

# Thoughts on Teaching Classical Chinese Literature

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**ABSTRACT:** In today's rapidly modernizing China, classical literature teaching is facing bottlenecks, what's the value of classic literature? Is classical literature still able to hold students? How to teach it? Undoubtedly, classical literature in modern times still has great vitality, it contains a profound Chinese traditional culture and its value lies in the humanities foundation and influence, and also in its irreplaceable charm of literature. In teaching, the teacher should find a starting point, select unique angles to convey the charm of classical literature; teacher should have three realms —— "preach, teach, solve doubts " and use advanced supplementary means of teaching; teacher should also understand students ,stimulate students' interest and combine knowledge and entertainment.

**KEYWORD:** Chinese classical literature; teaching; teacher; student

## 1 ABOUT PEDAGOGICAL IDEOLOGY

As in an ancient country with a civilization of more than 5,000 years, it seems that classical literature irrefutably occupies an important place in the teaching of Chinese literature. However, at the University's Chinese Department, although classroom hours of classical literature have been compressed to a rather urgent point, students don't seem to go for it. Some students believe that we use the modern characters and syntax after we graduate, even use fresh vocabulary, such as network language. Classical poetry and drama are so old, how could we write them out? Even if we are able to write classical poetry and drama, who will view them? In a Word, what is the use of studying classical literature? This problem, which is not supposed to be a problem, is what we cannot avoid in the market economy, a problem that some classical literature teachers who are also thinking about and searching for answer to it and it will directly affect our guiding thoughts.

In my opinion, there is no doubt that classical literature is useful, as for college students in the Chinese Department who're going to use Chinese characters for vocation, from basic understanding of words to fostering their sensibility to text, then expertly phrasing and developing astute characters in a continuous line, they need classical literature foundation and nurture. Not only that, the classical literature is of great charm, its charm is evident in

the marvelous beauty of integration of words, phrases and sound, it is to express real life into a fascinating picture, its beauty through the ages can still be moving. It's so different from modern civilization, but in a way to make up for the deficiency of modern civilization, which is the vitality of classical literature today.

Classical literature contains a profound Chinese traditional culture, conveyed by means of literature. Teachers cannot attend a full range, I think teachers on the teaching of classical literature should find a starting point, select the unique perspective of teaching, so as to convey the charm of the classics, rather than rigidly scripted and instill all sections of "knowledge".

Based on this understanding, I think "beauty" should be the center to expand when we teach classical literature. For example, when teach Tang and song literature, we should focus on teaching poetry in the mood, rhythm, spirit aestheticism so that students can learn the Chinese language and the elegance in an atmosphere created by ancient good writers via words; when teach Yuan, Ming and Qing literature, we should focus on the beauty of Chinese classical drama stage and the unique charm of narrative in novels. We should, for example, start from the work and person for further discussion, and then link to author and era to make students feel interested, and thus their test scores are pretty ideal.

## 2 ABOUT TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Han Yu (AD768-824, a scholar and poet in Tang Dynasty) said: "teachers, should preach, teach and solve doubts." According to my understanding, this consists of three realms which go forward one by one. "Preaching" is to impart knowledge; "Teaching" is to combine the knowledge and practice; as regards to "solve doubts", it refers not only to answer students' academic questions but also to answer their issues about life. The highest realm is to be a guide. In my opinion, it is also the three realms that classical literature teachers should pursue. Needless to say knowledge accumulation, as a classical literature teacher, if you want to teach students "a cup of water" of knowledge, you should have "a bucket of water" reserves. Teachers should be student's models to apply what we have learned. The predecessor professor had earnestly instructed us: "As a literature teacher, you not only need to teach, but also need to be able to create works." I deeply agree with this opinion, literature comes from life; literary has its vitality only in real-life. For example, we teach the Yuan drama, what's in our textbook is just the introduction of excellent writers and analysis of their works. These are necessary, however, drama is the art of the stage, without performing, it would look like the boat out of the water; it was not quite full enough and also not vivid. Therefore, I usually note what accumulated in the life and combine literature and life; this method received good results in teaching. For instance, when talking about poetry, I take out my own poems I wrote before, appreciate them with students; when talking about drama, I perform a role of it, even sing it, or let students watch the show live. Combination textbooks with vivid practice promote students' interest in learning. As to "solve doubts", I think, even the classical literature teacher should not indulge in the library and forget about everything else, on the contrary, classical literature teacher should be out of the ivory tower, access a wide range of social life, use practice to validate knowledge and use knowledge to improve life. Only in this way can we become a guide of students, and thus fulfill "solve doubts" responsibilities. To understand students, we should communicate with them. Teachers may wish to be teachers in the classroom, as well as students' friends outside the classroom. Being a mentor is the most ideal teacher-student relationship.

In terms of teaching methods, nowadays, teaching aids are already advanced; the use of multimedia equipment provides us a great convenience for classical literature teaching. Literature is the art of imagination and is also the visual arts, which direct appeal to human feelings. When the Guqin played, cartoon making the petals slowly falling on the screen, a poem of Li Shangyin *jinse* in chant, its artistic influence is much better than simply reciting

the poem by teachers or students. [1] *The Injustice to Dou E*, *The Romance of West Chamber* and other plays, if the teacher can play the video materials while teaching stories, personalities and artistic characteristics of them, students would have a deep impression and the whole class effect would be very good.[2]

In terms of teaching methods, I believe that there is another problem worth discussing: stand-up teaching and sit-down teaching. Until now, seated to teach is only a tale in China. At the podium, teachers often have to stand in class, sometimes up to three or four sections. Long standing makes teachers' throats sore and their legs cramp. Based on my own experience, the more people sitting than standing, the easier we can arouse memories and more flexible in thinking. Besides, both students and teachers sitting down looks like a more equitable manner. Why don't we choose a more favorable way?

## 3 ABOUT STUDENTS

Many fellows feel that today's students are increasingly difficult to teach. Why? In the information age, the raising speed of the dissemination and updating of knowledge improves students' requirement of the quality of knowledge; A variety of entertainments distract students; employment pressures also distract students a lot; college enrollment expansion decrease the quality of students. Objective reasons, of course, are undeniable but there are some students thirsty for knowledge, they need good teachers; there are some classes students like to listen to, they are capable of identifying good teachers. The way that teachers are selected by the students in some colleges may not be far off in the future. In view of this, how can teachers motivate students and let them listen, is a problem that is worthy of serious discussion.

For some experienced professors, their reputation and many years of teaching experience are sufficient to arouse students' attention. For young teachers who lack these experience, to control classes, to create a good atmosphere for learning and to arouse students' enthusiasm, become a required course that need continuous trials. I have had a very bad experience that I feel extremely well prepared but talked very boring. It is a thankless task.

Summarizing past experience, I think it is essential to understand students' psychology and to stimulate their interests. As a required courses, students' learning psychology is divided into active and passive. Active students are interested in this profession and may also have some knowledge about it. Passive students completely don't understand this course, usually, because they do not understand it and thus have no interest. Teachers should pay more attention to both kinds of students and stimulate

interest of passive students, as well as take into account the knowledge needs of active students; therefore, teaching contents should be both interesting and deep. This requires the teachers to observe and understand students, with their eyes open.

Teaching should also pay attention to the interest of knowledge. For all the knowledge, it can be divided into the knowledge that student want to learn and the knowledge they have to learn. Sometimes, it could not strike a balance between the two; what students want to learn is not necessarily required by the syllabus; what they have to learn is usually not what they like. Some experienced teachers are able to explain the required knowledge that students don't want to learn in a very simple and interesting way, which makes the listeners so delighted just like bathing in the spring wind. This takes times and efforts and cannot be achieved in one day. For young teachers, if you're not able to turn tedious into fun, the only way is to use interesting staff to "send" the boring: integrate the required knowledge that students don't want to learn into what they like so as to mobilize student's interesting in the classroom and help them acquire knowledge.

Since today's college students ' individuality and awareness grow gradually, teachers should guide this awareness. Teachers should not make the class into a place where the teacher alone has the say; instead,

they should encourage students to participate in, which will be beneficial to students' understanding of knowledge. For instance, when teaching Yuan drama, I envisaged students' performances. I thought they would be shy, but they turned out to be very active: group, script writing, rehearsing and makeup, most of their work were done by themselves. They performed almost all works of Yuan drama and also added a lot of modern ingenuity. Their performances are creative. This lesson served multiple purposes and help students learn a lot. It deepened students' understanding of the Yuan drama and even Chinese traditional opera, and was burned into a DVD.

Of course, classroom is a place to impart knowledge. It should be lively and even more serious; sometimes it is necessary to exert appropriate pressure on students. In today's colleges and universities, strengthening the construction of style of study and cultivating the spirit of respecting teacher and his teaching cannot be ignored, no more tautology here.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Poetry of Li Shangyin .Zhonghua Book Company, 06, 2014.
- [2] Yuan Qu Anthology. Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 04, 2008.