



Study on the Selection and Compilation of the Book of Songs in International Chinese Cultural Textbooks

-- Based on the Evaluation of Selected Poems from the Book of Songs in 12 International Chinese Cultural Textbooks

Yuke Cai

International College of Chinese Studies, Fujian Normal University,
Fujian Fuzhou, 350117, China

yukiyukiyk@163.com

Abstract. Culture course is an important type of international Chinese language education course and the Book of Songs is an important selection of cultural textbooks. Based on the systematic evaluation of selected poems in 12 international Chinese cultural textbooks, this paper analyzes the selected texts from the aspects of theme, arrangement, annotation and translation. It is found that the selected poems of the Book of Songs in the existing cultural textbooks are mainly love poems and there is very little exercises. The annotation and appreciation parts are mainly focus on word explanation, but the literary devices and multiple poetic interpretations are insufficient. It is suggested to increase the selection of multiple subjects such as corvee poems, optimize the design of exercises, enrich the appreciation to strengthen the cultural transmission efficiency of the textbook.

Keywords: the Book of Songs, international Chinese language education, cultural textbooks

1 Introduction

With the continuous improvement of China's international influence, international Chinese language education is flourishing, and the cultural teaching of international Chinese language education has made great progress. But the cultural textbooks still have some problems such as the limited quantity, weak pertinence, and disconnection from life.^[1]

Poetry is an important content in cultural textbooks and the Book of Songs is widely selected in textbooks because it closely related to the origin of Chinese culture. Therefore, it provides an excellent context for second language learners to understand Chinese culture. At present, the research on poetry culture textbooks for international Chinese language education is mostly a general review of the selection of ancient poetry, while the research on the Book of Songs in international Chinese language education is mostly related to the teaching practice and the dissemination of cultural

images, and there is a lack of in-depth research on the selection of the Book of Songs in cultural textbooks. Chen (2020) discussed the value of the Book of Songs by analyzing the selection of ancient Chinese literature textbooks for Chinese language majors in five universities in China, and created some samples for MTC SOL students.^[2] However, there is still room for improvement in the scope of concern groups, the number of textbooks used and the depth of the analysis of the poems in article.

This work centers on the presentation of the Book of Songs in textbooks while 12 international Chinese cultural textbooks containing the Book of Songs are selected to make a systematic and in-depth comparison of the selection and compilation of the Book of Songs. The work focuses on different perspectives such as selection, annotation, exercise and translation, so as to find the existing problems in the compilation of textbooks. And then provides some suggestions for the selected poems of Book of Songs in international Chinese cultural textbooks.

2 Overview of International Chinese Cultural Textbooks Related to the Book of Songs

Through a comprehensive search of the existing international Chinese cultural textbooks, this paper selects 12 international Chinese cultural textbooks involving the Book of Songs. Table 1 provides a brief description of the overall situation of each textbook.

Table 1. Publishing information of 12 international Chinese cultural textbooks.

Type	Textbook	Author	Publication time
Literary textbooks	Selected Readings in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose	Kou Dezhang	1990
	Selected Reading of Ancient Chinese Poems	Qian Hua, Liu Delian	1996
	Ancient Chinese literature poetry	Wang Qingyun, Sun Lan, Han Mei, Gong Xiaomei	2005
	100 ancient Chinese poems	Zhu Hongda, Wu Jiemin	2007
	Appreciation of Chinese Poetry	Wang Shuangshuang	2007
	Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry	Lin Qi	2012
	A Reading Book for the Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry	Ma Xinqin, Bai Hairong	2013
	100 Classical Chinese Poems with Chinese-English interpretations	Gao Min, Wang Yigao	2014
	Selected Ancient Chinese Literary Works	Xu Zongcai	2018

Type	Textbook	Author	Publication time
Cultural overview textbooks	China's' Cultural Heritage	Han Jiantang	1994
	China: Country Profile	Wang Shunhong	2015
	Understanding China	Cheng Aimin	2018

According to the Preface and the focused content, these textbooks can be roughly divided into two categories: literature textbooks and cultural overview textbooks.^[3] Among the twelve textbooks selected in this work, nine literature textbooks make a relatively comprehensive language teaching arrangement for the selected passages of the Book of Songs, focusing on the new words, the general idea of poetry, and appreciation. The three cultural overview textbooks are mainly introductory texts. A few of them also select some poems from The Book of songs, but these are not used as main teaching materials while teaching.

3 Selection and Evaluation of the Book of Songs in International Chinese Cultural Textbooks

3.1 Selected Poems: Subject Categories and Characteristics

The Book of Songs has wide-ranging content and it is diverse in theme. According to the cultural textbooks, the poems in the Book of Songs can be divided into five categories: love poem, corvee poem, labor poem, resentment poem and political anger poem. Among them, love poems refer to the poems that describe the love and marriage. The corvee poems refer to the poems in which the underclass are forced to do heavy labor such as basic service and military service. Labor poems refer to the poems that praise the laborers and reflect the scenes of ancient agricultural production. Resentment poems refer to the poems which aim at criticizing the current social problems and satirizing the rulers. Political anger poems refer to poems that express dissatisfaction with political career. The specific themes and their proportion are as follows.

Table 2. The selected themes of the Book of Songs in 12 international Chinese cultural textbooks.

Textbook	themes	Number	Title
Selected Reading of Ancient Chinese Poems	love poems	13	<i>Guanju , Jingnū , Bozhou , Boxi , Mugua , Dache , Caige , Jiangzhongzi , Jiaotong , Jianchang, Chuqidongmen, Zhenwei, Jianjia</i>
	corvee poems	1	<i>Fatan</i>
	resentment poems	1	<i>ShuoShu</i>
A Reading Book for the Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry	love poems	3	<i>Guanju, Jingnū, Jianjia</i>
	corvee poems	1	<i>Junziyuyi</i>

Textbook	themes	Number	Title
Selected Readings in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose	love poems	2	<i>Guanju, Jiangzhongzi</i>
	corvee poems	1	<i>Fatan</i>
	resentment poems	1	<i>Shuoshu</i>
Selected Ancient Chinese Literary Works	love poems	3	<i>Guanju, Jingnü , Bozhou</i>
	corvee poems	2	<i>Qiyue, Fatan</i>
	resentment poems	2	<i>Shuoshu, Xintai</i>
	labor poems	1	<i>Fuyi</i>
China: Country Profile	corvee poems	1	<i>Caiwei</i>
Understanding China	love poems	1	<i>Guanju</i>
Ancient Chinese literature poetry	love poems	2	<i>Guanju, Jianjia</i>
	corvee poems	1	<i>Caiwei</i>
	resentment poems	1	<i>Shuoshu</i>
	labor poems	1	<i>Fuyi</i>
100 Classical Chinese Poems with Chi- nese-English interpre- tations	love poems	1	<i>Guanju</i>
	corvee poems	1	<i>Fatan</i>
100 ancient Chinese poems	love poems	2	<i>Guanju , Mugua</i>
Appreciation of Chi- nese Poetry	love poems	1	<i>Caige</i>
China's' Cultural Heritage	love poems	1	<i>Caige</i>
	resentment poems	1	<i>Shuoshu</i>
	love poems	3	<i>Jianjia, Paoyoukuye, Herensi</i>
Appreciation of Chi- nese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry	resentment poems	1	<i>Geli</i>
	Political anger poems	1	<i>Xiangbo</i>

It can be seen from the table that love poem is the main selected type in the textbooks, among which *Guanju* has been selected eight times, with the highest number of selections. In addition, *Jianjia* , *Fatan* and *Shuo Shu* are also relatively favored by the textbook selection.

Such selection is closely related to the learning characteristics of ancient poetry in international Chinese language education. Gao (2005) put forward that "the difficulty of ancient poetry teaching for international students mainly lies in the understanding of ancient Chinese and artistic conception".^[4] While love is a common theme in world literature, the narrative of "pursuing love" is close to the learner's life, which can arouse emotional resonance and weaken the influence of cultural differences while reading.^[5]

Compared with the class criticism in *Fatan* and *Shuo Shu*, this kind of universal ethics is easy to be accepted in cross-cultural communication and meet the goal of "seeking common ground while sheltering differences" in cultural transmission. During the learning process of love poems in the Book of Songs, students can understand the origin of love and marriage views in Chinese society, and then experience the spiritual characteristics in Chinese such as "*liyuxianghe*"(*archive harmony between rituals and music*). Relevant cultural images like "*qin and se*" can also be used as the entry point to help the learners to expand their cultural knowledge.

3.2 Arrangement: Structure and Exercise

In different textbooks, there are different focuses and considerations on the arrangement regarding the Book of Songs. The compilation of each textbook is summarized in the table below.^[6]

Table 3. Structure of the text from The Book of Songs in international Chinese cultural textbooks.

Textbook	Structure
Selected Reading of Ancient Chinese Poems	Original text + full text Pinyin + annotation + English annotation + Japanese annotation + interpretation
A Reading Book for the Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry	Introduction of the Book of Songs + interpretation of the title+ original text + annotation + translation + appreciation + key words and verses (+ related words) + exercises
Selected Readings in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose	Original text+ annotation
Selected Ancient Chinese Literary Works	Original text + interpretation + annotation
China: Country Profile	Introduction of the Book of Songs (select <i>Caiwei</i>)
Understanding China	Introduction of the Book of Songs + appreciation + word explanation
Ancient Chinese literature poetry	Introduction of the Book of Songs + original text + annotation + translation + appreciation (+ appreciation of famous sentences)
100 Classical Chinese Poems with Chinese-English interpretations	Introduction of the Book of Songs + English translation of the introduction+ original text + annotation + English translation + appreciation + English translation of appreciation
100 ancient Chinese poems	Original text (with <i>pinyin</i>) + appreciation + English translation + annotation
Appreciation of Chinese Poetry	Introduction + original text + Notes + poem interpretation + New words + dictation + vocabulary comparison + word usage + free-response question + word explanation + English translation
China's' Cultural Heritage	Introduction + original text (translation) + poetic introduction
Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry	Original text + annotation + appreciation

The comprehensive items in textbook enable learners to have a more systematic understanding of the selected poems. On the whole, the items in literature textbooks are more diverse than those in cultural overview textbooks. All textbooks have original texts and annotations, and some of them also have the appreciation parts. Some textbooks have pinyin and foreign language annotations or translations.

Among them, a total of two textbooks set up exercises on selected poems. A Reading Book for the Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry has various examination forms, such as phonetic notation, blank filling, thinking questions, word formation, multiple choice. In the blank filling exercise, the textbook combines the key words in the Book of Songs with modern daily life communication, which enhances the practicability of the textbook. And free-response question has been designed in the Appreciation of Chinese Poetry. The two textbooks mainly focus on the meaning exercise in the practice of the Book of Songs. Objectively, the Book of Songs has many difficult and uncommon words due to its created age. So the learning requirements to students are more focused on the grasp of the poetry's theme. Therefore, it is reasonable to arrange the exercises with a large proportion of meaning exercises and supplemented by mechanical exercises. Well-designed exercises are helpful to enlighten students and help teachers to measure students' learning efforts, which reflects the practical and scientific principles in textbook compilation.

3.3 Interpretation: Annotation, Appreciation and Translation

Table 3 illustrates that ten of the twelve international Chinese cultural textbooks contain annotation. Wang (1991) classifies annotation into four types according to the content: lexical annotation, sentential annotation, theoretical annotation and comprehensive annotation, among which comprehensive annotation contains the other three.^[7] Based on the statistical results of selection frequency in Table 2, Table 4 analyzes the selection of *Guanju* in eight textbooks, *Jianjia* in Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry and *Cai Ge* in Appreciation of Chinese Poetry.

Table 4. Annotated structure of selected text in international Chinese cultural textbooks

No	Textbook	Number of annotations	lexical annotation	sentential annotation	theoretical annotation	Introduction
1	Selected Reading of Ancient Chinese Poems	13	11	2	0	0
2	A Reading Book for the Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry	12	12	0	0	0
3	Selected Readings in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose	14	13	0	0	1
4	Selected Ancient Chinese	13	7	6	0	0

No	Textbook	Number of annotations	lexical annotation	sentential annotation	theoretical annotation	Introduction
Literary Works						
5	China: Country Profile	0	0	0	0	0
6	Understanding China	1	1	0	0	0
7	Ancient Chinese literature poetry	15	13	1	0	1
100 Classical Chinese Poems with Chinese-English interpretations						
8	100 ancient Chinese poems	14	1	13	0	0
9	Appreciation of Chinese Poetry	13	13	0	0	0
10	China's Cultural Heritage	5	5	0	0	0
11	Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry	0	0	0	0	0
12		13	13	0	0	1

Among the nine literature textbooks, the number of annotations of selected texts is approximately 12, which is quite comprehensive, while general textbooks contain only a few of them and completely not at all. Most textbook annotations are mainly lexical annotation. Some textbooks also add the introduction of the selected poems, while the theoretical annotation are completely missing in the textbook. But at the same time, some textbooks can analyze the meaning of poetry in the appreciation, which play the same role as theoretical annotations. Some textbooks might expand some extra culture knowledge. For example, the Interpretation part in Selected Ancient Chinese Literary Works gives a brief introduction of the geographical location and historical succession of the ancient place in poems. Ancient Chinese literature poetry explains the literary devices of the Book of Songs. In addition, some textbooks still focus on expository introduction, and there is no appreciation section in Selected Readings in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose.

Multiple poetic interpretation in appreciation has always been a emphasis in the research of the Book of Songs. Although the explanation might be difficult, it is necessary for foreign learners to notice the existence of multiple poetic interpretations. In Appreciation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Ci-Poetry, it is mentioned that *Jianjia* has variety of interpretations of political poem, love poem, friendship poem, and custom poem. And it is supplemented with extended materials such as Nineteen Ancient Poems. However, objectively, it is quite difficult for learners because it requires a corresponding Chinese language level.

While studying the Book of Songs, translation is also an indispensable part. Four of the twelve textbooks are translated in vernacular, with literal translation as the main method. Some of the textbooks use foreign language to translate. The following is a comparison of the English translations of *Guan Ju* in 100 Classical Chinese Poems with Chinese-English interpretations and 100 ancient Chinese poems.^[8]

In terms of The title, 100 Classical Chinese Poems with Chinese-English interpretations translates *Guan Ju* into *Cooing and Wooing*, while 100 ancient Chinese poems use *The Ospreys*. Former one reflects the theme of the love poem and cleverly rhymes bird calls with the word “*wooing*”, which tends to be liberal translation, while 100 ancient Chinese poems favored the literal translation. In terms of the content, “Water flows left and right, Of cress long here, short there” in *Cooing and Wooing* directly describes the scene that the cress drifts while the water flows, which belongs to the literal translation. “The spatterdocks grow high or low, She gathers them along the stream” in *The Ospreys* depicts a young girl picking the plants. It fills up the cognitive deficiency caused by learners’ lack of in-depth understanding of Chinese culture and tends to liberal translation. This approach can help learners understand the connotation of poetry and is conducive to cross-cultural communication.

4 Conclusion

Through the analysis of 12 international Chinese cultural textbooks, it can be seen that the current textbooks have the following advantages: (1) The predominant selection of love poems is in line with the learning characteristics of Chinese learners. (2) The well-structured arrangement can help students learn from multiple perspectives such as words, poetic understanding, history and culture. (3) Accurate and multiple annotation is helpful to deepen students’ understanding of the poetry. The annotations are mainly lexical annotation, supplemented by sentential annotation. Most of the textbooks can summarize the poetry of selected texts and help students grasp the theme.

However, selections of the Book of Songs in current international Chinese cultural textbooks still exhibit some limitations: (1) The simplex theme in selections results in monotony and the similar in underlying cultural items. (2) Only a minority of textbooks provide exercises. There is still room for development in the diversity of questions’ types, and the interestingness needs to be further improved. (3) In the textbook arrangement, the literary devices and multiple poetic interpretations are insufficient.

Based on the research of twelve international Chinese cultural textbooks contain the Book of Songs, the following suggestions are proposed for improving the selection and compilation of the Book of Songs in international Chinese cultural textbooks.

4.1 Increase the number of selected poems in different themes except love poems to avoid the monotony.

The love poems in the Book of Songs are good teaching materials, but other subjects also deserve to be selected, such as Corvee poems. Corvee poem is an important part of the Book of Songs, and it is the cry from the underclass people who was forced to do

heavy labor. Li (1992) argues that "they not only depict the sufferings of the laborer, but also clearly reveal the social consequences of heavy corvee. Therefore, this kind of work reflects the social contradictions in a profound and powerful way."^[9] There are deep and complex emotions in the corvee poems, from which shows the laborer's awareness of their own suffering, as well as their strong feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction towards the rulers. The selection of corvee poems helps Chinese language learners to understand the social and political system of ancient China.

4.2 Optimize the design of exercises, pay attention to practicality and interestingness.

In the process of compiling the textbook, using variety of exercises can guide the students to think independently and help teachers to measure students' learning effect. It is necessary to arrange exercises for selected parts of the Book of Songs. The textbooks should choose appropriate ways to arrange exercises, creating communicative situations. Also, textbooks should pay attention to the combination of poetry content and daily dialogue to improve the practicability. At the same time, it can be presented in multimodality, which not only conforms to the situational beauty and phonological beauty in the Book of Songs, but it can also enhance the interestingness of the textbooks.

4.3 Promote the diversification of appreciation to achieve further understanding.

The literary devices such as *Fu*, *Bi*, *Xing* and *Chongzhangdieju* in the Book of Songs are worthy of study for learners, which help students to understand the meaning of poems and feel the implicit beauty. These literary devices have also been reflected in later literary works, such as *Lisao*, and learners can understand them easily by analogy.

In addition, the multiple poetic interpretations enables learners to understand the Book of Songs beyond its surface meaning, leading them to consider historical events and the time background, thus improving learners analysis ability and help them to think critically. Studying multiple poetic interpretations also helps students become familiar with typical cultural imagery and thus understand the text in depth.

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