

## **Attitude and Identity Categorizations: A Corpus-based Study of Chinese Animated Movie of Ne Zha Zhi Mo Tong Jiang Shi**

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper reports a corpus based attitudinal analysis of discourse of movie reviews of Chinese animations. The study aims at the perception of viewers about Chinese animated films. The aim of the study is to investigate the social semiotic perspective of online reviewers to analyze identity construction in a corpus of text comprising online reviews of moviegoers. Based on appraisal theory proposed by Martin and White (2005) to investigate the distribution of the three attitudes: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation on film reviews of Ne Zha Zhi Mo Tong Jiang Shi on IMDb website by self-compiling a corpus. Results of the study indicate that seventy-five percent of foreign moviegoers positively appreciate the film. On the contrary, about fourteen percent of viewers express their affections and nine percent of viewers make judgment. Regarding the appreciation, the internal structures of the film are frequently discussed, such as the balance of the storyline and the complexity of the languages. Overall, the storyline, the state-of-the-art special effects and the upbeat theme are applauded, while the structure of the story and the translation are criticized. It is also figured out that the majority of the reviewers turn out to be overseas Chinese and foreign audiences go to see the movie because they accompany their Chinese wives or friends to see the film.*

**Key words:** *appraisal theory, attitudinal analysis, movie review, culture export*

## 1. Introduction

Animation has progressed significantly in the movies, cartoons, advertisements etc. due to the recent advancement of technology. In fact, these animated movies play a significant role in disseminating the ideology, an attitude, identity and even constructs the perception of the people, an attitude, and identity. Müller-Hartmann (2008) states that we have to face the fact that “not all is well in the Disney kingdom when it comes to questions of morality”. For example, in the movie, *Disney Princesses* franchise, princesses are not a beacon of feminist values rather these princesses show other subtle messages. In another movie, e.g. The *Cars* franchise, for example, is full of stereotypes about rednecks, Italians, women, and more. Therefore, an attitude and identity are being constructed through the animated movies and bullying is portrayed as a part of characters’ everyday lives which develops into a reality. These images and attitude are being indoctrinated with certain messages, positive or negative.

Therefore, Chinese government launched a lot of policies to develop its own animation industry, such as constructing industrial animation parks and issuing laws to protect innovative contents (Keane, 2010) to tackle the influx of foreign animations. Through endless efforts, China has witnessed a rapid rise of Chinese animation projects and has produced quite a few good quality animations with its own domestic “tastes” (Jiang & Huang, 2017), such as *Monkey King: The Hero Is Back* (Chinese: 美猴王之大圣归来) in 2015, *Big Fish & Begonia* (Chinese: 大鱼海棠) in 2016, *White Snake* (Chinese: 白蛇缘起) and *Ne Zha Zhi Mo Tong Jiang Shi* (Chinese: 哪吒之魔童降世) in 2019. All these movies, being ample with Chinese culture, were well-planned with creative contents and perfectly made with state-of-the-art technologies. They all won great success within China. Take *Ne Zha Zhi Mo Tong Jiang Shi* (Chinese: 哪吒之魔童降世) as an example, the film, made with sophisticated technologies and novelty storyline, became the Top One box-office recorder and achieved high ratings among all ages. It, as a representative of China, entered into the preliminary list of Best Foreign Language Film of Oscar nominations. However, international moviegoers responded to those movies indifferently.

Chinese film industry has contributed significantly while exporting a positive performance of Chinese films to global markets and high-budget movies were more likely to improve overseas performance (L. Liu & Lai, 2009). What’s more, though Chinese culture differs greatly from American culture theoretically, Chinese films were as popular in the United States as in Asian-Pacific nations (Fu, 2013). In other words, language difference didn’t not have a positive relation with the acceptance of overseas audiences.

China has caught the attention of the world economic powers due to her rapid growth of economy, (W. W. Li, 2016). China's cultural export enjoys narrow channels. One way is to attend the film fairs held home and abroad, and the other way is the adoption of foreign agencies. A third method is to cooperate with other nations (H. L. Li, 2016). It is revealed that the majority of Chinese cultural products were mainly consumed by overseas Chinese in Southeast-Asia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the US and Canada. Thus, apart from the improvement of contents, technologies and management innovations, it is suggested to get involved with overseas Chinese in the promotion of Chinese cultural products as they are familiar with both the culture of homeland and the migrated country (W. W. Li, 2016).

The study is significant because it deals with the viewers attitude towards Chinese characteristics films and viewers attitudes towards Chinese movies. The study undertakes online reviews to investigate the attitude of people. As film reviews contain a multitude of evaluators' opinions, feelings, attitudes, and preferences, thus, an attitudinal analysis of film reviews could lead to a thorough understanding of audience attitudes, preferences and tastes.

Legoux et al. (2016) proposed that film reviews may also be known as film critique supplemented with a linguistic and pragmatic analysis and evaluations of film. Film reviews are important because they first act as an intermediary between film directors and movie consumers. Film review writers explain the contents, the filming techniques, symbolism, and significance to readers who do not have relevant backgrounds (Anderson & Grether, 2017). Second, reviews keep the potential either encourage or discourage people to watch the film in that critics' attitudes. Good and positive evaluations were conducive to the success of the film, while negative and bad comments would keep moviegoers away from the films (Legoux, Larocque, Laporte, Belmati, & Boquet, 2016).

Prince (2001) stated that film reviews are classified into two general categories: one targeted at newspaper and television audiences with a primary purpose to help moviegoers have basic understandings of the film and decide whether a particular film is worth watching, and the other aimed at academic research scholars, highlighting the academic values. The widespread of Internet has shifted film criticisms from papered-medium to the Internet. As a result, anyone can express their opinions and feelings, discuss films with reasonable arguments, and be considered as a movie expert. "The ability for everyone to write criticism and be heard, allows viewers to feel empowered, to create meaningful commentary on the art form of film and also connect with fellow film buffs and enthusiasts that are likewise working to develop their own critical voices (Weiss, 2018)". In fact, viewers' reviews are *per se* a type of word-of-mouth (Chakravarty, Liu, & Mazumdar, 2010) and could generate great influence

on the success of box-office revenues, trustworthy and assessable (Y. Liu, 2006). Online collective reviews are tested to be more reliable and predictive than experts' evaluations (Ponnamma Divakaran & Nørskov, 2016).

In this context, this paper seeks to contribute to the cultural export studies through an attitudinal examination of overseas online film reviews on Chinese animations under the guidance of *Appraisal Theory* (Martin & White, 2005) by addressing the following questions: (1) what are the semantic features of the attitudes expressed in online movie reviews, (2) what do viewers applaud for and what do they criticize, (3) and how do their attitudes reflect their identities.

## **2. literature review**

### **2. 1 Studies on online film reviews**

In the field of market research, scholars have paid attentions to the relationships between film reviews and other variables, such as viewers' satisfaction and film success. Studies showed film reviews positively correlated to box performance (Boatwright, Basuroy, & Kamakura, 2007; Gemser, Oostrum, & Leenders, 2007; Y. Liu, 2006; Wu, 2015). For instance, Basuroy and Chatterjee (2003) pointed out that reviews of film critics can both indicate and influence box-office performance, and negative reviews would hurt box-office revenues more than positive reviews help box-office success. With regard to the impact of movie reviews on post-reviewing evaluations, it is noted that polarized and negative reviews from both professional and amateur critics would lower viewers' enjoyment and post-reviewing evaluations (Jacobs, Heuvelman, Ben Allouch, & Peters, 2015). D' Astous and Touil (1999) claimed that experts' opinions and judgements on films significantly affected ordinary viewers' evaluations. Compared the influence effects of professional critics with amateur film reviewers, Chakravarty et al. (2010) found that audiences' comments weighted more on infrequent filmgoers while experts' advices were more appreciated by frequent moviegoers. Similar results were made by Wen-Chin Tsao (2014) who found that consumer reviews exerted greater influence on potential filmgoers' choice and their post-evaluations of films than professional reviews. Excellent evaluations of films were proved to have greater potential to be successful and stay longer in the cinema than bad, medium and good comments (Legoux et al., 2016).

Sociological and cultural researchers were concerned with the underlying reflections of online film reviews. For example, Wanderer (2011) looked at the gender differences in critics' reviews and identified that men were more likely to be kinder than women on ratings. Anderson and Grether (2017)

explored the race issues in film reviews through a qualitative content analysis and reported that audiences' reviews built up a more color-blind racism environment than professionals did. Cultural differences could lead to different degree of reliability in film reviews. For instance, Koh, Hu, and Clemons (2010) compared the differences of online users' reviews from China and the United States, and found that Chinese online reviews were more trustworthy in terms of evaluating the quality of movies.

Linguists such as de Jong and Burgers (2013) and Afzaal & Xiangyi (2020) investigated the linguistic features of film reviews to unveil the hidden context embedded in the media discourse. Beaudouin and Pasquier (2017) conducted an automated text analysis of 40,000 amateurs' film reviews through algorithm and they figured out two writing models: film-centered and receptor-centered. The former model regarded to the content and the form of films while the latter referred to the effect that the movies generated on moviegoers. To find out how professional critics differed from consumers in commenting, de Jong and Burgers (2013) conducted a qualitative and quantitative genre analysis by comparing the moves and strategies. They revealed that professional critics tended to describe the film but ordinary users were more likely to evaluate movies based on their personal experience. Computational researchers attempted to use automated methods to conduct sentiment analysis by examining user-generated contents aiming to produce overall evaluations of the films through web spider, word cloud, big data processing or other techniques (T. Li, Chen, & Zhang, 2018; Yang & Yecies, 2016). Unfortunately, most of those methods concentrated on the semantic orientation or polarity, which quite often were about the basic information of film such as the name of characters or the genre of the movie, instead of useful comments or valid evaluations.

## **2.2 Studies on Attitudinal analysis of online film reviews**

Online reviews, also regarded as a kind of word-of-mouth, are abundant with reviewers' emotions, opinions, attitudes and evaluations (Reilly & Seibert, 2003). Studies revealed that collective convergent emotions in reviews, either positive or negative, enhanced the importance of the reviews and polarize post-reviewing evaluations in the respective direction (Kim & Gupta, 2012).

To see whether appreciations differ in divergent contexts, Taboada and Grieve (2004) adopted the semantic orientation method to classify texts through a corpus study of reviews from the website *Epinions.com* including movies, books, music, cars, and phones. Guided by the *Appraisal Theory* to differentiate the subjective contents, this study showed that appraisal values varied from the type of

reviews. For instance, hotels comments enjoy a high judgement and appreciation value, while movies or art-related evaluations obtain a high judgement value. Trnavac, Das, and Taboada (2016) explored how discourse relations modify the evaluative contents of opinion words under the theoretical framework of *Rhetorical Structure Theory* and *Appraisal Theory*. By examining 50 movie reviews from a review corpus, they showed that the polarity of opinion words could be intensified by relations like *concession* or *elaboration*. Their study, combining lexicon-based approach and text organization, laid more stress on the positive and negative property of words, rather than the contents of moviegoers' preferences or tastes.

A few Chinese scholars attempted to utilize *Appraisal Theory* to probe into the distributions of the attitudinal resources in critics' reviews of different movies from mainstream newspapers (D. Li, 2015), online professional review websites (J. Li, 2011), online movie rating websites (S. Q. Li, 2016; Shi, 2018). It was found that among the attitude system, the appreciation resources embraced the largest proportion in film reviews in both American and Chinese reviews (D. Li, 2015; J. Li, 2011; S. Q. Li, 2016; Shi, 2018). In respect to the judgement and affect resources, American reviewers were more likely to use affect resources and less adoptions of judgement resources than Chinese commentators (S. Q. Li, 2016). In their studies, they mainly focused on the analysis of feature movies, TV series and action movies.

Previous studies were conducted mostly to illustrate the distributions of attitudinal resources based on vocabularies, but few touched on the content analysis of the sentences or the whole discourse. Moreover, a gap from the abovementioned literature can be found that there has no attitudinal analysis of overseas consumers' film reviews on Chinese animation. In this case, it is important to understand that whether there are any attitudinal differences when audiences review a different type of films and to discover the contents that overseas moviegoers appreciate and disfavor.

### **3. Research Methodology: Corpus-based Attitudinal Analysis**

#### **3.1 The Attitudinal System**

In the Appraisal Theory proposed by Martin and White (2005), there are three sub-systems, namely Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. Among them, the attitudinal system concerning with the ways of human's feeling encompasses three sub-categories: Affect, Judgment and Appreciation. The Affect refers to the values of emotional reactions, either positive or negative feelings, like happy or sad. Judgment regards to the attitudes towards behaviors, such as praise or condemn. Appreciation involves

assessing the quality of things including objects, performances and natural phenomenon. To put it specific, the three sub-categories of attitude address the emotions, ethics and aesthetics of feelings respectively.

Affect can be divided into dis-inclination, un-happiness, in-security and dis-satisfaction. Dis-inclination involves the desire for the condition of future events. Un/happiness refers to the emotions related to the heart, such as the degree we feel sad or happy. In-security deals with the feelings of peace and anxiety concerning the environments. Dis-satisfaction regards to the emotions relevant to the pursuit of goals, e.g. the degree of frustration or achievement. As judgement is concerned with the evaluations of people's behaviors, it can be classified into two types: social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem covers normality (how special someone is), capacity (how capable someone is), and tenacity (how resolute someone is). Veracity (how trustful someone is) and propriety (how ethical someone is) are constituted in the social sanction. Social esteem is more to do with oral speeches while social sanction involves in writings such as regulations and laws which are concerned with penalties and punishments. Appreciation deals with the way or the angle we look at things and comprises of three divisions: reaction, composition, and valuation. Reaction is about the impacts of things on us, such as the degree of catching our attentions and the degree of our likeness. Composition is to do with the internal structure, like balance and complexity. Valuation concerns the values of things, such as their degree of innovation or authenticity. Reaction is about the affection, composition is concerned with the perception and valuation is to do with the cognition. To put it another way, reaction targets at interpersonal relations, composition at textual structures, and valuation at ideational values. A summary of the attitude system is made with examples in Table 1 (Feng, 2012).

Attitudes can be inscribed or invoked through languages. Inscription refers to express attitude explicitly through lexical words. Invoked attitude is concerned with the implicit expression by using various strategies including metaphors (provoke), intensification (flag), and recounting events (afford). Recounting events can be further subdivided into three ways to identify the implicit attitudes. Here this paper adopts the model provided by Feng (2012) which encompassed three components (showed in Figure 1): eliciting condition, the inner feelings and attitudes, and resultant action.



Figure 1. The attitude schema provided by Feng (2012)

**Table 1.** Types of attitudes and examples (based on Martin and White 2005)

	Attitude	Positive	Negative
Affect	inclination/ disinclination	want, long for, hope, wish, eager	reluctant, unwilling, resistant, hesitant
	happiness/ unhappiness	cheerful, happy, hug, laugh	sad, cry, heart-broken, unhappy
	security/ insecurity	confident, assured, trusting, calm	uneasy, anxious, surprised, fidgeting
	satisfaction/ dissatisfaction	satisfied, pleased, impressed	angry, bored, fed up, scold
Judgment	normality 'How unusual?'	lucky, normal, cool, fashionable	unlucky, peculiar, odd, eccentric
	capacity 'How capable'	powerful, wealthy, intelligent	weak, immature, slow, incapable
	tenacity 'How dependable'	cautious, patient, careful, reliable	impatient, impetuous, unreliable
	veracity 'How truthful'	honest, credible, frank, direct	deceitful, manipulative, lying, devious
	propriety 'How ethical'	moral, fair, kind, humble, respectful	immoral, evil, mean, cruel, selfish
Appreciation	reaction	engaging, moving fascinating, exciting,	dull, tedious, plain, ugly, revolting
	composition	balanced, consistent, logical, simple	uneven, contradictory, flawed, disorganized
	valuation	profound, innovative, valuable, exceptional	worthless, ineffective, useless, fake

Table 1. Types of attitudes and examples

The attitudinal system is tested to be an effective approach to conduct attitudinal analysis (Cheung & Feng, 2019; Feng & Zhang, 2018). To overcome the issues about generalizability and representativeness, a combination of corpus-based study and manual text analysis is made in this paper.

### 3.2 Corpus of the Study

A small corpus was compiled and analyzed by UAM Corpus Tool (3.3k). In total, there are 51 movie reviews and 383 concordances. The comments of *Ne Zha Zhi Mo Tong Jiang Shi* (hereafter called



*Nezha*) were extracted from the IMDb website. The choice of this Chinese movie was because it won great success within China in 2019, obtaining a high rating score and a large number of audiences. However, it did not go far in the English-speaking world. The huge response differences within China and out of China trigger off the researchers' interest in foreign audience' attitude towards this movie. Moreover, compared to other Chinese animated film, *Nezha* obtained the largest number of comments among online foreign audiences.

The data was collected from the IMDb website in that this paper focuses on ordinary viewers' attitude and preference. The reason for choosing IMDb website is that this website stresses the truthfulness and importance of consumers' reviews rather than professional critics (Weiss, 2018). It not only offers every details of the film, ranging from actors, pictures and videos, to similar genre of movies, but also provides "user rating" and "user comment" about the film and updates information in real-time. The comment zone leaves room for user to explain the reasons of their rating or their analysis of the film.

### 3.3 Coding

Every sentence was read carefully to identify the attitudinal instances under the guidance of Martin and White's (2005) attitude system, and to manually code each line into different categories, such as "theme", "storyline", "structure", "character", "technology" and "translation". To guarantee the accuracy of analysis, the authors pilot coded 10 cases and worked out the solutions for ambiguous cases. All the 383 concordances were first coded by the first author and uncertain cases were marked and discussed with the second author. Among the 383 concordances, 288 was identified as appreciation, 55 as affect, and 36 as judgement.

## 4. Results

The overall results of the attitudes are listed in Table 2. At first, among the 383 concordances, overseas users appreciated the movie substantially in comparison to another two types of attitudes. Secondly, overall positive attitudes towards the movie outnumbered the negative attitudes, which implies that most reviews are satisfied with this animation. Lastly, online reviewers more preferred to express their attitudes directly. These findings resonate with the studies done by S. Q. Li (2016) and Shi (2018). To identify the preferences for the movie contents, analysis need to be done on the appreciation and judgment as these two resources were related to the evaluations of films.

Feature	N	Percent
total unit	N=383	
ATTITUDE-TYPE	N=383	
affect	53	13.84%
judgement	36	9.40%
appreciation	288	75.20%
ATTITUDE-POLARITY	N=383	
positive-attitude	284	74.15%
negative-attitude	93	24.28%
EXPLICITNESS	N=383	
inscribed	351	91.64%
invoked	25	6.53%

Table 2. Distribution of overall attitudinal resources

#### 4.1 Analysis of appreciation

It is illustrated (shown in Table 3) that among the appreciation of films, online audiences went for the discussion of the internal structures of the animation. In other words, film reviewers attempted to justify their opinions through the content analysis of the movie. Thus, an examination of the positive and negative opinions on the composition could unveil users' preferences.

	reaction	composition	social valuation	total
positive	43	79	93	215
negative	5	54	14	73
total	48	133	107	288

Table 3. Distribution of appreciation resources

##### 4.1.1 Positive composition

A coding of the key words and the main ideas in each positive segment was done manually and generalized the following results (shown in Table 4). First of all, overseas audiences spoke highly of the storyline. They used words “intelligent”, “well-told”, “the best”, “perfect”, “more twists and turns than expected” etc. to express their fondness. Next, the special effects in the film won great applauds of overseas audiences. Similarly, users showed their amazement explicitly by using fancy vocabularies like “superb”, “spectacular”, “outstanding”, “exquisite”, and “awesome” and so forth. After that, the upbeat theme of Nezha was acclaimed by expressions like “subversion of the genre”, “against prejudice”, “fantastic adaptation”, “modern parenting”, “modern values of

the Z generation”, and “family and love”. Plots which left users deep impressions and the design of characters won credits of some audiences. Concerning the evaluations of plots, “unpredictable”, “interesting”, “amazing” were the top three words among the reviews. “Great”, “live”, “adorable” characters were favored by overseas consumers. A few viewers particular enjoyed the voice acting and the jokes inside the film. A little praise was given to the languages, translation, subtitle and dialogues.

	stroyline	special effects	theme	plot	character design	voice acting	jokes	music	language	tranlastion	subtitle	dialogues	total
positive	20	17	16	8	6	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	79

Table 4. Positive reviews about the movie contents

In respect to the way of expressions, overseas consumers tended to voice their likeness directly. From Table 5, it can be seen that all positive comments were addressed explicitly. One common strategy is to use positive attitudinal lexes, in particular the use of adjectives. More examples of the positive comments within the composition resources are listed to offer details.

Example 1: “A complete and intelligent storyline.”

Example 2: “The story is refreshing and very creative.”

Example 3: “Also, the pacing of the movie is perfect.”

Example 4: “All the special effects are well done.”

Example 5: “The voice acting was absolutely awesome in Nezha.”

Example 6: “The ending song was marvelous as well.”

EXPLICITNESS	postive	negative	total
inscribed	79	50	129
invoked	0	4	4
total	79	54	133

Table 5. Explicitness of composition resources

#### 4.1.2 Negative composition

As shown in Table 6, among the 54 units, storyline and translation obtained more criticisms than the rest. It is noteworthy that storyline ranked the first in both positive and negative reviews. In other words, polarized opinions were held by moviegoers. Critics elaborated that the storyline was “cliché”, “poor”, “repeating”, and “did not make sense”. There were a number of complaints about the translation of the film. They used words like “imprecise”, “difficult”, and “lost essence” to display their dissatisfaction. The design of the characters also criticized by overseas users with expressions like “not good”, “needs to be better”, and “look like Monkey King”. As the movie *Ne Zha* was adapted from Chinese myth, the deep and profound cultural differences were hard for some foreigners to comprehend and thus got some negative comments. “Stereotyped” theme and jokes, “awkward” voice acting, “so-so” visual effects, and “cringing” dialogues were discussed by a handful of users.

	storyline	translation	character design	back- ground	theme	jokes	voice acting	special effects	subtitle	dialogues	sponsor	total
negative	16	12	7	5	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	54

Table 6. Negative reviews about the movie contents

Most negative feelings were expressed straightforward. Regarding the invoked strategies, moviegoer chose to employ the strategy of “recounting event”. One critic had trouble with the understanding of dialogues within the movie, and he wrote “She (girlfriend) helped me understand plot points and certain dialogue that I was struggling with”. By eliciting the condition he was in, he implied his negative attitude to the dialogues. The other adopted method was to elaborate the resultant actions. For instance, in the review “I hope the translation can get the essence of the story, so more people can enjoy it”, the user indicated that the present translation did not convey the real and the accurate meaning of the story by stating that actions need to be taken to address the inaccurate translation. In short, explicit linguistic strategies such as the use of negative words and expressions were more frequent-used by overseas viewers than implicit expressions.

#### 4.2 Analysis of judgment

Judgment is concerned with the evaluations of people’s behaviors in line with social esteem

and social sanction. In movie reviews, consumers criticized character's behaviors, which also indicated reviewers' approvals and denials of the film. Table 7 first illustrated that social esteem took more places than social sanction. It was reasonable as the film reviews aimed to analyze the film characters objectively. Second, normality and propriety were the salient features. To put it another way, audiences emphasized how unusual and how ethical the characters were.

	positive		negative		total
	inscribed	invoked	inscribed	invoked	
normality	6	0	6	0	12
capacity	6	0	1	0	7
tenacity	2	3	1	0	6
propriety	3	5	1	2	11
veracity	0	0	0	0	0
total	17	8	9	0	34

Table7. Distribution of judgement resources

#### 4.2.1 Normality

Online amateurs mainly evaluated the main character Nezha as shown in Table 8. Positive reviewers claimed that Nezha was a “fortunate”, “powerful”, “beautiful”, and “not odd” person, while negative audiences criticized the appearance of Nezha. All of the three negative comments used the word “ugly” to imply their dislike of Nezha’s appearance. Other characters in the movie were praised with “modern” looking, while some believed they were “not pretty enough” and looked “odd”. Regarding the way of expressions, overseas audiences chose to comment the movie characters, either positive or negative attitudes, in an explicit way. They achieved their communicative purposes mainly by adopting adjective lexes illustrated in the analysis.

normality	ne zha	all characters	villager	total
positive	5	1	0	6
negative	3	2	1	6

Table 8. Review contents on the normality of characters

#### 4.2.2 Propriety

As shown in Table 9, the ethical examinations were done to the leading character Nezha and Aobing. Besides, Nezha’s parents were also judged according to their treatments to Nezha. In general,

positive attitudes were hold towards the ethical values of the main character. Attitudinal vocabularies like “nice”, “not bad”, and “offensive” were used to judge their ethical behaviors. However, when it comes to the distinguish of right and wrong, unlike the way they reviewed the contents of the movie, overseas audiences tended to judge the characters’ ethics implicitly. One way they used was to elicit the conditions of the behaviors by using verbs like “help”, “teach”, “protect” and nouns like “justice”, “sin”, “bad words” (shown in the following examples). Instead of stating their attitudes, they elaborated the detailed conditions like “Nezha helped ... and listed in saga list”, which implied that Nezha was a good and moral person. The other way was to use metaphors like “Yin and Yang” to assemble the personality of “Nezha and Aobing”, indicating that they were pure in essence. The seven invoked examples are stated below to give the details of this strategy.

Example 7: Nezha, was born in Shang dynasty, helped King Zhouwu destroyed Shang dynasty and founded Zhou dynasty and listed in saga list.

Example 8: the Nezha is so clean from he was born, even if he has presented demon.

Example 9: Nezha and Aobing could also have been seen as two sides of China. They are like Yin and Yang in the Bagua.

Example10: Anything he (Nezha) did presented justice.

Example 11: His mom teaches the values to him.

Example 12: His parents protect him.

Example 13: Those new elites had sin before their born.

Example 14: Nezha says lot of bad words.

	Nezha	Aobing	Nezha's mom	Nezha's parents	total
positive	4	2	1	1	8
negative	1	1	1	0	3

Table 9. Review contents on the propriety of characters

## 5. Discussions: Overseas Audience attitude, preference and identity

Cultural identities are constructed through languages and discourses (Shuter, 1993). Through

analyzing the 51 film views on Chinese animation *Nezha*, it is identified that overseas Chinese were the main consumers of Chinese films. Among the 51 movie reviews, 41 of them were overseas Chinese and only 5 were foreigners. The identity of the rest 5 reviewers left unclear because their comments only contained one or two sentences. Some foreign viewers revealed their identities explicitly like “I speak little Chinese but I sawed this movie with my girlfriend (native speakers)” and “I spent a day discussing the film with my wife who is Chinese”. Others unveiled their identities unintentionally by expressions like “I have a Chinese nearby who flew to his hometown to watch the film” and “as a minority of being Asian”.

Chinese identities can be figured out in three ways. First of all, some audiences publicly stated that “being a Chinese” or “I am a Chinese”. Next, the profound and detailed analysis of the background of *Nezha* story indicated that he/ she was familiar with the Chinese culture. A good illustration can be seen in the examples 15. The words underlined are ample with Chinese culture and even Chinese history. Such an understanding of the Chinese history and clear analysis implied that either he/she was a sinologist or he/ she was a native Chinese speaker. Given that online reviews were usually written casually, this piece of comment was more likely to be written by a Chinese. A third way was the complete understanding of the jokes within the movie. Considering that the translation in the film were not accurate enough, only the Chinese who knew the language and had similar culture background could laugh with the jokes.

## 6. Conclusion

The study answers the very question of the perceptions of Chinese films outside China. Among the three categories of attitudinal system, foreign audiences display a high proportion of positive appreciation, which implies that most foreign viewers are keen on this animated film. As movie reviews are to evaluate the quality of the product, thus such a figure seems reasonable. In regard to the use of affect and judgment, this paper figures out that overseas reviewers more likely to express their emotions than to judge the film, which accords with the results reported by S. Q. Li (2016) that American users tended to employ more affect resources to show their attitudes than Chinese audiences.

A detailed analysis of the content indicates that overseas audiences favor the storyline, the state-of-the-art special effects and the upbeat theme while they criticize the structure of the story and the translation. Polarized opinions on the storyline demonstrate that though being captivated by Chinese culture, the story needs to be well-planned, logical, completed and smooth. Viewers are satisfied with

the filming technology as they state that this movie can be compared to some Hollywood blockbusters. To put it the other way, movie fans do have requirements and standards for visual and auditory enjoyment. The criticism of translations shows that overseas audiences, either overseas Chinese or foreigners, stress highly of the language communication. If a viewer cannot read Chinese or do not have relevant cultural background, he/she cannot fully appreciate the film. Therefore, effective and understandable translations need to be granted in the future. Chinese is regarded as a high-context culture and English a low-context culture; thus, their differences need to be emphasized and tackled with careful considerations.

This attitudinal study suggests that overseas Chinese are the major consumers of Chinese cultural products and foreigners are not interested in Chinese movies. The reason for the foreigners to see the movie is that their wives or friends ask them as an accompany. In other words, they do not go to see the film out of their own willingness. Hence, how to attract the attentions of foreigners to Chinese films is the first step to successfully export cultural products. Making enough propaganda and promotion in target market could be a tentative choice. Future studies can be paid to the analysis of the ways of attracting foreign moviegoers' attentions.

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