



# On the Application of Funeral Vocabulary in Chinese International Education

Xinyi Yang

College of Cultural Tourism and Journalism Arts, Shanxi University of Finance and Economics, Taiyuan 030000, Shanxi, China

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**Abstract:** For foreign students, the Chinese funeral culture is inherently mysterious and exotic, and funeral vocabulary carries a strong cultural connotation, making it ideal for use in Chinese international education teaching. However, funeral vocabulary is rarely seen in current Chinese international education teaching, and there are still problems such as limited coverage, scattered content, and superficiality in this area. Therefore, this paper will analyze the funeral vocabulary with Chinese characteristics and study their value and application necessity in language teaching and cultural teaching of Chinese international education.

**Keywords:** international education in Chinese language teaching, funeral culture

## 1. Overview of funeral culture

The first dictionary in China, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, defines the meaning of "death" as "also known as Si, which means to part with people. It is formed by the combination of the characters for "步" (meaning "to part with") and "人" (meaning "people"). In the traditional Chinese culture, people believe that after the death of a person's body, the soul still exists, so even if a person has passed away, the living should not forget him. The construction of ancestral halls, the installation of memorial tablets, and regular tomb-sweeping and worship activities for the deceased all reflect the ancient people's respect for the deceased and the concept of death. Therefore, in order to properly place the souls of the deceased, a rich and diverse funeral ceremony came into being, and a mature funeral culture was nurtured, deeply rooted in the spirit of the Chinese nation.

## 2. Typical words related to funeral

### 2.1 Process-related vocabulary

Common process words basically cover the main rituals in funeral, and we can summarize them by executing the order.

(1) Announce the death. Tell the news of someone's death to relatives and friends. Those who have heard the news should go to the funeral according to etiquette. The mourning symbols include hanging white cloth, firecrackers, gunfire, and other forms.

(2) Encoffination is the process of placing the deceased into the coffin, which varies in time across different regions. When the deceased is buried, relatives and friends will surround the coffin and pay tribute in silence, expressing their last respect for the deceased.

(3) Funeral is a ceremony to send the coffin containing the deceased to the cemetery or funeral home, usually held on the seventh day after the death of the deceased. During the farewell ceremony, people will set off firecrackers and scatter paper money.

(4) After the deceased is buried, relatives need to visit the cemetery every seven days and burn paper money, for a total of 49 days. The ceremony on the 49th day is called "breaking the seven", which is the official end of the funeral.

### 2.2 Type-related vocabulary

Due to the continuous development of material conditions, ideological changes, and the large number of ethnic groups in our country, a variety of funeral customs have emerged. From the records of books such as *Shuowenjiezi*, *The Book of Rites*, and *Zhouyi*, we can roughly summarize the following typical vocabulary:

(1) Grass burial, which involves wrapping the corpse in grass and throwing it into the grass for burial. There are also descriptions related to grass burial in ancient books: "When someone dies, they are wrapped in grass and thrown into the middle of the field."

This funeral custom is still preserved today, mainly among the Bai ethnic minority who live in the Bijiang area of Yunnan Province. They don't use coffins to contain the bodies, but simply place the deceased on a wooden board, cover it

tightly with thatch from the roof, and then cover it with soil to form a tomb-like structure. This symbolizes that after death, the deceased still resides in the same house with their family.

(2) Burial in the ground, which usually involves placing the body in a coffin and then burying it in the ground. The book *Shuowenjiezi* once recorded: "coffin, also known as *guan*, is used to cover the corpse." In ancient times, the coffins used to place the corpse were very complex, generally divided into three types: bamboo coffin, wooden coffin, and outer coffin. The coffin is the part closest to the corpse, and outside the coffin is the outer coffin, which is outside the coffin.

(3) Sky burial is a funeral form mainly popular in the Tibet region. After placing the corpse in a designated location (usually on a high mountain), it is left to be eaten by vultures and eagles.

(4) Water burial is a funeral method in which the corpse is thrown into the water and eaten by fish. It is mostly seen among the Tibetan people in some areas of Tibet and the Ganzi region of Sichuan Province.

### **3. Teaching principles and methods of funeral vocabulary and funeral culture**

#### **3.1 Teaching principles**

##### **3.1.1 The principle of combining morphemes, characters, and words**

Compound words account for a large proportion of Chinese vocabulary. If only the interpretation of individual Chinese characters is emphasized in teaching, students will have difficulty understanding the overall meaning of the vocabulary. However, if only the whole unit of words is analyzed, it is difficult for students to digest the meaning of individual morphemes and use them flexibly. Therefore, in the teaching of funeral vocabulary, we can explain the meaning of words by analyzing the morpheme meaning, and then explain the structure of words through word-formation rules, and finally let students understand and apply them.

##### **3.1.2 The principle of practical communication**

Vocabulary teaching should not be limited to book explanations. We must remember that the essence of language is communication, and the ultimate goal of language learning is to internalize it in practical use. Therefore, teachers should encourage students to speak up. In the stage of vocabulary application, teachers can adopt situational teaching methods, which place vocabulary in specific contexts. For example, when learning the word "funeral", we can place it in a specific context: "On his funeral procession, people all had heavy expressions and were indescribably sad." This will help students understand and grasp the vocabulary, and know its specific and correct usage.

##### **3.1.3 Student-centered principle**

The classroom of Chinese international education must fully reflect the subjectivity of students and prepare courses based on their receptive ability. There are numerous funeral vocabulary words, and it is necessary to fully consider students' learning abilities and teach them in stages and levels based on the difficulty and frequency of use of the words. It is important to avoid blindly pursuing depth and difficulty, which can dampen students' enthusiasm for learning. At the same time, teachers should create a relaxed and pleasant classroom atmosphere, stimulate students' interest, and encourage them to actively participate in classroom learning.

#### **3.2 Teaching methods**

##### **3.2.1 Translation Teaching Method**

Translation method is a method of directly translating target language vocabulary into the learner's native language. This teaching method often appears in the early stages of learning. Due to the low frequency of use and difficulty in understanding funeral folk vocabulary in daily life, more difficult vocabulary often appears during the explanation process. Therefore, translation method is undoubtedly a more appropriate teaching method for funeral folk customs vocabulary. The translation method can also be made into a more intuitive and one-to-one table for learners to refer to.

##### **3.2.2 Visual teaching method**

The intuitive teaching method is one of the frequently used teaching methods in the process of second language teaching. It mobilizes students' senses by using objects, pictures, videos, and other methods.

In actual teaching, teachers can introduce Chinese funeral culture through pictures and videos. Let students intuitively perceive the context in which the language describes the content, and then specifically understand the meaning of funeral vocabulary. Take the wreath for memorial as an example. Teachers can show pictures or videos of the wreath, which is easier to deepen students' impression than traditional text explanations.

##### **3.2.3 Comparative teaching method**

Only by truly understanding the cultural connotation of a nation can one truly learn and use the language of a nation. Comparative analysis is an important method in language teaching. Language learners from different cultural backgrounds

have different understandings and acceptance of funeral. Teachers can encourage students to speak up and tell about their own ethnic funeral culture, and to identify the similarities and differences between Chinese funeral culture and their own country based on their own understanding and judgment. For example, is there a similar counterpart activity in Western funeral culture to the Chinese-style "sacrificial wine" culture? What kind of death concept does the rigorous attitude of the Chinese people in the entire funeral activities reflect? These are all issues worth exploring.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This article analyzes and studies Chinese funeral vocabulary and funeral culture, and deeply explores their learning and teaching significance, effectively demonstrating that they are an indispensable part of Chinese international education. At the same time, combined with relevant methods of second language teaching, research is conducted on the teaching of funeral sections in Chinese international education. It is hoped that with the development of Chinese international education, there will be more and more research in the field of funeral vocabulary and funeral culture, and that they will be integrated with Chinese second language teaching to fill the gaps in practice.

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#### **Author Bio**

Xinyi Yang, female, born in September 2004, Han nationality, Sichuan Province, undergraduate student of Shanxi University of Finance and Economics, majoring in Chinese international education.