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An In-depth Exploration of Social and Cultural Connotations in Ancient Chinese Literary Works Based on Corpus Methods

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Abstract Literary works, as the carriers of social thoughts of the times to which they belong, are important references for social and cultural research. This paper focuses on ancient Chinese literature and uses corpus as a research tool to explore the social phenomena and cultural connotations reflected in literary works. Based on the different textual characteristics and connections between ancient and modern texts, we analyze the methods of selecting paragraph alignment features of the two texts. We also analyze the alignment process of ancient and modern texts, so as to complete the construction of the Ancient Literature Annotated Corpus. Then the technical framework of K-BERTopic model is designed to analyze and extract the themes of the texts in the corpus. It also combines the improved EDR with the Kmeans++-based dimensionality optimizer to dynamically reduce the dimensionality of the input documents and enhance the model effect. Subsequently, ancient poems are selected as the research object to analyze the social and cultural connotations of ancient Chinese literary works, extract the central keywords of ancient poems, statistically analyze the frequency of intonation auxiliaries, and collate the information of temporal changes of ancient poems. The K-BERTopic model is used to analyze the first data in the Tang Dynasty corpus, in which the probability of the theme of “landscapes and fields” is 0.2142 and the probability of the theme of “wandering to the ends of the earth” is 0.5768, which is in line with the corresponding thematic content of the poems. It shows that the K-BERTopic model can realize the thematic analysis of literary works by aligning ancient literary works with modern textual features, and assist in analyzing the social and cultural connotations.

Index Terms ancient literature, corpus, K-BERTopic model, cultural connotation

I. Introduction

Ancient literary works are the bright pearls in the treasure house of Chinese culture, which carry rich cultural connotations and profound significance of the times [1], [2]. In the form of literature, these works convey the values, moral norms, and ways of thinking and expression of the society at that time, thus influencing the cultural development of later generations [3], [4].

As a carrier of culture, ancient literary works are deeply rooted in the social, historical and cultural background of the time, so they have strong social and cultural connotations [5], [6]. These works not only present the ancient people's way of life, social system and moral concepts, but also contain rich cultural symbols and symbolic meanings [7]. For example, the ancient Chinese literary classic Dream of Red Mansions, with Jiafu as the background, presents a panoramic view of the rise and fall of feudal society. The work reveals the irrationalities and contradictions of the society at that time by depicting the marriage system, official culture, and power relations between men and women in feudal society [8]-[11]. This kind of delicate and profound revelation is the unique charm of ancient literary works [12]. In addition, ancient literary works also conveyed the values and moral standards of the society at that time by depicting social events such as wars, family strife, court struggles, etc. For example, Water Margin shows the corruption and darkness of the society at that time by taking the clues of the conflict between the government and the stragglers, and this kind of revelation of the social phenomena and concern about the interests of the people reflects the profound thinking of ancient literary works on the concepts of the society [13]-[16]. And by focusing on the good and evil of human nature, the concept of morality and the value system, it guides people to make correct choices and judgments in today's society [17], [18].

In this paper, we firstly describe in detail the selection and calculation methods of alignment features between ancient literature and modern texts, design the alignment process, and establish the annotated corpus of ancient literature. Then, under the framework of K-BERTopic model, the specific working principle of the modified EDR is elaborated. The dimension optimizer based on kmeans++ is proposed, and the dynamic dimension reduction

process of this optimizer is analyzed. From there, the K-BERTopic model is constructed as a thematic analysis method for ancient literary works. Finally, taking ancient poems as an example, we extract the central keywords in the poetic works, sort out and analyze the frequency of the appearance of tone auxiliaries, and visualize the time information of Chinese ancient poems. Under the preparation of this research, the K-BERTopic model is used to extract and calculate the thematic distribution of ancient poetic works, and analyze the thematic evolution of ancient poems in different periods.

II. Methodology for the construction of the corpus

II. A. Selection of Alignment Characteristics of Ancient and Modern Texts

In this paper, the paragraph length variables of ancient and modern texts are denoted as $|l_C|$ and $|l_E|$, while the relationship between the two can be expressed using δ_1. And where the alignment model denotes c as the ratio of the total number of bytes of modern text to the total number of bytes of ancient text. After counting 4746 pairs of paragraph-aligned ancient-modern texts, the distribution of the ratio of the length relationship satisfies the normal distribution. Although ancient and modern texts belong to different language families, the paragraph length of ancient texts and the paragraph length of modern texts show a relatively stable linear length relationship, so this experiment takes the length relationship as an important feature of the ancient-modern text paragraph alignment model. The formulas for the length features of this paper are shown in Eqs. (1)-(4):

$$c = \frac{\sum l_E}{\sum l_C} \tag{1}$$

$$s^2 = D\left(\frac{l_E - c \times l_C}{\sqrt{l_C}}\right) \tag{2}$$

$$\delta_1\left(l_C, l_E\right) = \frac{\left(l_E - c \times l_C\right)}{\sqrt{l_C s^2}} \tag{3}$$

$$F_1 = f_1\left(A, L_C, L_E\right) = -100 \times \log 2\left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^{|\delta_1|} e^{-x^2/2} dx\right) \tag{4}$$

As shown above, $|l_C|$ is the length of each passage of the ancient text, while $|l_E|$ is the length of its corresponding translated passage, and s^2 is the variance of the formula for calculating $\frac{l_E - c \times l_C}{\sqrt{l_C}}$. In this paper, we have selected the Analects of Confucius, the Records of the Rites, the Strategies of the Warring States Period, the Shangshu, the Tao Te Ching, the Records of the Grand Historian, the Art of War, the Analects of Hengshi, the Zhouyi, the Classic of Filial Piety, the Book of the Merchant, the Mozi, the Zhuangzi, the Mencius, and the Gongsun Longzi. 15 pre-Qin canonical books totaling 4746 Statistical experimental calculations of manually aligned passages of ancient-modern texts can be obtained $c \approx 3.78$, $s^2 \approx 27.82$, and the length characteristics of passages can be calculated F_1 by calculating the δ_1 of ancient-modern text passages.

II. B. The Experimental Process of Aligning Kuwen and Modern Texts

Experiments were conducted on 15 pre-Qin canonical books obtained from the Analects of Confucius, the Records of Rites, the Strategies of the Warring States, the Book of Shangshu, the Tao Te Ching, the Records of the Historian, the Art of War of Sun Tzu, the Lun Heng, the Zhou Yi, the Book of Filial Piety, the Book of the Merchant King, the Mozi, the Zhuangzi, the Mencius, and the Gongsunlongzi, totaling 4,746 pairs of ancient-modern text passage alignments. The overall experimental flow is shown in Figure 1.

The crawled ancient-modern text bilingual corpus is subjected to data cleaning to remove the noisy data in it, such as punctuation marks, web page symbols, and missing parts and so on. On this basis this paper also adopts manual alignment to align the original-modern text bilingual chapter-aligned corpus of the pre-Qin canon into paragraphs to verify the effect of the paragraph alignment method of this paper.

II. C.Construction of an annotated corpus of ancient literary works

Any corpus research begins with the establishment of the corpus body, and the quality of the corpus will affect all the corpus-based work to be done in the future, so the selection of the corpus corpus and the annotation are extremely important work.

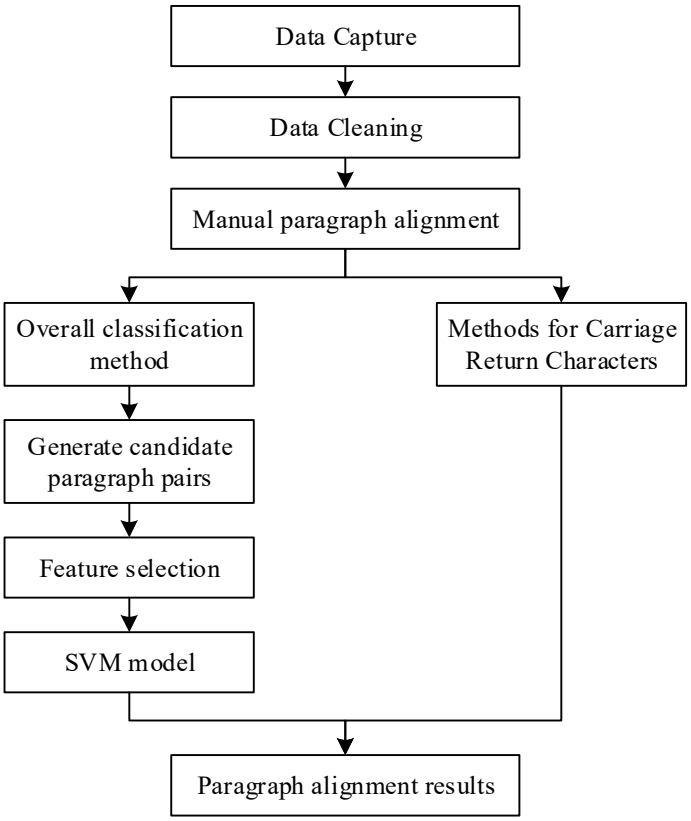

Figure 1: The overall process of the paragraph alignment experiment

(1) Selection of corpus

The corpus takes Selected Literary Works of China Throughout the Ages as the core corpus, because the works selected therein cover representative works of important writers of various genres in various periods, and while focusing on the unity of ideology and artistry, attention is also paid to the breadth of the works' subject matter and the diversity of their styles. Taking into account the balance of the corpus, a large number of works on mythology, religion, divination, politics, literature, history, geography, philosophy, discourse, military, etc., have been added, and the corpus can be supplemented according to the needs in the process of analyzing and using.

(2) Annotation of corpus

In order for a corpus to become a knowledge base, it must be labeled and processed at different levels, such as lexical, syntactic and semantic, so that the “raw corpus” can be turned into a “familiar corpus”, and then the acquisition of knowledge can be made possible. At present, there is no uniform specification for the annotation of ancient Chinese corpus, and in the process of processing the corpus, the annotation system is mainly established according to the grammatical system of representative grammarians such as Wang Li. According to the needs of the application of lexical, syntactic, semantic, chapter, genre, writer and other information for multi-level labeling.

III. Methods of thematic analysis of literary works

III. A. K-BERTopic Modeling Framework

In this chapter, the K-BERTopic model is proposed in conjunction with the research objectives of the topic clustering phase. The model architecture is shown in Fig. 2.The features, functions and inputs/outputs of each structure of the model are as follows.

(1) Document Embedder

The document embedder (DEP) is responsible for converting textual data into a vector representation for subsequent clustering and topic modeling. In K-BERTopic, the pre-trained ALBERT model is used as the document embedder.

(2) Embedding Dimensionality Reducer

A dimensionality reducer (EDR) is used in BERTopic models as a tool for mapping high-dimensional vector representations to low-dimensional spaces for more efficient clustering and topic modeling. In K-BERTopic, the high-dimensional vector representation generated by the document embedder is mapped to a more manageable low-dimensional space using UMAP, a nonlinear dimensionality reduction technique that maps data to a low-dimensional space by maintaining neighborhood relationships between data points in the high-dimensional space.

(3) Document Clustering Engine

The Document Clustering Engine (DCE) employs HDBSCAN, which is capable of recognizing regions of density in the data, resulting in clustering results with a hierarchical structure, which helps to discover themes in the data, and can adaptively determine the number of clusters.

(4) Topic Representation Generator

The Topic Representation Generator (TRG) uses c-TF-IDF to generate topic representations for each cluster, including extracting representative keywords and constructing topic labels. This helps users to better understand the topics represented by each cluster.

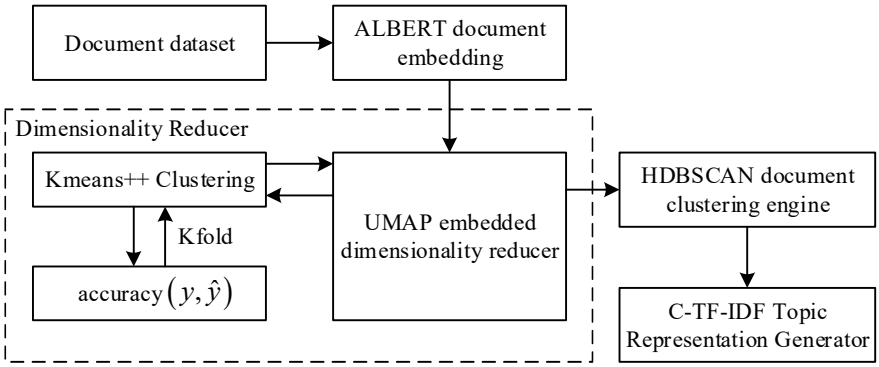

Figure 2: K-BERTopic model architecture

III. B. Clustering-based dimension optimization layer design

III. B. 1) EDR Characterization and Design

EDR plays a role in downscaling high-dimensional text data to lower dimensions in the BERTopic model, which helps the model better understand and analyze the structure and patterns of text data. The EDR with relatively the best effect at present is UMAP, which has a better ability to grasp the global picture than PCA and t-SNE, which are localized information dimensionality reduction methods. However, neither PCA, t-SNE nor UMAP as EDR solves a problem. In the existing BERTopic and its derivative models, the document embeddings are all static dimensionality reduction, which means that the dimensionality of the document embeddings is fixed no matter how the contextual context of the text changes, or how the specific domain it belongs to changes. As a result, this inevitably leads to the loss of some key information, because the model cannot capture the special information of documents in different contexts or domains.

To address this problem, it can be solved by introducing a clustering algorithm, which clusters the embedding results in order to divide them into different clusters, and then dynamically reduces the dimensionality of the data within each cluster in order to find the optimal dimensionality. The flow of the algorithm is shown in Fig. 3.

Commonly used clustering algorithms mainly include SVM, hierarchical clustering and K-means. The output of document embedding is 768-dimensional data, SVM will make the data become very sparse when facing the increase in the dimensionality of the data, which makes the model training and prediction difficult, so the SVM algorithm will face the challenges of dimensionality disaster and computational complexity in dealing with the document embedding of the BERTopic output. The results of hierarchical clustering are affected by the initial clustering tree, which leads to unstable model output.

To solve the above problems, iterative clustering can be used. Among them, K-means algorithm is a kind of iterative clustering, which minimizes the distance between the data points and the clustering center by updating the clustering center continuously and iteratively until the convergence condition is reached, so it can solve the above

problems well. However, K-means is sensitive to the selection of initial center of mass points, and different initial centers of mass may lead to different clustering results. That is to say, when the initialization position of the center of the clusters is inappropriate, the clustering results will have serious errors.

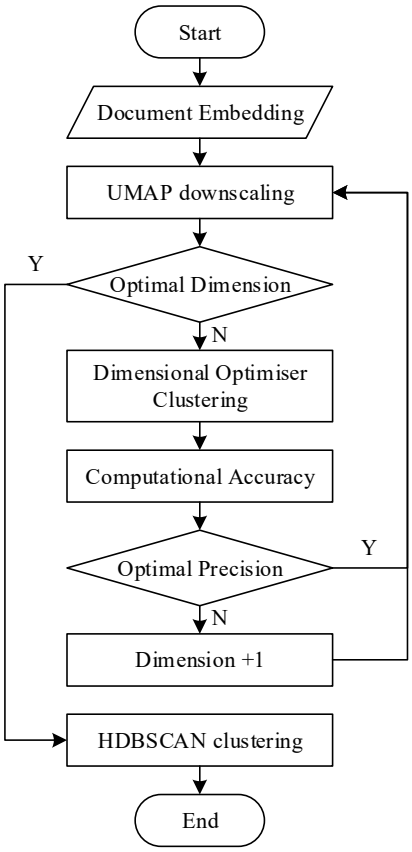

Figure 3: Dynamic dimension reduction algorithm process

III. B. 2) Clustering-based dimensional optimizer design

The method of Kmeans++ in initializing cluster centers is to select k cluster center one by one, and the further away from the other cluster centers the more likely the sample point is to be selected as the next cluster center, thus avoiding as much as possible the impact of poor selection of initial cluster centers on the clustering results. The algorithm first randomly (uniformly distributed) selects a sample point from the data set as the first initial cluster center c_i. then calculates the shortest distance between each sample and the currently existing cluster center, denoted by $D(x)$, and then calculates the probability that each sample point will be selected as the next cluster center $P(x)$. The probability of the next cluster center is calculated as in equation (5).

$$P(x) = \frac{D(x)^2}{\sum_{x \in X} D(x)^2} \tag{5}$$

Subsequently, the sample point corresponding to the maximum probability value (or probability distribution) is selected as the next cluster center and the alignment is calculated, followed by repeating the calculation of cluster centers until k cluster center is selected.

Different clustering clusters will be generated by the above method, and the alignment accuracy is continuously calculated during the clustering process, comparing the degree of match between the given category labels and the cluster labels generated by the clustering, until the best cluster labels can be determined when there is no significant change in the accuracy. The accuracy of symmetric alignment consistency is calculated as in equation (6).

$$Accuracy\left(y,\hat{y}\right)=\max\left(\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n-1}1\left(perm(y)=y_i\right)\right) \tag{6}$$

where, y denotes the true label. $\hat{y}$ denotes the predicted label. n denotes the sample size of the dataset. $1\left(perm(y)=y_i\right)$ is the indicator function which is 1 when y is the same as $\hat{y}$ and 0 otherwise.

After obtaining the best matching clustering labels, the data of each cluster is downscaled using the nonlinear dimensionality reduction algorithm UMAP. The algorithm first constructs a nearest-neighbor graph by calculating the distance or similarity between the high-dimensional data points, and subsequently optimizes the loss function to preserve the global and local structure between the data points and to obtain a representation of the data points in the low-dimensional space.The loss function of UMAP consists of two parts: a global structure preserving term and a local structure preserving term, which are calculated as in equation (7).

$$CE=\sum_{i=1}^{N}w_i\left(\alpha D_{ij}-\log\sum_{k=1}^{K}\exp\left(-\frac{D_{ik}^2}{\alpha}\right)\right)^2 \tag{7}$$

where, N denotes the number of data points in the data set. w_i denotes the weight of data point i. D_{ij} denotes the distance between data point i and data j. K denotes the size of the local neighborhood of each data point. α denotes a parameter that controls global structure maintenance.

This loss function allows the points that are closer in the high dimensional space to remain close in the low dimensional space and the points that are farther away to remain farther away in the low dimensional space, thus realizing efficient and accurate data dimensionality reduction.

The strategy of using clustering and then dynamic dimensionality reduction adds some extra computational complexity. The sources of complexity are mainly clustering, which is related to the size of the dataset and the number of clusters required, and dimension selection, which is mainly reflected in determining the dimensionality of the dimensionality reduction for each cluster. The time complexity O is calculated as in equation (8).

$$O=n\cdot d\cdot K\cdot I+n\cdot d\cdot k^2 \tag{8}$$

where, n is the number of samples in the dataset, K is the number of clusters, d is the feature dimension of each sample in the dataset, I is the number of iterations, and k is the dimension after dimensionality reduction.

IV. Analysis of Ancient Poetry Themes

Taking ancient poems as an example, this chapter uses the feature selection method designed above to extract keywords and phrases in Tang poems, Song lyrics and Yuan operas, and verifies the importance of keywords and key phrases in the thematic analysis of ancient poems. Then, the frequency of tone auxiliaries in the works of ancient poems is counted and analyzed, as well as the temporal changes in the development of ancient poems, so as to complete the research preparation for the analysis of the thematic evolution of ancient poems. Finally, the K-BERTopic model is used to calculate the thematic distribution of ancient poems and analyze the thematic evolution of ancient poems in the Tang and Song dynasties.

IV. A. Preparation of the study

IV. A. 1) Center keyword extraction

Using the feature selection method devised in Chapter 2, the first few keywords in the corpus of Tang poems, Song lyrics, and Yuan operas were extracted and analyzed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: A comparison of key words in Tang poetry, Song Ci and Yuan Qu

Keyword ranking	Types or forms of literature		
	Tang poetry	Song Ci	Yuan Qu
1	He chu	Ren jian	Ming yue
2	Wan li	Ping sheng	Qing shan
3	Bai yun	Gui lai	Qiu feng
4	Jin ri	Mei hua	Xi feng
5	Chun feng	Dong feng	Jiang nan

The words “ten thousand miles”, “white clouds” and “spring breeze” in Tang poems also reflect the description of the scenery well, better reflecting the Tang poets' sentimentality to the scenery. As for the keywords of Song lyrics and Yuan operas, it is found that most of them also reflect the scenery, which is mainly due to the fact that the identification of this kind of words is more perfect. Here, we can find the common points of the three genres of Tang poems, Song lyrics and Yuan operas, and from the table to the inside, it can be learned that all the poets, when they created the ancient poems and lyrics, most of them were touched by the scene, reflecting their own state of mind according to the feelings of the present moment. It can also be seen that keywords and key phrases have common points as well as their differences, so it can be concluded that it is necessary to extract keywords and key phrases separately.

IV. A. 2) Statistics and Analysis of Aphorisms

After statistics and analysis, there are a total of 11,367 Chinese characters contained in all 730,369 ancient poems, of which tone auxiliaries appear a total of 458,550 times, accounting for 1.1113% of all Chinese characters. The frequency of various types (referential, exclamatory, declarative, interrogative, other) of tone auxiliaries is shown in Fig. 4. It can be found that there are relatively more tone auxiliaries indicating doubt, which can be seen in the context of the linguistic features and environment of the ancient poems. In ancient poems, expressing the poet's emotion is a very important reason for creation, and the poet usually expresses his questioning and exclamation on social and natural phenomena. Therefore, there are relatively more words of questioning tone. In all the ancient poems, there are about 0.2372 tone words in one ancient poem on average, which shows that the number of tone words does not account for a large part of the overall ancient poems, and therefore it is easy to be ignored in the usual parsing. However, once these archaic words are removed, the emotion expressed by the poet will be greatly reduced. Therefore, although the frequency of tone auxiliaries in the overall ancient poems is not high, they have high research value to a certain extent.

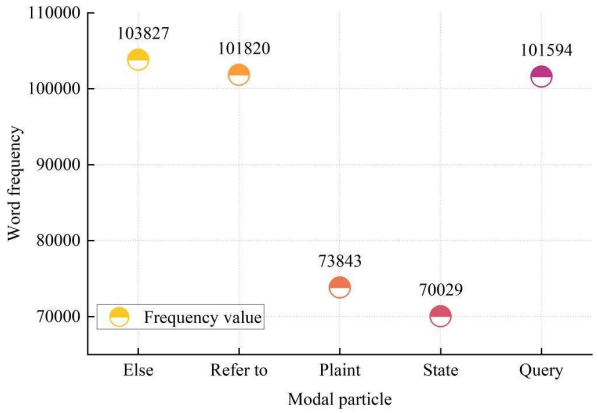

Figure 4: The frequency of appearance of modal particles

IV. A. 3) Visualizing Temporal Information of Chinese Ancient Poetry

Ancient poetry time information timeline is shown in Figure 5, is the timeline information can be compared vertically the distribution of the number of ancient poems in different dynasties, overall from the timeline of the figure, the flourishing stage of the development of ancient poetry is the Tang Dynasty, the Song Dynasty and the Yuan Dynasty. This is in line with the law of poetry development in history, in these three dynasties. The timeline can give a general impression of the development of poetry as a whole. From the pre-Qin it seems that a small extreme point in the number of poems appeared, because the ancient poems of this period did not have very specific authors of the time, and the basic sources of the ancient poems were passed down to the present day through the book of the Classic of Poetry. This general collection of poetry contains a wealth of information, and learners can observe this point in time and focus their study and research on it.

IV. B. Thematic Analysis of Ancient Poetry

IV. B. 1) Calculation of Topic Distribution Based on K-BERTopic Models

Taking a representative corpus of Tang Dynasty poems as an example, the themes of Tang Dynasty poems are extracted and categorized into (Topic0) Landscape and Fields, (Topic1) Reading and Pilgrimage, (Topic2) Family and Country without Matters, (Topic3) Wandering to the Ends of the Earth, (Topic4) Wanderer's Detention, and (Topic5) Earthly Dust and Dust, and the K-BERTopic model is used to calculate the theme of the Tang Dynasty poems probability distribution and output the results in Table 2, selecting one of the data for analysis.

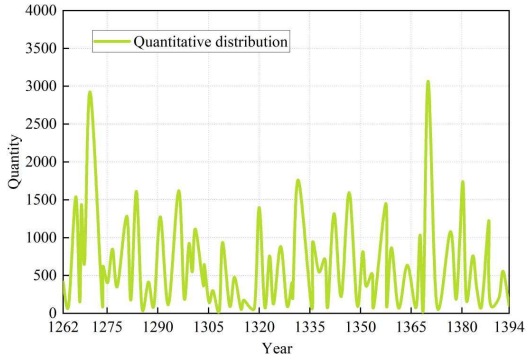

Figure 5: The timeline of the distribution of ancient poetry quantities

Table 2: The theme probability distribution of Tang Dynasty poetry

Serial number	Topic0	Topic1	Topic2	Topic3	Topic4	Topic5
0	0.2142	0.0518	0.0531	0.5768	0.0518	0.0523
1	0.0516	0.0516	0.0523	0.0525	0.0527	0.7392
2	0.062	0.062	0.0626	0.6903	0.0619	0.0622
3	0.0436	0.438	0.6189	0.0443	0.0436	0.2059
…	…	…	…	…	…	…
31613	0.0556	0.0559	0.5453	0.0558	0.2305	0.0570

Taking the first data as an example, the topics related to the poem are calculated as Topic0 (Landscape and Garden) and Topic3 (Wanderlust), and then according to the serial number, we look up the text dataset of the poem, and find that its corresponding poem is Spring Return to the Old Pine Niche of Zhongnan Mountain, which was made by Li Bai.

The poem describes the scenery of Zhongnan Mountain in detail, in line with the theme of landscape and idyllic features, and according to the background of the poem can be seen in the poem was created in 731, when Li Bai was 30 years old, he left Anlu, the first to enter Chang'an, seeking politics, but always failed to do as he wished, and finally decided to leave and live in Zhongnan Mountain, which expresses the poet's disdain for the noble and the spirit of arrogance, but also shows the poet's freedom of character of the wandering the world. It also demonstrates the poet's free character of wandering to the ends of the earth. Therefore, calculating the thematic probability distribution of the content of the poem according to the K-BERTopic model can effectively determine multiple themes of the poem.

IV. B. 2) Thematic Evolution of Ancient Poetry in Different Periods

This subsection takes the two dynasties of the Tang and Song Dynasties, the apex of the development of ancient poetry and literature, as the objects of study, and divides the Tang Dynasty into two periods according to the development of the society: (T1) the early Tang and the flourishing Tang, and (T2) the middle Tang and the late Tang, and the Song Dynasty adopts the stage division of (S1) the Northern Song Dynasty and (S2) the Southern Song Dynasty directly. The thematic emphasis of ancient poems in the four periods is different, and the changes in the thematic tone of ancient poems in the four periods are analyzed in turn in Figures 6-9, with the size of the dots corresponding to different themes in the figure indicating the degree of their share in the current period.

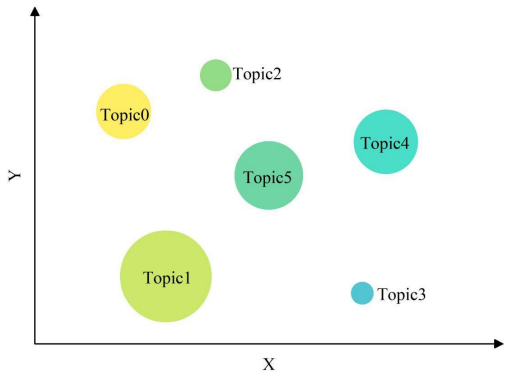

Figure 6: The thematic tone of ancient poetry in the T1 period

In the early Tang and Shengtang periods, the themes of (Topic 1) pilgrimage to study and (Topic 5) the dust of the world are the most prominent, while the themes of (Topic 2) the family and the country and (Topic 3) the wandering of the world are fewer. Reflecting the stable development of society in the early Tang Dynasty and the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty, the stability and prosperity of the social economy and politics not only made the scholars hope to show their ambition through the career path, but also nurtured the ideal of the people to live in peace and work in contentment.

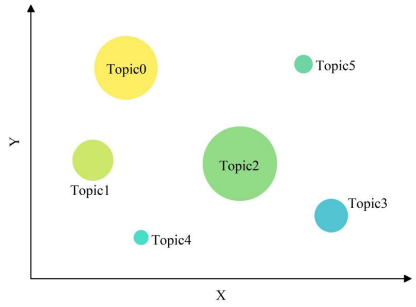

Figure 7: The thematic tone of ancient poetry in the T2 period

After the Middle and Late Tang dynasties, the theme of (Topic2) Family and State becomes the most prominent, followed by (Topic0) Landscape and Fields, and then by (Topic1) Reading and Pilgrimage. This corresponds to the mid- and late-Tang Dynasty when the regime was in turmoil, the society and economy were in decline, and the people were in dire straits. Therefore, the poet hopes that the mountains and rivers will remain intact and that he can save his family and country by joining politics, and he also has the mentality of avoiding the world and hoping to stay away from the wars and disputes.

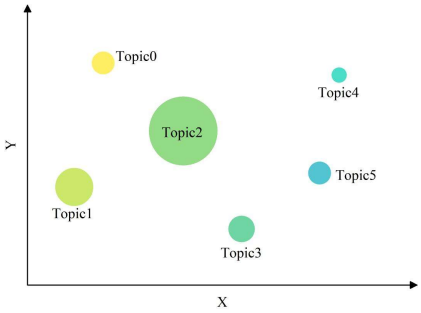

Figure 8: The thematic tone of ancient poetry in the S1 period

In the Northern Song Dynasty, the themes of (Topic 1) Study Pilgrimage, (Topic 2) Family and Country, and (Topic 4) Traveler's Journey stood side by side. Compared to the period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms that just ended, although the society tends to be stabilized, but there are still many hidden dangers, so there are career aspirations and family and country feelings coexist.

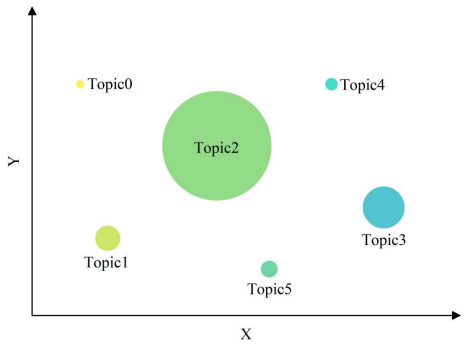

Figure 9: The thematic tone of ancient poetry in the S2 period

Southern Song Dynasty (Topic2), the theme of the family and the state of the most since the Tang and Song dynasties, from the capital was forced to relocate, full of foreign invasions, and the weakness of the court, both the literati and the people, burst out of a strong patriotic feelings.

V. Conclusion

This paper establishes an annotated corpus of ancient literary works by aligning the language features of ancient and modern texts. At the same time, we design a dimension optimizer based on kmeans++, and adopt dynamic dimension reduction measures to improve the coherence and diversity of the model in text analysis. Thus, the K-BERTopic model is constructed, which, in the analysis of the first data of the Tang Dynasty corpus, calculates that the probability of the theme of “landscapes and fields” is 0.2142, and the probability of the theme of “wandering to the ends of the earth” is 0.5768, which is in line with the content of corresponding the content of the corresponding poems. After obtaining the linguistic characteristics of ancient literary works, this paper unfolds the thematic calculation and analysis of ancient literary works, which provides a powerful technical support for the social and cultural research of ancient poems.

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