



To Appreciate the Beauty of Emotions in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose

Teaching Strategies on Aesthetic Education of Chinese Courses in Vocational Colleges

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Abstract. Based on the Chinese teaching activities in the vocational college and combined with the uniqueness of teaching classical Chinese poetry and prose, this article attempts to guide students to taste the feelings implied in such literary works and make them more exposed to classical Chinese poetry. Thus, I propose my views on achieving the aesthetic educational function of teaching Chinese in vocational colleges.

Keywords: teaching classical Chinese poetry and prose · vocational colleges · poetic feelings

1 Introduction

Classical Chinese poems and proses are indispensable components of Chinese textbooks adopted in vocational colleges. Only by fully leveraging disciplinary advantages and guiding students to love poetry and get close to poetry learning can they be cultivated in Chinese civilization. Students in vocational colleges can feel the great artistic charm and profound aesthetic value of such beautiful poems of these beautiful classical poems as they are learning. When it comes to concrete Chinese teaching activities, the common feelings shared by humanity should be considered. A Chinese teacher should help his or her students emotionally resonate with the poets, guide them to more contact with classical poems, and make them more familiar with classical poems. With these efforts, the inner beauty of classical Chinese poetry will be fully explored and students' cultural confidence will be gradually consolidated. As students inherit and spread excellent Chinese culture, the aesthetic educational function of Chinese Courses is achieved.

2 Current Situation of Teaching Classical Chinese Poetry

Major differences in Chinese teaching exist between vocational colleges and ordinary senior high schools. The teaching activities of vocational colleges aim at the national college entrance exam and the cultivation of applied talents. In the meantime, due to

various channels for students to access external information, students are experiencing greater spiritual and visual impact brought by the unique expression of new media.

In such a context, Chinese teaching in vocational college should focus more on aesthetic education. As time passes, the Internet has made cultural exchanges worldwide more frequent and diverse. Such cultural exchanges provide opportunities for broadening cultural horizons for teachers and students; however, they have caused cultural shocks and conflicts to curb the teaching of traditional Chinese poems. It is necessary for Chinese education in vocational colleges to explore how to help students be aware of the beauty of Chinese culture in multi-cultural learning and profoundly understand its nature through the contrast with other different cultures.

China is the cradle of classical Chinese poetry and numerous impressive poems constitute a crucial part of excellent traditional Chinese culture. The history of poetry is the history of the country's culture, nourishing the whole nation. Loving and learning poetry is a way to be bathed in the glory of Chinese civilization. The beautiful lines of poetry embrace the extraordinary charm and deep value of aesthetic education. Therefore, in Chinese teaching, the teacher should fully explore the inner beauty of classical poems and help students be familiar with them. The teacher can open students' minds to fully leverage the aesthetic education function of Chinese as a discipline.

Besides, in the era of fast-spreading information, Chinese teaching in vocational colleges should guide students to establish correct aesthetic concepts of right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, kind and evil, fully stimulate students' aesthetic interest, train students' aesthetic ability, promote students' all-round development, and ensure to improve students' comprehensive ability.

3 Analysis of Teaching Strategies for Appreciating Poetic Beauty

3.1 Perceiving Patriotic Feelings in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose

In Chinese history, a great number of famous poems and proses that are remembered generation after generation were written by ancient civilian officials who managed the overall situation off the battlefield. However, different from these officials, some brave and resolute soldiers were also great poets, whose poems are filled with a sense of patriotism.

They "had unyielding backbones and were devoted to safeguarding their nation wholeheartedly. When such strong patriotic feelings cannot be confided in others, they were presented in these poets' works to the fullest. As important carriers of feelings, these poems show the function of "stating courage and ambitions". These poets are heroes as well, and they left not only the records of historical wars but also wonderful literary works different from the general ones [1].

For example, in learning the poem "*Water Dragon's Chant on Mounting the Shangxin Pavilion in JianKang*", the general contents of teaching classical Chinese poetry and prose are needed. In other words, the teacher needs to guide the students to understand and imagine the magnificent natural beauty behind the refined lines.

For this poem, however, thinking over the reasons why the poet Xin Qiji felt sad and resentful when he faced splendid "Far-off northern hills like spiral shells or hair

decor of jade” is more important. In this sense, the first step is to guide the students to think about a question revealed by the poem naturally, “Why did the poet feel sad and resentful?” When the poet looked south, he witnessed the magnificent mountains and rivers of southern China during the Song Dynasty, but he felt ashamed that his motherland became incomplete because the imperial court feared the enemies and refused to fight, and even though he was ambitious to take the lost territory back, there was no place for him to unleash his courage and strength. All these factors contributed to the poet’s grief and hatred.

In the following step, it is suggested that the teacher guide the students to ponder over: What actions did the poet take when he was dominated by such “grief and hatred”? With the question, the students will pay attention to the lines of the poem:

*“Long I look at my precious sword,
Only to pound all the railings with my hand.”*

The lines involve the poet’s typical actions, which were taken because of his thrilling feelings. When the students understand the lines, they can be encouraged to imitate such actions to share the poet’s feelings so that they will deeply experience his grief and indignation of failing to realize the national reunification and his ambitions.

The poetic beauty lies in touching feelings to moving people. In the process of teaching classical Chinese poetry and prose, the teacher should guide the students to seek their emotional resonance with poets. To achieve the purpose, the students need to know the necessary information, including the historical background and the poet’s social status and life experiences. Moreover, they should imagine and experience the poet’s emotions on their own. These are the basic methods of learning and understanding poetic feelings. Only in this way can we get emotionally close to traditional Chinese poetry, truly have the opportunity to taste the classical beauty of literature, and feel the influence of the poet’s patriotism. Such aesthetic education should be consistent throughout Chinese teaching, especially the teaching of classical works.

3.2 Tasting Filial Piety in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose

In *“Ehr Ya of the Book of Poetry”*, an ancient book containing commentaries on classics Chinese poems and proses about 600 B.C., “He who is good at serving his parents is filial.” Mencius also once said, “Of all which a filial son can attain to, there is nothing greater than his honouring his parents.” Filial piety refers to being grateful, the basis of which is intimacy. For vocational college students, because of their age and psychological characteristics, an intimate relationship has been built with their parents who love and care for them the most. In this sense, the teacher can guide the students to spontaneously express their gratitude to their parents on the basis of such intimacy and recognize that it is their obligation and responsibility to do so in Chinese teaching. To be specific, the teacher should take advantage of Chinese courses as a discipline, making the students fully taste the beauty of filial piety in classical Chinese poetry and prose. Thus, students will further understand that carrying out filial piety is the basic virtue and the foundation of social morality.

For instance, in learning “*Xiangji Room*” (written by Gui Youguang in Ming Dynasty), when the teacher guides students to digest “grief” emotion in the poetry, the focus can be laid on “sadness” and “filial piety”. More details of daily life are described in the prose. The unconscious details are often seen in students’ daily life, and by learning classical prose and focusing on the exquisite and moving details, students can better taste and understand filial piety.

For example, the teacher should guide students to combine their experiences and the old maid’s words about the author’s late mother to profoundly understand the prose. “Is the child cold or is he hungry?” The filial piety implied in this short question is hard to feel if students fail to read it carefully. The teacher should remind students of noticing the original text and its annotations: The prose writer was very young when his mother passed away, so he could not clearly remember her image. All the memories of his mother were told by the old maid to help him recollect. Therefore, the teacher should guide students to know the differences between this detail and their own parents’ solicitude in daily life. Admittedly, it is not a big deal, but as students get along with their parents, such trivial and ordinary details are abundant, which is the common ground of the most touching feelings shared by humanity.

“Is the child cold or is he hungry?” It is similar to the caring question asked by each student’s mother when the student arrived home, “Are you hungry? You want get something to eat?” The happy students may tend to say, “I’m home.” or “Mom, where are you?” But the prose writer did not have the opportunity to communicate with his mother. What he could do is to listen to the old maid’s recollections and imagine the most common life details to memorize his mother, while students with their mothers’ company live more happily today. It is the ordinary life conveyed in plain words that is permeated with the sincerest human feelings. After the students resonate with the writer, they will be guided to taste the natural beauty of the language that instead of rhetorical expressions, properly plain ones can also be heartfelt with lingering charm.

In the process of teaching classical Chinese poetry and prose, feeling empathetic is difficult because of the barriers of time and space, but there are always some common feelings. Therefore, when it comes to the learning of filial piety, the emotional connotations should be ensured to be fully tapped. Under the influence of feelings, students are guided to make full use of their life experiences and accept the cultivation of emotional beauty while acquiring Chinese knowledge. As a result, students will be grateful for their parents and life.

3.3 Inspiring Romance in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose

Romance is more common and easier to resonate with students than any other topic of literary works. Vocational college students are in the young stage of longing for and paying attention to romance, so in Chinese courses, the teacher should ingeniously utilize the relevant texts, especially the classical poetry and prose showing traditional Chinese characteristics, to educate students in an aesthetic manner and guides them to have the reasonable and correct understanding on the beauty of romance.

Chinese people are more reserved in expressing romantic feelings, and learning love poetry prose is an essential way to understand such implicit beauty.

For example, the love poems written by Li Shangyin, a poet living in Tang Dynasty, suggest such characteristics of Chinese people to a great extent, and he “created a hazy romantic atmosphere in his love poems, conveying his innermost feelings in the established environment and images as well as the beauty of sorrowful, disturbing, and implicit love” [2].

Take the poem “*Gorgeous Zither*” (written by Li Shangyin) as an example. It is one of his most difficult poems to interpret, and as some sighed before, “The poem is so hard to explain.” The poet frequently used the rhetorical device of “bixing (metaphor and emphasis)” to deliberately create obscure expressions, so the understanding of the specific feelings in the poem is hindered.

As a matter of fact, the focus of learning the poem should not be laid on interpreting the specific feelings. Instead, students can compare the poem with their own life experience, imaging the images and associating with themselves. Therefore, they can seek the similarities between different poetic concepts and convert the obscure expressions into similar experiences or familiar scenes in movies or television. For example:

“Why should the Gorgeous Zither have fifty strings?”

In learning this line, the teacher can guide students to recall whether there is a similar moment when a question is asked for no reason. By taking it as a starting point, students can interpret the poem from their life experiences. Based on such true feelings, students can get emotionally closer to the poem and deeply understand a series of literary quotations in it:

*“A butterfly Chuang Tzu dreamed to be in a dim morning,
Amorous a cuckoo was, when it did not stop crying until its heart poured out,
In moonlit pearls see tears in mermaid’s eyes,
With sunburned mirth let the blue jade vapour rise.”*

All the above quotations come from Chinese traditional tales. Thus, the sincere, strong, profound and thought-provoking feelings are conveyed through visible and felt images in the poem. The meaning of the poem is uncertain, which can be utilized to become its highlight. This is because such uncertainty and obscurity make people in different life stages generate emotional resonance, making it possible that the students who have not experienced romantic relationships can feel uniquely about the poem and love.

3.4 Internalizing the Beauty of Poetry and Prose via Expanding Reading

To guide students to read classical Chinese poems and proses, we should not only pay attention to teaching and learning in class, but also pay attention to construction of a trinity reading system composed of “teaching reading, self-reading and extracurricular reading”. It is quite necessary to emphasize the combination in and out of class and encourage students to develop their ability independently [3], with the purpose of improving their comprehensive reading quality and cultivating a lifelong reading habit.

To build a well-formed trinity reading system, we should pay attention to the teaching and learning assisted system, effectively carrying out “self-reading”, and let unit guidance and reading prompts play an important role in it. In self-reading classes, teachers should create situations based on texts and students’ current ability to arouse their interest in reading, and deal with the relationship between “help” and “release” [4].

Only with teachers’ guidance on appreciating the beauty of emotions in classical Chinese poetry and prose and with the learning lists such as task support and situation support provided by teachers in the “self-reading” activities, can students learn to expand the basic methods of reading classical Chinese poems and proses, to effectively carry out extracurricular reading. “Reading in class is of little use to the acquisition of knowledge, for it is only on the surface of things without enough summarization. The deeper and wider you go, the easier it is to suddenly understand and turn it into useful experience. And extra-curricular reading is the way to guide you to go deep and widely” [5], said by the famous educationist Ye Shengtao.

4 Conclusion

Students are increasingly dependent on network technology, and their lives are diverse with unique features due to the emergence of new media. The audio-visual media have widened the gap between students and traditional culture. Students’ and teachers’ living conditions vary a lot, so communication is becoming more difficult. The barriers caused by classical Chinese poetry and prose make students instinctively resistant to learning the. Teachers should face up to such resistance and explore the emotional connotations in the teaching material, so they can find the key points that resonate with students. Consequently, while appreciating the beauty of feelings in poems and prose and being closer to them, students will recognize and love traditional Chinese culture and identity. Promoting cultural identity through emotional closeness seems to be an effective way to enhance the aesthetic educational function of Chinese courses in vocational colleges. Of course, it is easier said than done. Loving beauty is an ability, but for fostering the ability to appreciate beauty or aesthetic education, there is still a long way to go.

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Authors’ Contributions. The author is now a lecturer in the Department of Foundation Education at Beijing Information Technology College. She received her master’s degree in College of Liberal Arts of Hunan Normal University, majoring in Chinese curriculum and teaching methodology. As a young teacher in her team, her lessons are very popular among students. In 2020, her students won a first-level prize in the “2nd Conference on Reciting, Writing and Speaking classical Chinese” held by the Committee of Language and Literature in Beijing, right under her instruction.

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