

Overview on Teaching Strategies of Traditional Chinese Historical and Biographical Literature in Vocational Colleges

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Abstract—Traditional Chinese historical and biographical literature contains rich national spirit. Teaching historical and biographical literature works in the Chinese courses of vocational colleges, guiding students to read these classics in an immersive way, can help them better understand the spiritual code of the Chinese nation. For many reasons, many students in vocational colleges are not very interested in historical and historical literature works, which reduces the teaching effects of traditional Chinese culture. To solve this problem, this paper analyses the current teaching situations of traditional historical and biographical literature works in vocational colleges, expounds the necessity of teaching these works, and proposes the teaching strategies of these works in Chinese courses of vocational colleges based on teaching practice.

Keywords—historical and biographical literature, teaching Chinese course in vocational college, teaching strategy, expanding reading, textbook drama

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Chinese historical and biographical literature is a part of Chinese historical literature, which has both the characteristics of history and literature. From the perspective of literature, it is based on historical events as the theme, focusing on the description of historical figures of literary works. From the perspective of historiography, it is a historical work that expresses a certain view of history with the description of historical events and historical figures by means of literature and art. As China is a country with a long history and bright ancient civilization, there are abundant national spirits in the works of traditional Chinese historical and biography literature. The ancient cultural classics contain the sages' deep thinking about society, life and history, which can still inspire us a lot. Immersed in reading these classics, we can better understand the sages' thoughts, better understand the spiritual code of the Chinese nation, and better understand and improve ourselves. However, for many reasons, most students in vocational colleges show little interest in traditional historical and biographical literature works, which reduces the teaching effects of traditional Chinese culture. To solve this problem, this

article analyses the current teaching situations of traditional historical and biographical literature works in vocational colleges, expounds the necessity of teaching these works, and proposes the teaching strategies of these works in Chinese courses of vocational colleges based on teaching practice.

II. TEACHING SITUATION OF HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE WORKS IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

From the author's personal experience, in the process of Chinese teaching in vocational colleges, the teaching status of historical and biographical literary works is not optimistic. "Moral education" is naturally one of the main functions of the Chinese discipline. The proposal of "Cultivating morality and educating people" and other related policies also prompts teachers to pay more attention to the teaching of historical and biography literature works. However, as vocational colleges have different training orientation and goals for students from ordinary high schools, students generally lack of the motivation to deeply study classical Chinese culture, and the foundation of Chinese courses is generally weak. Using the teaching mode which is similar to that of historical and biographical literature works in ordinary high schools is not adaptable.

On the one hand, compared with students in ordinary senior high schools, students in vocational colleges do not have the pressure of national examination for college entrance, and their daily learning is more focused on the study and practice of professional courses. Taking the high-end comprehensive major in our school as an example, students only have 4 Chinese class hours per week, so they have very limited learning efforts and lack of learning motivation for basic education subjects such as Chinese.

On the other hand, students in vocational colleges generally have a relatively weak grasp of the basic knowledge of Chinese courses in junior middle school, and they are lack of good learning habits such as preview before class and review after class. They only rely on limited classroom teaching time to sort out a large amount of classical Chinese knowledge, or carry out word-by-word indoctrination mechanically.

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However, it is difficult to guarantee the classroom time for teachers to guide students to deeply analyze the content of the traditional Chinese historical and biographical literature works, which leads to a lack of exploring the spiritual connotation of the works. As a result, students in vocational colleges are not interested in it, and the teaching effect is greatly compromised. This may cause the reality that after many hours of classroom teaching and learning, students seem to have learned some classical Chinese words, but they can't really understand the historical background and spiritual connotation of the article, and they can't really appreciate the charm of historical biography literature works.

III. WHY WE NEED TO TEACH TRADITIONAL CHINESE HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE WORKS IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

A. *Historical and Biographical Literature Is an Important Code for Students to Understand the Humanistic Spirit of the Chinese Nation*

Ji Xianlin, a master of traditional Chinese culture and literature, said, "China can become a great economic power and a great scientific and technological power, but most fundamentally, China is a great cultural power. The cherishing of national culture is the foundation for a country to stand for thousands of years".

The cultural foundation of the Chinese nation is profound and broad, which is often involved in traditional historical and biographical literature works. Taking "*The Battle of Zhu Zhiwu to Retreat Qin Army*" as an example, this text is selected in the new edition of Chinese textbook for required course published by the People's Education Publish House. This article comes from "*Zuo Tradition*" [1], a complete chronological history book of commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals by Zuo Qiuming in ancient China, which is a representative of historical literature works in pre-Qin Dynasty. Historical books are generally based on records, revealing the author's thoughts and concepts in the historical narration, which provides an important way for future generations to understand the ancient people's thoughts. In the specific teaching process, by exploring the details of the article, it can help us to understand some of the thoughts and concepts at that time, and better understand the foundation of the Chinese nation's national spirit.

In this article, the feudal lords of Qin and Jin were allied together to besiege the feudal lord of Zheng because Zheng had been "disrespecting the Zhou emperor's proprieties". Later, the feudal lord of Qin rebelled against the alliance, but feudal lord of Jin refused to attack the rebelled ally when the Qin army was retreating. He thought that attacking the retreating Qin army would be "without the virtues proper to humanity", "unwise" and "against chivalry". This kind of action of feudal lord Jin was generally approved by the society and the common people at that time, and considered as "a representative to obey Zhou emperor's proprieties". Therefore, when explaining the concept of "the Zhou emperor's proprieties", which constitutes the foundation

of ancient Chinese national culture, teachers should consciously guide students to deeply understand and comprehend the cultural code conveyed by the article under the specific historical events and social background provided by the article.

B. *Studying Historical and Biographical Literature Works Is an Effective Way for Vocational College Students to Get Close to Classic Chinese Literature*

Historical and biographical literature works are usually dramatic and interesting, which are relatively approachable in the traditional Chinese classical literature works. Non-historical classical works of classical Chinese generally reflect the core of classical culture and national spirit more directly. However, due to the cultural evolution caused by the change of time and space and the obscure traditional Chinese characters and sentences, students have no interest in studying and reading such works intensively.

Classical historical and biographical literature works have both historical value and literary value, which contains large amount of artistic expression and descriptions that are easier to be accepted by students. In order to make the characters prominent, historical and biographical literature works will consciously select expressive details and typical examples to depict the characters and highlight the characteristics of the characters. They will also pay attention to the selection of scenes with prominent and sharp contradictions, so that the characters can display their distinct personalities in the struggle and battles in which they are against each other. The design of character's language will also be more personal and dramatic.

Take the paragraphs of Xiang Yu's death in "The Biography of Xiang Yu the Conqueror" in the biographical book "Records of the Grand Historian" as an example. When he lost the war against the Han Dynasty, he was going to commit suicide beside the Wujiang River for all his soldiers and brothers were killed by the enemy, leaving him all alone. Before his death, he sang the famous "*Song in Gaixia*" [2]:

I pulled out the mountains with my strength.

I conquered the world with my power.

But my precious horse could not fly as there was no chance and luck.

What could be done if my horse could not fly?

Yu Ji my love, could you tell me what to do next.

In addition, as the storyline of these works are usually twists and turns, they are highly storied and dramatic. Many historical and historical literary works have long been popular masterpieces in the fields of folk drama, story-telling and Pingtan (a traditional Chinese minstrelsy). At present, many historical and biographical literature works have been shown on the screen, and many typical characters in historical biographical literature works are familiar to students due to their frequent appearances on the screen or in video games. Therefore, when students "meet" the characters they are more or less familiar with in textbook which is selected or extra-curricular to read, they will have some sense of

closeness, which makes it easier for them to generate reading interest and drive them to read in-depth and understand further.

Taking the “*The Banquet at Hongmen*” [2] for example, as a history presented in a series of biographies in “Records of the Historian”, the historical events are narrated with the historical figures as the center. The shaping of the characters and the personalities of the characters are all profound, and the story has twists and turns. Nowadays, as a proverb, “The Banquet at Hongmen” has been widely used in daily life, and the story has also been referred to by a large number of film and television works and electronic video games. When students read such historical and biographical classical Chinese literary works, their resistance and fear of difficulty will be weakened to a certain extent, and some reading interest will be generated to be verified in classical Chinese.

IV. ANALYSIS OF TEACHING STRATEGIES OF HISTORICAL LITERATURE WORKS IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

A well-presented results section coupled with a convincing discussion will definitely prove the novelty and importance of your study. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

A. Attach Importance to the Use of Textbook Dramas to Improve the Sense of Participation

To guide students to deeply understand historical and biographical literature works and improve their reading efficiency, we should make efforts both inside and outside the classroom. In order to increase the sense of participation and immersion in learning historical and biographical literary works, it is a feasible way to encourage students to perform textbook dramas. The difficulty of reading classical Chinese literature works is self-evident. It is difficult for students to have a sense of closeness and to stimulate their interest in deep reading. Generally speaking, students are much more interested in the performance of textbook dramas than in mechanically reciting texts or rote memorizing knowledge points.

As an interesting classroom teaching mode, textbook drama has been widely used [3, 4], and plays a positive role in activating the classroom atmosphere and stimulating students' interest in learning. However, there are several following problems in the traditional form of textbook drama: first, it takes a lot of classroom time. Considering that the teaching time of Chinese courses in vocational colleges is very limited, the classroom time is relatively precious; Second, it is difficult to mobilize the enthusiasm of the vast majority of students, resulting in only a small number of activists participating, but the participation of most other students is not high, and their attention paid to this is also very limited; Third, the teaching efficiency is low and the continuous influence on students is insufficient. The performance of the textbook play is just one-time thing. For most students, it is a moment of excitement in the classroom. After the

performance is completed, the students no longer pay attention to it. The continuous interaction and mutual evaluation between students are relatively limited.

Considering the current teaching situation of students in vocational colleges, this paper tends to guide students to select interesting historical and biographical texts or fragments in their spare time by means of network teaching [5], record small videos of textbook plays, upload them to the online disk space of the course, and the teachers will guide and select them, and then push and observe them to the whole class. Compared with the performance of textbook dramas in class time, the video recording sharing method has the following advantages: first, it can greatly reduce the occupation of class time, and reserve sufficient time for deep reading and intensive reading for the teaching of historical and biographical literature; Second, it can stimulate students' creativity to a greater extent, and it is not necessary to stick to the time limit of 5 minutes or 10 minutes, allowing students to freely exert their imagination and performance; Third, it can improve the enthusiasm and participation of students. Students can form teams by themselves, and groups can prepare and rehearse in parallel. Students with spare capacity can participate in multiple groups, and teachers can give more points according to their contributions.

B. Actively Guide Students to Do Extracurricular Extended Reading

There are a vast number of excellent historical and biographical literature works. After all, only a few are selected into the teaching textbooks. It is difficult to complete the teaching task of “expanding reading” by only relying on the teaching textbooks. As ever we take “*The Banquet at Hongmen*” as an example, which is selected from the historical book of “Records of the Historian” into the textbook. The paragraphs selected in the teaching textbook are wonderful. However, if you want to have a more comprehensive understanding of the figures of Xiang Yu, Liu Bang and other historical figures, and understand more three-dimensional and vivid characteristics of them, you need to fully expand the reading. Teachers can recommend students to read “*The Biography of First Emperor of Han Dynasty*” and “*The Biography of Xiang Yu the Conqueror*” as expanding reading materials when they are teaching “*The Banquet at Hongmen*”. Thus, In the process of expanding reading, some students may consciously carry out further expanding reading for Fan Kuai, the Queen Lv and other characters driven by their interest.

However, the time of classroom teaching is limited after all, which could not be able to provide enough time for students to read on their own. As Mr. Ye Shengtao the famous educationist said, “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” [6]. Teachers should carefully design, arrange reading tasks for students, and help students gradually

complete the reading of the whole book and develop good reading habits in combination with the instruction in class.

Similarly, take “*The Banquet at Hongmen*” as an example. In the actual teaching process, in addition to the regular reading tasks, teachers can also assign students with extended reading tasks by selecting relevant characters which they are interested in from “*A New Account of Tales of The World*” [7] for a comprehensive reading, and conduct a 3–8 minutes speech on character comments as the content of the beginning of class. Since most of the work on the extended reading task is completed after class, the students can fully communicate with each other about the content they are interested in during the process of autonomous learning. The classroom time is mainly used for communication and discussion of expanding reading achievements. The teacher answers questions pertinently, guides students to break through reading difficulties, leads students to gradually understand various ancient characters, and gradually improve their reading habits and appreciation level in the process of reading.

C. *Deeply Understand the Meaning of Key Words*

In the teaching progress of historical and biographical literary works in vocational colleges, whether it is classroom teaching or extracurricular expansion reading, considering that the students’ foundation of Chinese course in junior school is relatively weak, if they overemphasize the mastery of classical Chinese knowledge points according to the requirements of ordinary high schools, a large amount of time and efforts will be spent in the process of clearing up the interpretation of classical traditional Chinese words, which is time-consuming and boring, and it is easy to dampen the enthusiasm of students in reading and learning. For the teaching of classical traditional Chinese, the knowledge of classical Chinese words and sentences must be accumulated for a long time. However, the isolated words training and the boring learning of traditional Chinese sentences will make students lose their interest in exploring historical stories, so well as fundamentally improve their ability to read traditional Chinese works [8]. In the teaching of historical and biographical literary works in vocational colleges, it is not necessary to deliberately emphasize the comprehensive inculcation of classical Chinese knowledge, but to guide students to focus on understanding the key classical Chinese words that have a great relationship with the theme of the article, and encourage students to read and explore on their own efforts.

Similarly, take “*The Duke Zheng Defeat Marquis Duan at Yan*” selected from “*Zuo Tradition*” as an example. According to the traditional teaching process, teachers need to spend a lot of time in classroom, translating the whole text for students word by word, so that students can overcome the reading barrier of classical Chinese language and understand the general idea of the text. However, the spiritual connotation of historical classical Chinese is often internalized in the special meanings and idioms of some keywords, so students

should be guided to study and explore deeply. For example, the word “defeat” is originally a word of praise and criticism. This word should be used to deal with the enemy. However, Duke Zheng “defeated” his own brother Marquis Duan at Yan. In ancient China, Duke Zheng’s behavior is not appreciated by the public. This expression reveals the author’s disapproval and criticism of Duke Zheng.

D. *Flexibly Set the Motivation of Reading Task*

Since there is no pressure for vocational college students aimed at the national college entrance examination, the teaching of historical and biographical literary works in vocational colleges should not pursue the goal of high scores in the examination. Teachers can set more flexible incentive methods for reading tasks in the teaching process, such as credit incentive and task offset. In the specific operation, in order to prevent the pre-class speech, textbook play and other learning modes from becoming mere formality, teachers must plan in advance and implement the contents and implementation steps of extracurricular reading in the teaching plan.

On the one hand, teachers should make use of the internal relationship between textbook content and extracurricular reading content, list specific reading tasks for students, and evaluate reading through the completion of task points. Set the required and optional options in the task list. The required options are used to consider the basic requirements such as the reading time and reading impression spent by students. The optional options provide students with a variety of choices. If you choose one of them to complete the task, you can obtain additional credits, which can be used to offset the credits of other tasks. On the other hand, teachers should encourage students to display and communicate their reading achievements, so as to further improve students’ enthusiasm in reading tasks. For example, after the completion of the task list, 15 minutes of communication time for extracurricular reading content can be arranged. Teachers can select the task results or controversial views, guide students to express their views, and conduct face-to-face communication to further solidify and deepen the reading effect.

E. *Carefully Select the Content of Extracurricular Reading from Difficult Ones to Easy Ones, then Vice Versa*

“*Records of the Grand Historian*” is one of the top-level works of traditional Chinese historical biography literature. However, reading and understanding it requires high attainments in classical Chinese, which is difficult for young students in vocational colleges. In the actual teaching process, teachers can carry out teaching and reading activities for 1–2 semesters based on “*Records of the Grand Historian*”. As mentioned above, the development of extracurricular reading should be based on the guidance of classroom teaching. On the basis of teachers’ teaching and reading, students should be guided to gradually understand the “task support” of reading after self-reading and understanding in class, and form a reading list to further expand the depth and breadth of

extracurricular reading. Taking the story of “Jing Ke assassinating the king of Qin” [9] in the “Records of the Grand Historian” as an example, teachers should make full use of the opportunity of “teaching and reading” to provide students with extra-curricular knowledge supply, popularize relevant historical knowledge, and guide students to develop interest in “Assassin” reading. For example, the teacher can introduce the other four assassins named Cao Mo, Zhuang Zhu, Yu Rang and Nie Zheng in “Biographies of the Great Assassins” of “Records of the Grand Historian” to the students, and briefly tell the stories of these assassins, so that the students can have a preliminary understanding of the assassin culture in ancient times, and then pave the way for the study of Jing Ke assassin the king of Qin, and for the students to conduct in-depth extracurricular reading after class.

Then, after 1–2 semesters of reading activities based on “Records of the Grand Historian”, teachers can add easier to understand extracurricular reading materials such as “A New Account of Tales of The World” to the reading task. The reading difficulty of classical Chinese in “A New Account of Tales of The World” is much lower than that in “Records of the Grand Historian”, as most of the stories in “A New Account of Tales of The World” are originated from the daily life. The articles are short and concise, and the language is relatively plain. Students can read the original text in combination with the vernacular translation to understand and master the figures’ characteristics. However, relatively fewer historical figures involved in “A New Account of Tales of The World” have been put on the screen or designed into electronic games. In the existing materials and network resources, it is difficult for students to find sufficient references and materials in the stage of reading and rehearsal of textbook dramas. They can only read the original work carefully and understand it in depth. Especially, during the short pre-class performance or speech, it is a challenge for the vast majority of students to express the characters and the plot vividly of a short and concise story within a limited time. Teachers should actively guide students to consult materials around the central figures with an expanding reading, invisibly increase their reading depth and the difficulty of reading comprehension, and further improve their abilities of reading

F. Patiently Accompany Students through the “Bottleneck Period” of Reading

Excellent historical and biographical works are both historical and literary. At the same time, the language style of classical Chinese also brings great challenges to the reading comprehension of young students. After the novelty of the story and the interest of historical figures, with the continuous increase of extracurricular reading tasks, student’s ability of reading comprehension of ancient Chinese will enter a bottleneck period with a performance of slow improvement. At this time, young students will easily lose their interest in reading historical and biographical literature works, and even cause their

instinctive dissatisfaction and rejection. During this period, teachers need to pay a lot of patience and make comprehensive use of various incentive methods to accompany students through the “bottleneck period”.

Take the author’s practical teaching experience as an example. At the beginning of a certain term, I arranged the first-year students of my vocational college (the same age as the first-year students of ordinary senior high schools) to work in groups to write, rehearse and play textbook dramas according to the articles of in “Zuo Tradition”. At the beginning, the students were very resistant. They were generally unwilling to learn such boring classical Chinese works by themselves or do such “extra” tasks, thinking that the teaching task was unreasonable. Through patient communication and exchange, the content of “textbook dramas” was expanded to “Records of the Grand Historian”. As there are some articles in the “Records of the Grand Historian” that have been put on the screen or video games, the students have some understanding of the typical characters such as Liu Bang, Xiang Yu and Han Xin, so many students have completed the reading task well and received excellent evaluation.

V. CONCLUSION

Chinese historical and biographical literature works contain rich national spirit. It is a long-term process to cultivate the students’ interest in reading historical and biographical classical Chinese. As Chinese teachers, we should not be too eager for quick success and instant benefits. We should fully consider the actual situation and reading level of students, pay attention to the similarities and differences between the teaching methods of ordinary high schools, and teach students according to their aptitude. In the reading teaching activities, attention is paid to guiding students to combine in and out of class, stimulating students’ interests and enthusiasm, focusing on reading accumulation and in-depth excavation of key classical Chinese words, so that students can gradually feel the unique charm of classical Chinese in the process of learning, gradually develop good reading habits and improve their reading comprehension ability.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Congying Feng and Guijie Wu conducted the research; Bin Feng designed the framework of this article and put forwards several key viewpoints; Congying Feng wrote the paper and do some teaching activities; all authors had approved the final version.

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