

# *A Study of British Readers' Reviews on Chinese Literature*

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**Abstract:** This study delves into the reviews of Chinese Literature by British readers. It utilizes the perspective of the Attitude System within Appraisal Theory. The research specifically examines three dimensions: Appreciation, Judgement, and Affect. With the aid of the UAM corpus tool, the study analyzed a total of 3,743 valid comments across 37 highly popular works of Chinese Literature. The results highlight that resources related to Appreciation are predominant, accounting for 90.27% of all reviews. The British readership demonstrates a profound aesthetic and emotional engagement with Chinese literature, placing significant importance on its cultural profundity and artistic merit.

## **1. Introduction**

Chinese literature was first introduced to the UK in the form of poetry, a history that dates back over 400 years. In 1589, the English scholar George Puttenham introduced the metrical structure of Chinese classical poetry for the first time in his work "The Art of Poetry"<sup>[1]</sup>. In 1761, the first Chinese novel, "Hao Qiu Zhuan," was published in the UK<sup>[2]</sup>. Liu Yi and Xu Lina (2019) used Jin Yong's "The Legend of the Condor Heroes" as an example to discuss the publication and dissemination of Chinese popular literature in the UK<sup>[3]</sup>.

Scholars' research on the dissemination of Chinese literature in the UK mainly focuses on poetry and novels, with few scholars studying the reviews of British readers from the perspective of the appraisal theory's Attitude System. This paper takes the reader's reviews as the basis, with the online comments of 37 Chinese Literature with the highest popularity and more than 100 comments on the UK Amazon website as the research object, and the Attitude System as the theoretical framework, to explore the British readers' emotional intentions, value judgments, and appreciation preferences for Chinese Literature.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Appraisal Theory, proposed by linguist Martin (2003) in the 1990s<sup>[4,5]</sup>, has built a vast and precise system to explore the positions of language users, including the Attitude System, Engagement System, and Graduation System<sup>[6]</sup>. In the Appraisal System, the Attitude System is the core<sup>[7]</sup>. The Attitude subsystem is divided into Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation<sup>[8]</sup>.

Reader's reviews not only express the British readers' feelings towards Chinese literature but

also contains their positions and emotional attitudes, which can be positive or negative. By analyzing the attitudes of British readers, we can deeply understand their subjective feelings towards Chinese literature and thus understand why certain works are praised.

### 3. Research Design

#### 3.1 Research Questions

This study answers two questions: 1) What is the overall distribution of attitude resources in the reviews of Chinese literature by British readers? 2) How are attitude resources specifically presented in the reviews?

#### 3.2 Data Collection and Annotation

This study uses reader's reviews on Chinese literature from the UK Amazon website (Amazon.co.uk) as the data source. The data was collected using "Chinese Literature" as the search condition on the UK Amazon website, resulting in a total of 114 Chinese Literature works. Out of these, 37 works with more than 100 reviews were selected, and all visible online comments for these 37 works were collected. A total of 3778 comment data were collected. After manually removing duplicate and irrelevant comments, a total of 3743 valid comments were obtained. The corpus was imported into the UAM Corpus Tool. Based on the overall manual inspection and selection of the corpus, the data was automatically counted by the software.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Attitude Resource Statistics

Category	Attitude					
	Affect		Judgement		Appreciation	
Quantity	2036		2474		5110	
Proportion	21.16%		25.72%		53.11%	
Polarity	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Quantity	1676	360	2325	149	4683	427
Proportion	82.32%	17.68%	93.98%	6.02%	91.65%	8.35%

Table 1 shows the annotated statistical results of attitude resources, with a total of 9620 instances of attitude resources appearing in the discourse. The data shows that the attitude resources in the reviews of Chinese literature by British readers are, in terms of overall distribution, dominated by appreciation resources (53.11%), followed by judgment resources (25.72%), and then by affect resources (21.16%). The overall sentiment polarity data shows that positive attitude resources account for 90.27% (8684 instances), while negative attitude resources account for 9.73% (936 instances). Positive reviews overwhelmingly dominate, which proves the influence and value of Chinese literature among international readers and also demonstrates the strong interest and positive attitude of British readers towards Chinese literature.

Among the three evaluative attitude resources, appreciation resources have the highest proportion, and three positive attitude reaches 91.65%. This means that British readers focus on the value and quality of the work in their reviews, and have a high aesthetic recognition of Chinese literature. At the same time, the proportion of judgment resources is also relatively high, accounting for 25.72%. The data indicates that British readers not only stay at the emotional level when evaluating Literature but also engage in rational analysis and judgment. The proportion of affect

resources shows the emotional investment of British readers in the reviews process. They express their likes or dissatisfaction based on personal reading experiences and emotional responses. Through the study of evaluative attitudes, the author found that British readers showed a profound understanding and appreciation of Chinese literature.

#### 4.1 Affect System

The use of affect resources is the lowest (21.16%). Readers not only affirm the highlights of the book but also make constructive suggestions on the book. When evaluating Chinese Literature, British readers express their love, which is rooted in a profound resonance with and impact on the concept, structure, and theme of the book. For example, in Example 1, Dan Pearson's comment uses the word "love" to express a strong liking for the concept and story of the work. In Example 2, "satisfied" conveys a positive emotion, expressing the reader's satisfaction with the structure and innovation of the book. However, the comment in Example 3 includes the negative emotion of "disappointed," expressing dissatisfaction with the content of the book and the damaged packaging, providing valuable feedback for the author and publisher to improve.

Example 1: "I love the concept and story and could see this being edited into a movie or TV series quite well." (Dan Pearson)

Example 2: "I am very satisfied with the structure and innovation of this book." (Bogdan Vera)

Example 3: "I am somewhat disappointed with the content of this book, and the packaging has also been damaged." (R E Sibley)

Affect resources reflect the British readers' personal experiences and feelings. Through these resources, readers express their love for Chinese literature, emotional resonance, and critical feedback. The direct expression of these emotions adds a personal touch to the book review and provides a rich emotional background for further literary analysis.

#### 4.2 Judgement System

Judgment resources rank second (25.72%) in British readers' reviews of Chinese Literature. In specific Literature, British readers will evaluate whether the characters in Chinese Literature exhibit positive qualities such as honesty, bravery, and fairness, or whether they have negative traits like deception and cowardice. For example, in Example 4, expressions like "unwavering integrity" "truly commendable" "the power of honesty in the face of adversity" highlight the reader's appreciation for the protagonist's integrity and perseverance, which not only affirms the moral strength of the character but also reflects the British readers' expectations for Literature to convey positive moral values. However, not all reviews are positive. For example, in Example 5, Stephen's reviews mentions "lacks depth" "missed opportunity," reflecting the reader's dissatisfaction with the portrayal of the antagonist.

Example 4: "The protagonist's unwavering integrity throughout the novel is truly commendable. It's a testament to the power of honesty in the face of adversity." (Partick Potter)

Example 5: "The portrayal of the antagonist in this novel is lacks depth. It's a missed opportunity to explore the complexity of human nature." (Stephen)

Judgement resources reflect that British readers not only pay attention to emotional resources and personal preferences but also focus on the cultural depth, moral norms, and social responsibility reflected in the works. These reviews not only reveal the British readers' exploration and reviews of the deeper values of Literature but also reflect their emphasis on the social function and cultural significance of Literature.

### 4.3 Appreciation System

The use of appreciation resources is the highest (53.11%). In particular, the narrative prowess of Chinese Literature is lauded by readers. Take Amy Hannah's review in Example 6, where she expresses admiration for the author's storytelling, noting that the scenes are "delicate descriptions and vivid." This underscores the readers' appreciation for the author's adeptness in crafting evocative and artistically effective narratives. Readers also appreciate the exquisite narrative structure in Chinese Literature, as in Example 7, where reader describes the book collection as full of "profound emotions" and "exquisite expressions," with each chapter like a painting, reflecting the reader's high reviews of the depth and aesthetic value of the work. However, appreciation resources also include criticism of the work's possible shortcomings. For example, in Example 8, S Payne expresses a negative reviews of the language and artistry in the book, considering it "obscure and difficult to understand" and "the artistic conception is vague," which cannot resonate with the reader's emotions. This indicates that readers encountered barriers to understanding when appreciating Literature, which is crucial for the international dissemination of Literature because it reveals the challenges of acceptability and artistic communication that works may face in different cultural backgrounds.

Example 6: "Each scene is filled with delicate descriptions and vivid scenes, immersing readers in it." (Amy Hannah)

Example 7: "This book collection is full of profound emotions and exquisite expressions. Each chapter is like a painting, triggering the deepest resonance in my heart, allowing me to re-examine the meaning of life."(Emma Miller)

Example 8: "The language of this book is obscure and difficult to understand, and the artistic conception is vague, which cannot resonate with my emotions." (S Payne)

Appreciation for Chinese Literature among British readers is profound, with a notable admiration for the intricate artistry and narrative prowess. The literature's ability to evoke vivid imagery and deep emotions is particularly highlighted, as exemplified by the immersive scenes and profound thematic explorations that resonate with readers on a personal level. Despite this, the reviews also reveal a critical eye for the works' language and artistic clarity, underscoring the nuanced and complex nature of literary appreciation across cultural boundaries. This dialectic of praise and critique reflects the rich tapestry of reader engagement with Chinese Literature, showcasing both its universal appeal and the challenges inherent in its international dissemination.

### 5. Conclusion

This study examines the reviews of Chinese Literature by readers on the UK Amazon website, guided by the Attitude System within the Appraisal Theory as the theoretical framework. Utilizing the UAM corpus tool software, the analysis of the Attitude System was conducted across three dimensions: Appreciation, Judgement, and Affect. The data reveal that, in terms of overall distribution, Appreciation resources are the most prevalent, with positive evaluative resources constituting the vast majority. Through the reviews, readers acknowledge the aesthetic pleasure and artistic value and contribution brought by Chinese Literature. These findings reflect not only the British readers' keen interest and positive attitude towards Chinese literature but also the charm of Chinese culture.

This research provides significant data support for understanding the popularity and acceptance of Chinese Literature in international dissemination. It reveals the appeal of the rich cultural connotations and unique artistic styles of Chinese Literature among British readers and highlights the importance of literary exchange and cross-cultural understanding. By studying the reviews of British readers, we can draw on the experience to further promote the dissemination of Chinese

literature, enhance the understanding and appreciation of Chinese literature among readers worldwide, and encourage literary diversity and exchange globally.

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