A Corpus-Based Study of Chinese Animation Image in *Nezha*: From Foreign Moviegoers' Perspective

Jin Qiu[1], Qiaoyun Liao[2*], Xin Su[1]

[1]School of Foreign Languages, Chongqing Jiaotong University, Chongqing, China
[2]Institute of Linguistics, Shanghai International Studies University,Shanghai, China
*Corresponding Author.

Abstract:

This article sets out to investigate the Chinese animation image in the Chinese animation blockbuster *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* (hereinafter *Nezha*) from foreign moviegoers' reviews on famous movie websites. Methodologically, this research adopts a corpus-based approach to examine discursive mechanism through keywords analysis, collocation analysis and concordance line interpretation. Corpus findings present the mixed attitudes of foreign moviegoers towards *Nezha* on three major themes, namely general impression, movie details, and story reception. The findings of positive image are discussed in relation to the successful animation production together with the conceptual transformation of character shaping and storytelling, whereas the negative image to the immaturity of Chinese animation industry as well as the cultural and ideological differences among countries.

Keywords: *Chinese animation image,Nezha,Corpus,Foreign moviegoers'film reviews.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A popular Chinese animation movie *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child*, with a surprisingly high box office (ranked 12 worldwide in 2019) of more than $726 million worldwide[1], has become a huge hit since its release in July, 2019. Its growing popularity has led to a number of domestic studies on Chinese animated character shaping[2,3], the evolution of Nezha'simage on screen over decades[4,5], the narrative and aesthetic studies of*Nezha*[6,7], the reasons for its box office success[8,9], and the like.

Notwithstanding its prevalence in China, *Nezha*'s foreign box office only accounts for 0.5% of its worldwide box office, grossing $3.7 million or so. Compared with other animation blockbusters whose foreign box offices contribute a large proportion to their total box offices (e.g., *The Lion King being* 67.2%,*Frozen* II 67.1%, *Toy Story* 4 59.6%), *Nezha*, and other Chinese animation movies alike, undoubtedly have some deficiencies to make up for. In order to figure out the striking contrast between the domestic and the foreign box offices of *Nezha*, an objective, and perhaps essential, study should be made to examine the most recent image of Chinese animation movies from foreigners' perspective.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW OF CHIANESE (ANIMATION) MOVIES

There has been a limited (though growing) international academic attention focusing upon Chinese animation movies[10]. The extant research literature covers such topics as cultural representation[11-14], film translation[15,16], history of Chinese animation[17-19], etc.

Amidst the literature, the main focus has been on the cultural representation of Chinese animation movies. Song and Zhang[11]investigated the dominant cultural values in *The Legend of Nezha* (Version 2004), manifesting traditional Chinese values such as wisdom, perseverance, collectivism, humanitarianism, family, and nature, which frequently portrayed the positive characters in *Nezha* (2004). Whyke, Mugica, and Brown[10]demonstrated that the different version of *Nezha* (2019) presented a "national style" which interweaved Chinese traditions with modernity. Though not a "faithful" representation of the original narratives and the traditional Chinese arts, *Nezha* (2019) was a symbol of "contemporary renegotiations of national image". While Whyke and his collaborators defines "national style" as an "authentic Chinese national culture" represented by particular Chinese aesthetics and stories, some scholars associate "national style" in Chinese animation movies with "an institutionalized public and official discourse"[20]. From this political standpoint, Chinese animation movies have been considered as the "mainstream" or "political" animation movies[18,21,22], and their directors' "in control of every element of their films' content" leaves nothing neutral in their animation[22].

With regard to film translation, Baños and Díaz-Cintas[23]considered film translation as a "part of audiovisual translation". Yau[24]and Yu[15]discussed the features and technical constraints of dubbing and subtitling source language to target language in films, and tried to reach better translation solutions. Scholars arrive at consensus that there is very little difference between the dubbed and subtitled versions in most of the films[24,15,16]. However, McDonald[16]found that the dubbing version of *Nezha* had greater deviation from its subtitles because of the linguistic, cultural and communicative purposes.

Among few studies concerning the history of Chinese animation, Lent and Xu[17], Li and Li[25,26]investigated that Chinese animation had experienced ups and downs in history. They believed that 1950s to 1966, and the late 1970s to 1985 had been its golden periods. Since the flooding of Japanese anime into China in 1985, Chinese animation seldom made a name for itself both domestically and globally[19]. Besides, in its long but unprosperous history, Chinese animation was believed to have been constrained by "the political and ideological conditions" [25].

Overall, the above studies are from scholarly perspective. What are the primary concerns of ordinary moviegoers about Chinese animation movies? Upon this view, we are going to take the top-grossing Chinese animation movie *Nezha* as an example, to marshal linguistic evidences of foreign moviegoers' film reviews on famous websites. By means of corpus quantification, we aim to examine the Chinese animation image in *Nezha* from foreign moviegoers' film reviews to find out the welcome and unwelcome aspects in the movie, which will probably shed light on the future development of Chinese animation industry. This article is focused on the following two research questions:

1）What kind of animation image has been established in the movie *Nezha*?

2）What are the major reasons for the image?

III. DATA AND METHODS

Methodologically, this article attempts to conduct a corpus-based discourse analysis of foreign moviegoers' film reviews of *Nezha* on well-known websites to scrutinize the Chinese animation image in foreign moviegoers' eyes. Baker[27]elaborates that "corpus-based analysis allows researchers toidentify more or less objectively widespread patterns of naturally occurring languageand rare instances, both of which may be overlooked in a small-scale analysis". Corpus approach is a useful way to "reduce researcher bias" and discover "the incremental effect of discourse"[28].

3.1 Corpus Construction

We adopted "Nezha" and its variations "Ne Zha" and "Ne zha" as search words to extract film reviews from well-known movie review websites IMDb (https://www.imdb.com/) and Rotten Tomatoes (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/) between July 2019 and June 2021. The research results generated 111 reviews, with 22,182 words in total. Considering the high occurrences of the names of the leading characters Nezha and Aobing, we replaced their respective variations with "Nezha" and "Aobing" in unity for subsequent keywords research. Henceforth Foreign Moviegoers' Review Corpus (abbr. as FMR Corpus) was constructed.

3.2 Corpus Analysis

This research, to be conducted by content analysis[11,29-31], adopted two kinds of software, namely AntConc[32]and BFSU Collocator[33]. The former, developed by Laurence Anthony, is a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for monolingual analysis, including keyword list, collocates, concordance, clusters, etc. Nevertheless, collocates in AntConc only encompass such parameters as frequency and statistics. Incapable of presenting log-log and log-likelihood values which are essential for content analysis, AntConc was supplemented by BFSU Collocator, a collocation extraction tool developed by two Chinese corpus linguists Xu and Jia. The combination of these two kinds of software serves the purposes of keywords analysis, collocation analysis and concordance line interpretation as follows.

3.2.1 Keywords analysis

In corpus linguistics study, keywords are "lexical items which occur statistically more frequently in texts when compared with another larger corpus"[28]. Keywords analysis is "an extremely rapid and useful way of directing researchers to unusually frequent elements, helping to remove researcher bias and paving the way for more complex analyses of linguistic phenomena"[27]. In this research, upon the preprocessing of data cleaning, data normalization and the removal of stop words (i.e., function words), AntConc was employed to generate keywords list by comparing the FMR Corpus against a much larger British National Corpus which is not bound by any particular topics. Considering space limitation, TABLE I. only lists the top 15 keywords

out of 251 in descending keyness order.

TABLE I. Keyword List in the FMR corpus

RANK	KEYWORD	KEYNESS	FREQUENCY
1	Nezha	+ 4196.56	249
2	animation	+ 1363.05	110
3	Chinese	+ 1352.45	161
4	movie	+ 1246.97	131
5	film	+ 863.77	137
6	animated	+ 502.15	48
7	pearl	+ 457.67	49
8	demon	+ 452.09	42
9	story	+ 435.2	88
10	Aobing	+ 386.97	23
11	Taiyi	+ 319.66	19
12	China	+ 264.53	49
13	characters	+ 217.74	38
14	humor	+ 198.14	14
15	Gongbao	+ 185.05	11

It can be observed from Table I. that the top five keywords, either in keyness order or in frequency order, are still ranked top five. The statistical data indicate that "Nezha", "animation", "Chinese", "movie", and "film" are the most saliently (can be seen in keyness) and frequently (can be seen in frequency) mentioned keywords in the FMR Corpus.

3.2.2 Collocation analysis

The above mentioned five keywords, namely "Nezha", "animation", "Chinese", "movie", and "film" are intentionally selected as the node words to identify their respective collocates within the span of L5-R5 (5 words to its left, and 5 to its right) in BFSU Collocator.Kilgarriff and Rundell[34]points out that log-log calculation is suggested in content analysis to reduce the weight of high-frequency words which are mostly function words (i.e., conjunctions, prepositions, and articles), whereas increase the weight of content words (i.e., nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs). Besides, log-likelihood is a statistical significance measure, informing us of how many evidences we have for differences between two corpora (i.e., the FMR Corpus and the British National Corpus). Specifically, the log-likelihood value of 3.84 is the cut-off for 95% confidence of significance ($p< 0.01$). Premised on statistical calculations of log-log and log-likelihood, Table Ⅱ. illustrates the high frequency collocates of the top five keywords in descending log-log value, each of which covers five collocates only due to space limitation.

TABLE Ⅱ. High frequency collocates of the top five keywords

NO.	KEYWORD	COLLOCATE	LOG-LOG	LOG-LIKELIHOOD
1	Nezha	*named*	3.8028	0
2	Nezha	*born*	3.3895	54.7871
3	Nezha	*ugly*	2.9039	29.3066
4	Nezha	*Aobing*	2.5372	44.5239
5	Nezha	*demonic*	2.2098	24.6387
6	animation	*industry*	5.6777	82.9978
7	animation	*great*	4.2637	63.8874
8	animation	*3D*	4.2083	41.1528
9	animation	*Chinese*	3.8570	143.6730
10	animation	*quality*	3.6598	36.2321
11	Chinese	*mythology*	6.0681	92.3458
12	Chinese	*culture*	5.9468	94.8247
13	Chinese	*industry*	5.5358	93.9311
14	Chinese	*traditional*	4.5699	50.6669
15	Chinese	*animation*	3.8570	143.6730
16	movie	*kids*	3.7822	37.7801
17	movie	*such*	3.6299	39.4961
18	movie	*great*	3.2037	51.8524
19	movie	*year*	3.0825	36.9914
20	movie	*best*	2.8620	35.7388
21	film	*animated*	5.6120	109.3528
22	film	*grossing*	4.0740	8.6934
23	film	*history*	3.6425	36.5743
24	film	*highest*	3.2286	12.1685
25	film	*jokes*	2.6657	26.1151

Collocate analysis offers key insights into understanding a rough picture rather than providing an exhaustive list of themes[31].Based on the high frequency collocates in TABLE Ⅱ. (expressed by italicized words), we identified the major themes on the whole:

Tomost foreign moviegoers, Nezha, *born* as the *demonickid*, originated from *Chinese mythology*. *Ugly* and intimidating, he made no friends except Aobing, and suffered discriminations from villagers. Being the *best* Chinese *3D animation* film, *Nezha* has become the *highest-grossinganimated* film in *history*, and a notable marker of *great* development in China's film *industry*. However, in order to fully understand the film,

some knowledge of *traditional* Chinese *culture* is necessary for foreign audiences.

3.2.3 Concordance line interpretation

To further consolidate major themes in detail, we examined the concordance lines in which theme-related words are embedded. For instance, Fig 1. is the snapshot of concordance lines of "animation" with its collocate "Chinese" in the FMR Corpus, which illustrates the way how we connect concordance analysis of the collocate to major themes. Approximately, the 17 lines constitute one major theme of "general impression of the movie", among which line 2, 4-6, 9, 12-14 and 17 have the potential to be positive opinions, and line 7-8, 11 and 15-16 negative opinions, while other concordance lines are probably irrelevant to this topic.
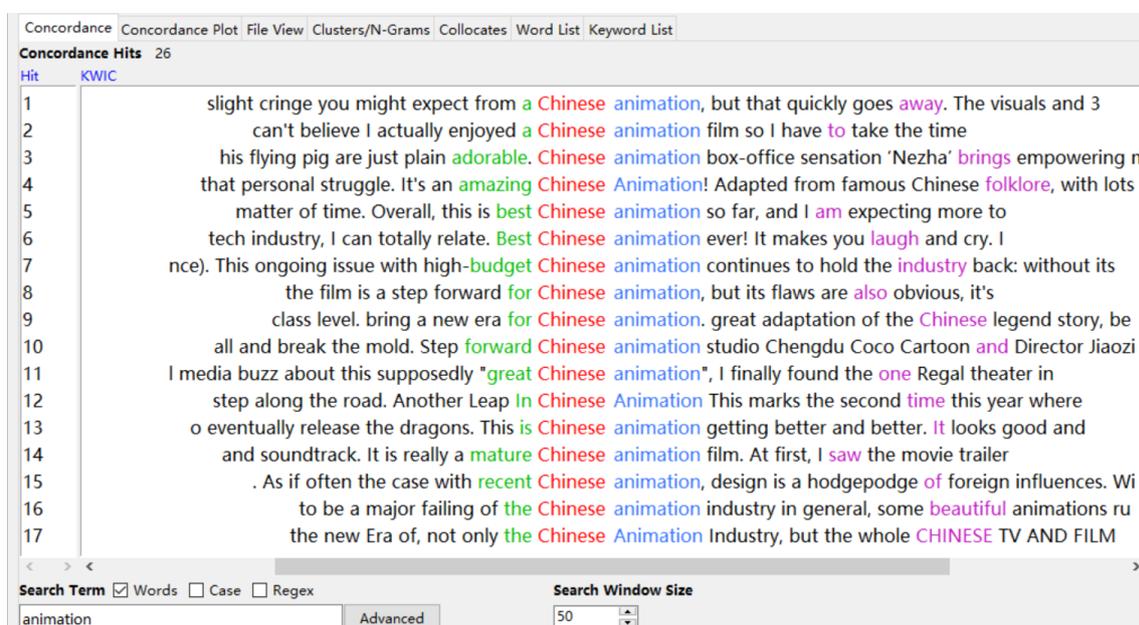

Fig 1: Snapshot of concordance lines of "animation" withits collocate "Chinese" in the FMR Corpus

Limited by space, concordance analyses of the five top keywords with their respective collocates are not presented here. Premised on these corpus analyses, this article confines the foreign moviegoers' reviews to three major themes, namely general impression, movie details, and story reception.

Ⅳ. RESULTS: CORPUS-BASED THEME ANALYSIS GENERAL IMPRESSION

4.1 General Impression

Foreign moviegoers' general impression on the movie *Nezha* are by and large positive. Many of them applaud its exceptionally high box office, emphasizing its crowning achievement as the top grossing Chinese animated film see Ex 1 and the second-highest-grossing film in the history of Chinese box, see Ex 2.

Ex 1. The top grossing Chinese *animated* **film** of all time, about a demon-child superkid, proves that the blockbuster style is flowing around the globe. (Rotten Tomatoes, Oct. 27, 2019)

Ex 2. Since its release in China back in mid-July, the movie broke records to become the country's second-*highest-grossing* **films** of all time.(Rotten Tomatoes, Sep. 25, 2019)

Some of the foreign moviegoers, either from the perspective of animation aesthetics or animation production technology, speak highly of the movie *Nezha*. They portray *Nezha* as the best animation movie worldwide in 2019 see Ex 3 and regard it as a hit movie in Chinese animation industry see Ex 4, or even a potential competitor to Pixar and Disney, see Ex 5.

Ex 3. This **movie** deserves to win *best* 2019 animation movie in the world.(IMDb, Sep. 13, 2019)

Ex 4. When most moviegoers think of animated **films**, they usually think of Disney, or the Japanese animeindustry. This year, *Chinese* hit animated movie *Nezha* showed audiences that China's animation industry packs a punch as well.(Rotten Tomatoes, Aug. 29, 2019)

Ex 5. This is the best-looking non-American *3D* **animation** I have ever seen in some very important ways. It's competing right up to the level of Pixar or Disney themselves.(Rotten Tomatoes, Oct. 3, 2019)

Despite these favorable impressions, negative opinions on *Nezha* have also been noticeable. Writer-director Jiaozi, in his feature-length debut, might demonstrate a perceptible weakness in collaging or borrowing plots, actions, or character designs from classical films,see Ex 6 and Ex 7. For instance, besides the cases of *Kung Fu Panda* and *Frozen* mentioned in Ex 7, scenarios in some other parts of the movie also seem familiar to audiences. That the birth of the Demon Orb transformed into fireballs, destroying buildings around, was said to be influenced by Disney movie *The Incredible*. Aobing, Nezha's friend and foe, looked like stepping out of a Japanese cartoon series *Dragon Ball*. The fighting actions between Nezha and Aobing on their first encounter were most probably from a Chinese kung fu film *Huang Feihong*[4].

Ex 6. As if often the case with recent *Chinese* **animation**, design is a hodgepodge of foreign influences. With *Nezha* there is a character lifted from Pixar here, an aesthetic from DreamWorks there. (Rotten Tomatoes, Aug. 29, 2019)

Ex 7. To anyone who has sampled the popular American *animated* **films** of the last 25 years, […] the style of *Nezha* will be breathtakingly familiar. Written and directed by Jiaozi, the movie has the bouncing-off-the-walls kinetic spirit of something like Kung Fu Panda, and the images themselves were clearly influenced by the mercurial, cosmic-weather-pattern style of Frozen. (Rotten Tomatoes, Oct. 27, 2019)

4.2 Movie Details

Corpus findings also illustrate reviews on movie details in character shaping, animation designs, improper jokes and imprecise translation. In foreign moviegoers' eyes, the animation image of Nezha is

lifelike and vivid. Bangs, knots, raccoon eyes, insignia on forehead and mischievous smiles of Nezha have successfully created a cynically rebellious child, whose image is a perfect combination of the traditional Chinese image and a modifiedversion of Joker, see Ex 8. The new traditional-but-entertaining image diminishesthe seriousness and righteousness of the mythological character, making Nezha more accessible to foreign moviegoers.

Ex 8. Technically, **Nezha**, the *demonic* child, is only two years old, but he looks about nine. He's got bangs and a pair of pigtail knots, kohl-rimmed raccoon eyes, a red underworld insignia branded on his forehead, and a smile that lights up with enough prankish malevolence to make him look like a junior version of Joker.(Rotten Tomatoes, Oct. 27, 2019)

Similarly, 3D animation production is unanimously agreed to be the highlight of *Nezha*. Some moviegoers recommend its animation production being "on the level of DreamWorks, somewhat near Pixar at times", see Ex 9. It is widely known that Disney, Pixar, DreamWorks, or the Japanese anime industry have long been considered as the flagship animation industry in the world. However, *Nezha* "packs quite a punch" see Ex 4 in its animation designs this time, not only presenting a series of beautifully rendered sceneries but also attaching great importance to every detail. For example, the effects of visual animation mentioned in Ex 10 is the overall considerations of light, color, and gravity.

Ex 9. The visuals and *3d***animations** were spectacular. I'd say on the level of DreamWorks, somewhat near Pixar at times.(IMDb, Aug. 30, 2019)

Ex 10. One of the **movie**'s *best* sequences involves a magical training ground hidden inside a painting. This environment takes on a surreal painterly aesthetic, with the landscape and detail easily changed with the flick of an enchanted paintbrush. The visuals in these scenes are marvelous, playing not only with light and color but gravity as well: lawns, hills, rivers and mountains all twist and undulate in dizzying fashions.(Rotten Tomatoes, Sep. 27, 2019)

What's more, *Nezha*'s animation designs can not only boast its aesthetical value, but also its imaginative function. *Nezha* takes advantage of the unrivalled function of animation, i.e., animation is capable of presenting scenarios which are impossible or expensive to achieve in live-action films[26]. For instance, the "enchanted scroll" mentioned in Ex 11 (also referred as "a painting" in Ex 10) serves the function of communicating character conflict and creating incredible fighting scenarios. It's quite imaginative for writer-director Jiaozi to create changeable fighting scenarios in the scroll with different combatants' grabbing of the magical brush. If not in the animation, these scenarios would require too much human, physical, and financial investment in live-action films.

Ex 11. *Nezha*, […] takes advantage of *3D***animation** to create action sequences that not only serve to communicate character conflict and growth, but look incredible at the same time. For instance, Zhenren utilizes an enchanted scroll as a place to train Nezha. Here, anything they can think of can be created using a specific magical brush.(Rotten Tomatoes, May 3, 2020)

However, a number of jokes, especially the toilet (pee and fart) jokes in *Nezha* are seemed ridiculously

out-of-nowhere to some foreign moviegoers. They feel at a loss and unable to get the punchline of the jokes. Some even claim that the "irredeemably bad jokes" "knock the entire film off-balance", see Ex 12. Besides, film translation might add difficulty to foreign audiences' understanding of *Nezha*, see Ex 13, especially when referring to the parts concerning Chinese culture-based humors and multi-layered emotions, see Ex 14.

Ex 12. And the same goes for the **film**'s irredeemably bad *jokes*, which are just rare enough that it feels petty to complain about them, and just frequent enough to seriously knock the entire film off-balance.(Rotten Tomatoes, Oct. 3, 2019)

Ex 13. If I have to find some negativeness, the translation might be a bit difficult for people who don't understand Chinese since there were lots of **Chinese***culture* in the movie.(IMDb, Sep. 12, 2019)

Ex 14. Also I have to point out, as with almost all *great* foreign language **movies**, the humors and multi-layered emotions of most dialogues in *Nezha* were inevitably lost in translation.(IMDb, Sep. 9, 2019)

4.3 Story Reception

It's worth noting that the movie *Nezha* caters to audiences worldwide rather than the minority fans of Chinese culture. Therefore, a considerable time is spent in "building up the backstory" to facilitate the understanding of "overseas audiences", see Ex 15. Originally, the Chinese mythology *Nezha* (previous versions) depicted the story from rights and wrongs, in which the hero Nazhe detested any evil deed and evildoer Aobing was abhorrent to every right-minded person[11]. By contrast, the latest version of *Nezha* "tells the story from an angle about prejudice, fate and friendship" which is popular with and welcome by modern people, see Ex 16. Integrating modernity with traditions, *Nezha* (2019) retells the Chinese mythology from a brand-new perspective by reconstructing the plots and reshaping the characters, which has proved to be a generally accepted version to most overseas audiences.

Ex 15. Owing to the complexity of **Chinese***mythology*, *Nezha*spends considerable time building up the backstory—but this will benefit overseas audiences less familiar with Chinese legends.(Rotten Tomatoes, Aug 29, 2019)

Ex 16. Although it is based on popular **Chinese***mythology* tales, the movie adds some changes and twists to the stories to make it more fun and unpredictable. The director tells the story from an angle about prejudice, fate and friendship, which I think is something that everyone can relate to.(IMDb, Sep8, 2019)

Even though *Nezha* "spends considerable time building up the backstory", see Ex 15, the way of storytelling might still be alien to some audiences who know little about Chinese mythology, see Ex 17. Apart from cultural differences, foreign moviegoers' low reception of the story might result from ideological differences as well. Some reviews relate the prevalence of *Nezha* to the Communist Party's intervention because it "actively portrays some of the social values that the Communist Party has been promoting", see Ex 18.

Ex 17. The down side is it is different from movies that we are used to and a lot will not be understood if

we are not Chinese or know much about **Chinese***mythology*.(IMDb, Aug15, 2019)

Ex 18. Quality of animation and storytelling aside, the ways that *Nezha* also reflects some aspects of contemporary **Chinese***culture*—or at least what the Communist Party aspires it to be. […] *Nezha*actively portrays some of the social values that the Communist Party has been promoting. (IMDb, Aug17, 2019)

V. DISCUSSION: REASONS FOR THE IMAGE

This corpus-based study has examined how Chinese animation image was discursively constructed in foreign moviegoers' film reviews. Unlike the academic foci in literature reviews, corpus evidences have shown that ordinary moviegoers' primary concerns about this Chinese animation movie *Nezha* are its animation effects, character shaping, plot reception, and other aspects, but there are still a large proportion of negative opinions, which together constitute the mixed attitudes of foreign audiences towards the major themes in this research. For instance, while some reviews speak highly of the animation production effects, comparing it to the works of the world's first-class animation producers, others complain about the seemingly familiarity of the plots, actions, and designs. While some reviews highlight the character shaping as the combination of modernity and traditions, the animated scenarios as the integration of aesthetics and authenticity, others belittle the animation as "a hodgepodge of foreign influences" (see Ex 6), and further criticizes the improper toilet jokes and imprecise translation in the movie. While some reviews point out that the backstory makes the movie more accessible to overseas audiences, others still feel at a loss due to their absence of Chinese culture, or even connect the prevalence of the movie to the promotion of the Chinese Communist Party.

The positive Chinese animation image in *Nezha* is in tune with the general conclusion advanced by Sun et al.[35]and Whyke, Mugica, and Brown[10]. The positive image is largely relevant to the successful animation production and the conceptual transformation of character shaping and storytelling. Firstly, the 3D animation effects in this movie are spectacular, which is undoubtedly the joint efforts of many talented animators and some first-classanimation companies in China. Besides, writer-director Jiaozi, a person of ideality and perseverance, spent years conceiving the plots and designing the movie scenarios, which can be seen in his attention to every detail in the movie. Meanwhile, technological advancements in the movie *Nezha* undeniably contribute a large proportion to its success, without which the visual effects throughout the animation can't be so realistic. Nevertheless, *Nezha*, being the only animation blockbuster in Chinese animation history, cannot be regarded as the advancement of the entire animation industry in China.

The other factor constituting the positive image of overseas audiences is the conceptual transformation of character shaping and storytelling. As for character shaping, all the characters in the movie have been refigured both in appearance and personality. For example, the leading character Nezha, whose new appearance is the combination of the traditional Chinese image and "a junior version of Joker" (see Ex 8), is portrayed as the transformation from a flawed young rebel into a villager-saving hero rather than a consistently principled teenager in the traditional way. And the supporting character TaiyiZhenren appears to be an obese and seemingly incompetent guy whose image is a subversion of traditionally wise and

authoritative Daoist immortals. Besides, this deity also has weakness in personality. His addiction to drinks was used by his rival Shen Gongbao who stole the Spirit Pearl and implanted the Demon Orb into Lady Yin.Admittedly, to err is human. Such characters with merits and drawbacks like ordinary people are more welcome by audiences. As for storytelling, the Hollywood narratives are more accessible to foreign audiences. Instead of employing the traditional way of Chinese artistic narratives, the movie *Nezha* which aims to the audiences worldwide, adopting Hollywood classic three-act structure, i.e., setup, confrontation, and resolution[36], together with the master mythologist Campbell's[37,38] "hero's journey", i.e., separation, initiation, and return, has successfully shifted its way of storytelling from "made in China" to "made for the world".

The constitution of the negative Chinese animation image in *Nezha* is also twofold. The first aspect lies in the immaturity of Chinese animation industry. It is acknowledged that *Nezha* hasa perceptible weakness in borrowing plots, actions, or character designs from classical films. As Chinese animation production remains in obscurity for quite a long time [17,19], the imitation of plots, actions, and designs in *Nezha* is specifically a process of learning, learning from the elements which make the story more universal and accessible to overseas audiences. Meanwhile, we shouldn't ignore few of the imaginative creations in the movie. For instance, the "enchanted scroll" mentioned in Ex 11 is a brilliant idea to make use of animation's advantage to exhibit changeable fighting scenarios from different combatants' perspectives.However, it is still important to emphasize that *Nezha* has proved to be a huge hit this time, but collaging or borrowing is not a long-term solution to upgrade Chinese animation quality. Without our own strong visual identity and typical style, Chinese animation will never carve out audiences beyond domestic ones.

The other aspect lies in cultural and ideological differences among countries. Cultural differences have made some audiences feel at a loss about Chinese mythology despite the introduction of the backstory. Cultural differences also generate the imprecise translation of *Nezha*, especially in the dubbing version. The dubbing version in *Nezha* removes all the swear words[16], and makes the language easier to understand for the consideration of the audience demographics and the translation principle that dubbing texts should match the mouth movements[15,39]. Besides, ideological differences account for the negative Chinese animation image as well. As scholars believe that animation is a reflection of realism[21,25], *Nezha* has unavoidably been associated with Chinese realism by some reviewers (maybe some film critics). In the reviews, the most frequent mentioning is the symbolization of the Heaven as the leading Communist Party in China, the second Shen Gongbao as the corrupted Party cadre who committed evil deeds in his pursuit of upward advancement. Discussing the symbolic meaning of characters is helpful in audiences' understanding of a movie. However, characters in *Nezha*, consciously or not, are frequently burdened with political symbolism, which might hinder ordinary audiences' willingness to watch the movie to some extent. What's more, the widespread of *Nezha* has, to some people, been regarded as China's exercising its cultural soft power. There exist different interpretations of cultural soft power. We Chinese people advocates for enhancing China's cultural soft power so as to make our culture known through international communication and dissemination. But understandings vary. Cultural soft power has also been considered as "an adjunct to public diplomacy and the acquisition of power by non-military means"[40]; and the term "soft" is "a synonym for anything other than military force"[41]. Upon the latter interpretation, the prevalence of the Chinese animation movie Nezha has been reckoned as a kind of cultural diplomacy rather than a means of cultural communication.

VI. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the corpus approach adopted in this research has provided useful insights into understanding the Chinese animation image in the movie *Nezha*from foreign moviegoers' film reviews. Corpus findings present the mixed attitudes of foreign moviegoers towards *Nezha* on three major themes, namely general impression, movie details, and story reception. The reasons for*Nezha*'spositive image are its successful animation production and the conceptual transformation of character shaping and storytelling. Whereas the reasons for its negative image are the immaturity of Chinese animation industry together with the cultural and ideological differences among countries.

Despite these grounded corpus-based linguistic evidences, this research is limited in several aspects. One limitation is that our data have exclusively focused on two major film review websites. Future studies on Chinese film image from more websites of different countries, or from professional film critics may yield a rather different picture. The other limitation is that our corpus-based research has prioritized analysts' interpretations over participants' knowledge. Future studies could supplement corpus evidences with findings from interviews. Generally speaking, corpus-based study affords a scientific and reliable approach to examine the film image in new discourses, which may shed new light on the existing methodology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

[1] IMDbPro Box Office Mojo (2019) Available at:https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/world/2019/

[2] ChenZ (2020) Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child: Research on the image of Chinese animated characters. Movie Review(8): 109-112

[3] GuoYN(2021) A comparative analysis of the differences between Chinese and foreign heroic image building in animated movies. Movie Literature (3): 61-63

[4] Peng H Y, Li K Y (2019) The evolution of Nezha's image on screen in national animation from 1961 to 2019. New Films 24: 90-95

[5] Yang Q (2020) The evolution and reflection of mythological character image shaping in Chinese animated films. Movie Review (9): 15-20

[6] Chen GN (2019) The aesthetic dimension of Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child. Movie Literature(23): 131-133

[7] LiuYL (2021)Character, plot and theme: Narrative aesthetics analysis of the animated movie Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child. Home Drama 13: 150-152

[8] Zou R (2020) Analyses on the success factors of domestic animated films: Case study of Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child and Monkey King: Hero is Back. Home Drama 34: 149-151

[9] Yang X (2021) The era of baokuan films: How Chinese social media creates box office success. Journal of Chinese Cinemas 15: 104-120

[10] Whyke T W, MugicaJL, & BrownMS(2021) Contemporizing the national style in Chinese animation: The case of Nezha (2019). Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal 16: 57-174

[11] Song Y, & Zhang Y B (2008) Cultural values in Chinese children's animation: A content analysis of the legend of Nezha. Chinese Media Research 4: 18-27.Available at:http://hdl.handle.net/1808/6879

[12] Barza S, &Mehran M (2014) Movie genre preference and culture. Procedia– Social and BehavioralSciences 98: 363-368

[13] McDonald S (2016) Animation in China: History, aesthetics, media. New York: Routledge

[14] Wu W H (2019) Chinese animation, creative industries, and digital culture. New York: Routledge.

[15] Yu H K (2015) Film translation in China: Features and technical constraints of dubbing and subtitling English into Chinese. Babel 61: 493-510

[16] McDonald M (2021) Reviewing the translation of the Chinese animation film Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child in North America from the perspective of eco-translatology. Communication across Borders: Translation & Interpreting 1:1-11

[17] Lent J A, & XuY (2010) Chinese animation film: From experimentation to digitalization. In Zhu, Y. & Rosen, S. (Eds.), Art, politics, and commerce in Chinese cinema (pp. 127-142). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press

[18] Voci P (2015) DV and the animateur cinema in China. In Zhu, Z. &Zito, A. (Eds.), DV-made China: Digital subjects and social transformations after independent film editors. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 163-183

[19] Jones S (2019) The Chinese animation industry: From the Mao Era to the Digital Age (Master's thesis, The University of San Francisco). Available at: https://repository.usfca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2020&context=capstone

[20] Du D Y (2019) Animated encounters: Transnational movements of Chinese animation, 1940s-1970s. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press

[21] Voci P (2017) Electric shadows reloaded: The post-digital animateur, shadow play and handmade cinema. Journal of Chinese Cinemas 11: 192-209

[22] Wu W (2018) The ambivalent image factory: The genealogy and visual history of Chineseindependent animation. Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal 13: 221–237

[23] Baños R, &Díaz-Cintas J (2018) Language and translation in film: Dubbing and subtitling. In Malmkjaer, K. (Ed.), The Routledge handbook of translation studies and linguistics. London: Routledge 313-326

[24] Yau W P (2014) Translation and film: Dubbing, subtitling, adaptation, and remaking. In Bermann, S. & Porter, C. (Eds.), A comparison to translation studies. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd 492-503

[25] Li G, Li J Y (2017a) Animating Chinese cinemas: A preface. Journal ofChinese Cinemas 11:115-122

[26] Li G, Li, J Y (2017b) Animating Chinese Cinemas II:Animation, technology, and media. Journal of Chinese Cinemas 11: 189-191

[27] Baker P (2004) Querying keywords: Questions of difference, frequency, and sense in keywordsanalysis. Journal of English Linguistics 32: 346–359

[28] Baker P (2006) Using corpora in discourse analysis. London: Continuum

[29] Baxter J (2020) Content analysis. International Encyclopedia of Human Geography. (2nd Ed.) 2: 391-396

[30] Papapicco C (2020) Informative contagion: The coronavirus (COVID-19) in Italian journalism. Online Journal ofCommunication and Media Technologies 10: e202014

[31] Huan C P, Deng M H (2021) Partners or predators? A corpus-based study of China's image in South African media. African Journalism Studies

[32] Anthony L (2020) AntConc (Version 3.5.9) [software]. Tokyo: Waseda University.Available at:https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/

[33] Xu J J, &Jia Y L (2014) BFSU Collocator (Version 1.0): A Collocation Extraction Tool [software]. Beijing: Beijing Foreign Studies University. Available at:http://corpus.bfsu.edu.cn/TOOLS.htm

[34] Kilgarriff A, &RundellM (2002) Lexical profiling software and its lexicographic applications − A case study. Proceedings EURALEX, 807-818. Copenhagen, August

[35] Sun S Y, Gai Y J, Zhou Y Y, Xu A T (2019) Research on user comments of douban animation made in China based on text mining technology. Proceedings of the 2019 7th International Conference on Information Technology: IoT and Smart City 89-93

[36] Field S (2005) Screenplay: The foundations of screenwriting (revised edition). Knoxville: Delta Publishing Company

[37] Campbell J (1990) The hero's journey: The world of Joseph Campbell. New York: Harper Collins Publishers

[38] Campbell J (2004) The hero with a thousand faces (Commemorative edition). New Jersey: PrincetonUniversity Press

[39] Zhang Y (2020) A Dialogue with the film translator JiaXiuyan. The Paper.Available at: https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_8913150

[40] Flew T (2016) Entertainment media, cultural power, and post-globalization: The case of China's international media expansion and the discourse of soft power. Global Media and China 1: 278-294

[41] Nye J (2011) The future of power: Its changing nature and use in the twenty-first century. New York: Public Affairs