	0.68	Strongly Agree
Preferred platforms for accessing content	4.35	0.72	Agree
Time spent engaging per week	3.98	0.85	Agree
Incorporation into language learning	4.21	0.79	Agree
Preferred interaction style	4.1	0.83	Agree
Total	4.21	0.77	Agree

To better understand the participants' opinions and verify the research purpose, some multiple-choice questions were designed in Part 2-Engagement Preferences. Table 4.7 shows the number or proportion of people who chose each option in the multiple-choice questions.

Table 4.7 Part 2: Frequency Analysis of Chinese Popular Culture Preferences

Questions	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
What kinds of Chinese popular culture are you interested in? (You can choose more than one answer)	Music	111	54.95%
	Movies	98	48.51%
	TV series	94	46.53%
	Online Games	79	39.11%
	Short videos	83	41.09%
	Novel	78	38.61%
	Anime	70	34.65%
	Food and Drink	80	39.6%
	Clothing	82	40.59%
	Festivals	82	40.59%
	Singers	75	37.13%
	Actors/Actresses	78	38.61%
	Idols	80	39.6%
Others (please specify):	1	0.5%	
Which platforms do you primarily use to access Chinese popular culture? (You can choose more than one answer)	YouTube	139	68.81%
	Bilibili	75	37.13%
	WeTV	73	36.14%
	iQiyi	85	42.08%
	TikTok	146	72.28%
	Weibo	79	39.11%
	Xiaohongshu (Red Note)	82	40.59%
	Language-learning apps (e.g., Hello Talk)	74	36.63%

Table 4.7 Part 2: Frequency Analysis of Chinese Popular Culture Preferences (Cont.)

Questions	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Which platforms do you primarily use to access Chinese popular culture? (You can choose more than one answer)	Offline events (e.g., film festivals, comic conventions)	69	34.16%
	Other (please specify)	1	0.5%
How do you incorporate Chinese popular culture into your language learning? (You can choose more than one answer)	Learning vocabulary/pronunciation through song lyric	131	64.85%
	Imitating dialogues from TV/films to practice speaking	140	69.31%
	Reading web novels/comics to learn Chinese characters	107	52.97%
	Participating in Chinese discussions within fan communities	92	45.54%
	Creating bilingual subtitles/translations	79	39.11%
	Analyzing cultural phenomena for coursework	70	34.65%
	Other (please specify )	0	0%

Table 4.7 above shows the results of a multiple-choice survey that explored respondents' engagement preferences for Chinese popular culture, covering three aspects: types of cultural content they are interested in, platforms for obtaining such content, and methods of integrating such content into language learning.

Multiple-choice questions on types of Chinese popular culture that are interesting (What types of Chinese pop culture are you interested in?). In terms of cultural interests, the most popular category was music, with 111 respondents (54.95%) selecting it, followed by movies (98 respondents, 48.51%) and TV series (94 respondents, 46.53%). Short videos (83 respondents, 41.09%), costumes and festivals (82 respondents each, 40.59%) also attracted strong interest, while online games (79 respondents, 39.11%), novels (78 respondents, 38.61%), and idols (80 respondents, 39.6%) had moderate engagement. The least selected category was "others", with only one person (0.5%) selecting it.

Multiple-choice question on platforms for acquiring Chinese pop culture (Which platforms do you mainly use to acquire Chinese popular culture?). In terms of platforms for acquiring Chinese popular culture, TikTok ranked first with 146 users (72.28%), followed by YouTube with 139 users (68.81%). Other commonly used platforms include iQiyi (85 users, 42.08%), Xiaohongshu (82 users, 40.59%), and Weibo (79 users, 39.11%), while Bilibili (75 users, 37.13%) and WeTV (73 users, 36.14%) also have a large number of fans. 74 respondents (36.63%) use language learning apps, and 69 respondents (34.16%) have participated in offline activities; again, only one person (0.5%) chose "other".

Multiple-choice question on ways to incorporate Chinese popular culture into language learning (How do you adopt Chinese popular culture into language learning?). In terms of language learning, the most common methods were imitating dialogues from TV and movies (140 respondents, 69.31%) and learning vocabulary/pronunciation through song lyrics (131 respondents, 64.85%). Reading online novels or comics to learn Chinese characters was also common (107 respondents, 52.97%). Other methods included having Chinese discussions within fan communities (92 respondents, 45.54%), creating bilingual subtitles or translations (79 respondents, 39.11%), and analyzing cultural phenomena for academic purposes (70 respondents, 34.65%), with no respondents (0%) selecting "other". These findings suggest that Chinese popular culture, especially in audiovisual form, plays an important role in language acquisition and provides diverse and interactive learning opportunities through mainstream digital

platforms.

In general, Chinese popular culture has a wide appeal among learners, especially music, film and television, and short video content are the most popular. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and iQiyi are the main media, showing the dominance of digital communication. Language learners combine popular culture with language learning through various means such as imitation, reading, and participating in communities, showing high interactivity and autonomous learning tendencies. Overall, Chinese popular culture has significant value in language education and cross-cultural communication.

#### 4.1.4 Analysis of Questionnaire Part 3: Perceptions of Chinese Popular Culture in Language Learning

Table 4.8 below shows students' attitudes toward the role of Chinese popular culture in their language-learning process. With an overall mean of 4.40, the results indicate a highest-level perception of its benefits. The strongest agreement is found in statements about enjoyment (4.50), belief in effectiveness (4.48), and vocabulary expansion (4.46), indicating that students find Chinese pop culture engaging and useful for improving language skills. Additionally, responses suggest that it enhances comprehension (4.41), acquisition of authentic expressions (4.45), and cross-cultural communication skills (4.33). The lowest mean score (4.28) still remains high, indicating that while some students may engage less actively in speaking, overall perceptions remain overwhelmingly positive. These findings suggest that Chinese popular culture serves as both a motivational and educational tool for Thai university students.

Table 4.8 Part 3: Perceptions of Chinese Popular Culture in Language Learning

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Enjoyment of using Chinese popular culture in learning	4.5	0.61	Strongly Agree

Table 4.8 Part 3: Perceptions of Chinese Popular Culture in Language Learning (Cont.)

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Belief in its effectiveness for learning	4.48	0.63	Strongly Agree
Increases interest and reduces anxiety	4.39	0.71	Agree
Helps eliminate negative emotions	4.3	0.75	Agree
Increases frequency of speaking	4.28	0.78	Agree
Improves language comprehension	4.41	0.69	Strongly Agree
Helps acquire authentic expressions	4.45	0.65	Strongly Agree
Improves cross-cultural communication skills	4.33	0.73	Agree
Expands vocabulary	4.46	0.67	Strongly Agree
Enhances understanding of spoken expressions	4.37	0.7	Strongly Agree
Total	4.4	0.69	Strongly Agree

#### 4.1.5 Analysis of Questionnaire Part 4: Opportunities and Challenges

Table 4.9 below shows both the benefits and difficulties students encounter when using Chinese popular culture for language learning. The overall mean score of 4.14 indicates a high level of perceived opportunities, but also highlights certain challenges. The most positively rated items include connecting with Chinese-speaking communities (4.40) and actively paying attention to new words (4.35), demonstrating

that popular culture facilitates real-life application and engagement. However, culture shock (3.90), religious/social conflicts (3.85), and entertainment distractions (3.95) scored lower, suggesting that while students appreciate the cultural learning experience, they also encounter difficulties in adapting to different norms. Additionally, exposure to non-standard language (3.92) and stereotypes (4.00) presents minor concerns. Despite these challenges, the overall results suggest that students view Chinese popular culture as a valuable, though complex, learning tool.

Table 4.9 Part 4: Opportunities and Challenges of Chinese Popular Culture in Language Learning

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Teachers introduce popular culture in learning	4.25	0.78	Agree
Usage of acquired vocabulary in assignments	4.18	0.8	Agree
Active attention to new words	4.35	0.74	Agree
Insights into social norms and values	4.31	0.76	Agree
Understanding of politeness norms	4.3	0.75	Agree
Recognition of regional differences	4.26	0.79	Agree
Connection with Chinese-speaking communities	4.4	0.71	Strongly Agree
Participation in cross-cultural discussions	4.22	0.77	Agree
Culture shock from differences in values	3.9	0.88	Neutral
Religious and social norm conflicts	3.85	0.91	Neutral
Entertainment value distracts from analysis	3.95	0.86	Neutral

Table 4.9 Part 4: Opportunities and Challenges of Chinese Popular Culture in Language Learning (Cont.)

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Encountering cultural stereotypes	4	0.83	Agree
Learning non-standard structures from media	3.92	0.87	Neutral
Risk of misunderstanding cultural habits	4.05	0.81	Agree
Total	4.14	0.8	Agree

Based on the quantitative analysis of questionnaire data collected from 202 Thai university students, the results reveal an overall strong agreement regarding the role of Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning. The total mean score was 4.44 on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating a generally positive perception. Among the three measured dimensions, participants expressed the strongest agreement with the perceived benefits of using Chinese popular culture for language learning ( $\bar{x}=4.40$ ). This suggests that students widely recognize its effectiveness in improving core language skills, including vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and speaking fluency.

The second highest score was observed in engagement preferences ( $\bar{x}=4.21$ ), with a mean of, reflecting a high level of interest and agreement toward the use of Chinese media formats such as dramas, music, vlogs, and online entertainment in their learning routines.

The dimension of opportunities and challenges scored slightly lower ( $\bar{x}=4.14$ ), yet still within the "agree" range. While students acknowledged various advantages, certain difficulties were also reported. Notably, concerns related to culture shock ( $\bar{x} = 3.90$ ) and non-standard language exposure ( $\bar{x} = 3.92$ ) received moderately high agreement, indicating areas where learners may experience confusion or barriers

during intercultural engagement.

In summary, the quantitative findings suggest that Thai university students generally consider Chinese popular culture to be a valuable, engaging, and motivating resource in the process of learning Chinese as a foreign language, despite facing occasional intercultural or linguistic challenges.

#### **4.2 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA (SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW)**

The results of this qualitative analysis were first sorted out and divided into three categories, according to Ob1: To identify the preferred ways through which Thai university students engage with Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning; Ob2: To explore Thai university students' opportunities for using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language; Ob3: To discuss intercultural challenges encountered by Thai university students in using Chinese popular culture for Chinese language learning. The questions were divided into relevant categories to help conduct a structured analysis of the research results on the participation, perceptions, and cross-cultural challenges/opportunities of Thai college students in using Chinese popular culture in language learning, as shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Based on the Three Objectives for Analysis of Qualitative Data

Objectives	No.	Question
To identify the preferred ways through Thai university students' engagement with Chinese popular culture in Chinese Language Learning	Q1	What kind of Chinese popular culture do you like most?
	Q4	What kind of opportunities do you get from integrating Chinese popular culture into your Chinese language learning?

Table 4.10 Based on the Three Objectives for Analysis of Qualitative Data (Cont.)

Objectives	No.	Question
To explore Thai university students' opportunities for using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language	Q2	What are the benefits of integrating Chinese popular culture into Chinese language learning?
To explore Thai university students' opportunities for using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language	Q3	In your opinion, what language skills have been improved most significantly from your experience of learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture?
To discuss intercultural challenges encountered by Thai university students towards the use of Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language	Q5	What challenges have you faced in learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture?
	Q6	What suggestions do you have for those who want to use Chinese popular culture as a source to learn Chinese language?

Following the principles of content analysis, data from semi-structured interviews with Thai university students were thoroughly reviewed, coded, categorized, and distilled into three core themes aligned with the research objectives. These themes reveal students' preferences, perceived benefits, intercultural opportunities, and challenges when engaging with Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language.

A total of 15 voluntary participants (six males and nine females) were recruited from a Thai university offering Chinese language programs. Participants were anonymously coded (e.g., S1 to S15) and selected to ensure a variety of academic years and Chinese language proficiency levels.

Table 4.11 Overview of Interview Participants

Participant Code	Gender	Year of study	Current Chinese Language Level
S1	Male	Year 1	HSK2
S2	Female	Year 2	HSK3
S3	Male	Year 3	HSK4
S4	Female	Year 4	HSK5
S5	Male	Year 2	HSK3
S6	Male	Year 3	HSK4
S7	Female	Year 1	HSK2
S8	Male	Year 4	HSK6
S9	Female	Year 3	HSK4
S10	Male	Year 2	HSK3
S11	Female	Year 1	HSK2
S12	Female	Year 3	HSK4
S13	Female	Year 4	HSK6
S14	Female	Year 2	HSK3
S15	Female	Year 4	HSK5

Table 4.12 Number of Codes, Categories and Concepts from Interviewees

Interviewee Code (S1-S15)	Number of Codes	Number of Categories	Number of Concepts
Student S1	18	9	3
Student S2	20	10	3
Student S3	22	11	3
Student S4	19	9	3
Student S5	21	10	3
Student S6	16	8	3
Student S7	18	9	3
Student S8	23	12	3

Table 4.12 Number of Codes, Categories and Concepts from Interviewees (Cont.)

Interviewee Code (S1-S15)	Number of Codes	Number of Categories	Number of Concepts
Student S9	20	10	3
Student S10	17	8	3
Student S11	19	9	3
Student S12	21	10	3
Student S13	22	11	3
Student S14	18	9	3
Student S15	20	10	3
Total	294	135	45

Table 4.12 shows the number of primary codes generated, the number of categories classified, and the number of refined final concepts generated by 15 respondents in a semi-structured interview. Through systematic qualitative coding of interviews with 15 Thai university students, a total of 294 initial codes were identified. These codes were further grouped into 135 categories based on thematic similarities, which were subsequently distilled into three core conceptual themes: Cultural Engagement Preferences, Language Learning Opportunities, Intercultural Learning Challenges.

1) Cultural Engagement Preferences:

Reflects students' preferred forms of Chinese popular culture (e.g., dramas, music, variety shows) and their motivations (e.g., entertainment, admiration for idols, curiosity about Chinese society).

2) Language Learning Opportunities:

Highlights how engaging with popular culture facilitated improvements in listening, speaking, vocabulary acquisition, and contextual understanding of Chinese language use.

3) Intercultural Learning Challenges:

Captures the difficulties students encountered, such as fast-paced

speech, unfamiliar slang, culturally specific humor, and implicit social norms presented in Chinese media.

Table 4.13 The Code-Category-Concept Analysis

Codes	Categories	Concepts
Watching Chinese dramas, learning vocabulary from subtitles	Media Type Preferences, Incidental Learning	Cultural Engagement Preferences, Language Learning Opportunities
Listening to Chinese popular music, joining fan groups	Music-based Learning, Social Interaction	Cultural Engagement Preferences, Language Learning Opportunities
Watching vlogs, mimicking TV lines, using translation apps	Media Type Preferences, Pronunciation Practice, Strategy Limitations	Cultural Engagement Preferences, Language Learning Opportunities, Intercultural Learning challenges
Following influencers, difficulty with cultural references	Social Media Exposure, Cultural Barriers	Cultural Engagement Preferences, Intercultural Learning Challenges
Singing along with C-popular, fear of grammar mistakes	Music-based Learning, Language Confidence Issues	Cultural Engagement Preferences Intercultural Learning Challenges
Learning vocabulary from subtitles, watching dramas	Incidental Learning, Media Type Preferences	Language Learning Opportunities Cultural Engagement Preferences
Joining fan groups, using Chinese in social media	Social Interaction, Social Media Exposure	Language Learning Opportunities Cultural Engagement Preferences

Table 4.13 The Code-Category-Concept Analysis (Cont.)

Codes	Categories	Concepts
Watching variety shows, fear of using wrong tones, using translation apps	Media Type Preferences, Language Confidence Issues, Strategy Limitations	Cultural Engagement Preferences Intercultural Learning Challenges
Singing C-popular, mimicry of TV lines	Music-based Learning, Pronunciation Practice	Cultural Engagement Preferences Language Learning Opportunities
Difficulty understanding slang, overreliance on translation	Cultural Barriers, Strategy Limitations	Intercultural Learning Challenges
Watching dramas, learning vocabulary, joining fan groups	Media Type Preferences, Incidental Learning, Social Interaction	Cultural Engagement Preferences Language Learning Opportunities
Singing C-popular, fear of incorrect tones, following actors online	Music-based Learning, Language Confidence Issues, Social Media Exposure	Cultural Engagement Preferences Intercultural Learning Challenges
Watching vlogs, mimicking TV lines, difficulty with cultural humor	Media Type Preferences, Pronunciation Practice, Cultural Barriers	Cultural Engagement Preferences Language Learning Opportunities Intercultural Learning Challenges
Learning vocabulary from subtitles, using translation apps	Incidental Learning, Strategy Limitations	Language Learning Opportunities Intercultural Learning Challenges

Table 4.13 The Code-Category-Concept Analysis (Cont.)

Codes	Categories	Concepts
Singing along, joining fan groups, watching variety shows	Music-based Learning, Social Interaction, Media Type Preferences	Cultural Engagement Preferences Language Learning Opportunities

Next section examined how Thai university students utilized Chinese popular culture as a tool for Chinese language learning. The study employed semi-structured interviews with 15 participants representing diverse academic years and Chinese proficiency levels (HSK 2-6). Data analysis followed Lichtman's (2013) six-step qualitative content analysis approach, which involved: 1) conducting initial coding, 2) reviewing initial codes, 3) developing preliminary categories, 4) refining categories based on emergent patterns, 5) revisiting category structures, and 6) identifying overarching themes (Dimarucot, Andres, Matitu, & Santiago, 2024). The findings revealed distinct yet thematically consistent patterns of engagement with Chinese popular culture.

#### 4.2.1 Media Preferences in Chinese Learning

Theme 1: Cultural Engagement Preferences reflected how students interacted with and consumed Chinese popular culture as a gateway to learning the language. Three prominent sub-themes emerged: 1) strong affinity for Chinese dramas and music, 2) preference for short-form and interactive media, and 3) emotional identification and cultural curiosity. These reflected different motivations and modes of interaction with Chinese popular culture that shaped the students' language learning experiences.

##### 4.2.1.1 Sub-theme: Strong Affinity for Chinese Dramas and Music

A dominant preference among the interviewees was their deep appreciation for Chinese TV dramas (C-dramas) and popular Chinese music. This sub-theme captured the role of long-form, narrative-driven content and its value in informal language acquisition. Eleven out of fifteen participants specifically mentioned that

watching Chinese dramas or listening to Chinese songs significantly motivated or reinforced their interest in learning Chinese. For Chinese TV dramas and songs, Interviewee 8 shared:

“Integrating Chinese popular culture into language learning can make learning more interesting and reduce the pressure of learning. For example, when I watch Chinese TV dramas or listen to Chinese songs, I can learn some Chinese words and sentences in a relaxed atmosphere. In addition, it can also help me understand Chinese culture better, which is helpful for learning Chinese. For example, through watching Chinese TV dramas, I can understand some Chinese traditional customs and values, which makes me more interested in learning Chinese.” (S8, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

Several students emphasized how C-dramas allowed them to immerse in authentic dialogues, exposing them to real-life expressions, tones, and cultural settings. For example, Interviewee 1 shared:

“I like Chinese TV dramas the most. For example, I'm really into dramas like *"Melody of Golden Age"* and *"The Romance of Tiger and Rose"*. These dramas not only have interesting storylines but also feature excellent actors such as Zhao Lusi, Luo Yunxi Ding Yuxi. Their performances are so vivid and help me understand the emotions and the use of language in different situations. The dialogues in these dramas are quite natural and cover a wide range of vocabulary and expressions. I also like watching the variety show *"Who's the Murderer"*.” (S5, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

This testimony illustrates the integration of passive viewing with active learning strategies, such as repetition and memorization, rooted in personal enthusiasm for the plot and characters. The participants often referred to dramas as a "natural classroom", where language acquisition happened incidentally yet effectively.

Similarly, music played a complementary role in facilitating pronunciation and memorization. Interviewee 1 noted:

“There are many different genres like popular and folk songs. A song like "永不失联的爱" has a melodious tune and touching lyrics that I really like. These two types of Chinese popular culture have had a great impact on my Chinese learning process.” (S1, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

Interviewee 2 noted:

“I like Chinese songs the most, especially those that reflect modern emotions and stories. They are meaningful and easy to access. My favorite Chinese singer is Jay Chou. His songs have a unique style and rich emotions. For example, in the song "不能说的秘密" (Can't Say the Secret), the melody is beautiful and the lyrics tell a touching love story.” (S2, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

The repetitiveness and melodic nature of popular songs appeared to support phonetic reinforcement and vocabulary retention. Moreover, many participants reported mimicking lyrics and even translating them as a form of self-study.

Among favorite genres, Xianxia dramas (fantasy genre rooted in Chinese mythology) were particularly popular, due to their rich cultural content and emotional narratives. Students described such dramas as simultaneously "addictive" and "educational", offering linguistic as well as cultural insights. Participants found these genres entertaining, which sustained their motivation. As one noted:

“When learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture, especially Xianxia dramas, I have faced some challenges. Xianxia dramas are different from modern dramas. They are set in a world full of fantasy and mythology, and they often involve many concepts related to Chinese history and culture. At the beginning, I found it difficult to understand some of these concepts, such as "

仙君" (Xianjun, a title for a powerful cultivator), "妖" (yao, demon), "师傅" (shifu, master), and "魔头" (motou, demon leader). I never got bored. The storyline made me want to understand more, so I kept checking new words.” (S3, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

This sub-theme demonstrates how students' preferences for certain forms of Chinese media, particularly dramas and music translated into effective and sustained engagement with the language in an emotionally resonant way.

#### 4.2.1.2 Sub-theme: Preference for Short-form and Interactive Media

While long-form content like C-dramas and popular music dominated among higher-level learners, several students, particularly those with lower HSK levels, expressed a distinct preference for short-form videos and interactive media. This sub-theme highlights how social media platforms such as TikTok, Bilibili, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu provided more accessible and engaging ways to interact with the Chinese language and culture.

Interviewee 6, who primarily followed short videos by bloggers like Li Ziqi and Dianxi Xiaoge, noted:

“I like short videos from Chinese bloggers such as Li Ziqi and Dianxi Xiaoge the most. Their videos show the beauty of Chinese rural life, traditional crafts, and delicious food. For example, Li Ziqi's videos show the beauty of Chinese rural life, traditional crafts, and delicious food. The attention to detail in the process of growing ingredients, preparing them, and cooking is amazing. And Dianxi Xiaoge's videos also give a glimpse into the simple and interesting life in the countryside, which is quite different from the urban life I am used to in Thailand. I learned words about food, cooking, and daily life.” (S6, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

Such videos allowed for visual learning, where meaning could be inferred from images, actions, and contextual cues even when full comprehension was not achieved. This was especially helpful for students in the early stages of language

acquisition. The digestibility of short-form content, often under one minute, also fit into students' daily routines more easily, enabling frequent exposure to the language.

Additionally, interactive elements such as comments, likes, and shares encouraged a form of participatory learning. Interviewee 8 mentioned:

“I watch dramas and then go to Weibo to see what people say about the characters. Sometimes I write a short comment too, in Chinese.” (S8, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

The convergence of media consumption and social interaction contributed to a more dynamic and meaningful engagement with Chinese. Weibo fan discussions and Xiaohongshu lifestyle content were not only language-rich but also culturally loaded, giving students both linguistic input and a chance to observe Chinese online communication styles.

Another participant highlighted how short videos removed the fear of complexity:

“TikTok videos are short but fun. I can understand a bit and guess from visuals and comments.” (S2, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

This strategy aligned with second language acquisition theories emphasizing the importance of comprehensible input (Ye, 2024). It also promoted confidence in language use without the pressure of perfection.

Thus, for lower-level learners or those constrained by time or motivation, short-form and interactive platforms served as an entry point into Chinese language and culture, blending entertainment with micro-learning opportunities.

#### 4.2.1.3 Sub-theme: Emotional Identification and Cultural Curiosity

A recurring motif across the responses was the participants' emotional connection with characters, stories, and values portrayed in Chinese popular culture. This emotional engagement translated into heightened cultural curiosity and a stronger drive to understand the language.

Students reported feelings of identification with characters, admiration for values such as family loyalty, resilience, or romantic ideals, and even nostalgia for historical narratives or traditional aesthetics. For instance, Interviewee 4 reflected:

“It can enhance learning motivation. For example, when I am interested in the Spring Festival, I will actively look for related information, such as watching documentaries about the history and customs of the Spring Festival. This not only broadens my horizons but also strengthens my interest in the Chinese language.” (S4, personal communication, March 15, 2025)

This statement underlines the cognitive-affective link in language learning: emotional interest in cultural content fosters deeper motivation to acquire linguistic competence.

Some students, particularly those drawn to genres like Chinese games the most, such as "Honor of King" and "Genshin Impact", which led to immersive language practices. Interviewee 12 shared:

“I think these games have very interesting plots and delicate designs. Take "Honor of King" as an example; it has a wide variety of characters, each with unique skills and backgrounds. The process of leading my favorite heroes to victory brings me a lot of fun. And "Genshin Impact" has a vast and beautiful open world for me to explore, which is really fascinating.” (S12, personal communication, March 15, 2025)

And Interviewee 9 shared:

“My reading skills have improved a bit through my attempts to read Chinese novels like "Silent Reading" (默读). Although I had to rely on the Thai version initially due to the high difficulty of the Chinese text, the exposure to the language has still helped me recognize more characters and understand some basic sentence structures. This has motivated me to continue learning and expanding my vocabulary, and I plan to challenge myself with reading Chinese

novels again once I have accumulated enough vocabulary and improved my reading proficiency.” (S9, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

This long-term exposure, combined with intrinsic motivation, contributed to vocabulary expansion, improved comprehension, and an enhanced cultural sense.

Additionally, exposure to traditional elements, such as festivals, cuisine, and crafts inspired a sense of appreciation for Chinese heritage. Interviewee 4 expressed:

“I enjoy watching Chinese New Year shows and food videos. It helps me know more about real Chinese culture.” (S4, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

Even when the language input was limited, such engagements fostered cultural familiarity, which in turn encouraged more active participation in language learning, such as through subtitles, vlogs, or cooking tutorials.

This sub-theme illustrates how emotional resonance and curiosity about Chinese life, society, and history can become powerful internal motivators for language acquisition, turning popular culture into a culturally immersive bridge between the student and the language.

The analysis of Theme 1 demonstrates that Thai university students engage with Chinese popular culture in highly diverse yet pedagogically meaningful ways. Whether through binge-watching fantasy dramas, following influencers on TikTok, or reading translated novels, their consumption of Chinese media reflects more than entertainment, it is a form of experiential learning.

Students with higher Chinese proficiency were more likely to engage with narrative-rich and linguistically complex content, such as C-dramas and novels, while beginners gravitated toward visual and short-form formats. Across levels, emotional and cultural attachment proved crucial in sustaining motivation and promoting deeper language engagement.

These findings suggest that educators and curriculum designers could systematically integrate Chinese popular culture into language instruction while adapting materials to learners' proficiency levels. For instance: Beginner learners may

benefit from scaffolded materials such as vocabulary lists extracted from short-form videos (e.g., TikTok) with pinyin annotations and slowed-down audio. Intermediate learners could analyze TV drama dialogues to identify conversational patterns, cultural references, and pragmatic expressions. Advanced learners might engage in critical discussions about sociocultural themes in web novels or films, connecting linguistic forms to broader cultural contexts. While high-proficiency students engage more with metacognitive and cognitive strategies, lower-level students prefer memory and social strategies. Across all levels, the integration of digital tools and peer collaboration is prevalent. These qualitative insights align with the study's quantitative results, reinforcing the need for proficiency-differentiated pedagogy in CFL curriculum.

#### **4.2.2 Language Acquisition Opportunities Through Chinese Popular Culture**

Theme 2: Language Learning Opportunities centered on the various ways in which Chinese popular culture supported language acquisition among Thai university students. Analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed three clear sub-themes: 1) enhanced listening and speaking proficiency, 2) acquisition of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, and 3) increased learner motivation and lowered language anxiety. The data demonstrated that integrating Chinese popular culture offered meaningful educational and intercultural benefits, varying with language proficiency and motivation. The qualitative content analysis was informed by both the frequency of responses and the richness of participants' descriptive accounts.

##### **4.2.2.1 Sub-theme: Enhanced Listening and Speaking Proficiency**

Among all language skills, listening and speaking were consistently identified as the most improved through interaction with Chinese popular culture. At least ten out of fifteen participants reported gains in listening comprehension, pronunciation, and speaking fluency as a result of exposure to real-life spoken Chinese via dramas, music, and short videos.

Interviewee 1 stated:

“From my experience, my listening and speaking skills have been improved the most. When I watch animations and listen to songs, I am constantly exposed to the Chinese language. My ears have become more sensitive to the sounds and rhythms of Chinese. For example, after listening to a lot of Chinese songs, I can now more easily distinguish between similar - sounding words.” (S1, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

Similarly, Interviewee 2 emphasized the role of audio-visual media:

“When I listen to Chinese songs, I can improve my listening ability and understand the pronunciation and intonation of Chinese. For example, by listening to Jay Chou's songs, I can learn the correct pronunciation of many words and phrases.” (S2, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

Participants described how repeated exposure to spoken Chinese, especially in emotionally engaging contexts allowed them to internalize intonation patterns, natural sentence rhythm, and tone distinctions. This aligns with the theory of incidental learning, where language skills develop implicitly through engaging activities.

For instance, Interviewee 6 highlighted:

“I think it might be vocabulary and listening. Because there isn't much dialogue in these videos I watch, I still try to listen to every word. This is a bit challenging for parts with dialects, but it also helps me get used to different accents and ways of speaking.” (S6, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

These observations underscore the aural immersion effect that popular culture provides, especially when learners are repeatedly exposed to speech in different accents, speeds, and informal settings, as is typical in C-dramas or reality shows. Students also reported mimicking lines from shows or singing along with lyrics as part of their informal speaking practice.

This sub-theme supports the view that Chinese popular culture acts as an auditory scaffolding tool, improving the learner's comfort with native-speaker speech and ultimately enhancing oral communication ability.

#### 4.2.2.2 Sub-theme: Vocabulary and Idiomatic Expression Acquisition

Another frequently cited benefit was the acquisition of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, particularly in context. Multiple participants noted how popular culture provided a source of natural, non-academic language, which helped them go beyond textbook Chinese.

Interviewee 3 said:

“Improves listening, accent, and pronunciation skills, as well as vocabulary and expression. Reduces stress and enhances motivation.” (S3, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

Similarly, Interviewee 7 shared:

“Vocabulary and listening skills, especially in understanding dialects and non-standard Mandarin.” (S7, personal communication, March 15, 2025)

Dramas, songs, and social media posts exposed students to real-life vocabulary, including slang, idioms, and cultural references that are often absent in formal instruction. For example, words related to food, relationships, emotions, and social life were repeatedly learned in context, which made them more memorable.

Participants with specific interests, such as romance dramas or fantasy novels, also reported acquiring domain-specific vocabulary. Interviewee 13 explained:

“Vocabulary expansion in specific areas (romance, fantasy), but not significant improvement in overall language skills.” (S13, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

This suggests that learners often gravitate toward content aligned with their interests, which allows for deep vocabulary acquisition in certain semantic fields, even if it does not always generalize to broad fluency.

However, it is important to note that a few participants, particularly Interviewees 14 and 15 acknowledged that while vocabulary benefits exist in theory, they did not personally experience these gains due to limited engagement with Chinese popular culture. This points to variability in engagement levels and highlights that mere exposure is not sufficient.

#### 4.2.2.3 Sub-theme: Increased Learner Motivation and Lowered Language Anxiety

A central psychological benefit observed across responses was the boost in motivation and reduction in language learning anxiety. Chinese popular culture was consistently described as fun, enjoyable, and relaxing, helping students stay engaged without the stress often associated with formal learning.

Interviewee 1 stated:

“Chinese animations like *"Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation"* (魔道祖师) provide a great way to understand real life language usage. In the animation, the characters' dialogues show how people communicate in different situations. For example, the interactions between Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji have a lot of natural and colloquial language. When Wei Wuxian teases Lan Wangji, he might use phrases like "蓝湛，你又生气啦？" (Lan Zhan, are you angry again?). This kind of language is very close to what you might hear in daily conversations among young people in China. It helps learners understand the meaning and usage of these phrases in a specific context and makes it easier for us to use them in our own conversations.” (S1, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

Likewise, Interviewee 10 noted:

“Makes language learning engaging and enjoyable, helps in practical language usage.” (S10, personal communication, March 15, 2025)

Interviewees appreciated how learning through entertainment removed the fear of making mistakes and made Chinese seem less intimidating. This informal learning context, often driven by personal interest, supports self-directed learning and the building of positive emotional associations with the language.

Interviewee 11 described:

“Increases learning motivation, connects culture and language.” (S11, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

Even participants who did not report measurable language skill gains acknowledged that Chinese popular culture had a positive influence on their attitude toward learning. For instance, Interviewee 12 shared:

“Increases interest, makes learning less pressured, offers cultural context.” (S12, personal communication, March 15, 2025)

Such remarks reinforce the idea that affective factors, including enjoyment, confidence, and emotional investment play a critical role in second language learning success (Ellis, 2004). Popular culture’s casual, student-controlled nature appears to reduce the perceived burden of language learning.

The qualitative findings reveal that Chinese popular culture offers rich linguistic input and motivational stimuli for Thai learners. The most consistently reported benefits were improved listening and speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, and increased learner motivation. These outcomes varied by learner interest, language level, and intensity of engagement, but the trend was clear: when learners actively interacted with popular culture, language development followed.

### **4.2.3 Challenges in Chinese Popular Culture-Driven Learning**

While students largely valued Chinese popular culture as a learning aid, several challenges were identified, especially in understanding content and maintaining consistent progress. Theme 3: Intercultural Learning Challenges examined the

difficulties Thai university students encountered when using Chinese popular culture for language learning. Analysis of the interview data revealed three prominent sub-themes: 1) language barrier and speed of native speech, 2) limited educational structure in popular culture content, and 3) cultural gaps and misunderstandings.

#### 4.2.3.1 Sub-theme: Language Barrier and Speed of Native Speech

Fast-paced dialogues, regional accents, and idiomatic expressions were frequently cited as major comprehension barriers.

“Sometimes I get lost when they speak too fast, especially in modern dramas with slang.” (S5, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

#### 4.2.3.2 Sub-theme: Limited Educational Structure in Popular Culture Content

Some students mentioned that popular content lacked grammar explanation or did not follow a pedagogical structure, which made it hard to build solid foundational knowledge.

“It's fun to watch, but I don't always know why a sentence is used that way.” (S9, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

In addition, some students mentioned that they did not really have the opportunity to integrate Chinese popular culture into their Chinese learning, and were not interested in these to a certain extent. In the learning process, they only followed the traditional classroom teaching and textbook learning path. For example, Interviewee 14 and Interviewee 15:

“I don't really like any kind of Chinese popular culture. I haven't been exposed to it much and I'm not interested in it personally. For example, even though my friends often talk about the latest Chinese popular songs or trendy TV shows, I've never felt the urge to check them out.” (S14, personal communication, March 15, 2025)

“I don't really like any kind of Chinese popular culture that much. To be honest, I have had little exposure to it. I know that there are things like Chinese popular music, TV dramas, and variety shows, but I haven't engaged with them actively. For example, I know some of my classmates talk about Chinese idols like Wang Yibo, Zhao Lusi or shows, but I haven't taken the time to watch or listen. Since I don't engage much with Chinese popular culture, I haven't had the chance to join any related language - learning groups or activities.” (S15, personal communication, March 15, 2025)

#### 4.2.3.3 Sub-theme: Cultural Gaps and Misunderstandings

Several participants found it difficult to fully grasp the cultural context or social references without prior knowledge, sometimes leading to confusion or misinterpretation, such as in Chinese romance and TV dramas, the way people express their love and deal with relationship issues is sometimes quite different from what I'm used to in Thai culture.

“In some Chinese stories, there's a lot of emphasis on fate and predestined relationships. There was a drama where the main characters believed they were soulmates connected by fate, which was a concept that was a bit hard for me to fully understand and accept at first. In Thai culture, while love is also important, the influence of such abstract concepts like fate on relationships is not as prominently featured as in some Chinese popular culture products. I need cultural background to really get it.” (S13, personal communication, March 14, 2025)

“I encountered my vocabulary improvement was limited. Moreover, sometimes the language used in popular culture is more colloquial and informal, which is different from the formal language I learned in textbooks, making it difficult for me to understand and apply it correctly.” (S8, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

While Chinese popular culture offers valuable opportunities for language learning, it also presents several challenges that learners must navigate. One of the most commonly cited difficulties is the complexity of the language used in entertainment media. Many Chinese TV dramas and novels incorporate idiomatic expressions, internet slang, and regional dialects, which can be difficult for non-native speakers to understand. Fast-paced dialogue and cultural references further complicate comprehension, making it challenging for learners to fully grasp the meaning of conversations. Additionally, learners may encounter industry-specific jargon in different forms of media. For example, mobile games often include technical terms and abbreviations that are not commonly found in standard language textbooks. While these terms may be useful within a specific context, they do not necessarily contribute to overall language proficiency. Similarly, historical dramas may use archaic expressions that are rarely used in modern spoken Chinese, which could lead to misunderstandings about contemporary language usage.

Another challenge is the potential for culture shock when encountering unfamiliar customs and social norms in Chinese media. Several interviewees reported feeling surprised by certain aspects of Chinese culture, such as the emphasis on fate and destiny in romantic relationships or the hierarchical nature of family dynamics. These cultural differences may be difficult for learners to relate to, leading to confusion or even resistance to certain aspects of Chinese popular culture. However, such experiences also present valuable learning opportunities, as they encourage students to explore cultural diversity and develop a more nuanced understanding of cross-cultural communication.

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

This study examined the impacts of Chinese popular culture on learning Chinese as a foreign language, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to address three research objectives. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between engagement with Chinese popular culture and language learning outcomes, while also highlighting nuanced intercultural opportunities and challenges.

Quantitative results demonstrated high levels of engagement (mean = 4.21) and overwhelmingly positive perceptions (mean = 4.40) among participants. Students perceived Chinese popular culture as an effective and enjoyable medium for improving vocabulary, listening skills, and cultural understanding. Notably, platforms such as TV dramas, music, and social media were identified as key facilitators of authentic language exposure. However, challenges such as culture shock (mean = 3.90), exposure to non-standard language (mean = 3.92), and distractions from entertainment value (mean = 3.95) underscored the complexity of integrating informal cultural resources into structured language education.

Qualitative insights further contextualized these findings. The qualitative analysis reveals that Thai university students utilize Chinese popular culture not only as a source of entertainment but also as a powerful tool for language development. While dramas, music, and short-form videos are the most favored formats, their influence extends to motivating learners, improving language exposure, and fostering intercultural awareness. Nonetheless, challenges such as comprehension gaps and lack of structure highlight the need for guided learning frameworks to fully maximize the educational value of Chinese pop culture. Participants emphasized the motivational benefits of popular culture, particularly its role in reducing anxiety and fostering real-world language application. Yet, the passive nature of media consumption and the prevalence of idiomatic expressions or regional dialects posed barriers to comprehensive language acquisition. Additionally, cultural dissonance, such as unfamiliar social norms or values depicted in media highlighted the need for guided intercultural reflection to bridge gaps between learners' Thai cultural frameworks and Chinese contexts.

Therefore, this research underscores the potential of Chinese popular culture as a motivational and educational resource for Thai university students learning Chinese. It suggests that educators and learners should consider leveraging this cultural interest to enhance language acquisition, while being mindful of the need for supplementary formal instruction to address the limitations posed by informal learning methods.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter synthesized the key findings presented in Chapter 4, offering a comprehensive conclusion based on the data analysis. It further engaged in an in-depth discussion of the implications of the results and put forward targeted recommendations derived from the study. The chapter was organized into three main sections, each addressing a distinct aspect of the research outcomes as follows:

- 5.1 Conclusion
- 5.2 Discussion
- 5.3 Recommendation

#### 5.1 CONCLUSION

The three research questions stated for this study were:

- 1) What are the preferred ways by Thai university students to access Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning?
- 2) What opportunities do Thai university students gain through using Chinese popular culture in their Chinese language learning process?
- 3) What do the participants consider challenges in learning Chinese as a foreign language through using Chinese popular culture?

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative strategies. Quantitative data were obtained through the five-score Likert Scale questionnaire, while the qualitative data were obtained through structured interviews. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires addressing all three research objectives. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured

interviews structured around the three research objectives. All details regarding the data and findings of the study have been presented. Based on the gathered data, the following conclusions were drawn.

### **5.1.1 Responses to Research Question 1**

The data revealed the most common avenues through which these students accessed Chinese popular culture to support their Chinese language learning, including online platforms, social media, streaming services, and fan communities. The questionnaire results showed diverse preferences in platform usage, with students often utilizing multiple digital tools for cultural engagement and language learning.

The most frequently used platform was TikTok, with 72.28% of respondents selecting it as a primary source for accessing Chinese popular culture. This finding highlights the growing popularity and influence of short-form video content among young learners. Following TikTok, YouTube also emerged as a highly popular platform, chosen by 68.81% of students. YouTube offers a broad spectrum of Chinese pop culture content, including music videos, drama clips, vlogs, and educational channels. Other commonly used platforms included iQiyi (42.08%), Weibo (39.11%), Xiaohongshu (Red Note) (40.59%), and Bilibili (37.13%), reflecting students' willingness to explore platforms originating from China to gain more immersive exposure. Notably, language-learning apps such as HelloTalk were selected by 36.63%, suggesting that a substantial portion of students also intentionally seek out tools designed for structured or semi-structured language exchange and cultural interaction. Conversely, the least selected option was "Other" (0.5%), indicating that nearly all respondents relied on mainstream digital platforms for accessing Chinese popular culture. Additionally, offline events such as film festivals or comic conventions were selected by 34.16%, reflecting lower but still meaningful levels of engagement in physical cultural experiences.

The qualitative interviews (Q1 and Q4) further substantiated these findings, showing that students valued these platforms not only for content accessibility but also

for their interactive features that facilitated language practice. Participants reported using comment sections and fan communities to practice written Chinese and engage in cultural exchanges.

The quantitative and qualitative data consistently demonstrated that:

- 1) Digital platforms served as primary access points for Chinese popular culture.
- 2) Short-form video content was particularly effective for language learning.
- 3) Platform choice correlated with language proficiency levels (as shown in Chapter 4's Table 4.4).

Digital platforms dominated cultural access, with platform choices reflecting learners' proficiency levels and goals. This multimodal engagement supported linguistic and intercultural development, evidenced by high engagement scores (mean=4.21, Table 4.6). The questionnaire data indicated strong agreement on the motivational and educational value of Chinese popular culture (mean=4.40), though challenges such as cultural dissonance were noted (mean=3.90).

### 5.1.2 Responses to Research Question 2

Regarding the opportunities of Chinese popular culture in language learning, the mean score of “connecting with the Chinese-speaking community” was 4.40 (S. D=0.71), indicating that students can feel the most opportunities for practical application and interaction in cultural learning. Other high-scoring items include the mean score of “active attention to new vocabulary” was 4.35 (S. D= 0.74), the mean score of “deep understanding of social norms and values” was 4.31 (S. D=0.76), the mean score of “understanding of politeness norms” was 4.30 (S. D=0.75), and the mean score of “recognizing regional differences” was 4.26 (S. D=0.79). The mean scores of these items are all above 4.2, indicating that students generally believe that Chinese popular culture provides them with rich language learning opportunities.

Questionnaire data demonstrated strong agreement regarding the educational value of Chinese popular culture (overall mean=4.40). Specific dimensions showed particularly high endorsement:

Enjoyment: Mean=4.50 (SD=0.61)

Belief in effectiveness: Mean=4.48 (SD=0.63)

Vocabulary expansion: Mean=4.46 (SD=0.67)

Authentic expression acquisition: Mean=4.45 (SD=0.65)

These results aligned with Chapter 4's thematic analysis (Table 4.8), which identified vocabulary development and cultural understanding as key benefits. Notably, listening comprehension showed significant improvement (mean=4.41, SD=0.69), corroborating interview reports of enhanced aural skills through media exposure.

The lowest scoring item pertained to speaking frequency improvement (mean=4.28, SD=0.78), reflecting limitations in verbal interaction opportunities within popular culture contexts – a finding that paralleled qualitative concerns about structural learning gaps.

Semi-structured interviews (Q2-Q3) provided nuanced insights into these quantitative trends:

1) Enhanced Linguistic Competence: Ten of fifteen participants reported substantial progress in listening skills, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

2) Cultural-Affective Benefits: 73% of participants cited reduced learning anxiety through entertainment, while 67% reported increased autonomous study time. Media narratives were also noted as aiding understanding of social norms.

3) Enhanced Cultural Understanding: 65% of respondents stated that engaging with Chinese popular culture helped them appreciate cultural nuances such as communication styles, honorifics, and traditional customs

Chinese popular culture offers Thai students' intercultural insights and immersive learning opportunities. Interview data highlight how exposure to films, music, and online content deepened their understanding of Chinese traditions and

social norms. From the interview results, it can be seen that exposure to authentic conversations in TV dramas, interviews, and online videos helped students develop a better grasp of pronunciation, tones, and informal expressions consistent with prior research on media-based language learning (Wang & Tananuraksakul, 2023). The data synthesis reveals that while Chinese popular culture effectively enhanced listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learning motivation (mean scores >4.30), it provided limited support for productive language skills like writing and structured speaking practice. This dichotomy aligns with Chapter 4's findings regarding media consumption patterns – while 69.31% of learners imitated dialogues (Table 4.7), only 39.11% engaged in bilingual subtitle creation, indicating predominantly passive engagement modes.

### 5.1.3 Responses to Research Question 3

According to analysis of the questionnaire data, it was found that both the benefits and difficulties students encounter when using Chinese popular culture for language learning. The items with lower mean scores include the mean score of “culture shock” was 3.90 (S. D=0.88), the mean score of “conflict between religion and social norms” was 3.85 (S. D=0.91), and the mean score of “entertainment value interference analysis” was 3.95 (S. D=0.86). These mean scores indicate that students encounter certain challenges in the process of cultural learning, especially when adapting to different cultural values and social norms. In addition, the mean score of “non-standard language structures in learning media” was 3.92 (S. D=0.87) also reflects the minor problems that students may face in the learning process.

Challenges in cultural comprehension were widely reported. Some students found it difficult to interpret humor, idiomatic expressions, and implicit cultural references embedded in TV dramas and online discussions. About 30% of students reported experiencing cultural shock, particularly in understanding different family structures, social hierarchies, and attitudes towards education and discipline in Chinese society. Moreover, some students expressed difficulty in distinguishing between contemporary Chinese cultural elements and traditional practices, highlighting the

need for more structured intercultural learning resources.

The semi-structured interviews (Q5, Q6) revealed a diverse range of challenges that students face when using Chinese popular culture for language learning, highlighting both linguistic and intercultural aspects. One common challenge across the interviewees is the difficulty in understanding various language features, such as hidden meanings, industry-specific terms, slang, and colloquial expressions. For example, Interviewee 1 mentioned struggles with understanding cultural references and industry-specific terms, while Interviewee 2 highlighted challenges with slang and unclear pronunciation in songs. Additionally, Interviewee 3 found it difficult to grasp terms in Chinese fantasy genres, like "Xianjun" and "yao", reflecting the complexity of specialized vocabulary in certain genres. Similarly, several participants noted that fast-paced dialogue and dialects in TV dramas and short videos made it hard to catch all the words, limiting their understanding of the content.

"One of the main challenges is that some words or expressions have hidden meanings. For example, in some Chinese songs, there are metaphors and allusions that are not easy to understand. In an animation, there might be some cultural references that I am not familiar with. Another challenge is that there are some industry - specific terms. In some animations about a particular field, like a sports- themed animation, there are many terms related to that sport that I have to look up and learn separately. It can be a bit confusing at times when I encounter these unfamiliar terms..... " (S1, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

"One of the challenges is understanding words or expressions that are not common in textbooks. For example, in some songs, there may be some slang or colloquial expressions that are not easy to understand. Sometimes, the pronunciation in songs is not clear, which makes it difficult for me to understand the lyrics. For example, some singers may have a unique pronunciation style, or the melody may affect the clarity of the pronunciation. This requires me to spend more time and effort to understand and learn." (S2,

personal communication, March 13, 2025)

"Yes, I have had a culture shock experience after being exposed to Chinese popular culture. In Thailand, we use different utensils for different foods. For example, we use chopsticks for noodles and a spoon and fork for rice. However, in China, people use chopsticks to pick up almost everything, and only occasionally use a spoon to assist. This was quite different from what I was used to in Thailand. Another example is about entering temples. In Thailand, we are required to take off our shoes before entering a temple. But in China, there is no such requirement when entering a temple." (S2, personal communication, March 13, 2025)

Despite these challenges, engagement with Chinese popular culture fosters increased cultural curiosity and encourages students to participate in cross-cultural discussions with native speakers. Overall, the qualitative data suggests that while Chinese popular culture provides valuable opportunities for language learning, it also presents significant challenges related to language comprehension and cultural adaptation. Students benefit most when they engage actively with content that interests them and when they navigate the linguistic and cultural challenges with patience and persistence. And the results suggest that while cultural engagement through popular media is beneficial, additional guidance and contextual learning are necessary to navigate cultural complexities effectively.

## **5.2 DISCUSSION**

This section discusses the study's findings in relation to the three research objectives: 1) Thai university students' preferred ways of accessing Chinese popular culture for language learning, 2) the opportunities derived from this engagement, and 3) the intercultural challenges encountered. The discussion integrates quantitative and qualitative data from Chapter 4, highlighting key implications for theory and practice.

### 5.2.1 Preferred Engagement Pathways with Chinese Popular Culture

The study identified digital platforms as the primary avenue for Thai university students to access Chinese popular culture. Quantitative data revealed that 72.28% of participants relied on TikTok for short-form content, while 68.81% utilized YouTube for diverse media consumption, including music videos, drama clips, and educational channels (Table 4.5). These findings align with broader trends among younger learners who favor interactive and visually engaging platforms (Wang & Tananuraksakul, 2023). Qualitative interviews further highlighted a proficiency-dependent bifurcation in preferences: higher-level learners (HSK4-6) gravitated toward long-form narratives such as C-dramas (e.g., *The Romance of Tiger and Rose*), which they described as “natural classrooms” for incidental language acquisition (S8). Conversely, beginners (HSK2-3) prioritized short-form videos (e.g., Li Ziqi’s rural vlogs) for their digestible input and contextualized visual cues, enabling comprehension even with limited vocabulary.

This divergence underscores the necessity for proficiency-level-specific pedagogical strategies. For instance, lower-level learners could benefit from structured activities integrating TikTok clips (e.g., extracting vocabulary from food-related content), while advanced learners might analyze drama dialogues to decode sociolinguistic patterns (e.g., honorifics in historical contexts). The dominance of digital platforms also signals a paradigm shift from traditional classroom resources to informal, learner-driven environments—a trend consistent with research on media-enhanced language acquisition (Ye, 2024).

The data further demonstrated that engagement with Chinese popular culture was multifaceted. Platforms like Bilibili (37.13%) and WeTV (36.14%) provided immersive exposure to China-originated content, while language-learning apps (e.g., HelloTalk, 36.63%) facilitated semi-structured interactions. Notably, offline events (34.16%) served as supplementary channels for cultural immersion, though less prominent than digital options. Such multimodal engagement reflects students' strategic use of media not merely for entertainment but as tools for incidental skill

development—particularly in listening comprehension (mean=4.41) and vocabulary acquisition (mean=4.46, Table 4.8).

These findings resonate with Otajonova's (2024) assertion that authentic cultural materials enhance learner engagement by bridging classroom instruction with real-world language use. Chinese popular culture acts as a conduit to the target language community, fostering both linguistic proficiency and sociocultural awareness (Liu & Lin, 2017). For example, students who mimicked drama dialogues (69.31%, Table 4.7) internalized tonal nuances and colloquial expressions, while those participating in fan communities (45.54%) practiced written Chinese through comments and discussions.

Crucially, the self-directed nature of this engagement aligns with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Learners driven by intrinsic motivation—such as admiration for idols or curiosity about Chinese traditions—exhibited deeper and more sustained interaction with cultural content (Trenshaw, Revelo, Earl, & Herman, 2016). As S12 noted, “Watching dramas feels like a hobby, not homework” underscoring how autonomy and interest reduce learning anxiety and enhance persistence. This intrinsic alignment suggests that integrating popular culture into curricula could amplify motivation, particularly when content aligns with learners' personal interests (Sun & Wudthayagorn, 2024).

In summary, Thai university students' engagement pathways with Chinese popular culture are shaped by platform accessibility, proficiency levels, and intrinsic motivation. These pathways not only reflect evolving digital learning behaviors but also highlight opportunities for educators to leverage media-rich resources in fostering both linguistic and intercultural competencies.

### **5.2.2 Opportunities in Language Learning and Intercultural Competence**

Students surveyed through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews overwhelmingly viewed Chinese popular culture as a valuable resource for enhancing

language acquisition and intercultural understanding. Quantitative data revealed strong agreement on its educational value, with vocabulary expansion (mean=4.46) and listening comprehension (mean=4.41) emerging as top linguistic benefits. These findings were substantiated by qualitative feedback: 73% of interviewees reported reduced anxiety through entertainment-driven learning, aligning with Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of low-stress environments in language acquisition. Additionally, 65% of participants noted improved understanding of cultural norms, such as politeness hierarchies (mean=4.30) and regional dialects (mean=4.26), underscoring the dual linguistic and intercultural advantages of media engagement.

One of the most prominent linguistic opportunities is the integration of Chinese popular culture into language learning provided students with authentic input that textbooks often lack. For example, mimicking drama dialogues (69.31% of respondents, Table 4.7) allowed learners to internalize tonal patterns and colloquial expressions, while exposure to music and variety shows enhanced their ability to decode fast-paced, natural speech. This aligns with Lan et al. 's (2015) findings on the efficacy of multimedia content in Mandarin acquisition. Students further highlighted how visual and contextual cues in short-form videos facilitated vocabulary retention, even at lower proficiency levels (HSK2-3).

Beyond linguistic gains, engagement with Chinese popular culture fostered intercultural communicative competence (Barker, 2016). By consuming media such as historical dramas (*The Untamed*) and reality shows (*Who's the Murderer*), students gained insights into Chinese social norms, historical narratives, and contemporary youth subcultures. This exposure enabled them to navigate cultural nuances, such as indirect communication styles in professional settings or the use of humor in informal interactions.

The “authenticity effect” (Pai & Duff, 2020) of popular culture also facilitated intercultural mediation (Kramsch, 2001). For instance, participation in online fan communities (45.54%, Table 4.5) allowed learners to practice written Chinese while

negotiating cultural meanings. As S8 explained, “Discussing plot twists on Weibo taught me how Chinese netizens express sarcasm—something I'd never learn in class.” Such interactions positioned students as cultural interpreters, bridging Thai and Chinese contexts through shared interests.

These findings align with the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), where low-anxiety environments enhance language acquisition. For instance, mimicking drama dialogues (69.31% of respondents, Table 4.7) allowed students to internalize tonal patterns and colloquial expressions without formal pressure. However, the limited improvement in speaking frequency (mean=4.28) suggests a gap in active verbal practice, as most engagement remained passive (e.g., watching rather than conversing). This dichotomy implies that while popular culture enriches receptive skills, structured speaking activities (e.g., role-playing drama scenes) are needed to bridge productive skill gaps.

### 5.2.3 Navigating Intercultural Challenges

The integration of Chinese popular culture into language learning environments, particularly among Thai university students, provides both unique intercultural opportunities and noteworthy challenges (Kahanurak, Dibyamandala, & Mangkhang, 2023; Nomnian, 2018). Data from both the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews revealed a multifaceted perspective among students. While many acknowledged the motivational and educational value of Chinese popular culture, they also reflected on the complexities and occasional discomforts they experienced while navigating cultural differences embedded in these media forms (Li, Liu, & Su 2024).

Students struggled with fast-paced dialogues (mean=3.92) and regional dialects prevalent in Chinese media (e.g., Sichuanese in *Nezha*), corroborating Wong and Xiao's (2010) observation that unmediated exposure to authentic content risks cognitive overload. Beginners (HSK2-3) faced particular difficulty decoding slang and idioms, as S5 noted: “In modern dramas, characters use phrases like ‘社死’ (social death) that textbooks never explain.” Such challenges align with Bahrani and Sim-

Tam's (2012) warning that unstructured media consumption may overwhelm learners, necessitating scaffolded support (e.g., annotated subtitles).

A critical challenge lies in avoiding superficial cultural understanding. Chinese popular culture often presents idealized narratives—romanticized relationships in idol dramas or aspirational lifestyles in reality shows (Fang, 2015). Without guided analysis, students risk internalizing stereotypes, mistaking fictional portrayals for societal norms. This underscores the need for critical media literacy training to distinguish between entertainment tropes and authentic cultural practices.

To effectively harness the intercultural benefits of Chinese popular culture while mitigating its challenges, a balanced pedagogical approach is essential. Meanwhile, language programs might also consider forming partnerships with Chinese universities or cultural institutions to facilitate student exchanges, virtual dialogues, or co-learning projects centered on popular culture (Ma & Wen, 2018). Such initiatives can deepen students' understanding of the socio-cultural context behind media content and promote reciprocal learning experiences.

## **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.3.1 Recommendations for Implementation of the Research Finding**

1) The engagement of Thai university students with Chinese popular culture has played a significant role in enhancing their language learning experience. It is recommended that educators integrate more Chinese popular culture elements, such as music, films, and online media, into their teaching strategies to increase student engagement and motivation (Tang & Hou, 2024).

2) Thai university students have demonstrated positive perceptions towards the use of Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language. Collaboration with native Chinese speakers can further enhance students' language proficiency. Exchange programs, language partner initiatives, and online language communities can help students gain real-world exposure to Chinese language and

culture (Jiang & Phusawisot, 2023). Therefore, it is suggested that Chinese language instructors actively utilize Chinese popular culture as a supplementary tool to make learning more enjoyable and relatable.

3) The use of Chinese popular culture has provided both intercultural opportunities and challenges for Thai university students. To maximize the benefits, universities should offer guidance and cultural context explanations to help students navigate cultural differences effectively.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

Future studies should explore the long-term impact of using Chinese popular culture on language proficiency. Longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into how engagement with popular culture influences vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and speaking skills over time. Additionally, researchers can examine differences in learning outcomes between students who frequently engage with Chinese popular culture and those who rely on traditional learning methods.

Another area for future research is the role of different types of Chinese popular culture in language learning. Studies can investigate whether music, television dramas, online videos, or social media content have varying levels of effectiveness in enhancing language acquisition. Researchers may also analyze how students with different learning styles respond to these various media formats.

Finally, cross-cultural comparisons can provide valuable insights into how students from different backgrounds perceive and benefit from using Chinese popular culture in language learning. Comparative studies between Thai students and learners from other countries can help educators refine teaching strategies and develop more effective language programs that cater to diverse student needs.

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**APPENDICES**



**APPENDIX A**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**



## Perceptions of Thai University Students on Chinese Popular Culture in Learning Chinese as A Foreign Language

### Questionnaire

Dear students,

Thank you very much for participating in this survey, please help to fill out the following questionnaire. The data collected will be only used for academic studies and all questionnaires and are designed to be anonymous in order to protect your personal information. Your answer will be of high value to study Perceptions of Thai university students towards the use of Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese as a foreign language.

Thank you once again for your time and support.

#### Part 1 Basic demographic information

Instruction: Please tick in box of your answer.

1	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to say
2	First language: <input type="checkbox"/> Thai <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify): _____
3	Year of study: <input type="checkbox"/> Year 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 4
4	Current Chinese Language Level: <input type="checkbox"/> HSK2 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK3 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK4 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK5 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK6 <input type="checkbox"/> Haven't taken HSK test yet

#### Part 2 Engagement Preferences

Instruction: Please tick in box of your answer.

5	What kinds of Chinese popular culture are you interested in? (You can choose more than one answer) <input type="checkbox"/> Music <input type="checkbox"/> Movies <input type="checkbox"/> TV series <input type="checkbox"/> Online Games <input type="checkbox"/> Short videos <input type="checkbox"/> Novel <input type="checkbox"/> Anime <input type="checkbox"/> Food and Drink <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Festivals <input type="checkbox"/> Singers <input type="checkbox"/> Actors/Actresses <input type="checkbox"/> Idols <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify): _____
6	<p>Which platforms do you primarily use to access Chinese popular culture? (You can choose more than one answer)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> YouTube <input type="checkbox"/> Bilibili <input type="checkbox"/> WeTV <input type="checkbox"/> iQiyi <input type="checkbox"/> TikTok <input type="checkbox"/> Weibo <input type="checkbox"/> Xiaohongshu (Red Note) <input type="checkbox"/> Language-learning apps (e.g., HelloTalk) <input type="checkbox"/> Offline events (e.g., film festivals, comic conventions) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify: _____)
7	<p>On average, how much time do you spend engaging with Chinese popular culture per week?</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 hour <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 7+ hours
8	<p>How do you incorporate Chinese popular culture into your language learning? (You can choose more than one answer)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Learning vocabulary/pronunciation through song lyrics <input type="checkbox"/> Imitating dialogues from TV/films to practice speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Reading web novels/comics to learn Chinese characters <input type="checkbox"/> Participating in Chinese discussions within fan communities <input type="checkbox"/> Creating bilingual subtitles/translations <input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing cultural phenomena for coursework <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify: _____)
9	<p>Which interaction style do you prefer?</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Passive consumption (e.g., watching dramas, listening to music) <input type="checkbox"/> Active creation (e.g., song covers, fan fiction) <input type="checkbox"/> Social media interaction (e.g., Weibo fan groups) <input type="checkbox"/> Offline activities (e.g., cosplay, dubbing competitions)

### Part 3 Perceptions

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement regarding the integration of Chinese popular culture in your Chinese language learning experience.

No.	Item	5 (Strongly Agree)	4 (Agree)	3 (Neutral)	2 (Disagree)	1 (Strongly Disagree)
10	You enjoy using Chinese popular culture elements in learning Chinese language.					
11	You believe using Chinese popular culture is helpful for learning Chinese.					
12	Exposure to Chinese popular culture increases your interest (motivation) in learning Chinese and reduces learning pressure (anxiety).					
13	Engaging with Chinese popular culture helps eliminate negative					

	emotions and fatigue in learning Chinese.					
14	You find that using Chinese popular culture increases your frequency of speaking in Chinese.					
15	Exposure to Chinese popular culture improves your understanding of the Chinese language to some extent.					
16	Exposure to Chinese popular culture assists your Chinese language learning and lets you acquire more authentic oral expressions.					
17	You believe that exposure to Chinese popular culture improves your cross-cultural					

	communication skills.					
18	Exposure to Chinese popular culture expands your vocabulary.					
19	You find that exposure to Chinese popular culture allows you to understand common spoken expressions and vocabulary collocations.					

#### Part 4 Opportunities and Challenges

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement regarding the opportunities and challenges of Chinese popular culture in your Chinese language learning experience.

No.	Item	5 (Strongly Agree)	4 (Agree)	3 (Neutral)	2 (Disagree)	1 (Strongly Disagree)
20	Your Chinese language teachers introduce Chinese popular culture in the process of teaching Chinese.					
21	You usually use the vocabulary					

	and sentences you acquired from Chinese popular culture when doing homework or assignments.					
22	When you encounter new words or expressions outside the textbook in Chinese popular culture, you actively pay attention to them and try to use them in your own language practice.					
23	You gain insights into Chinese social norms and values through popular culture.					
24	You understand cultural nuances in communication (e.g., politeness norms) by imitating dialogues from Chinese media.					

25	You recognize and understand regional cultural differences (e.g., North-South divide, dialects) with the help of Chinese popular culture.					
26	You connect with Chinese-speaking friends or online communities through share interests in popular culture.					
27	You participate in cross-cultural discussions (e.g., comparing Thai and Chinese traditions) with the help of Chinese popular culture.					
28	Differences in values and ways of thinking can lead to a culture shock when using Chinese popular					

	culture in language learning.					
29	Different religious beliefs and social norms can lead to culture clashes when you engage with Chinese popular culture.					
30	The entertainment value of Chinese popular culture (e.g., engaging storylines or humor) distract you from critically analyzing cultural differences during language learning.					
31	You encounter the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes (e.g., oversimplified views of Chinese culture, such as the belief that all					

	Chinese people practice Chinese Kung Fu, that Chinese cuisine is only about spicy food.) when engaging with Chinese popular culture?					
32	The use of simplistic and casual expressions in Chinese popular culture leads you to learn non-standard structures and words.					
33	Using Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning can cause misunderstandings due to different cultural habits of life and manners.					

### Interview Invitation

**\*\*\*If you are interested in participating in subsequent interviews, please leave your contact information. Your information will be protected. \*\*\***

**\*\*\*By volunteering to be an interviewee for this study, you can make a significant contribution to the field of Chinese language education. \*\*\***

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ -



## Perceptions of Thai University Students on Chinese Popular Culture in Learning Chinese as A Foreign Language

### Questionnaire

เรียน นักศึกษาทุกท่าน

ขอขอบคุณอย่างยิ่งที่เข้าร่วมในการสำรวจครั้งนี้ กรุณาช่วยกรอกแบบสอบถามต่อไปนี้ ข้อมูลที่เก็บรวบรวมจะถูกนำไปใช้เพื่อการศึกษาทางวิชาการเท่านั้น และแบบสอบถามทั้งหมดจะถูกออกแบบให้ไม่ระบุตัวตนเพื่อปกป้องข้อมูลส่วนบุคคลของคุณ คำตอบของคุณจะมีคุณค่าอย่างยิ่งต่อการศึกษาการรับรู้ของนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยไทยต่อการใช้วัฒนธรรมจีนยอดนิยมในการเรียนภาษาจีนเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

ขอขอบคุณอีกครั้งสำหรับเวลาและการสนับสนุนของคุณ

#### Part 1 Basic demographic information

กรุณาทำเครื่องหมายในช่องคำตอบของคุณ

1	เพศ: <input type="checkbox"/> หญิง <input type="checkbox"/> ชาย <input type="checkbox"/> นอนไบนารี <input type="checkbox"/> ไม่ประสงค์จะระบุ
2	ภาษาแรก: <input type="checkbox"/> ไทย <input type="checkbox"/> อังกฤษ <input type="checkbox"/> จีน <input type="checkbox"/> อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ): _____
3	ชั้นปีที่ศึกษา: <input type="checkbox"/> ปี 1 <input type="checkbox"/> ปี 2 <input type="checkbox"/> ปี 3 <input type="checkbox"/> ปี 4
4	ระดับภาษาจีนปัจจุบัน: <input type="checkbox"/> HSK2 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK3 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK4 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK5 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK6 <input type="checkbox"/> ยังไม่เคยสอบ

#### Part 2 Engagement Preferences

กรุณาทำเครื่องหมายในช่องคำตอบของคุณ

5	<p>คุณสนใจวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนประเภทใดบ้าง (เลือกได้มากกว่า 1 ข้อ)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> เพลง <input type="checkbox"/> ภาพยนตร์ <input type="checkbox"/> ซีรีส์ <input type="checkbox"/> เกมออนไลน์ <input type="checkbox"/> วิดีโอสั้น <input type="checkbox"/> นิยาย <input type="checkbox"/> อนิเมะ <input type="checkbox"/> อาหารและเครื่องดื่ม</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> เสื้อผ้า <input type="checkbox"/> เทศกาล</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> นักแสดง <input type="checkbox"/> นักร้อง <input type="checkbox"/> ไอดอล <input type="checkbox"/> อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ): _____</p>
6	<p>คุณใช้แพลตฟอร์มใดในการเข้าถึงวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนเป็นหลัก (เลือกได้มากกว่า 1 ข้อ)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YouTube <input type="checkbox"/> Bilibili</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> WeTV <input type="checkbox"/> iQiyi <input type="checkbox"/> TikTok <input type="checkbox"/> Weibo <input type="checkbox"/> Xiaohongshu (Red Note)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> แอปเรียนภาษา (เช่น HelloTalk)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> กิจกรรมออนไลน์ (เช่น เทศกาลภาพยนตร์ งานการ์ตูน)</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ: _____)
7	<p>โดยเฉลี่ยแล้ว คุณใช้เวลากับวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนกี่ชั่วโมงต่อสัปดาห์</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> น้อยกว่า 1 ชั่วโมง</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 ชั่วโมง</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 ชั่วโมง</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7+ ชั่วโมง</p>
8	<p>คุณนำวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนมาใช้ในการเรียนภาษาอย่างไร (เลือกได้มากกว่า 1 ข้อ)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> เรียนรู้คำศัพท์/การออกเสียงผ่านเนื้อเพลง</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> เลียนแบบบทสนทนาจากทีวี/ภาพยนตร์เพื่อฝึกพูด</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> อ่านนิยายเว็บ/การ์ตูนเพื่อเรียนรู้ตัวอักษรจีน</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> มีส่วนร่วมในการสนทนาภาษาจีนในชุมชนแฟนคลับ</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> สร้างคำบรรยาย/แปลสองภาษา</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> วิเคราะห์ปรากฏการณ์ทางวัฒนธรรมสำหรับงานเรียน</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ: _____)</p>
9	<p>คุณชอบรูปแบบการมีส่วนร่วมแบบใด</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> การรับชมแบบไม่มีส่วนร่วม (เช่น ดูละคร ฟังเพลง)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> การสร้างสรรค์เนื้อหา (เช่น คัฟเวอร์เพลง แต่งแฟนฟิคชั่น)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> การมีปฏิสัมพันธ์บนโซเชียลมีเดีย (เช่น กลุ่มแฟนคลับบน Weibo)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> กิจกรรมออนไลน์ (เช่น คอสเพลย์ การแข่งขันพากย์เสียง)</p>

### Part 3 Perceptions

กรุณาระบุระดับความเห็นด้วยของคุณต่อข้อความต่อไปนี้เกี่ยวกับการผสมผสานวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนในประสบการณ์การเรียน

ภาษาจีนของคุณ

No.	Item	5 (Strongly Agree)	4 (Agree)	3 (Neutral)	2 (Disagree)	1 (Strongly Disagree)
10	คุณชอบใช้องค์ประกอบของวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนในการ					

	เรียนภาษาจีน					
11	คุณเชื่อว่าการใช้วัฒนธรรม มือปิ่นช่วยในการเรียนภาษา จีน					
12	การสัมผัสกับวัฒนธรรมมือ ปิ่นเพิ่มความสนใจ (แรงจูงใจ) ในการเรียนภาษาจีนและลด ความกดดัน (ความวิตกกังวล) ในการเรียน					
13	การมีส่วนร่วมกับวัฒนธรรม มือปิ่นช่วยจัดการมโนคติ อันลบและความเหนื่อยล้าใ นการเรียนภาษาจีน					
14	คุณพบว่าการใช้วัฒนธรรม มือปิ่นเพิ่มความถี่ในการพู ดภาษาจีนของคุณ					
15	การสัมผัสกับวัฒนธรรมมือ ปิ่นช่วยพัฒนาความเข้าใจ ภาษาจีนของคุณในระดับห ึ่ง					
16	การสัมผัสกับวัฒนธรรมมือ ปิ่นช่วยในการเรียนภาษาจี นและทำให้คุณได้เรียนรู้สำ นวนการพูดที่เป็นธรรมชาติ มากขึ้น					

17	คุณเชื่อว่าการสัมผัสกับวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนช่วยพัฒนาทักษะการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมของคุณ					
18	การสัมผัสกับวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนช่วยเพิ่มพูนคำศัพท์ของคุณ					
19	คุณพบว่า การสัมผัสกับวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนช่วยให้คุณเข้าใจสำนวนที่ใช้ทั่วไปและการเรียงคำศัพท์					

#### Part 4 Opportunities and Challenges

กรุณาระบุระดับความเห็นด้วยของคุณต่อข้อความต่อไปนี้เกี่ยวกับการผสมผสานวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนในประสบการณ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาจีนของคุณ

No.	Item	5 (Strongly Agree)	4 (Agree)	3 (Neutral)	2 (Disagree)	1 (Strongly Disagree)
20	อาจารย์สอนภาษาจีนของคุณมีการแนะนำวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนในกระบวนการสอนภาษาจีน					
21	คุณมักใช้คำศัพท์และประโยคที่ได้เรียนรู้จากวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนเมื่อทำการบ้านหรืองานที่ได้รับมอบหมาย					
22	เมื่อคุณพบคำศัพท์หรือสำนวนใหม่ๆ นอกตำราเรียนใน					

	วัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีน คุณจะให้ความสนใจและพยายามนำมาใช้ในการฝึกภาษาของคุณ					
23	คุณได้เรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับบรรทัดฐานทางสังคมและค่านิยมของจีนผ่านวัฒนธรรมป๊อป					
24	คุณเข้าใจความละเอียดอ่อนทางวัฒนธรรมในการสื่อสาร (เช่น มารยาทในการพูด) จากการเลียนแบบบทสนทนาในสื่อจีน					
25	คุณรับรู้และเข้าใจความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมในแต่ละภูมิภาค (เช่น ความแตกต่างระหว่างเหนือ-ใต้ ภาษาล้านนา) ด้วยความช่วยเหลือจากวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีน					
26	คุณเชื่อมต่อกับเพื่อนที่พูดภาษาจีนหรือชุมชนออนไลน์ผ่านความสนใจร่วมกันในวัฒนธรรมป๊อป					
27	คุณมีส่วนร่วมในการสนทนาข้ามวัฒนธรรม (เช่น การเปรียบเทียบประเพณีไทยและจีน) ด้วยความช่วยเหลือจากวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีน					

	นธรรมป้อปจีน					
28	ความแตกต่างในค่านิยมและวิธีคิดอาจนำไปสู่การช็อกทางวัฒนธรรมเมื่อใช้วัฒนธรรมป้อปจีนในการเรียนภาษา					
29	ความเชื่อทางศาสนาและบรรทัดฐานทางสังคมที่แตกต่างกันอาจนำไปสู่ความขัดแย้งทางวัฒนธรรมเมื่อคุณมีส่วนร่วมร่วมกับวัฒนธรรมป้อปจีน					
30	คุณค่าความบันเทิงของวัฒนธรรมป้อปจีน (เช่น เนื้อเรื่องที่น่าสนใจหรืออารมณ์ขัน) ทำให้คุณเบี่ยงเบนความสนใจจากการวิเคราะห์ความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมอย่างมีวิจารณญาณระหว่างการเรียนภาษา					
31	คุณพบการตอกย้ำภาพเหมารวมทางวัฒนธรรม (เช่น มุมมองที่เรียบง่ายเกินไปเกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมจีน เช่น ความเชื่อที่ว่าชาวจีนทุกคนฝึกกังฟู อาหารจีนมีแต่อาหารรสเผ็ด					


	) เมื่อมีส่วนร่วมกับวัฒนธรรม มป้อปจีน					
32	การใช้สำนวนที่เรียบง่ายแล ะไม่เป็นทางการในวัฒนธรรม มป้อปจีนทำให้คุณเรียนรู้โ ครงสร้างและคำศัพท์ที่ไม่ เป็นมาตรฐาน					
33	การใช้วัฒนธรรมมป้อปจีนใ นการเรียนภาษาจีนอาจก่อใ ้เกิดความเข้าใจผิดเนื่องจา กความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม มในการดำเนินชีวิตและมา รยาท					

คำเชิญสัมภาษณ์

**\*\*\*หากคุณสนใจเข้าร่วมการสัมภาษณ์ในลำดับถัดไป กรุณาให้ข้อมูลการ  
ติดต่อของคุณ ข้อมูลของคุณจะได้รับการปกป้อง\*\*\***

**\*\*\*การอาสาเป็นผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์สำหรับการศึกษานี้ คุณสามารถมีส่วนร่วมที่  
สำคัญต่อวงการการศึกษาภาษาจีน \*\*\***

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

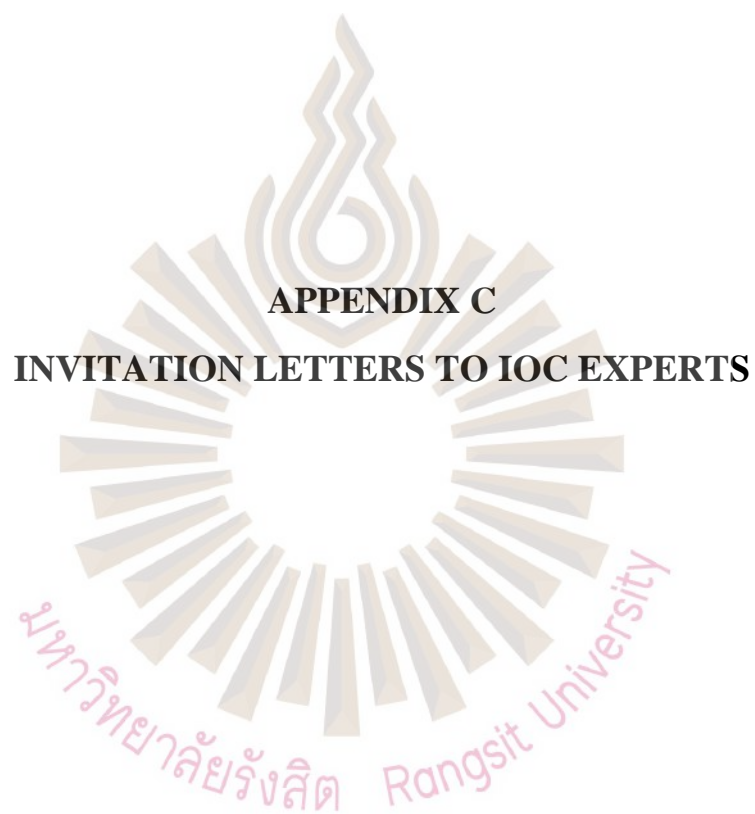
The image features a large, faint watermark of the Rangsit University logo in the background. The logo consists of a stylized flame or sunburst shape at the top, with a circular base made of radiating lines. Below the logo, the university's name is written in Thai and English.

**APPENDIX B**  
**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**  
**QUESTIONS**

มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University

### Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1	<p>What kind of Chinese popular culture do you like most?</p> <p>คุณชอบวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนประเภทไหนมากที่สุด</p>
2	<p>What are the benefits of integrating Chinese popular culture into Chinese language learning?</p> <p>การผสมผสานวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนเข้ากับการเรียนภาษาจีนมีประโยชน์อย่างไรบ้าง</p>
3	<p>In your opinion, what language skills have been improved most significantly from your experience of learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture?</p> <p>จากประสบการณ์การเรียนภาษาจีนผ่านวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีน</p> <p>ทักษะทางด้านใดที่คุณคิดว่าพัฒนาขึ้นอย่างเห็นได้ชัดที่สุด</p>
4	<p>What kind of opportunities do you get from integrating Chinese popular culture into your Chinese language learning?</p> <p>คุณได้รับโอกาสอะไรบ้างจากการผสมผสานวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนเข้ากับการเรียนภาษาจีน</p>
5	<p>What challenges have you faced in learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture?</p> <p>คุณเผชิญความท้าทายอะไรบ้างในการเรียนภาษาจีนผ่านวัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีน</p>
6	<p>What suggestions do you have for those who want to use Chinese popular culture as a source to learn Chinese language?</p> <p>คุณมีคำแนะนำอะไรสำหรับผู้ที่ต้องการใช้วัฒนธรรมป๊อปจีนเป็นแหล่งเรียนรู้ภาษาจีน</p>



**APPENDIX C**  
**INVITATION LETTERS TO IOC EXPERTS**

**RSU** มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต  
RANGSIT UNIVERSITY 

มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University T. (66) 2997 2200-30  
เมืองเอก อ.พหลโยธิน Muang-Aek, Pathayothin Rd., F. (66) 2791 5757  
จ.ปทุมธานี 12000 Pathumthani 12000, Thailand E. info@rsu.ac.th

STC.4800/0978  
7 February 2025  
Subject: Invitation to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert  
Dear Dr. Noppawan Chimroylarp  
Faculty of Education, Kasetsart University

Miss Lifei Dong student number 6204849, a student in the Master of Education (Bilingual Education) who has already completed her coursework and thesis proposal defense on 15 January 2025. Her research is entitled "The Impacts of Chinese Popular Culture on Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of Thai University Students". Currently, she is in the stage of collecting and analyzing data Asst. Prof. Dr. Panidnad Chulerk is her advisor.

Miss Lifei Dong has finished designing her research instruments. Thus, the college would like to invite you to validate these instruments. The package has been attached herewith.

I truly appreciate your kind support in this matter and hope that you will accept my invitation.

Sincerely yours,  
  
Assistant Professor Anchalee Chayanuvat, Ed.D.  
Program Director of Bilingual Education  
Suryadhep Teachers College  
Rangsit University

 มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University

www.rsu.ac.th



STC.4800/0979

7 February 2025

Subject: Invitation to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert

Dear Assoc. Prof. Nopporn Sarobol

Language Institute, Thammasat University

Miss Lifei Dong student number 6204849, a student in the Master of Education (Bilingual Education) who has already completed her coursework and thesis proposal defense on 15 January 2025. Her research is entitled "The Impacts of Chinese Popular Culture on Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of Thai University Students". Currently, she is in the stage of collecting and analyzing data Asst. Prof. Dr. Panidnad Chulerk is her advisor.

Miss Lifei Dong has finished designing her research instruments. Thus, the college would like to invite you to validate these instruments. The package has been attached herewith.

I truly appreciate your kind support in this matter and hope that you will accept my invitation.

Sincerely yours,

Assistant Professor Anchalee Chayanuvat, Ed.D.

Program Director of Bilingual Education

Suryadhep Teachers College

Rangsit University





## Memorandum

STC.4800/0980

7 February 2025

Subject: Invitation to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert

Dear Kanchana Cheewasukthaworn, Ph.D.

Rangsit English Language Institute, Rangsit University

Miss Lifei Dong student number 6204849, a student in the Master of Education (Bilingual Education) who has already completed her coursework and thesis proposal defense on 15 January 2025. Her research is entitled "The Impacts of Chinese Popular Culture on Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of Thai University Students". Currently, she is in the stage of collecting and analyzing data. Asst. Prof. Dr. Panidnad Chulerk is her advisor.

Miss Lifei Dong has finished designing her research instruments. Thus, the college would like to invite you to validate these instruments. The package has been attached herewith.

I truly appreciate your kind support in this matter and hope that you will accept my invitation.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anchalee Chayanuvat".

Assistant Professor Anchalee Chayanuvat, Ed.D.

Program Director of Bilingual Education

Suryadhep Teachers College

Rangsit University

**APPENDIX D**  
**IOC RESULTS**



## Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) Evaluation for Questionnaire Results by Experts

This appendix presents the results of the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) validation process conducted by three content experts in language education and popular culture. The IOC index was employed to assess the alignment of questionnaire and interview items with the research objectives, ensuring the validity of the instruments. Each expert independently rated the 34 questionnaire items and 6 interview questions on a scale of **1** (clearly measures the objective), **0** (unclear alignment), or **-1** (clearly does not measure). To maintain impartiality, experts were not informed of the specific objectives each item addressed. The final IOC scores were calculated using Rovinelli and Hambleton's (1976) formula, with a minimum threshold of **0.50** required for item retention. All items achieved IOC scores ranging from 0.67 to 1.00 (mean = 0.82), exceeding the acceptability threshold. Below are the IOC review results from the three experts:

No.	Statement	Rating by Experts			IOC Average	Remarks
		Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3		
<b>Part 1 Basic demographic information</b>						
1	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to say	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
2	First language: <input type="checkbox"/> Thai <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify): _____	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
3	Year of study: <input type="checkbox"/> Year 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 4	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
4	Current Chinese Language	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted

	Level: <input type="checkbox"/> HSK2 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK3 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK4 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK5 <input type="checkbox"/> HSK6 <input type="checkbox"/> Haven't taken HSK test yet					
<b>Part 2 Engagement Preferences</b>						
5	What kinds of Chinese popular culture are you interested in? (You can choose more than one answer) <input type="checkbox"/> Music <input type="checkbox"/> Movies <input type="checkbox"/> TV series <input type="checkbox"/> Online Games <input type="checkbox"/> Short videos <input type="checkbox"/> Novel <input type="checkbox"/> Anime <input type="checkbox"/> Food and Drink <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing <input type="checkbox"/> Festivals <input type="checkbox"/> Actors/Actresses <input type="checkbox"/> Singers <input type="checkbox"/> Idols <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify): _____	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
6	Which platforms do you primarily use to access Chinese popular culture? (You can choose more than one answer) <input type="checkbox"/> YouTube <input type="checkbox"/> Bilibili <input type="checkbox"/> WeTV <input type="checkbox"/> iQiyi <input type="checkbox"/> TikTok <input type="checkbox"/> Weibo <input type="checkbox"/> Xiaohongshu (Red Note) <input type="checkbox"/> Language-learning apps (e.g., HelloTalk) <input type="checkbox"/> Offline events (e.g., film festivals, comic conventions)	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted

	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify: _____)					
7	<p>On average, how much time do you spend engaging with Chinese popular culture per week?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 hour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 hours</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 hours</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7+ hours</p>	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
8	<p>How do you incorporate Chinese popular culture into your language learning? (You can choose more than one answer)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Learning vocabulary/pronunciation through song lyrics</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Imitating dialogues from TV/films to practice speaking</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reading web novels/comics to learn Chinese characters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Participating in Chinese discussions within fan communities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Creating bilingual subtitles/translations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing cultural phenomena for coursework</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify: _____)</p>	0	+1	+1	0.67	Accepted

9	Which interaction style do you prefer? <input type="checkbox"/> Passive consumption (e.g., watching dramas, listening to music) <input type="checkbox"/> Active creation (e.g., song covers, fan fiction) <input type="checkbox"/> Social media interaction (e.g., Weibo fan groups) <input type="checkbox"/> Offline activities (e.g., cosplay, dubbing competitions)	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
<b>Part 3 Perceptions</b>						
10	You enjoy using Chinese popular culture elements in learning Chinese language.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
11	You believe using Chinese popular culture is helpful for learning Chinese.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
12	Exposure to Chinese popular culture increases your interest (motivation) in learning Chinese and reduces learning pressure (anxiety).	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
13	Engaging with Chinese popular culture helps eliminate negative emotions and fatigue in learning Chinese.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
14	You find that using Chinese popular culture increases your	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted

	frequency of speaking in Chinese.					
15	Exposure to Chinese popular culture improves your understanding of the Chinese language to some extent.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
16	Exposure to Chinese popular culture assists your Chinese language learning and lets you acquire more authentic oral expressions.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
17	You believe that exposure to Chinese popular culture improves your cross-cultural communication skills.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
18	Exposure to Chinese popular culture expands your vocabulary.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
19	You find that exposure to Chinese popular culture allows you to understand common spoken expressions and vocabulary collocations.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
20	A lack of basic knowledge of Chinese culture makes you spend extra time understanding cultural contexts.	-1	+1	+1	0.33	Delete
<b>Part 4 Opportunities and Challenges</b>						
21	Your Chinese language teachers introduce Chinese	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted

	popular culture in the process of teaching Chinese.					
22	You usually use the vocabulary and sentences you acquired from Chinese popular culture when doing homework or assignments.	+1	0	+1	0.67	Accepted
23	When you encounter new words or expressions outside the textbook in Chinese popular culture, you actively pay attention to them and try to use them in your own language practice.	+1	0	+1	0.67	Accepted
24	You gain insights into Chinese social norms and values through popular culture.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
25	You understand cultural nuances in communication (e.g., politeness norms) by imitating dialogues from Chinese media.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
26	You recognize and understand regional cultural differences (e.g., North-South divide, dialects) with the help of Chinese popular culture.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
27	You connect with Chinese-speaking friends or online communities through share interests in popular culture.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted

28	You participate in cross-cultural discussions (e.g., comparing Thai and Chinese traditions) with the help of Chinese popular culture.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
29	Differences in values and ways of thinking can lead to a culture shock when using Chinese popular culture in language learning.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
30	Different religious beliefs and social norms can lead to culture clashes when you engage with Chinese popular culture.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
31	The entertainment value of Chinese popular culture (e.g., engaging storylines or humor) distract you from critically analyzing cultural differences during language learning.	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
32	You encounter the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes (e.g., oversimplified views of Chinese culture, such as the belief that all Chinese people practice Chinese Kung Fu, that Chinese cuisine is only about spicy food.) when engaging with Chinese	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted

	popular culture?					
33	The use of simplistic and casual expressions in Chinese popular culture leads you to learn non-standard structures and words.	0	+1	+1	0.67	Accepted
34	Exposure to Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning can cause misunderstandings due to different cultural habits of life and manners.	+1	+1	0	0.67	Accepted

**Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) Evaluation for the Semi-Structured Interview Results by Experts**

No.	Statement	Rating by Experts			IOC Average	Remarks
		Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3		
1	What kind of Chinese popular culture do you like most?	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
2	What are the benefits of using Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning?	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
3	In your opinion, what language skills have been improved most significantly from your	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted

	experience of learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture?					
4	What kind of opportunities do you get from using Chinese popular culture in learning Chinese language?	+1	0	+1	0.67	Accepted
5	What challenges have you faced in learning Chinese through Chinese popular culture?	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted
6	What suggestions do you have for those who want to use Chinese popular culture as a source to learn Chinese language?	+1	+1	+1	1	Accepted

**APPENDIX E**  
**CRONBACH'S ALPHA RELIABILITY ANALYSIS**



### Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis

Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CITC)	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Part 3 Perceptions</b>		
10.You enjoy using Chinese popular culture elements in learning Chinese language.	.540	.944
11. You believe using Chinese popular culture is helpful for learning Chinese.	.592	.943
12. Exposure to Chinese popular culture increases your interest (motivation) in learning Chinese and reduces learning pressure (anxiety).	.582	.943
13.Engaging with Chinese popular culture helps eliminate negative emotions and fatigue in learning Chinese.	.604	.943
14.You find that using Chinese popular culture increases your frequency of speaking in Chinese.	.601	.943
15.Exposure to Chinese popular culture improves your understanding of the Chinese language to some extent.	.537	.944
16.Exposure to Chinese popular culture assists your Chinese language learning and lets you acquire more authentic oral expressions.	.537	.944
17.You believe that exposure to Chinese popular culture improves your cross-cultural communication skills.	.492	.945
18. Exposure to Chinese popular culture expands your vocabulary.	.521	.944
19. You find that exposure to Chinese popular culture allows you to understand common spoken	.582	.943

expressions and vocabulary collocations.		
<b>Part 4 Opportunities and Challenges</b>		
20. Your Chinese language teachers introduce Chinese popular culture in the process of teaching Chinese.	.678	.942
21. You usually use the vocabulary and sentences you acquired from Chinese popular culture when doing homework or assignments.	.691	.942
22. When you encounter new words or expressions outside the textbook in Chinese popular culture, you actively pay attention to them and try to use them in your own language practice.	.697	.942
23. You gain insights into Chinese social norms and values through popular culture.	.734	.941
24. You understand cultural nuances in communication (e.g., politeness norms) by imitating dialogues from Chinese media.	.717	.942
25. You recognize and understand regional cultural differences (e.g., North-South divide, dialects) with the help of Chinese popular culture.	.673	.942
26. You connect with Chinese-speaking friends or online communities through share interests in popular culture.	.665	.942
27. You participate in cross-cultural discussions (e.g., comparing Thai and Chinese traditions) with the help of Chinese popular culture.	.710	.942
28. Differences in values and ways of thinking can lead to a culture shock when using Chinese popular culture in language learning.	.636	.943
29. Different religious beliefs and social norms can lead to culture clashes when you engage with	.616	.943

Chinese popular culture.		
30. The entertainment value of Chinese popular culture (e.g., engaging storylines or humor) distract you from critically analyzing cultural differences during language learning.	.660	.942
31. You encounter the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes (e.g., oversimplified views of Chinese culture, such as the belief that all Chinese people practice Chinese Kung Fu, that Chinese cuisine is only about spicy food.) when engaging with Chinese popular culture?	.659	.942
32. The use of simplistic and casual expressions in Chinese popular culture leads you to learn non-standard structures and words.	.658	.942
33. Using Chinese popular culture in Chinese language learning can cause misunderstandings due to different cultural habits of life and manners.	.699	.942



**APPENDIX F**  
**CERTIFICATE OF RESEARCH ETHICS**

COA. No. RSUERB2025-043



**Certificate of Approval  
By  
Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University**

COA. No.	COA. No. RSUERB2025-043
Protocol Title	PERCEPTIONS OF THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON CHINESE POPULAR CULTURE IN LEARNING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
Principle Investigator	LIFEI DONG
Co - Investigator	Paidnad Chulerk
Affiliation	Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University
How to review	Expedited Review
Approval includes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project proposal</li> <li>2. Information sheet</li> <li>3. Informed consent form</li> <li>4. Data collection form/Program or Activity plan</li> </ol>
Date of Approval:	13 February 2025
Date of Expiration:	13 February 2026
Date of Renewal:	within 13 January 2026

The prior mentioned documents have been reviewed and approved by Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University based Declaration of Helsinki, The Belmont Report, CIOMS Guideline and International Conference on Harmonization in Good Clinical Practice or ICH-GCP

Signature.....

(Associate Professor Dr. Panan Kanchanaphum)  
Chairman, Ethics Review Board for Human Research

**BIOGRAPHY**

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