

Teaching Chinese in Bangladesh without knowing Bangla

Yang Jinxiang, a teacher from China Languages University who speaks neither English nor Bangla, is teaching Chinese in Dhaka University.

What has impressed people about her most is not teaching Chinese in a foreign country, but her style of teaching.

Yang cannot speak Bangla, the mother tongue of Bangladeshis, or English, the widely spoken language in the country. But over the last two years, there are 19 students in her class who will get scholarships from the Chinese government to study in China.

She came to teach in Dhaka University in August 2005. There were two teachers in the Chinese Department at that moment including Afzar Hossain who had studied in China from 1997 to 2001.

Sharing her first experience, Yang said when she gave the first few classes, she asked Afzar to be present, in order to help her communicate with the students. Then she could give lessons independently.

'I teach the Bangladeshi students Chinese phonetic alphabet at the beginning. There are some differences in pronunciation between Chinese and Bengali. For example, the Bengali people are not easy to pronounce the phonetic alphabets like Z, C, and S, so I will ask them to practise more on these sounds,' Yang said.

Each student has each got a textbook on Chinese, but with English explanations. Yang organizes the class based on their progress.

When Teacher Yang teaches new words, she will read the word with body language and teaching tool, it is easy for students to understand.

In order to improve their Chinese level, Yang uses whatever methods she finds.

For example, after she teaches one word, she will ask the student who understands to narrate to other students, and after a test, she will ask two students in pair to exchange their test paper, and find out each other's problem.

Yang said these methods have greatly improved the students' interest in learning Chinese language.

She encourages all the students to answer questions or propose questions. Many students now are able to speak Chinese after studying for less than one year.

The students here study Chinese out of their own will. They don't get a degree after finishing study.

Narul Islam is working at the Dhaka Zia International Airport. He started to learn Chinese last year, and got the scholarship from the Chinese government this year.

Narul said he wanted to establish a Chinese school after finishing studies in China.

Aktar Islam is studying accounting in a local university. He spends his spare time to learn Chinese in Dhaka University. He was also awarded the scholarship this year.

Yang showed the test paper of her students, the test includes writing Chinese after reading phonetic alphabet, writing Chinese after listening, making sentences, and composition.

She said that she was already getting messages and calls from her students in Chinese.

Yang has got acclimatized with the local environment after living for almost two years in Bangladesh. She treats the students as her children, and the students call her 'Chinese mother'.

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