

# ***Subject Consciousness and Language Trend of Voice Actors in the Film Nezha the Devil Comes Down***

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**Keywords:** Film dubbing; Subject consciousness; Dialect cognition; Language tendency; Narrative language

**Abstract:** Chinese animated films adapted from mythic IP have received a good response in the current film industry market, and audiences of different ages have paid great attention to the theme of mythic IP adaptation, which has promoted the film production team to continue the second creation of mythic IP adaptation. *Nezha* is one of the most successful films in recent years, both at the box office and by word-of-mouth. Different from traditional animation dubbing, the voice actors (dubbing actors) in this film consciously internalize the demands of society and the audience into their own dubbing subject consciousness and narrative language trend. Their dubbing subject consciousness mainly includes subject consciousness, audience consciousness, dialect cognition, etc. Their narrative language specifically presents the colloquial trend of characters' language and the artistic conception of narrative language. The dubbing fusion of language and art in the film is of great significance to the theoretical exploration of dubbing research.

## **1. Introduction**

Domestic animated film has a unique and important position in the history of Chinese film. It is unique because the early domestic animated films mainly promoted the moral level of children by means of "teaching" and "blending", but the final result far exceeded the educational function itself and realized a wider range of cultural transmission. The importance lies in the fact that since the new century, the domestic animated films have passed on the values of the era in a humorous way, and have become a kind of aesthetic value communication and audiovisual plastic art works. With the entry of capital into the film industry, domestic animated films ushered in a rapid development period with 42 releases in 2015, but later due to the slowing box office growth and rational investors, the output of domestic animated films from 2016 to 2023 is maintained at about 30 to 60 per year. During the development of domestic animated films over the past seven years, they have produced and formed their own unique narrative culture. "Unique" implies that domestic animated films have been in the contact and communication with Europe, America, Japan and South Korea as well as their film culture and audio-visual language for a long time, and have moved towards a diversified development road at the level of expression mode, narrative theme and characterization.

An animated film by Khorgos COLORROOM Co LTD, *Ne Zha* has broken box office records and garnered strong reviews after its theatrical release. The vigorous development of domestic animated

films cannot be separated from the oral expression of excellent voice actors conforming to and in line with the aesthetics of times. And the behind-the-scenes team of animated films makes pictures according to the dubbed audio provided by the voice actors for the post-production. Therefore, in view of the important influence of dubbing on the film, the author takes the domestic animation work *Nezha the Devil Comes Down* as an example to explore the dubbing actors' dubbing subject consciousness and dubbing language characteristics.

## 2. The Subject Consciousness of the Voice Actor

The subject consciousness of a dubbing actor refers to the dubbing subject's spontaneous consciousness of his/her role identity, language ability, the value of vocal foundation and the goal of dubbing. On the one hand, it includes the dubbing subject's analysis and cognition of role identity and language ability, and on the other hand, it also includes his/her control to the object and environment. Based on the perspectives of linguistics and broadcasting, it finds that the voice actors' subjective consciousness is mainly embodied in the subjective consciousness, audience consciousness and dialect cognition.

### 2.1. Subject cognition: conform to the social aesthetic of pursuing individuality

The dubbing subject consciousness of dubbing actors refers to the aesthetic consciousness formed by the dubbing actors in accordance with the social context. The film *Nezha* is a Chinese-language original animation with the participation of more than 60 production teams and more than 1,600 production staff. It collects laughs, tears and interesting parts, and the final hit is expected. Specifically, original animated films need to adapt to the social status quo of pursuing individual aesthetics, so the voice actors are determined to use sound to subvert the traditional image, and then break the inherent audio-visual pattern. Lyu Yanting, the voice actor of *Nezha*, says that "unlike other animated children, Nezha is angry from the bottom of his heart."

In order to match this manic tone, Lv Yanting takes a small smoke voice and uses breath to impact the vocal cords to pursue individual expression, which can not only highlight the characteristics of Nezha's voice, but also help meet the aesthetic needs of society. Under the ideological background of social aesthetics, voice actors attach great importance to the careful consideration of characters and the repeated practice of lines. At the same time, the director also strictly checked the relevant dubbing content, so that the voice actors could not simply transmit voice and transcode in the dubbing practice of different roles, which provided a personal cognitive context and social aesthetic background for the dubbing actors in *Nezha* to express their dubbing subject consciousness.

### 2.2. Audience consciousness: in line with the acceptance habits of modern audiences

Dubbing audience consciousness of dubbing actors refers to the need for dubbing actors to conform to the audience's acceptance habits in the process of dubbing practice, which mainly refers to the viewing needs and cultural habits of moviegoers. On the one hand, early voice actors in the role of Nezha's voice, "the use of simple tone is an important way to narrow the distance with the audience." [1] In the film, the identities of Nezha and Aobing are re-set, so that the changes in their picture image, sound image and connotation characteristics are "isomorphic" with modern people's audio-visual. Therefore, Aobing's voice actor Hanmo chooses a real and comfortable voice to fit the listening habits of modern audiences and fully activate the audience's semantic feelings.

On the other hand, considering the specificity of the audience target group, the film's voice actors present the voice narration and voice style of some characters in a humorous way, so as to satisfy

the audience's interest in watching the movie. The voice transmission of voice actors is no longer one-way output, but forms a two-way interaction between voice actors and auditory audiences, so that the sound goes to the audience, to the interest and secularization. For example, Yang Wei, the voice actor of Shen Gongbao, created a specific humorous atmosphere by impromptu shaping the voice of stuttering, and stimulated the audience's imagination while not deliberately.

### 2.3. Dialect cognition: absorbing the dubbing expression of regional culture

"At the phonetic level, dialects have their own unique aesthetic functions as explicit ideographic symbols." [2] In film and television culture, local tone is the natural language in which characters present their unique tonality and charm. "Audiences themselves can adjust their cultural identity in the regional ecology and historical context in dialect films and TV dramas, and restore the character characteristics of film and TV characters through voice, and then seek the identity of characters in the interaction of folk culture and ideographic symbols." [3]

In terms of sound, articulation and intonation are ways of presenting regional culture and characters. For example, the language design of Taiyi zhennren (a fictional character in the classical novel The Romance of the Gods) in the film reflects the regional flavor of "Chuanpu", Sichuanese Standard Chinese. Because "Chuanpu" is widely spread in Sichuan, and the director has done historical research, and found that Taiyi's dojo Qianyuan Mountain Golden Cave is located in Mianyang, Sichuan, indicating that Taiyi's ancestral home is in Mianyang, Sichuan. Zhang Jiaming, the voice actor of Taiyi, uses a lot of vivid and humorous words in the voice acting to show his regional identity, and at the same time shows his humorous and kind character characteristics in detail. Zhang Jiaming's pronunciation is smooth, the change of enunciation is light, there is a sense of syllabic ambiguity, and its pronunciation enunciation is a recessive expression of Taiyi's unreliable character characteristics. The frequent use of Taiyi Zhenren dialect words in the drama has formed special regional aesthetic symbols and means of language expression, and has restored profound Chinese culture.

## 3. The Trend of Dubbing Language

The dubbing language of the animated film *Ne Zha* transmits the related history of outstanding traditional culture and art in a true, accurate and simple way of expression. With the spread of audio-visual images, the dubbing language especially embodies the value of image deconstruction, cultural characteristics, and artistic communication and integration of traditional story characters. All these make the dubbing language present the following creative characteristics.

### 3.1. The colloquial tendency of characters' language

At present, there are more and more TV series and movies about animation, and the sound expression corresponding to it also tends to the audiovisual habits of the audience. For a long time, the preaching voice of animation dubbing has been obvious, but the affinity and authenticity are relatively deficient, and the single expression with loud and long tones is mostly difficult to be accepted by the audience. At the same time, the director presets the shape of the dubbing roles in advance and lacks cultural innovation, which limits the space for the dubbing actors to create oral English. Moreover, the dubbing actors are unable to bring forth new cultural meanings in the animated films, thus weakening the characters and artistic charm of the films.

In film and television animation, "the design of sound modeling should not be typified, patterned or artificial, but should be visualized, characterized and personalized." [4] This requires voice actors to pay more attention to the sense of listening and not be too polished and artificial, and on the basis

of maintaining equality with the audience, the sense of language tends to be colloquial. Compared with previous animated films, *Nezha* has a distinct "sound texture", which is due to the fact that the voice actors focus on connecting with reality and entering the heart of the audience, supplemented by "down-to-earth" and "colloquial" character language dubbing, making the characters in the film present a unique national cultural image. For example, in the dubbing of Shen Gongbao by the dubbing actors, the language expression process is not unchanged, and the narrative sense is strengthened in the details.

At the beginning of the plot, Yang Wei, the voice actor of Shen Gongbao, half-spoken and half-stammered, said: "No, die for a righteous cause if not succeeding." Then fluently expressed, "The stereotype in the human heart is a mountain, no matter how hard you cannot move." The above two sentences from the sense of language, outside tight inside loose tone and oral style to express the psychological activities of Shen Gongbao at the moment, while the colloquial expression is close to the emotions of children and adults, and their inner feelings synchronously. Combined with the self-discipline of Shen Gongbao upward picture, its complex character image deeply into the hearts of the audience. This realistic and colloquial narrative expression reflects the colloquial trend of the characters' language in the film.

### 3.2. The artistic conception shaping of narrative language

"Artistic conception is an important category of Chinese aesthetic thought, which reflects the beauty of art. In artistic creation and appreciation, people often take artistic conception as a standard to measure artistic beauty." [5] With the change of audience's aesthetic concept in the new era, the depth of artistic conception of sound in animated films is the audio-visual standard to highlight its own value. The presentation of the artistic conception of sound is related to the acceptance of the audience, "without the fantasy of the recipient's imagination, the artistic conception of artistic language will not be formed." [6] In the expression of animated films, the reasonable use of dubbing is an important guarantee for audiences to watch movies. The narrative language dubbing of the film *Nezha the Devil Comes Down* presents a complete overlaying of elements, rhythm control and aesthetic implications of dubbing, thus creating a unique artistic conception style of the film.

The tone of narration voiced by the dubbing actors is restrained, low and gentle, and the tone of "demon tribe" and "demon" is heavy. Through this kind of accent processing, the charm and fierce image perception of the demon tribe is strengthened, and the audience feels that the disputes between the people and the demon tribe in the film have been irreconcilable. This kind of narrative dubbing enhances the artistic conception and detail carving of the sound. In addition to foreshadowing the conflict between the people and Nezha in the future, it also deepends the audience's impression on the film, so that the narration language dubbing affects the style of the entire animated film. The narrative language in the film is almost accompanied by background music intermingling with each other. In addition, the dubbing voice fits well with the background timbre, and the emotion presented after superposition is similar. While enriching the dubbing shape, it also conveys a full listening feast. In short, the artistic conception of narrative language is not only the external expression of sound beauty, but also an important means to integrate the integrity of film sound.

## 4. The Significance of Dubbing Research

The dubbing subjectivity of the dubbing actors in the animated film *Nezha the Devil Comes Down* mainly embodies the subject cognition, the audience consciousness and the dialect cognition. Its subject cognition mainly emphasizes the pursuit of individuality of social aesthetic, that is, voice

actors need to adapt to the pursuit of individuality of aesthetic social status, to subvert the traditional image with sound. Its audience consciousness focuses on making the changes of picture image and sound image and connotation characteristics "isomorphic" with modern audiovisual. His dialect cognition focuses on restoring profound Chinese culture with special regional aesthetic symbols and linguistic means of expression. The dubbing language mainly presents the colloquial trend of character language and the artistic conception of narrative language. This combination of colloquial and artistic conception of narrative expression ultimately affects the style of the entire animation film. With the further strengthening of the purpose of the animation film *Nezha*, voice actors gradually integrated it into their works, and then internalized it into a dubbing consciousness. "Such as the concept of sound modeling, the concept of appeal, the concept of artistic creation, etc., make it truly become an important voice that affects the daily life of the people." In that sense, dubbing truly becomes a sound art." [7] From theoretical discussion to dubbing practice, from the construction of creative purposes to the exploration of creative rule, ostensibly it is an analysis of the animated film *Ne Zha*, but in fact it is a continuous expansion of the scope of dubbing art.

The communication circle believes that the audience has the characteristics of curiosity, expressiveness and cognitive desire. According to the above characteristics of the audience, the animation dubbing focuses on constructing, shaping and strengthening the unique plot and emotions of the animation to achieve the purpose of attracting the audience. Story communication is one of the effective ways to achieve the purpose of animation communication. Among them, telling wonderful stories is the active presentation of voice actors to the audience, and it is also the part of any cartoon that spare no effort and focus on rendering, which has become a key factor affecting the audience rating. "*Nezha the Devil Comes Down*" is an adaptation of the storyline of a traditional Chinese fairy tale called "Nezha." Cast Nezha as a "devil child" who comes to the world by a strange mistake and causes trouble. Although Nezha slowly grows into a demon king, he still has a heart to be a hero. The film has a clear story, covering family and friendship, and portrays the complexity of human nature through the interaction between Li Jing, Yin Shiniang and Nezha. Therefore, the story nature of Nezha's animated film helps the voice actors to create. Nezha has a temperamental personality trait, and voice actors need to combine speed and relaxation during voice acting. Yin Shiniang's majesty when treating subordinates, guilt and care when treating Nezha, Yin Shiniang's instructions and reprimands to subordinates, voice actor's breath is big and powerful, and turns to Nezha's careful and even inconsiderate tone change, the voice begins to become soft and gentle. Honest Li Jing has always been more respectful to others, humble tone, devout attitude, reflecting his integrity when dubbing, but also pay attention to its accurate sound makeup. When dubbing for Taiyi, pay attention to imitating the fat man's speech, the base foot, the breath is stable, the chest resonance is more obvious, the nasal sound can be slightly thick, to shape his naive image.

It is precisely because of the dubbing subject consciousness and dubbing language characteristics of the dubbing actors that the animated film *Ne Zha* has the ideological and cultural communication significance of language and art, and forms the transmission value of the national ideology of dubbing art in China on the basis of synthesis and summary. With the active integration of dubbing language art and animation film culture, it is gradually internalized into a cultural idea of telling Chinese stories well, and then reflects the new trend of presenting Chinese national art and cultural images under the global background.

## 5. Conclusions

The dubbing shape of the film *Nezha The Devil Comes Down* mainly reflects the subject consciousness of the dubbing actors and the trend of dubbing language. The subject consciousness of dubbing actors mainly emphasizes the analysis on the role identity and language ability of the

dubbing subjects, as well as the control of the matched objects and the environment, and can understand the subject consciousness of dubbing actors from the three levels of subject, audience and language. The trend of dubbing language focuses on the colloquial trend of character language and the artistic conception of narrative language. The pursuit of colloquial and artistic conception of film dubbing is not only the external presentation of sound image, but also an important means to highlight the overall sound of film.

## Acknowledgements

This paper thanks to the project: A Study on the Mechanism of Integrating Educator Spirit into College Teacher Education (PHDJZ2303), Xi'an Peihua University.

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