

# An Investigation into Xishuangbanna Online English Voluntary Aid-Education Program for Building a Quality Guarantee System

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**Abstract:** In the context of optimizing education in China, China's aid-education system has been further developed. Due to the outstanding advantages of Internet, online aid-education activities not only transcend the time and space limitation, but also promote the sharing of educational resources. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the online aid-education activities after which have been launched and run for a period of time, aiming to maximize the strengths of education resources. The Xishuangbanna Online English Voluntary Aid-education Program organized by Zhejiang Gongshang University is so representative that the study of it, by means of interviews and questionnaires, will contribute to identifying the underlying problems and proposing universal solutions. All of these will help to improve the online aid-education system.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Significance of the Online Aid-Education Powered by College Students

Education is closely related to people's sense of well-being, and it is also the cornerstone of the country's future development. Although the domestic economy has made a great progress in China in recent years, the level of development and the degree of informatization of teaching vary from region to region. In terms of English learning, especially in some relatively backward areas, some students do not have access to adequate English teaching resources. With more than 40 million students enrolled in institutions of higher education in 2020, the imbalance in education will be alleviated to a large extent if those students who have the ability to teach can become the main troops of the online teaching program. Due to the increasing popularization of computer rooms and various limitations of offline teaching, online teaching has been able to survive and thrive. However, there are still problems with this kind of public service as regards long-term development, strategic mechanism, and institutional construction. For example, the teaching model of the following project Xishuangbanna Online English Voluntary Aid-education Program and its regular evaluation and feedback system of "cloud teaching" have not yet matured and need to be improved[1].

### 1.2 Case Introduction

In 2019, students from the School of Foreign Languages of Zhejiang Gongshang University carried out a voluntary activity, naming Xishuangbanna Online English Voluntary Aid-education Program, targeting students from the No.2 middle school in Jinghong, Dai Autonomous Prefecture. The activity explores new ideas, focuses on practice and serves the national strategy and provides intellectual support to students in poor villages and areas. Relying on the advanced Internet technology in the new era, it jumps out of the limitation of time and space. Besides, with the assistance of two teaching classes--English Educational Psychology and English Teaching Method, it shows the charm of English to students on the one hand, and plays the role of problem-shooter on the other, making up for their shortcomings while forging their merits. The team later developed an applet on the platform of WeChat which is well matched with the project, optimizes its processes and provides a technical guarantee for its continuation. The project has been launched twice successfully, with a total working time of over 4,000 hours, attracting more than 500 volunteers. It

was reported by the *People's Daily* and other major media, and was awarded the honor of National Excellent Team by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League as well as the Silver Award of the 2020 Zhejiang Youth Volunteer Service Project Competition[2].

As mentioned above, the project is a positive attempt under the concept of distance teaching with college students as its core, which creates conditions for us to carry out a quality assessment and conceive a distance teaching system based on it[3].

The details of the teaching program are as follows.

(1) Preparation: Before the commencement, the team recruits volunteers and screens them after interviews. Then, team members divide volunteers into small groups and establish WeChat groups, and introduce a leader in each group for relevant task handover and arrangement. Moreover, they organize a pep rally, during which they explain specific matters of the activity and share experiences.

(2) Students Distribution: The team of aid-education activity matches the students with volunteers at random, each pair gets connected on the basis of the both sides' agreement.

(3) Teaching Method: During the evening study period arranged by the school, the students will connect volunteers at the computer room. There are 10 times of classes each term, each class lasts one hour.

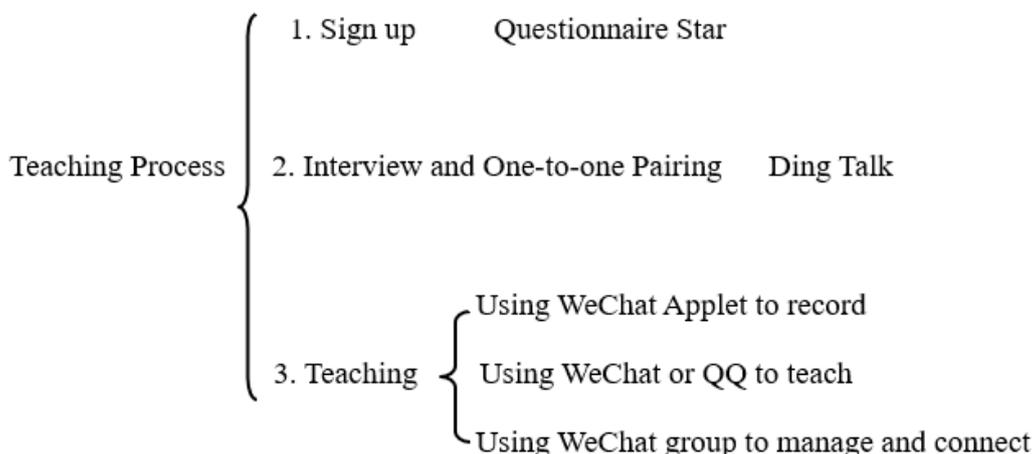


Fig.1 The Detail of the Implementation Form of Xishuangbanna Online English Voluntary Aid-Education

## 2. Research Method

Due to the alteration of students' school grades and the personnel changes of volunteers, the main targets of this quality guarantee investigation are the students of the second program who received the online aid-education. The questionnaire is designed according to the results of the profound interviews which is used for further investigation.

### 2.1 Research Tools

#### 2.1.1 Profound Interviews

In August, 2021, via communication software such as WeChat and QQ, our team conducted an interview on the Xishuangbanna Online English Voluntary Aid-education Program. The targets of this investigation are random groups of students and volunteers who attended the second term of the activity:

For students: The main interview contents are: gender, character, perspectives and suggestions on the aid-education, opinions on the aid-education volunteers, and so on.

For volunteers: The main interview contents are: the estimation of the volunteers on the students, the teaching methods of volunteers, perspectives and suggestions on the aid-education

### **2.1.2 Designing Questionnaire**

Perfecting the questionnaire combined with the results of the interviews. From 30th, August to 4th September, 2021, questionnaires were distributed to volunteers through online platforms like WeChat and Ding Talk, which stands for the beginning of the quality investigation.

The questionnaire is divided into three dimension, which are the behavior of students, the teaching experiences and feedback of volunteers, the condition of teaching management. Questions in the dimension of the students involve: the will of attending the online aid-education program, character and gender, positivity, English skills, the behavior in class. Questions in the dimension of the volunteers are: gender and character, the arrangement of teaching, having disagreements with students or not, the current relationships with students, the estimation of own teaching performance, the will of attending next activity. Questions in the dimension of teaching management includes: the distribution of students is reasonable or not, smooth communication medium is guaranteed or not, voluntary organization should further engage in or not (such as supervising and managing, training, and so on), the condition of the operation of the voluntary activity. The questionnaires handing out add up to 200, among which 120 are valid, consisting of 11 questionnaires accomplished by boys, 109 finished by girls.

### **2.2 Data Statistics and Analysis**

Using Questionnaire Star to summarize and sort out the valid questionnaires, making charts, and then analyzing them according to SPSS Statistics.

## **3. Research Results and Analysis**

### **3.1 Basic Information and Classroom Performance of Students**

In this part, focusing on the perspective of volunteers oriented to students, we designed questionnaires in terms of motivation, English skills and classroom performance of the students being taught, respectively, to obtain feedback from volunteers on students' performance during the online aid teaching process.

#### **3.1.1 Data Results**

(1) Feedback on students' classroom performance: Among those students, 92.5% of them volunteered to participate in online teaching activities and in terms of their classroom performance 43.33% of the students were highly motivated. Through further investigation, we found that students' low motivation is mainly due to their low interest in learning English itself, with students' indifference to the online aid teaching class, their personality and gender. As far as the classroom performance is concerned, 68.33% of the students performed well, while the rest are in some trouble, among which the commonest is that students were often distracted in class.

(2) Students' level of English: We categorized students' level of English into three parts, ranging from "very good", "good" to "average" and "poor". Among those students, only 27.5% students' English level reach the "good" level and above, 50% belong to the "average" level, 15.83% of them are classified "poor", and the level of the remainder of those students is unclear.

#### **3.1.2 Analysis of the Results**

In summary, this online aid teaching program has its realistic and empirical meaning. We found that despite the weak foundation of most students, almost all of them actively participate in the online aid teaching program, which reflects their willingness to seek for improving English. Most of the students performed well in class and had a positive attitude. However, there are still some problems. Some students could not adapt to the online classroom quickly, and their motivation was relatively weak, causing their poor classroom performance, which indicates that there is still room for volunteers to improve the classroom atmosphere. In addition, since students' English level varies, it is suggested that the project can be prepared by dividing students into different groups depending on English levels and providing them with targeted tutoring.

### 3.2 Volunteer Teaching Experience and Teaching Feedback

In this part, from the perspective of volunteers, the teaching experience and teaching feedback of volunteers were collected and analyzed from the aspects of basic information of volunteers, curricular arrangement, feelings of both volunteers and students as well as willingness of both to following online aid teaching, respectively.

#### 3.2.1 Data Results

(1) Basic information of volunteers: among the volunteers who received the questionnaire, 90.83% were female and 9.17% were male. The majority of volunteers are patient and gentle, optimistic and cheerful, which reflects that the teaching project was prepared in advance, and the volunteers were strictly screened in the interview, and then those qualified volunteers were selected as teachers.

(2) Feedback from volunteers on teaching process: The volunteers were highly motivated. 87.5% of the volunteers rated their enthusiasm on a scale of 4-5 on a full score of 5, while 12.5% rated their enthusiasm on a scale of 1-3. In terms of curricular arrangement, 50.8% of the volunteers provided targeted tutoring according to students' weaknesses in English, and carried out teaching in writing, reading, grammar, listening, speaking and other modules. 17.5% of the volunteers took the strategy on explaining students' mistakes appeared in the process of learning, 14.2% on homework tutoring, and 0.83% did not specify the focus of their lessons.

(3) Relationship between volunteers and students: In the process of teaching, 14.17% of the volunteers could not successfully contact the students who should have been taught. Among the volunteers who got in touch with the students, the majority of said they got along well with the students, while a small number of volunteers expressed different teaching priorities from students. There was no conflict between the volunteers and the students. After the aid teaching, 52.4% of the volunteers said they would continue to keep in touch with the students, while 45% of the volunteers registered their unwillingness to contact the students anymore.

(4) Volunteers' willingness to following online aid teaching: As shown in Table 1, 81.7% of the volunteers scored their teaching results between 3 and 5 on a scale of 5. As for the willingness to continue teaching, 77.5% of the volunteers indicated that they were willing to continue to participate in the online aid teaching program, which reflected the volunteers' recognition and support for the teaching activities. 22.5% of the volunteers were reluctant to take participation in the following teaching activities. Further investigation revealed that the main reasons for those volunteers unwilling to participate were that their increasing academic pressure, their insufficient energy caused by graduation and entering work areas.

Table 1 Volunteers' Rating Of Their Teaching Achievements

Score Level	1-2	3	4	5
Number	22	57	35	6
Percentage	18.3%	47.5%	29.2%	5%

#### 3.2.2 Results Analysis

In summary, the online aid teaching activity was properly screened for volunteers in the preliminary preparation. Throughout the teaching process and even after, most of the volunteers and the students maintained a good relationship with each other. The content of the volunteers' lectures was diverse, and most volunteers were intended to understood the students' strengths and weaknesses and provided them with targeted counseling. However, there are still a small number of volunteers who didn't specify their teaching focuses, making the teaching arrangement vague. It is suggested to establish a unified volunteer training system. The feedback shew that the teaching activities were supported by volunteers, and most of whom were satisfied with their teaching performance and wish to participate in following activities.

### 3.3 Teaching Management Effect

This section investigates volunteers' views on the preparation and management system of online aid teaching program, and aims to perceive the problems that volunteers encountered in the teaching

process.

### 3.3.1 Data Results

(1) Preparation: In terms of student-volunteer match, 68.33% of volunteers think the match is reasonable, while 31.67% think it unreasonable. Further investigation finds that the main reason is that the teaching activity does not take into account the problem of complementary knowledge, students' personality and gender match, among which the latter two were trivial.

(2) Management system: 81.5% of the volunteers think there are problems with the WeChat group of volunteers set up by online aid teaching program. The main reasons are: less interaction and insufficient communication within the volunteer group, unclear functions of the volunteer group, low efficiency in problem solving, and insufficient motivation of the leader of the each group of volunteers.

(3) Problems in the teaching process: The volunteers who received the questionnaire survey said that they encountered problems in the teaching process, and the main problems were not clear about the students' learning progress, content and needs, as well as teaching materials suitable for the students; insufficient teaching time; lack of teaching experience of the volunteers themselves; failure to connect smoothly due to equipment problems, and difficulty in negotiating with the students on the following project etc.

### 3.3.2 Analysis of Results

In summary, the online aid education activity needs to be further improved in terms of preparation, management system, and volunteer training system. In the preparation, the project only randomly assigned personnel and did not match the strengths of the volunteers with the weak boards of the students being taught. In the management system, the cloud teaching team only set up a small WeChat group for management, but the WeChat group only plays a simple role of information transmission. In the teaching activities, hardware and software problems, equipment and network problems occur frequently, and the school and parents do not play an effective monitoring role. The training system of teaching activities needs further improving, and the volunteers are too individualized in the arrangement of teaching contents because the teaching contents are not unified. The above problems affect the sustainable development of cloud teaching and need to be solved and improved.

## 4. Reflection and Discussion

According to the above questionnaire and interview results, there are four main problems in the Xishuangbanna Online English Voluntary Aid-education Program.

(1) Lack of a relatively systematic and complete voluntary aid-education system. Volunteers do not have a unified systematic teaching syllabus, and the knowledge acquired by students is fragmented, resulting into students' thinking skills not being significantly cultivated.

(2) Lack of effective communication mechanism. As a result of insufficient connections between teaching information and resources, the excellent innovative products cannot be promoted and the common teaching difficulties cannot be eliminated. At the same time, the way to connect volunteers and students is not totally reasonable, so there is even a "lost contact" between the two.

(3) Lack of volunteer training, management and evaluation system. There is no unified criteria evaluating the teaching strengths and weaknesses of volunteers; volunteers have a knowledge gap in some areas and cannot answer students' questions in the corresponding areas. Some volunteers lack the appropriate teaching skills that can motivate students.

(4) Lack of a considerably complete feedback system. Volunteers cannot synchronize students' learning situation in time, which hinders the adjustment of volunteers' teaching methods, contents and progress. Thus, failure to obtain perfect feedback makes teaching a "one-way" process.

## 5. Concept of Online Aid-Education Program

Based on the mentioned problems, our team proposes four suggestions for building a quality guarantee system for online aid-education.

(1) Improve the teaching system. Our team used questionnaires and interviews to understand the learning needs of the students being taught, and suggested setting six major teaching content sections: listening, pronunciation, grammar, reading, writing, and vocabulary.

(2) Improve the communication mechanism. In view of the lack of communication within volunteers, it is suggested that online aid-education team should establish a platform for volunteers to help each other: for example, organize a volunteer sharing conference and implement the “aid system” (former volunteers who have participated in the activity guide the new comers). Establish a unified communication channel between volunteers and students, such as using a unified online teaching software, to avoid “lost contact”. At the same time, we should strengthen the supervision of the school to ensure that the students' network is smooth and that they can connect with the volunteers within the specified time.(3) Establish a volunteer training, management and evaluation system. It is recommended to focus on cultivating volunteers' communication skills and imparting knowledge of educational psychology. The evaluation can be divided into pre-teaching evaluation and post-teaching evaluation. In the volunteer tryout stage, the volunteers' ability to master the knowledge of the six boards will be comprehensively assessed, and specific teaching boards will be arranged accordingly. After finishing all the aid-education lessons, the outstanding volunteers will be selected and rewarded.

(4) Establish an aid-education feedback system. It is suggested that the online aid-education team should conduct stage tests of the learning results of the students being taught and establish a feedback system, so as to promptly test the students being taught in the six corresponding modules to understand the learning conditions of the students and the teaching products of the volunteers at that stage, which also contributes to adjusting the related arrangements for the next round of online aid-education.

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