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## English oral presentation

Good morning, respected professor and my fellow classmates!

Today, I would like to share with you two approaches to learn the Confucian classics, the philological and the interpretive. I will briefly describe the definitions of the two approaches. The first is the philological approach, which attaches importance to the exegesis of the word meaning. The second is the interpretive approach, which focuses on the elucidation of classical meaning.

Next, I will cite four examples from the history of Chinese classical scholarship to explain how each approach works and its importance to scholarship, two of them use interpretative approach, two of them use philological approach.

Firstly, I will introduce two scholars of interpretive.

One is Wang Bi. Wang Bi 王弼 was a famous classic scholar in The Three Kingdom period. He was one of the representatives and founders of metaphysics in Wei and Jin Dynasties. His representative work is the *Note of the Book of Changes* 周易注. The *yi* system of Wang Bi is huge,

the content is profound, he based on Lao Zhuang thought, established a complete system, abstract speculative metaphysical philosophy. His contribution was to change the traditional method of Han Dynasty(*xiangshu* 象數), and annotate the *Book of Changes* from a speculative philosophical height, which was a leap in the history of the study of *yi*. For example, people in Han dynasty who regard the eight trigrams as the sky, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountains and other images, and use "horse" to represent the meaning of "健" in the Hexagram qian 乾卦 and use "cattle" to represent the meaning of "順" in the Hexagram kun 坤卦. Wang Bi criticized the mechanical interpretation of *xiangshu*. He debated the relationship among *yan* 言, *xiang* 象 and *yi* 意 for the first time, explained the *Book of Changes* from the speculative rationality of words and meaning, and explored the meaning of hexagrams. Wang Bi opened the new method and tradition of the *yili* 義理, and created a new idea and atmosphere of classical interpretation, which laid the foundation for the transformation of the Confucian classics to the metaphysics of the Wei and Jin Dynasties.

Another one is Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi 朱熹 was the Neo Confucianist with the deepest attainments and the greatest influence in the Southern Song Dynasty. His Neo Confucian thought was called Cheng Zhu Neo Confucianism with Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao. Zhu Xi wrote several works,

one of which is *Shiji Zhuan* 詩集傳. He realized the shortcomings of *Maoshi Xu* 毛詩序 in the interpretation of the *Book of Songs*, and established a new interpretation principle with the text as the core, emphasizing that the interpretation of follow the text and pursue the meaning of the text. *Maoshi Xu* uses the method of praise and sarcasm to talk about poems, so Zhu Xi also put forward the theory of using a poem to express another poem 以詩說詩 and applied it to the study of specific poems, centering on the text to refute the method of praise and sarcasm to restore poetry. For example, for the poem *Yuan You Tao* 園有桃, the *Maoshi Xu* considers to be a satirical poem, but Zhu Xi explored its meaning from the text of the poem and considered it to be a poem that only expresses sorrow. The point view of Zhu Xi is more in line with the aesthetic and artistic characteristics of poetry.

Secondly, I will introduce two scholars of philological.

One is Zheng Xuan. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 was an outstanding scholar of Confucian classics in the Eastern Han Dynasty. He annotated many Confucian classics. He was proficient in exegetics and philology, and his research results on characters were reflected in the way of annotating classics. *Maoshi Jian* as one of Zheng Xuan's representative works, showcases his research results on the characters of the *Book of Songs*. Zheng Xuan made contributions to the philological and exegetical study

by comprehensively studying the form, sound and meaning of characters, by virtue of his philological knowledge and exegetical experience, to accurately determine the original meaning and extended meaning of characters, to accurately distinguish the ancient and modern characters from the borrowed characters, and to further his research on the *Book of Songs*. Moreover, Zheng Xuan integrated the study of the *Book of Songs* with the modern and ancient texts, which reached the highest level at that time. He extended the study scope of the *Book of Songs* to multiple cultural fields, and also provided rich research materials for cultural history.

Another one is Wang Niansun. Wang Niansun 王念孫 is a linguist of the Qing Dynasty. He is the inheritor of Hui School of simple learning 徽派樸學 and has made great achievements in the fields of philology, phonology, exegetics and textual criticism. His representative work is *Guangya Shuzhen* 廣雅疏證, which moves from the exegetical explanation of specific linguistic phenomena to the theoretical exploration of the internal laws of language, breaking the limitation of emphasizing on font and not on sound in ancient Chinese philology and thus opening a new stage in the study of Chinese linguistics. At the same time, Wang Niansun's collation thought and method also played a role in promoting the study of Chinese classical philology. For example, he corrected more

than 900 sentence errors in *Huainanzi* , 'Neipian'淮南子 • 內篇, and summed up the rule of wrong examples in ancient books from these wrong examples by induction, which provided a good example for the collation of ancient books.

Finally, I will share with you my personal opinions.

Personally, I think the two approaches are all important for studying the Confucian classics. However, both approaches have disadvantages. If we only use one approach, it is easy to misunderstand and deviate. For example, if we only focus on the philological approach, we can gain the meaning of words by the study of philology, phonology, exegetic and understand the original meaning of scriptures correctly. But we can't grasp the main idea of the scriptures in general. Similarly, if we only focus on the interpretive approach, it is easy for us to understand the scripture according to our own meaning or imagination, which may deviate from the original meaning of the text and lead to misunderstandings.

In conclusion, we need to combine the two approaches mentioned above when we study classics, so that we can not only understand the original text correctly, but also master the ideas of the text, thereby helping us absorb the wisdom of the ancients from the classics.

That concludes my presentation. Any feedback and suggestions will be appreciated. Thank you!