**Story of Me and My Double-Teacher Class**

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I teach English to students in Senior High School Grade Two in Tongren City Nationalities Middle School （同仁市民族中学）, Qinghai Province. My school was introduced to Yuanshan Education Foundation (情系远山基金会) in November 2019. With the recommendation of Vice-governor Li Jianqiang (李建强) and support from the Tongren County Government, our school was given the opportunity to receive free English courses from teachers of China's New Oriental School (新东方学校NOS). Subsequently, my students began receiving online classes from professional English teachers of the NOS. These are “double-teacher classes,” which means the same course is taught by two teachers - one in class and one online. The double-teacher teaching method is greatly benefiting our students. For this reason, I want to tell more about my students, their English background, their interactions with the Yuanshan Education Foundation, and the double-teacher class's positive outcomes.

The school is located in a predominantly Tibetan populated county named Tongren or Rebgong (热贡) in Tibetan in the southeast of Qinghai Province. Out of Tonrgen’s total population of 100,000 people, Tibetans account for 75% of the population. Tongren Nationalities Middle School has some 900 students in junior middle school and about 1,300 in senior high school for approximately 2,200 students. Most of the students are Tibetans and Tu (Monguor 土族) ethnic groups from rural farming and pastoral regions. Relatively few are from nearby urban villages in Tongren County. For these ethnic minority students, English is their third or fourth language. Moreover, before they arrived in this school, due to the lack of English teachers and their schools' remote location, most students received a limited education in English. Consequently, when the students arrived in the high school, their English levels varied, and their English attitudes were different.

In September 2019, when my job was transferred to this high school as an English teacher, I learned from many students that English score was counted in their college entrance exam score. As a result, many students did not view English study as necessary. In fact, many students' plan was to attend ethnic minority colleges (民族大学). They never gave any consideration to enter general colleges（普通大学） because they did not see this as a possibility. This resulted in many students giving up learning English after enrolled in high school. They focused on other subjects that they felt would be more helpful in entering university.

Furthermore, the school had not prioritized English as it had, for example, Tibetan, Chinese, and Mathematics. After some research, I realized that ethnic minority colleges were appropriate for ethnic Tibetan students in the leaders' vision because the students could continue to learn Tibetan subjects; however, if the students entered general colleges, Tibetan was not part of the school curriculum. Hence, before I arrived in this school, English was taught only to meet a government requirement. The textbook adopted for the senior high school students was a basic version of New Concept English, which did not meet the college entrance exam standards. In sum, English was treated as a minor course and given little value.

However, from the Fall semester of 2019, there was a significant change. A new generation of school leaders realized that if English scores were high enough, students’ chances of getting into colleges were not limited to the traditional system or Minkaomin （民考民）system - the system whereby ethnic minority students enter minority colleges. Students also can apply via the Minkaohan（民考汉） system, the system of ethnic minority students entering general colleges. Considering students' future and employment chances, the latter is a better choice because the quality of academic studies in general colleges is more developed, and the majors are well-appointed to students’ career goals. Thus, instead of using New Concept English, the school started implementing the PEP (People’s Education Press) version of high school English textbooks and increased English classes from three to five per week. The school recognized English as a critical subject that can help many students enter general colleges rather than ethnic minority colleges. Moreover, to serve this purpose, this is also partially why I was appointed as an English teacher from another local junior middle school.

A positive aspect of this transformation is that the school's education is moving in a new direction that will benefit many students. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, students’ English levels varied, and interest was low. Many students had limited vocabulary and limited knowledge of grammar, presenting challenges, for example, what standard to use in teaching and evaluating students in the classroom? Furthermore, the textbook was a big jump compared to students' experiences in junior middle school. I worried that many students would lose interest in learning.

When we first engaged with the standardized textbook, it was overwhelming. For the first few weeks, the teaching speed was very slow. We had to explain everything in detail, or many students would be confused. However, after a few months’ struggle, I saw some progress because the students worked hard to learn and their vocabulary showed systematic improvement. These positive outcomes proved that we were moving in the right direction and gave me the courage to continue to be devoted to my teaching job.

On top of the positive outcomes, another driving force was the Vice-Governor of Tongren County, Mr Li Jianqiang, who introduced the Yuanshan Education Foundation and recommended its double-teacher class project to us. Mr Li is currently serving as a temporary Vice-Governor of Tongren City (it became a city in 2020). His formal job is with the People's Bank of China in Beijing. Since he is a native of Beijing and from a highly educated family (both parents are university professors), he understands and values the importance of education. As we explained our English learning strategies, he made a great effort to assist. In 2019, Mr Li and other officials of Tongren County Education Bureau held a licensing ceremony and officially launched the project in our school. On the wall of the classrooms, we put up a sign that read: “Double-Teacher Class of Senior High School by Qingxi Yuanshan Foundation (情系远山高中英语双师课堂).” In the history of Tongren, English classes have never been prioritized or given such recognition. Mr Li’s support provided a material based need, but most importantly, it is a spiritual pillar for both the students and teachers. Such official support from high-level government inspires students to study hard and encourages teachers to be devoted to their teaching. In this respect, the implementation of Yuanshan’s double-teacher class has been a driving force for a giant leap forward for English study in the history of Tongren County.

Yuanshan’s online class was taught once a week for ninety minutes on Sunday nights. Instructors for the courses are professional English teachers of China’s New Oriental School. Students can watch live or replay the classes. The classes touch upon important topics that are essential skills for college entrance exams and are taught in accordance with grade levels, such as vocabulary, phrases, expressions, grammar structures, writing skills, and so on. Since the teaching style is clear, professional, organized, and humorous, students find the classes enjoyable and full of resources. Since the textbook contents and online classes are well-matched, the online classes help them comprehend the textbook content.

The classes benefit not only the students but also teachers like me. If I watch lessons together with students, I can deploy some of the teaching skills and techniques into my classes. The explanation of particular vocabulary and grammar structures also help me consolidate my knowledge. Therefore, Yuanshan’s double-teacher class has had a positive impact on English study at our school. They really serve students' needs. Over time, I am confident one outcome will be students' higher marks on the college entrance exam and the opportunities such as higher scores bring.