

Exploring the Impact of Serious Reading of Classical Metatextuals on University Students' Learning of Traditional Culture

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An important carrier of excellent Chinese traditional culture is the classic book, and university students carry the important responsibility of promoting Chinese excellent traditional culture and propagating cultural confidence. The serious reading of classical texts is an important way for university students to learn traditional culture, which has the advantages of professionalism and systematization. At the present stage, university students lack the awareness and action to read the classics, and the time for serious reading is very limited. The genre, subject matter, and extent of IP development are important factors that affect the in-depth reading of the classic metatext.

Keywords: traditional culture, Chinese traditional culture, university students, reading ability

Preface

This paper adopts a questionnaire, data analysis, and control variables research method, after screening a total of 200 valid questionnaires, of which questions 11 and 12 are the data source and research basis for this paper. The 11th question asked "Have you ever learned about 'sutras, histories and sons'?" and the 12th question asked "Among the following books, which one do you like to read most in its original form?" The answers included the *Analects of Confucius*, *Zhou Yi*, *The Records of the Grand Historian*, *Xu Xia Ke's Travels*, *Zhuang Zi*, *Shan Hai Jing*, *Chu Shu*, and *Wen Xin Diao Long*, which are multiple choice questions. After the analysis of the two questions, two points were made. Firstly, at this stage, university students lack the awareness and action to read the classic metatext, and their reading behaviour is influenced by their personal reading efforts and the strength of the dissemination of the classic metatext. Secondly, the genre of the classics and the extent of IP development are positively and strongly correlated with students' interest and action in reading. Therefore, university students should study traditional culture independently and spontaneously, and increase the time spent on serious reading.

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Do You Automatically Know About “Scripture, History, and Songs”?

Firstly, the scope of traditional culture is defined, and in this section the scope of traditional culture is narrowed down to the various types of books representing traditional culture, with a clear point of reference.

The *Sui Shu—Scriptures and Records* is the first historical catalogue in China’s history to be named after the four sections of the scriptures, history, sons, and collections, and it is also the earliest extant tetrad catalogue. Scholars generally agree that the New Book of the Middle Classics was the beginning of the classification of the four divisions.

The *Siku* classification is an important way of classifying ancient Chinese texts and is authoritative and universal.

In question 11, on the question “Have you ever automatically learned about ‘sutras, histories, sons and collections’?”, the largest proportion of respondents (36.5%) said “No”, followed by “actively studied but not in depth” (30%), followed by “asked by teacher to study” and “actively studied and studied in depth” (26% and 7.5% respectively). The survey results show that all the subjects were asked to learn about the subject by their teachers but not in depth. The results of the survey show that the largest number of respondents did not know about the subject, the smallest number knew about it and did not learn about it, and the largest number did not know about it, the teacher asked them to learn about it, and they took the initiative to learn about it but did not learn about it.

When the subjects were selected in the “Science” and “Engineering” samples, the results were different from the first two, with the highest percentage of subjects having no knowledge and the lowest number of subjects being asked by teachers to learn more.

From these results it is clear that at this stage university students lack the awareness and action to read the classical metatext. Compared to the study of university courses and recreational extra-curricular learning, university students do not take enough initiative, and even among students majoring in real literature, the results of carrying out the study are not satisfactory and differ greatly from the ideal state. The reasons for this are twofold.

The first is reading ability. The reading of classical texts is difficult and boring, and requires a high level of reading ability and knowledge accumulation, so the interest and enthusiasm in reading will quickly disappear if the reading ability does not meet the requirements. At the same time, university students who are accustomed to the one-answer exams of secondary education are not as comfortable with independent learning and exploration as they would be if they were able to read, but they are afraid to delve deeper and speak up because they do not have standard answers or guidance from their teachers. Similarly, in the process of reading, problems are encountered, problems are solved, knowledge is accumulated, and positive feedback is given to promote reading enthusiasm and reading ability, so that autonomy and reading ability become bigger and bigger like a snowball, with better and better results. Therefore, university students must take the initiative to enhance their self-learning ability and gradually improve their reading ability in the serious reading of classic metatextuals. No one is born with the ability to read everything, and knowledge and ability are gained in the process of learning.

The second is the strength of dissemination. In a contemporary age of highly developed media technology, more and more people are looking to dissemination as an important measure of the quality of a publication’s content, however, the truth is that publications with a high level of dissemination do not necessarily have a high impact, and publications with a high impact have a high level of dissemination versus not necessarily a high impact. The classics are generally not as widely distributed as bestsellers or popular online videos because of the

reading skills they require, but the impact of serious reading on a person is profound and far greater than that of reading and watching other types of publications. Therefore, the question of how to increase the dissemination of classic metatextuals within an appropriate range and stimulate university students' interest in reading them is an important one for the publishing industry and editors to consider in the future.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from combining the results of the three different analyses is the importance and effectiveness of the teacher's role in guiding university students in the seriousness of the classic metatext. The teacher's guidance and requirements are important guides to enable university students to break out of their information cocoons and join the seriousness reading stage. It can be concluded from random interviews that students in editing and publishing have carried out readings about the Historical Records under the guidance of their teachers in the Classics Reading course, and will form a reading report based on their reading experience, which will also be exchanged and presented in the class during the course, giving an important impetus to the effectiveness of the acquisition of the Historical Records. The teacher has an important role to play in the learning of students, and also has an important role to play in guiding and promoting the attitude of students in reading the classical canon. In the editing and publishing course, the teacher strongly recommends, encourages, and requires the students of the course to read the canon and to write reading reports. The students are guided by their teachers to engage in serious reading, mobilise their interest in reading, and gain a sense of satisfaction and feedback in the process of sharing, which in turn leads to further reading action and improved reading skills.

Of the Following Books, Which Would You Most Like to Read in Their Original Form?

The next question is the twelfth, "Which of the following books would you most like to read in their original form?" The purpose of this question was to specifically analyse the reading of the more widely recognized metatexts in the different categories of scripture, history, and scripture, with the aim of identifying the key factors influencing university students' interest in reading meta-texts.

The top three were the *Shanhaijing* with 68%, the *Shiji* with 46%, and the *Xu Xike's Travels* with 41%. Because a large proportion of the subjects were from the editing and publishing program, and the fact that the teacher of the major course required the reading of *The Chronicle of History* influenced the findings, the top three were chosen to exclude *The Chronicle of History* from the analysis, and the top three after that were *The Scriptures of the Mountain and the Sea*, *The Travels of Xu Xia Ke*, and *The Analects of Confucius*. The reasons for the share of each book are analysed in the following:

The high willingness to read the *Shanhaijing* reflects the influence of IP development and film and television productions. The *Shanhaijing* is a marvelous book among China's classical masterpieces, containing a large amount of information on geography, local objects, ethnic folklore, and mythological stories in its 30,000 words, and the rich cultural resources it contains have great potential for exploitation. From *The Legend of Nezha* to the light of national comics, *Big Fish Begonia* has incorporated a large number of these mythological stories and elements, forming an important cultural feature of domestic animation. As a result, the dissemination and recognition of the original has been made more widespread through mass communication and IP development, and because of the penetration of various cultural creations and film productions in everyday life, the original *Shan Hai Jing* has become closer to people and more familiar. The higher degree of familiarity and dissemination in turn reduces the difficulty of reading to a certain extent, which, together with popular interest, makes university students highly willing to read the *Shanhaijing* metatext. However, after the extraction of elements and the

shaping of values, IP development and cultural creativity have presented products that have deviated from the content written in the Canon itself. Therefore, the adapted works should not be used as a way to study the classic Canon, but to truly read the Canon in depth and look at the adapted works objectively.

The high willingness to read *Xu Xiakai's Travels* reflects the influence of the style of the text and the low reading ability required. *Xu Xiake's Travels* is a prose travelogue written by the Ming dynasty geographer Xu Xiake over a period of more than 30 years. The author takes the process of travelling as the backbone of the entire work, describing many natural images of aesthetic interest; crossed with the author's emotional ups and downs and spiritual direction, achieving the effect of the subject's spiritual experience against the aesthetics of objective scenery. The book is mainly about landscape scenery and contains a wealth of geographical knowledge and accounts of natural phenomena, making it extremely appealing to geography enthusiasts. At the same time, Xu Xiakai adopts a diary style of writing, which requires low reading skills and is more interesting to the reader, hence the high willingness of university students to read it.

The higher willingness to read *The Analects* reflects the influence of exposure to learning and cultural stratigraphy piled up from childhood and the lower reading ability required for the discursive form. *The Analects*, an important Confucian classic, has permeated every aspect of students' studies from childhood to adulthood, and university students are expected to have a high level of knowledge of *the Analects* and its content. At the same time, the format of the discourse style is reader-friendly and requires less reading skills. The two reasons combine to make university students more willing to read *the Analects* of Confucius.

The high willingness to read *the Histories* reflects the role of teacher guidance on students' reading of the metatext. Editorial and publishing students are influenced and motivated by their teachers to read *the Shiji* metatext and to write reading reports that incorporate their personal understandings, receiving timely feedback and good acquisition results.

After the above analysis, two conclusions are drawn. The first is that university students are more enthusiastic and take action in learning traditional culture through extra-curricular entertaining means than through serious reading of the classical metatext and university courses. This is closely related to the degree of dissemination and the reading ability of university students. Secondly, we should return to reading the classical canon and encourage and guide university students to read in depth. We should take an objective view of film and television works and online videos.

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