

## *Original Paper*

# A Study on the Publication of English Textbooks with Chinese Character Phonetic Notation in the Late Qing and the Republican China

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### ***Abstract***

*This study examines the development of English textbooks annotated with Chinese characters for pronunciation (1748-1949). These materials, categorized into vocabulary, conversation, comprehensive, and ESP types, used dialects like Cantonese and Mandarin to transcribe English sounds. They served as both a bridge for Sino-English phonetic systems and a cultural adaptation strategy: while leveraging native language influence to facilitate early learning, they risked distorting cultural nuances. Research on these textbooks reveals grassroots responses to Western linguistic impact and offers insights into localization practices and identity negotiation in language learning.*

### ***Keywords***

*Chinese character-phonetic annotated English textbooks, Evolution, textbook classification, languages of annotation, overview of publication, impact*

### ***Introduction***

English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation refer to learning materials that utilize Chinese characters or Pinyin to annotate the pronunciation of English words or sentences. As a unique means for language learning, these textbooks have left an indelible mark on the history of English language teaching in China. They originated during the Qianlong era of the Qing Dynasty, peaked in prevalence during the mid-twentieth century, and have even experienced a controversial resurgence in contemporary times, manifesting in new forms such as internet slang. By examining the historical trajectory and compilation landscape of these textbooks, this paper aims to provide a panoramic historical perspective and academic reflection on this distinctive linguistic and cultural phenomenon.

## 1. The Emergence and Evolution of English Textbooks with Chinese Character Phonetic Notation

The formation and development of English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation were closely intertwined with the political, economic, cultural, and educational transformations in modern Chinese society. As early as the mid-to-late Ming Dynasty, with the arrival of European colonizers such as the Portuguese and Spanish, English was sporadically introduced to China through trade and missionary activities. However, Latin and Portuguese were more highly regarded at the time, while English had limited influence. In 1620, the British merchant ship Unicorn entered the waters of Guangdong province, marking the beginning of large-scale direct contact between the English and Chinese languages on Chinese territory and symbolizing the inception of English learning among the Chinese. Nevertheless, for nearly a century afterward, there were very few documented records of Chinese people learning English.

In 1715, after the British established a permanent factory in Guangzhou, merchants of the "Thirteen Hongs" in Guangdong began to acquire a rudimentary knowledge of trade-related English vocabulary through oral transmission to facilitate interactions with the British East India Company. They expressed these terms according to Chinese syntactic structures, resulting in a unique hybrid Sino-Western language historically known as "Canton English", which gradually evolved into the lingua franca of Sino-British trade. By the mid-18th century, particularly after the implement of the "Canton System" in 1757 issued by the Qing government, which restricted foreign trade to the port of Guangzhou, Britain's trade status in China rose sharply. Consequently, societal demand for trade professionals proficient in English grew significantly.

To facilitate English learning, interpreters of the "Thirteen Hongs" in Guangdong began transcribing English pronunciations using the Cantonese dialect, leading to the creation of English textbooks with "Cantonese phonetic notation." Thus, the earliest English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation came into being.

In 1842, China was compelled to open the "Five Ports" for foreign trade as the consequence of the First Opium War between China and Britain, marking the failure of China's long-standing policy of isolation. Western merchandises poured into China. In the coastal trading ports, the traditional "small-scale peasant economy" of China was significantly impacted and. Trade became a favorable means for people to improve their living conditions, and English served as a stepping stone for them to enter the field of trade. Against this backdrop, trading ports such as Ningbo and Shanghai witnessed a "surge in English learning." Drawing on the experience of English learning in Canton, they adapted English textbooks with "Cantonese phonetic transcription" into versions with "Ningbo dialect phonetic transcription." At the same time, foreign missionaries and merchants, led by Robert Thom, recognized the importance of English for trade and missionary work in China. To help Chinese people better master English, they used "Mandarin" to annotate English pronunciation and compiled English textbooks with "Mandarin phonetic transcription." As a result, the content of Chinese-character-phonetic-transcribed English textbooks was enriched, including versions with

"Cantonese phonetic transcription," "Ningbo dialect phonetic transcription," and "Mandarin phonetic transcription."

In 1858, after the Second Opium War, Britain demanded that the treaties be written in English, leading the Qing government to recognize the importance of English learning. In 1862, the Qing government established the Tongwen Guan in Beijing, formally incorporating English into the curriculum of state-run schools and initiating a top-down promotion of English learning. This not only advanced English education among China's upper class but also sparked enthusiasm for English learning among the general populace. Particularly after the War against Japanese Invasion, the Chinese deeply realized the importance of Western learning, giving rise to a powerful wave of English learning. After the Opium Wars, China was forced to open its doors, leading to increasing interactions with the West. Learning English became an essential skill for the elite to access Western technology, military affairs, and diplomacy. However, due to the scarcity of formal foreign language education institutions and the lack of systematic phonetic knowledge, English textbooks with various dialect phonetic transcriptions emerged. In addition to "Cantonese phonetic transcription" and "Ningbo dialect phonetic transcription," versions such as "Shanghai dialect phonetic transcription," "Shandong dialect phonetic transcription," and "Mandarin phonetic transcription" were published.

After the Revolution of 1911, the Republican government placed great emphasis on English education. However, due to a severe shortage of qualified English teachers and the unpopularity of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) teaching in China, various versions of English crash course handbooks and spoken language primers flooded the market, widely using Chinese characters for phonetic transcription. This period became the "golden age" of Chinese-character-phonetic-transcribed textbooks. For example, to help young children master English pronunciation, introductory English sections were appended to premier textbooks such as *You Xue Qiong Lin*, or *The Forest of Wisdom for the Young Learner*, using Chinese characters to annotate English pronunciation. Additionally, major publishing houses released various Chinese-character-phonetic-transcribed English textbooks with titles such as *Self-Taught English*, *Mastery of English in a Hundred Days*, *Mastery of English in One Month*, and *Mastery of English in Half a Month*. The enthusiasm for English learning continued to grow, and the demand for such textbooks surged, reaching its peak in the 1940s.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, British and American colonizers withdrew from China mainland, and English lost its practical application in China. Moreover, with China's close relations with the Soviet Union, great importance was placed on the cultivation of Russian language talent, which dampened the Chinese people's enthusiasm for learning English. As a result, these Chinese-character-phonetic-transcribed English textbooks, which had facilitated self-study, gradually faded from the historical stage in mainland China, though they continued to be widely circulated among overseas Chinese communities.

Reviewing Chinese-character-phonetic-transcribed English textbooks published from 1748 to 1949, they can be categorized into vocabulary-based textbooks, sentence-based textbooks, comprehensive

textbooks, and skill-specific textbooks. The publication overview of various Chinese-character-phonetic-transcribed English textbooks is as follows.

## 2. The Compilation of English "Vocabulary-based" Textbooks with Chinese Character Phonetic Notation

The earliest surviving glossary is the Yingjili Guo Yiyu (an English-Chinese vocabulary transcribed in Cantonese), compiled in 1748. It categorizes 740 English words into 20 heads: Astronomy, Geography, Seasons and Time, Human Affairs, General Use, People, Implements and Tools, Birds and Beasts, The Body, Fragrances and Medicines, Numbers, Food and Drink, Clothing, Classics, Literature and History, Palaces and Buildings, Precious Stones and Jewels, Flowers and Trees, Directions and Locations, and Sounds and Colors. The English pronunciations are annotated using Cantonese dialect. This textbook has survived to the present day as it is housed in the Palace Museum of China.

According to William Winterbotham, a British writer, as early as 1793 during the Macartney Embassy, people in Guangdong had already published vocabulary booklets using Chinese characters to transcribe English pronunciation, facilitating Chinese merchants in learning English sounds. (Winterbotham, 1978) In 1820, a foreign merchant visiting China mentioned in his diary: "In China, they print a variety of books, both in foreign languages and Chinese. Among them is the *Lung-wie-pe-shoo*, a miscellaneous work of eighty volumes, the last eight of which contain general geographical knowledge... Among these books are also samples of various coins, costumes of different nations, and various languages, presented not only in writing but also in pronunciation, specifically mentioning Sanskrit, Pali, and Arabic. Two volumes contain a large number of foreign language vocabulary entries; the words are woodblock-printed, and the pronunciations are marked with Chinese characters, though not very accurately." (R., 1822) As recorded in *The Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdom*: "During the Jiaqing reign in Qing Dynasty, there was a book published translating foreign words into Chinese characters with their phonetic transcriptions in Cantonese dialect, which was very convenient for Chinese people learning translation. However, the Guangdong authorities banned it." (Song & Wang, 2004) It is also indicated that as early as 1827, Jiang Youke and his son, tea merchants from Fangkeng Village, She County, Anhui Province, traveled to Guangdong for trade and compiled a notebook titled *Notes on the Route from Huizhou to Guangzhou*, which included several hundred English words transcribed phonetically using the Cantonese dialect. (Zhang & Wang, 1995) Besides this notebook, another Huizhou merchant copied a booklet called *Numerical Methods of Various Nations*. (Wang, 2011) In the 1820s, the American merchant William C. Hunter encountered a pamphlet used for learning English in Guangzhou: "...a small Chinese book called 'Devil's Talk'... was sold in the adjacent bookshops for a few cash each, and was to be found in the hands of all the servants, coolies, and shopmen." (William, 2009)

During the 1830s, various English vocabulary textbooks using Chinese character transcription, often titled with terms like "*Red-Haired Devil's Talk*," emerged rapidly. In 1836, American missionary

Samuel Wells Williams published an article titled *The Jargon of Canton* in the Chinese Repository, mentioning that there were many English vocabulary textbooks in Guangzhou that used Cantonese dialect for phonetic notation. He noted, "Such books are extremely common among the Cantonese. Copying these booklets can be considered the first step in learning English. Their contents include not only names of objects but sometimes also idioms, phrases, and spelling rules." (The Chinese Repository, 1836) In 1837, Williams again wrote in the Chinese Repository, referring to various English vocabulary booklets circulating in Guangzhou at the time. Some contained over 3,000 entries, and he specifically mentioned two textbooks: one titled *A Complete Collection of the Miscellaneous Words Used in the Foreign Language of Macao* and another called *Those Words of the Devilish Language of the Red-Bristled People Commonly Used in Buying and Selling*. In 1840, Wilhelm Schott, a German scholar, listed a book titled *Hūng-mao-hóa*, or *A Language of the Red-Haired Foreigners* in his *Catalogue of the Chinese and Manchu Books* in the Library of the Elector of Brandenburg compiled for the Bibliotheca Electoralis Brandenburgica.

Over the past decade or so, domestic scholars have gradually uncovered a number of English textbooks bearing the title "Red-haired," such as *the Commonly-Used Foreign Language of the Red-Haired People*, *the Foreign Language of the Red-Haired People Commonly Used in Buying and Selling*, *Those Words of the Devilish Language of the Red-Bristled People Commonly Used in Buying and Selling*, *The Devilish Language of the Red-Haired People Used in Buying and Selling between Chinese and Foreigners*, *the Foreign Language of the Red-Haired People*, *the Red-Haired People's Language*, or *the Devil's Language*. These extant Cantonese-annotated English textbooks generally contain a vocabulary of fewer than 400 words, though there are a few exceptions. According to the Chinese scholar Zhou Zhenhe's research, *the Foreign Language of the Red-Haired People* held in the British Library includes approximately 1,400 words. This demonstrates a significant increase in the number of self-compiled English textbooks during this period, providing strong evidence for the development of English education among the populace in Guangdong.

In *Language Contact and Pidgin: Research and Reproduced Materials of 19th Century East Asia*, edited by Uchida Keiichi and Shen Guowei, a reproduction of *the Chinese and English Vocabulary* from the British Library is included, which contains a total of 2,319 words. Another manuscript, *Yiyin Jiyao*, or *A Collection of Alien Tongues*, includes no fewer than 4,000 entries.

In 1846, P. Streenevassa Pillay, an attendant to the British forces stationed in Zhoushan, Ningbo, was commissioned by the British military to compile *A Manual For Youth and Students or Chinese Vocabulary and Dialogues Containing an Easy Introduction to the Chinese Language*. This work used the Ningbo dialect to annotate the pronunciation of English words and organized the vocabulary into 72 categories based on meaning, such as astronomy, human affairs, the body, psychology, and disabilities, containing a total of 3,193 entries.

In 1875, Kuang Qizhao, in the first appendix of the second edition of his *English and Chinese dictionary*, added a part named *Zazi Cuoyao*, or *the most important words selected from Miscellaneous*

topics, which classified vocabulary into 50 categories, including "astronomy, geography, seasons, names of countries and islands, names of national capitals, and names of peoples." It contained 4,964 entries and used Cantonese dialect to annotate English pronunciations.

In 1901, Tang Yixiu, a native of Lanxi, Zhejiang Province, compiled *Yinzhū Huaying Mengxue Tushuo*, or *An Illustrated Elementary Primer with the English pronunciations Annotated in Chinese*, categorizing vocabulary into sections such as human relations, astronomy, physical form, geography, architecture, utensils, food and drink, clothing, fruits, aquatic creatures, beasts, insects, birds, plants, military affairs, and music. The work included 300 Chinese-English entries and used the Jiang-Zhe dialect to annotate English pronunciations.

In 1900, Shanghai Book Company published *Zhongxi Riyong Zazi*, or *The Chinese and Western Miscellaneous Characters for Daily Use*, which was revised in 1906 and renamed *The Newly Augmented Chinese and Western Miscellaneous Characters for Daily Use*, *The Improved Illustrated Chinese and Western Miscellaneous Characters for Daily Use*, or *The Universal Newest Illustrated Miscellaneous Characters*. The instructional contents were divided into categories such as astronomy, seasons, geography, human relations, physical appearance, birds, beasts, aquatic creatures, insects, trees, flowers, grasses, vegetables, fruits, grains, pastries, teas, meats, fish dishes, headwear and clothing, adornments, silks, precious stones and pigments, household items, architecture, everyday items, grain shop items, tools for artisans, farming tools, weaving tools, drinking vessels, boat equipment, fishing gear, stationery, weapons, musical instruments, toys, foreign settlements, maps, official positions, and a summary of English phrases. The "summary of English phrases" section presented Chinese-English comparisons and used the Shanghai dialect to annotate English pronunciations.

By the period of Republican China, Chinese-character-annotated English vocabulary textbooks titled *Chinese and Western Miscellaneous Characters for Daily Use* were widely published by major publishing houses in Shanghai. Examples include *Huituzhongxi Riyong Zazi* or *The Illustrated Chinese-Western Daily Characters* published by Shanghai Jiaojingshanfang, Huaiyinshanfang, Changwen Book Company, Wende Book Company, Zhuji Book Company, Tianbao Book Company, Daguan Book Company, Dacheng Book Company, Tianji Book Company, Jinbu Book Company, Guangji Book Company, and Liudeji Book Company; *Huituzhongxi Jiachang Riyong Zazi*, or *The Illustrated Chinese-Western Daily Characters for Household* published by Shanghai Guangyi Book Company; *Xinzeng Zhongxi Riyong Zazi* or *The Newly Added Chinese-Western Daily Characters* published by Shanghai Simalu Haizuo Book Company; *Huituzhongxi Riyong Zashi* or *The Illustrated Chinese-Western Daily Affairs* published by Shanghai Lianshi Book Company; *Xinzeng Zhongxi Riyong Zazi* or *The Newly Added Chinese-Western Daily Characters* published by Ningbo Jigengzhai; and *Yinyi Shuangzhu Yingwen Changyong Zihui* or *The Phonetic and Semantic Annotated Glossary of Common English Words* compiled by Zheng Banyu and published by Shanghai Foreign Language Editing Society. During the Republic of China period, a popular literacy textbook for children was *Youxue Qionglin*, or *The Forest of Wisdom for the Young Learner*, which often included *Introduction to*

*the English Language* as an appendix, which listed four to five commonly used Chinese-English words in the upper margin of each page, with corresponding pronunciations annotated in Chinese characters. Additionally, to facilitate the mastery of English vocabulary, several Chinese-character-annotated English textbooks titled "dictionaries" were published during the Republic of China period. These works followed the compilation methods of foreign dictionaries, arranging words in alphabetical order and using both the International Phonetic Alphabet and Chinese characters to annotate English pronunciations. Examples include *Phonetic English-Chinese Small Dictionary*, *Phonetic Chinese-English Small Dictionary*, and *5,000 Most Common English Words* compiled by Xi Shizhi and published by Shanghai Chunming Bookstore; *4,000 Most Frequently Used English Words* compiled by Thorndike and Lu Yuying; *Student's English-Chinese Dictionary with Chinese Phonetic Notation* and *Student's Chinese-English Dictionary with Chinese Phonetic Notation* compiled by Jiang Guoxiong and published by Shanghai Guoguang Bookstore; *Chinese Phonetic Student's Chinese-English Dictionary* compiled by Zhu Liangmo; *Chinese-English Phonetic Glossary of Mechanical Terms* published by Shanghai Commercial Press; *Chinese Phonetic English Dictionary* compiled by Feng Yushen and Li Xinhua and published by Institute of Languages Shanghai China; *Model Chinese-English Dictionary with Chinese Phonetic Notation* and *Practical English-Chinese Dictionary with Chinese Phonetic Notation* compiled by Xi Shizhi and published by Shanghai Dafang Bookstore; and *Thorndike's English-Chinese Dictionary for Junior Middle Schools* compiled by Contemporary Linguistics Association and published by Shanghai Qiming Bookstore.

Thus, from the Qianlong era of the Qing dynasty to the period of Republican China, a wide variety of textbooks using Chinese characters to annotate English pronunciations emerged. Their vocabulary ranged from a few hundred to several thousand words, serving not only to meet the literacy needs of young children but also acting as a "stepping stone" for students and even adults to self-study English.

### **3. The Compilation of English "Sentence-Based" Textbooks with Chinese Character Phonetic Notation**

The earliest English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation primarily consisted of English vocabulary. With evolving societal demands and the improvement in Chinese English proficiency, English textbooks focusing on phrases and sentences, categorized as "sentence-based" textbooks, began to emerge. In addition to common English vocabulary, these textbooks incorporated short English sentences, typically arranged according to the number of Chinese characters. The linguistic logic between contexts was often weak, hence was designated "sentence-based" English textbooks. Existing historical records indicate that "sentence-based" English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation began to appear in the 1840s. Following the signing of the Treaty of Nanking between China and U.K. in 1842, China was compelled to open five coastal ports for trade, expanding Sino-Western trade from Guangzhou to Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai, and other treaty ports. This created an unprecedented demand for foreign trade talent and raised the required level of English proficiency. The

existing Cantonese-phonetic-notated "Canton English" vocabulary textbooks could no longer meet learners' needs, particularly those in Ningbo and Shanghai. Consequently, English textbooks using Mandarin, Ningbo dialect, and Cantonese phonetic notation began to appear. Building upon the original vocabulary-based content, these textbooks added commonly used English sentences and organized the teaching materials according to the number of Chinese characters in the sentences, from fewer to more, categorizing them into "single-character phrases, two-character phrases, three-character phrases, four-character phrases, five- or six-character phrases, and long sentences." Thus, English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation evolved from being primarily "vocabulary-based" to predominantly "sentence-based."

The first known English "sentence-based" textbook with Chinese character phonetic notation is *Chinese and English Vocabulary Part One*. Compiled by Robert Thom (1807-1846), a British diplomat and translator, and published in Guangzhou in August 1843, it used Mandarin to annotate English pronunciation. The book contained approximately 1500 entries, including vocabulary, phrases, and short sentences. Formally, these entries were independent; however, contextually, they possessed an internal logical relationship, demonstrating certain communicative and practical functions. After its publication, the book was extremely popular and widely circulated in coastal treaty ports. It became a primary English textbook in missionary schools in China at the time and was even brought to Japan. Republished in 1860, it became widely used during Japan's Meiji Restoration.

In the 26th year of Daoguang of the Qing Dynasty (1846), Liang Weisong from Shunde County, Guangzhou Prefecture, compiled a Cantonese-phonetic-notated English textbook titled *Hua-I-I-Yü, or Sino-Barbarian Dictionary*. Its content covered both vocabulary and sentences, categorized into sections such as "Colors, Melons and Fruits, Food, Birds, Beasts, Fish and Shrimp, Wines and Beverages, Plants and Trees, Single-Character Category, Two-Character Category, Three-Character Category, Four-Character Category, Long Sentence Category," etc. This established a precedent for organizing English teaching content based on the number of characters in Chinese sentences.

In 1855, a Chinese compiler named "Ziqing" compiled *Huaying Tongyu (Chinese and English Vocabulary)*, published by Xiedetang. Its contents included categories such as "Numbers, Seasons, Astronomy, Geography, Buildings, Utensils, Jewelry, Household Items, Study Room Items, Tools, Occupations, Human Relations, Trades, National Treasures, Metals, Jade and Stones, Tea, Silks and Satins Fabrics, Medicinal Herbs, Commerce, Diseases, Body, Penal Law, Colors, Melons and Vegetables, Fruits, Plants and Trees, Food, Processing, Birds, Beasts, Fish and Shrimp, Wine Names, Various Ports, Ships, Single-Character, Two-Character, Three-Character, Four-Character, Short Sentences, Long Sentences," totaling 2612 entries of vocabulary, phrases, and sentences. Currently, there are four main extant versions of *Huaying Tongyu*: besides the 1855 Xiedetang edition, there are the 1860 Kaidetang edition, the 1860 Hengmao (Western District) edition, and the 1879 Cangwentang edition.

In 1858, *Huafan Maoyi Yanyu Tongxiao*, or *The Comprehension of the Trade Language between*

*Chinese and Barbarians* was published by the Provincial Jingtang, comprising two volumes. The first volume mainly consisted of categorized vocabulary, including "Foreign Script, Foreign Numerals, Conversion Rates for Various Countries' Weights to Jin, Numbers Category, Weights and Measures Category, Unclassified Words (including personal appellations, country names, place names, business names, body parts, months, days of the week, time, etc.), Birds and Beasts Category, Silks and Satins Category, Medicinal Herbs Category, Precious Stones and Metals Category, Clothing Category, Bamboo and Wooden Ware Category, Colors Category, Tools and Implements Category, Glassware Category, Unclassified Goods Names (including various waters, oils, hides, ships and their parts), Goods Category, Unclassified Miscellaneous Words." The second volume consisted of commonly used "trade phrases," generally arranged according to the number of characters in the Chinese sentences, ranging from as few as three characters to over ten characters. The entire book used Cantonese to annotate the pronunciation of English words and sentences. Furthermore, the author found a textbook titled *Fanhua Zhengyin*, or *The Correct Sounds of Foreign Speech* (Volumes 1 & 2) on the Kongfz.com antique book website, whose content appears very similar to that of *The Comprehension of the Trade Language between Chinese and Barbarians*.

In 1860, Ningbo merchant Feng Zefu (also known as Feng Xueqing) and others, drawing inspiration from the Cantonese-dialect-annotated English textbook *Ying Hua* or *English Language*, utilized the "Gouzhang local dialect" to annotate English pronunciation and compiled the Ningbo-dialect-annotated English textbook *Ying Hua Zhu Jie* (*Annotation of English Language*). This book consisted of 39 lexical categories, including "ports of various nations, astronomy, geography, seasons, sovereigns and officials, human relations, teachers and friends," and six syntactic categories, namely "one-character phrases, two-character phrases, three-character phrases, four-character phrases, five-character phrases, and long-sentence phrases." It contained approximately 3,300 entries of vocabulary and sentences, making it the first known Ningbo-dialect-annotated English textbook compiled by Chinese individuals. The textbook was later reprinted multiple times by publishers such as the Commercial Press in Shanghai, Wen Yi Book Company, Shenchang Calligraphy and Painting Studio, and Jianqingzhai Book Company. Some publishers even removed the original English words from the book, retaining only the Chinese meanings and Chinese character annotations, and renamed it *Ying Hua Wen Da Zhu Jie* or *English Dialogues with Ningbo Dialect Annotations*.

The practice of organizing textbook sentences based on the number of Chinese characters was largely influenced by Chinese culture. As the standard of English education in China continuously improved, cross-cultural awareness among people grew stronger, leading to a gradual trend of "Sino-Western integration" in textbook compilation. For example, in 1899 (the 25th year of the Guangxu era), Zhuo Qishan from eastern Guangdong Province compiled *Hua Ying Lei Yu* (*Chinese and English Phrase Book and Dictionary*), dividing the teaching content into 158 categories, including "one-character category, two-character category, three-character category, and four-character category." In these categories, the content was not only arranged by the number of characters but also followed the order

of the English alphabet. For instance, in the "two-character category," words such as "degree, delay, demerit, deny, depend, destroy, detain, dialect" were arranged in the order of the English alphabet and annotated with Chinese pronunciations.

Another type of Chinese-character-annotated English sentence textbook imitated Western textbook compilation styles. For example, in 1899, Zhong Tianwei, founder of the Nanyang Third-Level School, published *Hua Ying Ti Ji Chu Bu*, or *English and Chinese Primer*, at the Meisheng Book Company in Shanghai. The original book, titled Indian Readers, was a textbook compiled by the British for Indian primary school students. Zhong Tianwei added Chinese translations and Chinese character annotations to the first volume, Primer, and named it the *Qie Yin Ying Wen Po La Mai Yi Ben*, where "Po La Mai" is the Shanghai-dialect annotation of "Primer." The book was divided into 90 lessons, following a progressive principle that transitioned from letters, spelling, and vocabulary to sentences and eventually to religious texts. The lesson content increased gradually in volume and complexity, showing a spiral upward trend. Zhong Tianwei's *English and Chinese Primer* closely resembled Xie Honglai's *Hua Ying Chu Jie (English and Chinese Primer)*, published by the Commercial Press in Shanghai in 1898, as both originated from the same source text. Xie Honglai pointed out, "At that time, English original textbooks published in Shanghai included *Primer*, *Li Dou* (a phonetic translation of Reader)... *Jin Jie (Progressive)* only provided annotations in Chinese, while *Li Dou* included both annotations and pronunciations, limited to the Shanghai dialect, making it unusable elsewhere." (Zou, 2011) This indicates that before Xie Honglai published *Hua Ying Chu Jie* and *Hua Ying Jin Jie*, others had already adapted Indian textbooks into Chinese-character-annotated English textbooks, though these earlier versions have unfortunately been lost.

Compared to Chinese-character-annotated vocabulary-based English textbooks, these Chinese-character-annotated sentence-based English textbooks incorporated common phrases and short sentences based on vocabulary, reflecting an initial awareness of "constructing sentences from words." This approach helped English learners grasp common English sentence expressions and can be regarded as the budding stage of Chinese-character-annotated conversation-based English textbooks.

#### **4. The Compilation of Comprehensive English Textbooks with Chinese Character Phonetic Notation**

Comprehensive English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation refer to teaching materials that employ Chinese characters to annotate English pronunciation while concurrently addressing comprehensive language skills such as phonetics, vocabulary, conversation, grammar, and writing. Their primary objective is to enhance learners' overall proficiency in using the English language. The compilation of these comprehensive textbooks was closely intertwined with the specific social context of the time. Influenced by various factors, including the Westernization Movement, the Reform Movement of 1898, educational reforms in the late Qing Dynasty, and the presence of missionary schools in China, significant shifts occurred in people's ideologies and modes of thinking. There

emerged a proactive impetus to learn "Western knowledge" and "Western techniques." Individuals who merely understood spoken foreign languages without literacy skills could no longer adequately meet societal demands. Within this context, comprehensive English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation were compiled to impart knowledge and skills in English phonetics, vocabulary, conversation, grammar, reading, writing, and more, thereby aiming to elevate learners' comprehensive English application abilities.

In 1862, *The Chinese-English Instructor* (*Ying ü Tsap Ts'ün*) compiled by Tang Tingshu, a prominent figure in the Westernization Movement in China, can be regarded as a precursor to comprehensive English textbooks. This work, divided into six volumes, used Cantonese to annotate English pronunciation. Its content encompassed "phonology, reading methods, essentials of pronunciation, categorized vocabulary, human affairs, commercial tariffs, sentences, and dialogues," making it a comprehensive Cantonese-phonetic-notated English textbook that integrated phonetics, vocabulary, sentence patterns, and situational conversation. Following *The Chinese-English Instructor*, a variety of comprehensive English textbooks employing Chinese character phonetic notation were successively compiled. Among these, Cantonese-dialect phonetic notation textbooks included: Kuang Qizhao's *Words, sentences, notes, bills, letters, petitions & c.* (1875), T. L. Stedman and K. P. Lee's *A Chinese and English phrase book in the Canton dialect, or, Dialogues on ordinary and familiar subjects for the use of the Chinese resident in America, and of Americans desirous of learning the Chinese language* (1888), Zheng Zhiruo's *Chinese and English Phrase Book* (1893), Zhuo Qishan's *English & Chinese Phrases* (1899), *English Conversation Self-Taught* (1906) · and *Essentials of Chinese-English- Spanish Social Conversations* (1906), Huang Shaoqiong's *The Classified List of Miscellaneous Important Terms* (1895), Huang Lüqing's *English and Chinese Dialogues* (1899), *Improved Essential English Reader* (1906), *Need to Know about English* (1907), Mo Wenchang's *English Made Easy* (1904), Tam Pui-shum's *Spanish, Chinese & English Conversations* (1928), Chen Xingya's *A Modern Anglo-Chinese Book for Daily Use: Useful Words and Idiomatic Phrases* (1928), and *Anglo-Chinese Book of Reformation Individually For Self-Taught Complete English Lessons* (1930), Xingji Shuzhuang's *English Compass* (1932).

Additionally, A Chinese-character-annotated Book named *A First Book for Teaching English* was held in the Harvard University Library, with the compiler and date unknown. And *Self-Taught English Without a Master* was published by Hong Kong region Jinhua Publishing House, with the compiler and date unknown.

Mandarin phonetic notation comprehensive English textbooks included: Sau Mang Yian's *Tones of the Mandarin Dialect Given in English and Chinese* (1865), *The Natural Method of Learning English* by the Commercial Press Compilation Department (1912), Lin Cheng's *Detailed Explanations of Model English Readers* (1912), Ma Furen's *Self-Learning English through Illustrations* (1912).

Shanghai dialect phonetic notation comprehensive English textbooks included: M. T. Yates's *First lessons in Chinese* (1871), Cao Xiang's *Primer for English Words* (1874), Yang Shaoping's *Guide to*

*English Words* (1879), *English in Hundred Days* published by Shanghai Guoguang Bookstore (1912), Wu Jinzhang's *The Foreign Service Book with Commercial Conversations* (1925), *English in Hundred Days* by Shanghai English Research Society (1932), Shi Xianhong's *Handbook of Foreign Service Language* (1932), Xiong Baolian and Xiong Zhengmin's *Key to English Grammar and Conversation* (1935), Mei Xiugui's *The Foreign Service Book with Commercial Conversations* (Revised Edition) (1939), Lin Dongsheng's *Gateway to English* (1941).

The comprehensive English textbooks with Ningbo dialect phonetic notation included: Zheng Qimiao's *Household Conversation and Miscellaneous Important Words* (1921), Suzhou dialect phonetic notation comprehensive English textbooks included: Wu Yusheng's *English in 100 Days* (1932). The comprehensive English textbooks with Shandong dialect phonetic notation included: Liu Shude's *A New Simple Handbook of English Words & Phrases* (1910). The comprehensive English textbooks with Chongqing dialect phonetic notation included: Dong Zhuren's *Master Conversation English in Hundred Days* (1944). Although some of these textbooks were titled "Conversation," their content typically covered phonetics, vocabulary, conversation, writing, and other areas, thus belonging to the comprehensive category.

These comprehensive English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation aimed to improve learners' practical English skills. While conversation was often the primary focus, they also systematically incorporated knowledge of phonetics, vocabulary, syntax, and writing. These textual materials embody the multifaceted cultural perspectives prevalent in society at that time.

## **5. The Compilation of Specific-Skill English Textbooks with Chinese Character Phonetic Notation**

Specific-skill English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation refer to instructional resources specifically designed and compiled to address particular aspects of English language proficiency (such as speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, etc.) or to meet specific academic or occupational needs. The emergence of such specific skill English textbooks was an inevitable outcome of the development of English language teaching. As mentioned earlier, the earliest English textbooks with Chinese character notation were vocabulary-based ones. Later, commonly used English sentences were added, forming "sentence or phrase-based" textbooks. These subsequently evolved into "comprehensive textbooks" covering linguistic knowledge such as pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, conversation, and writing. With the diversification of societal needs and the improvement of English teaching standards, increasing emphasis was placed on English "language skills" and "communicative functions." To meet the varied needs of learners, publishers issued various English specific-skill textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation, predominantly focusing on pronunciation and conversation, along with a smaller number of readings, writing, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

As a matter of fact, all English teaching materials with Chinese character notation involved instruction

on English pronunciation to varying degrees. For instance, works like Cao Xiang's *Primer for English Words* (1874) and Yang Shaoping's *Guide to English Words* devoted significant space to teaching how to segment sounds. However, the approach of treating English pronunciation as a specific skill for dedicated textbooks began during the Republican period. For example, the renowned English educator Zhou Yue ran published several English pronunciation textbooks with The Commercial Press, including *Ying Zi Qie Yin (English Spelling, 1915)*, *Ying Zi Du Yin (A Primer of English Sounds, 1917)*, *Chu Ji Du Yin Jiao Ke Shu (An English Phonetic Primer, 1918)*, and *Ying Zi Pin Yin Ru Men (A Course in English Spelling, 1940)*. These pronunciation textbooks were generally used in formal schools. As contemporary sources noted, "Mastering English pronunciation and reading methods often relied on oral instruction from the teacher in the classroom, the results of which were extremely slow. It was far less effective than being able to consult a dictionary and spell out words according to the provided symbols, which facilitated easier progress." (Luo, 1934) and "Individuals have different environments and economic circumstances; those wishing for the joy of self-study without a teacher cannot succeed without the aid of an English pronunciation guide." (Liu, 1939) Therefore, to help self-learners master English pronunciation, people published English pronunciation textbooks with Chinese character notation.

In 1934, Luo Gongquan compiled *A Guide to Pronunciation*, published by Shanghai Baicheng Book Company, which used Beiping pronunciation and Guoyin (National Pronunciation) to annotate English sounds. "If scholars can become proficient in it, they can master the study of pronunciation without a teacher." In 1937, Yuanchang Advertising Company published *Ying Zi Du Yin Yao*, or *Key to the Pronunciation of English Words*, compiled by Zhang Yuanxian and Chen Shuping, which used Shanghai dialect to annotate English pronunciation. In 1939, Liu Wanshan compiled *Directions for English Pronunciation* for students at the Peiyong Tutorial School in Yantai, Shandong, using Shandong dialect to annotate English sounds. In 1946, Guanghua Printing Bureau published *Ying Wen Fa Yin Pin Zi Zhi Nan*, or *A Guide to English Pronunciation and Spelling*, compiled by Wang Yanru, which used Beiping pronunciation and National Pronunciation to annotate English sounds, serving as the pronunciation textbook for the Guangfu English Tutorial Class. In the same year, Ma Yuanzeng published *Key to English Pronunciation* with Cicheng Printing Factory, which simultaneously used Chinese characters, national pronunciation, and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols to annotate English pronunciation. Additionally, in 1946, Zhang Xiangzhang compiled *Master of English Pronunciation in Half Month* for correspondence or self-study students. These English pronunciation textbooks with Chinese character notation organically combined the IPA with Chinese character phonetic notation, creating an English pronunciation teaching methodology that integrated Chinese and Western approaches. This represented significant progress compared to the early "direct sound method" which directly used Chinese characters to annotate the pronunciation of English words.

English teaching materials with Chinese character notation for specific skills were predominantly conversation textbooks. Initially, they organized content in a "question and answer" format. For

example, Zhuo Qishan's *Hua Ying Tong Yu Wen Da* or *English Conversation Self-Taught* (1906), categorized teaching content into sections such as "celestial phenomena, chronology, geography, human relations, occupations, animals, plants, minerals, mathematics, transportation, weapons, stationery, physiology, medicine, clothing, food and drink, games, individual words, conversation, sound segmentation," using Shanghai dialect to annotate English pronunciation. It was regarded as a new system on the simplest principles for universal self-tuition with complete Chinese pronunciation of every word.

By the Republican period, the titles of these textbooks typically included the term "conversation". In 1921, Shanghai Huatong Book Company published Zheng Qimiao's *New Method English Conversation*, which used Ningbo dialect to annotate English pronunciation. In 1934, Shanghai Huanqiu Book Company published Dong Jianzhi and Jin Zefu's *English Conversation in Hundred Days*, later republished by Da Zhonghua Book Company and Wenye Book Company. In the same year, Daxin Book Company published *English Conversation in Hundred Days* compiled by Shi Jieran, who got a master degree from the University of Chicago, with Chinese annotations for sound segmentation. This book was registered with the Ministry of Interior in April of the 23rd year of the Republic of China (1934). In 1935, Shanghai Zhongying Translation Society published Wu Yiming's *Wu Shi Zi Tong Ying Yu Hui Hua* (*Self-Taught English Conversation*), using Jiangsu-Zhejiang dialect for phonetic notation. In 1936, Baihong English Research Society compiled *The Commercial English Conversation One Hundred Days' Lessons with Chinese Pronunciation and Explanation*, published by Shanghai Baihong Press. In 1939, Wang Anguo compiled *A Practical Conversation in Chinese, Japanese, English, French, German and Phonetically Annotated Conversation in Chinese, Japanese, English, French, German*, published by Renwen Publishing House. These two works had identical subject matter; the former presented content in five languages (Chinese, Japanese, English, French, German), while the latter used Chinese character phonetic notation to annotate the pronunciation of Japanese, English, French, and German texts, serving as a supplementary teaching material for the former. In 1941, Shanghai Chinese Books and Periodicals Company published Zhang Xiangzhang's *Anglo-Chinese Practical Conversation Through Radio*, which became a common textbook for correspondence or self-study students. In 1943, Zhou Siliang compiled *Self-Taught English Conversation*, published by Chongqing New China Book Company. A notable feature of this book was that it no longer provided phonetic notation for all conversation content, instead used "notes" to annotate the pronunciation of some new English words. In 1945, Shanghai English Literature Society published Ge Shigui's *English Conversation Understand in One Month*. In the same year, Shen Gengcu compiled *Elementary English Conversation*, published by Shanghai International Bookstore. In 1946, Shanghai Guoguang Bookstore compiled and published *Social Conversations for Daily Use*, using Shanghai dialect to annotate English pronunciation. Also in 1946, Xiong Baolian, a Master of Arts from the University of Washington, compiled *Anglo Chinese-American Conversation Book*, published by Minghua Book Company. Chen Zixin compiled *English Conversation in Hundred Days*, published by the Esperanto Studies Society in 1946. In 1949,

Hong Kong region Daxin Bookstore published *Wu Shi Zi Tong Zi Xue Ying Yu Hui Hua (Self-Taught English Conversation)* compiled by English Research Society. In 1959, Qian Siliang compiled *English Conversation in Three Months*, published by the Hong Kong region English Research Society. Furthermore, *Tong Chang Ying Yong Ying Yu Hui Hua (Commonly Used English Conversation)* is available for sale on the Confucius Old Books website, though its compiler, publisher, and publication date are unknown. This demonstrates the great abundance of English conversation specific-skill textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation.

In addition, there were some textbooks whose titles did not include the word "conversation," but based on their content, were also designed to cultivate the specific skill of English conversation. For example, in 1934, Henry K. Pott's *Ying Hua Yi Yue Tong (Understand English in One Month)* published by Shanghai Foreign Language Studies Society, and Zhou Jingyu's *Ying Yu Yi Yue Tong* or *How to Master English in One Month*, published by World Book Company in the same year. In 1946, Cui Junfu's *Key of English Language with Chinese Explanation* published by Shanghai Da Zhonghua Book Company. In 1937, *Master English Conversation in Hundred Days* was published by the Editorial Department of Chunming Bookstore. In 1943, Chen Ping's *Practical English Self-Taught* was published by Guilin Xinsheng Book Company and in the same year, Liu Baihai's *English in One Month with Chinese Explanation* published by Nanguang Bookstore, etc. The primary audience for these English conversation textbooks with Chinese character notation was working adults in society, hence their content was closely related to daily life, containing rich socio-cultural connotations.

During the period of the Republic of China, English reading was also a highly valued skill, leading to the compilation of various English reading textbooks. These were generally named "readers", such as *Imperial English Reader, Model English Readers, Kaiming English Reader, National English Reader, Elementary English Reader, Mass English Reader, Progress English Reader, Zhongshan English Reader, Junior High School Practical English Reader, Direct Method English Reader, Century Basic English Reader, Daily Use English Reader, Vocational English Reader, Applied English Reader, Newly Compiled English Reader, Standard English Reader, Modern English Reader*, etc. These readers generally imitated the compilation style of foreign textbooks and used the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to annotate English pronunciation. However, some compilers adapted these readers, adding English pronunciation charts at the beginning or end and using Chinese characters to annotate the pronunciation of English phonemes, thus forming English reading textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation. For example, in 1912, The Commercial Press published Lin Cheng's *Model English Readers*, which provided detailed explanations using diagrams, phonetic notation, and articulation positions in the front matter. Each word's pronunciation was annotated with Chinese characters, National Pronunciation, and IPA/Wade-Giles phonetic symbols. This illustrates that within English teaching materials with Chinese character notation, reading skill training also placed great emphasis on English pronunciation.

Besides English textbooks for specific language skill, there were also materials compiled for specific

occupations. In 1929, Zhu Jinchang's *Guide to Printers with Chinese Translations* was published by Shanghai Xinye Publishing House. Its content included: English alphabet, French alphabet, spelling categories, printing categories, binding categories, lithography categories, type casting categories, engraving categories, drawing categories, stationery categories, paper material categories, photoengraving plate categories, names of colors, types of manuscripts, various symbols, Western type case layout format, including (I) Upper Case, Western type case layout format (II) Lower Case, Western type case layout format (III) Ornamental Case, proofreader's correction methods, job seeking (I), job seeking (II), stationery store dialogue, printing house dialogue, telephone call about printing dialogue, proofreader and typesetter dialogue, Westerner and printer dialogue, Westerner and ruling pen operator dialogue, color lithography house dialogue, engraving shop dialogue, job application letter, letter entrusting a friend to purchase type, letter applying for proofreading position, letter requesting business card printing, letter purchasing paper materials, letter requesting salary advance, letter collecting ink, sick leave request letter, letter requesting salary increase, letter purchasing books from a bookstore, Chinese character type case layout format, business card size diagrams, general printing knowledge, various paper size charts, paper usage folio charts.

In 1918, Hong Kong region Xing'a Book Printing Company printed *The Technical Terms Hand-Book* compiled by the Machine Research Society, which was reissued in 1935, using Cantonese to annotate English pronunciation and renamed *Xin Zeng Yue Yin Hua Ying Ji Qi Da Cheng (The Technical Terms Hand-Book)*. The book was divided into six chapters: Chapter 1 included the alphabet, arithmetic, tools needed by artisans, balancing instruments, measuring instruments, measurement tables, climate tables, etc., timepieces, clocks and watches, optical instruments, drawing instruments, tools needed by blacksmiths, tools needed by carpenters, pattern makers, shipwrights, joiners, etc., tools needed by copper and iron foundries, tools needed by masons, lathes and attachments. Chapter 2 included various steam machinery, such as steam engine accessories, cylinders, pistons, valves, etc., various types of valves, cocks, various pipes, etc. Chapter 3 covered naval parts, external fittings of steamships, internal parts of steamships, various propellers and their attachments, small boat fittings, electricity, hydraulic (pneumatic) machinery, heating appliances, trains/carriages/ carts, etc., axles, drive shafts, railways. Chapter 4 included the nature of metals, various screws, various chains, various paints, cement, sand, stone, names of colors, Chinese and foreign paper, ink, pens, etc., books/documents/receipts/bills/deeds, etc., items needed in shops and offices, tables/chairs/stools, etc., boxes/baskets/barrels/basins, etc. Chapter 5 included names of skilled artists/craftsmen, laborers/sailors, etc., company staff, merchants, industrial and commercial sites, factories/manufacturing plants, shops/companies, departments within a company, public buildings, houses, parts of a house, doors and windows, rivers, streets, bridges, etc., various forces (heat, gas, motion), months/days/weeks/years\seasonal tables, Gregorian calendar tables (monthly calendar), action verbs/words, key business phrases, descriptive phrases. Chapter 6 included British weights and measures, Chinese method of recording jin, liang, and decimals, various tables, French weights and measures, Metrical

and British measurement comparison tables, etc. This content embodies rich socio-technological and cultural knowledge.

Other English textbooks with Chinese character phonetic notation related to specific occupational skills include *Tang Zi Zhu Yin Hua Ying Ji Qi Za Hua Jie Jue* or *A Handbook of Chinese-English Technological Terms with Phonetic Notation*, published by The Commercial Press in 1919; *Chuan Wu Da Li Ren Za Hua* or *The Tallyman's Vocabulary* printed by Hong Kong region Jinfu Bookstore in 1923, *Zeng Ding Hua Ying Ji Qi Za Hua Da Cheng* or *Newly Expand Chinese-English Technological Terms* distributed by Hong Kong region Xing'a Printing Bureau in 1935, etc. These English reaching materials can be considered China's earliest English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks.

### Conclusion

From the 13th year of the Qianlong era (1748) in the Qing Dynasty to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, English textbooks with Chinese character-phonetic annotation underwent a historical trajectory from emergence to gradual decline. In terms of textbook types, these included pronunciation-based textbooks, vocabulary-focused textbooks, conversation-oriented textbooks, writing-centered textbooks, comprehensive textbooks, and English for specific purposes textbooks. From the perspective of phonetic annotation, there were English textbooks annotated with Cantonese, Ningbo dialect, Shanghai dialect, Mandarin, and others. In terms of compilers and users, these textbooks encompassed English learners from various regions across China, such as Guangdong, Fujian, Ningbo, Shanghai, Beijing, and Shandong.

The English textbooks with Chinese character-phonetic notation served not only as a bridge between the phonetic systems of English and Chinese but also as a transitional strategy for cultural adaptation, reflecting an instinctive approach and pragmatic modification by the native culture in response to the impact of foreign culture. On one hand, they acknowledged the objective reality that learners, in their initial stages, could not entirely detach themselves from the influence of their mother tongue, and leveraged this to facilitate learning. This embodies a "learner-centered" pedagogical approach, respecting learners' cultural backgrounds and cognitive habits, thereby demonstrating cultural inclusiveness. On the other hand, these textbooks might also convey inaccurate cultural connotations, inadvertently "distorting" the cultural imagery of the English language and potentially becoming an obstacle in cross-cultural communication.

Linguistic and cultural research on Chinese character-phonetic annotated English textbooks helps uncover the cultural psychological phenomena underlying language. Its research value far exceeds its efficacy as a mere learning tool. These textbooks represent the most direct and vivid response at the grassroots level to the impact of Western language and culture on Chinese society over the past century. Studying them not only enriches theories of language contact and interlanguage but also provides profound insights into the complex attitudes and practical wisdom of ordinary people in navigating language learning and cultural identity within the context of globalization. They serve as a valuable

window into Sino-English language contact, the "localization" of foreign languages in Chinese culture, and the linguistic psychology of the populace.

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