

Original Research Article

## The impact of English cultural references in international TV series on cross-cultural audience acceptance

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on the English cultural elements present in international TV dramas and explores their impact on cross-cultural audience acceptance. By analyzing the presentation of English cultural elements across different types of international TV dramas and integrating cross-cultural communication theory, the study examines how these elements influence cross-cultural audiences at cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels, thereby affecting their acceptance of the dramas. The research finds that English cultural elements can enhance acceptance through cultural familiarity but may also reduce it due to cultural differences causing comprehension barriers. Implementing reasonable strategies for utilizing cultural elements is crucial for improving the dissemination effectiveness of international TV dramas in cross-cultural markets.

**Keywords:** international TV dramas; English cultural elements; cross-cultural audience; acceptance

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### 1. Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization, the dissemination of international TV dramas has become increasingly widespread on a global scale. TV dramas from different countries and regions transcend national borders, reaching audiences with diverse cultural backgrounds. As a global lingua franca, English cultural elements frequently appear in international TV dramas, covering aspects such as language use, lifestyles, values, and social customs, exerting a complex and profound influence on cross-cultural audience acceptance. Studying the impact of English cultural elements in international TV dramas on cross-cultural audience acceptance not only aids in a deeper understanding of cross-cultural communication patterns but also provides valuable references for the production and dissemination of international TV dramas.

### 2. Literature review

#### 2.1. Cross-cultural communication theory

Cross-cultural communication theory offers a theoretical foundation for examining the impact of English cultural elements in international TV dramas on cross-cultural audience acceptance. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory highlights differences among cultures in terms of power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term vs. short-term orientation. These cultural disparities influence how individuals perceive and accept information. Samovar's cross-cultural communication model emphasizes the interplay between cultural backgrounds, communicators, and audiences, suggesting that cultural differences can lead to communication barriers and that effective cross-cultural communication necessitates adjustments to accommodate these disparities.

#### 2.2. Research on TV drama acceptance

Previous studies have explored various factors influencing TV drama acceptance. Some focus on content quality, such as the attractiveness of the plot and character development, while others emphasize the impact of distribution channels and marketing strategies on acceptance. However, specialized research on the impact of cultural elements in international TV dramas on cross-cultural audience acceptance is relatively scarce. Although some studies mention the effect of cultural differences on audience understanding of TV dramas, they have not

systematically and thoroughly analyzed the specific role of English cultural elements.

### **3. Presentation of English cultural elements in international TV dramas**

#### **3.1. Linguistic level**

English appears as the primary or auxiliary language in international TV dramas. In dramas set in English-speaking countries, English serves as the main language of communication, allowing audiences to hear authentic English dialogues. In non-English-speaking countries' dramas, English may emerge in the form of interludes, quotes, or language used in specific scenes. For instance, in some Asian TV dramas, characters may use English expressions in certain contexts to convey a sense of internationalization or fashion.

#### **3.2. Lifestyle level**

Lifestyle elements from English culture frequently appear in international TV dramas, including dietary culture (e.g., displays of Western breakfasts), leisure and entertainment activities (e.g., going to bars, attending parties), and living environments (e.g., modern apartments, standalone villas). The presentation of these lifestyle elements allows cross-cultural audiences to gain insights into the daily lives of English-speaking countries.

#### **3.3. Values level**

The values advocated by English culture, such as individualism, free competition, and innovation, are also reflected in international TV dramas. For example, some American dramas emphasize personal self-realization and the pursuit of dreams, with characters often achieving success through their own efforts and struggles. The presentation of these values can have a certain impact and influence on the values of cross-cultural audiences.

#### **3.4. Social customs level**

Social customs from English culture, such as festival celebrations, wedding ceremonies, and social etiquette, are also common cultural elements in international TV dramas. For instance, the portrayal of Western festivals like Christmas and Thanksgiving in TV dramas enables cross-cultural audiences to understand the festival cultures and traditional customs of English-speaking countries.

### **4. Mechanisms of impact of English cultural elements on cross-cultural audience acceptance**

#### **4.1. Cognitive level**

**Cultural Familiarity Enhances Comprehension:** When cross-cultural audiences possess a certain level of understanding and familiarity with English cultural elements, these elements can facilitate a better comprehension of the plot and content of TV dramas. For example, audiences familiar with Western festival cultures may find it easier to resonate with and understand plotlines involving Christmas in TV dramas. **Cultural Differences Cause Comprehension Barriers:** Conversely, if cross-cultural audiences lack understanding of English cultural elements, these elements may become barriers to comprehending TV dramas. For instance, certain English slang terms, puns, or specific cultural metaphors may be difficult for non-native English speakers to grasp, thereby affecting their understanding of the plot.

#### **4.2. Emotional level**

**Cultural Identity Strengthens Emotional Resonance:** If English cultural elements align with or resonate with the cultural values of cross-cultural audiences, these elements can enhance their emotional resonance with the TV drama. For example, some American dramas emphasizing personal struggle and self-realization may attract Asian audiences with similar values. **Cultural Conflict Triggers Emotional Resistance:** Conversely, if English cultural elements significantly clash with the cultural values of cross-cultural audiences, it may trigger emotional resistance. For instance, some English cultural elements overly emphasizing individualism and material enjoyment may make audiences who prioritize collectivism and spiritual pursuits feel uncomfortable.

#### **4.3. Behavioral level**

**Cultural Imitation Promotes Acceptance:** When cross-cultural audiences develop a positive attitude towards

English cultural elements, they may imitate certain behaviors and practices depicted in the TV drama. For example, some audiences may emulate the dressing styles, dietary habits, or leisure activities of characters in the drama. This cultural imitation behavior further fosters their acceptance and appreciation of the TV drama. Cultural Rejection Reduces Acceptance: If cross-cultural audiences hold a rejecting attitude towards English cultural elements, they may reduce their viewing and attention to related TV dramas. For instance, some audiences may choose not to watch dramas containing certain English cultural elements due to their disagreement with the depicted values or lifestyles.

## **5. Case analysis**

### **5.1. Acceptance of friends in the asian market**

Friends, a classic American sitcom, enjoys a large audience in the Asian market. The drama is rich in English cultural elements, including everyday English dialogues, the lifestyles of young Americans, and values related to friendship and love. Initially, some English slang terms and cultural metaphors in the drama may be challenging for Asian audiences to understand, but with continued viewing, they gradually become familiar with these elements. Simultaneously, the friendship and love stories depicted in the drama resonate with the emotional concepts in Asian culture, triggering emotional resonance among Asian audiences. Additionally, the fashion elements and lifestyles presented in the drama have also influenced Asian audiences, with many imitating the dressing styles and leisure activities of the characters. Consequently, Friends has achieved high acceptance in the Asian market.

### **5.2. Utilization effect of English cultural elements in an asian TV drama**

An Asian TV drama incorporated numerous English cultural elements to convey an international atmosphere, such as English dialogues and scenes set in Western restaurants. However, the integration of these English cultural elements with the plot was not natural, appearing somewhat forced, and some English dialogues were difficult for non-native English speakers to understand. Furthermore, some individualistic values advocated in the drama clashed with the collectivist values prevalent in Asian culture, triggering emotional resistance among certain audiences. As a result, the acceptance of this TV drama in cross-cultural dissemination was not ideal.

## **6. Strategies to enhance acceptance of international TV dramas in cross-cultural markets**

### **6.1. Reasonable utilization of English cultural elements**

Producers should select and utilize English cultural elements reasonably based on the cultural backgrounds and acceptance levels of the target cross-cultural audiences. Avoid overloading the drama with English cultural elements, which may cause comprehension difficulties for the audience. Simultaneously, ensure that English cultural elements are closely integrated with the plot and presented naturally and smoothly.

### **6.2. Strengthening cultural annotations and explanations**

For English cultural elements that may cause comprehension barriers for cross-cultural audiences, producers can provide annotations and explanations through subtitles, voiceovers, or explanations within the plot. This approach helps audiences better understand the plot and reduces the impact of cultural differences.

### **6.3. Emphasizing cultural values integration**

In the production of international TV dramas, emphasis should be placed on integrating English cultural values with the cultural values of the target cross-cultural audiences. Identify commonalities between the two cultures and convey positive and uplifting values through plot development and character portrayal, triggering emotional resonance among audiences.

### **6.4. Conducting cross-cultural marketing activities**

During the dissemination process of TV dramas, producers and distributors can conduct cross-cultural marketing activities, such as organizing cultural exchange events and inviting cross-cultural audiences to participate in discussions. Through these activities, the sense of participation and identification with the TV

drama among cross-cultural audiences can be enhanced, thereby increasing their acceptance of the drama.

## 7. Conclusion

English cultural elements in international TV dramas have multifaceted impacts on cross-cultural audience acceptance, encompassing both positive aspects, such as enhanced comprehension through cultural familiarity and strengthened emotional resonance through cultural identity, and negative aspects, such as comprehension barriers due to cultural differences and emotional resistance due to cultural conflicts. Through case analysis, it is evident that strategies like reasonable utilization of English cultural elements, strengthening cultural annotations and explanations, emphasizing cultural values integration, and conducting cross-cultural marketing activities can effectively enhance the acceptance of international TV dramas in cross-cultural markets. Future research can further delve into the specific impacts of different types of English cultural elements on cross-cultural audience acceptance and develop more precise dissemination strategies based on the characteristics of different cross-cultural markets.

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