

Study on Chinese Learning Behavior of Southeast Asian Students Studying in China

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Abstract. More and more attention and research have been paid to teaching from the perspective of learners and learning behaviors in modern curriculum and teaching reform, which is of great significance to the improvement of students' Chinese learning efficiency and teaching quality. In this paper, the methods of classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and literature review are used to focus on the daily learning behavior of Thai students. This paper investigates the Chinese learning behavior of Southeast Asian students studying in China from the aspects of learning motivation, learning anxiety, time concept, classroom performance, extracurricular cultural activities, learning methods and progress, and learning and life discipline, in order to provide the research basis for finding the corresponding adjustment path and countermeasures.

Xiang Kuihua holds that "learning behavior is a synonymous concept with learning activities. It is the sum of movement, action and reaction that learners show in the process of learning under the influence of subjective and objective factors, and the external expression of learners' inner psychological qualities, such as thought, emotion, attitude, motivation and ability"[1]. Only by researching and optimizing students' learning behavior can we fundamentally find effective learning behavior, solve students' learning burden, and truly realize the reform of the relationship between teaching and learning, thereby improving learning efficiency and improving students' learning quality of life. As for Southeast Asian students studying in China, different cultures will show different learning behavior representations in different students. This paper takes Thai students as a case to analyze.

Learning Motivation

Many students began learning Chinese with interest in Chinese culture. Liu(2014) believes that the distant social distance between the United States and China will have a certain attraction to students, which is often reflected in the positive learning motivation of American students. Of course, some students learn Chinese because they like to accept challenges and like new things. Southeast Asia is adjacent to China, and also in the eastern cultural circle, so students' learning motivation is more inclined to China's economic circle yearning and job development. With China's rising economic and political status in the world, China means more development space and more job opportunities for neighboring countries. With the deepening of contacts with China, enterprises and units in these countries also need people who can master many languages. Therefore, due to the different needs of individuals, the learning motivation of Chinese learning is different.

Tao(2014) divides Thai students studying in China into three categories according to their recognition of Chinese culture: Students who have a strong recognition of Chinese culture show the strongest motivation to learn Chinese and work harder to learn Chinese. The proportion of foreign students who identify with Chinese culture is large, and their motivation to learn Chinese is strong. Students who don't agree with Chinese culture are just for the sake of exemption from tuition fees. The motivation of learning Chinese is mostly instrumental, realistic and direct, with strong purpose. To learn Chinese well is to graduate smoothly or find a job with high salary. Although the motivation is different, most Thai students are still willing to choose to learn Chinese and study hard. From classroom observation and interviews, it is found that the learning motivation of Thai students is general. Many people say that "they do not know what to do after graduation". Only a

few people say that they want to “do business” or “be a teacher” frankly, and they have no clear ideals and goals. However, one thing is generally accepted, “learning Chinese is easy to find jobs”. Zhou and Luo (2012) surveyed the aims and expectations of Southeast Asian students studying in China from Yunnan Normal University and Dali University. The results mainly focus on four aspects: language and cultural learning objectives, tourism objectives, other people’s requirements or influences and career development objectives. Affected by friends or elders, most of the overseas students come to China to study because of their admiration for the ancient oriental civilization. They study and experience in China with the mentality of learning Chinese, improving the level of Chinese, understanding Chinese culture and historical civilization, improving the ability of intercultural communication, and paving the way for future job hunting or trade with China.

Southeast Asian students have the greatest expectations of language and social contact. “Being able to understand Chinese/mandarin” and “expressing their ideas in Chinese” are their greatest expectations of coming to China. They have general academic expectations, and the ability to learn or understand Chinese and understand Chinese culture is the best achievement for them. Whether in speech or in the specific learning process, they never worry about the problems such as entering a higher school and employment, and never work hard because of the honor and expectation of their parents and family.

Learning Anxiety

Although the learning motivation of Thai students is generally not strong, their learning anxiety is obvious. As we all know, learning anxiety is a kind of psychological emotion that learners are nervous, worried and even afraid of in class or in the process of carrying out learning-related activities in life. Among Thai students, it is often seen that some students can not achieve the desired effect of Chinese learning, or can not overcome some obstacles in Chinese learning, including cultural awareness and language skills, resulting in an anxious emotional state caused by lack of confidence or sense of failure. Serious Chinese learning anxiety will lead foreign students to sink into a vicious circle of Chinese learning, distract their attention, and even find various excuses to skip classes. In the interview, foreign students’ anxiety in learning Chinese comes from different aspects:

Overseas student: “I’m not afraid of teachers, but when I see the teacher, I can’t speak and feel very nervous.”

Overseas student: “I’m most afraid to answer questions in class. Sometimes I can’t understand the teacher’s questions, but I’m afraid of making mistakes, so I’m especially afraid of class, and then I play truant. I don’t dislike the teacher.”

Overseas student: “In the first grade, I can’t do homework without dictionary, and I’m afraid of Chinese. I can’t sleep a few days before the exam or test. I even cried when I called my mother.”

In the author’s own teaching class, there are always two or three students who arrive at the class ahead of time to occupy the last row position. They are afraid to answer questions, and make eye contact with teachers. They will be full of confidence after the talks, but they will still make mistakes later.

Time Concept

Teachers who have been in contact with Thai students have the same experience. No matter in the native language environment or in the target language environment, they have different time concepts from Chinese students. Thai students treat time very casually. They are rather sloppy and often late. In Thailand class, there is often a phenomenon that the teacher has already arrived at class, but the students have not arrived at class. Students always walk slowly into the classroom, or some students will rest for a period of time before class, some students even come to class after half an hour of class, and some students will walk leisurely after late and say, “Late, no matter”. Thai students seldom hand in their homework together, and some students usually put it off for a few days at a time. They are often late for their activities.

In China, people attach great importance to appointment time. In primary and secondary schools, people often get punished for being late. Late for appointment or class is regarded as an act of disrespect for each other. Chinese people even choose to arrive early when they go to an appointment. Because of different perceptions of time, many Chinese teachers can't understand the performance of Thai students who are often late, and sometimes they get annoyed at it. But Thai students are accustomed to it and don't feel sorry for being late. In fact, they know the habits of the Chinese people. Most of the foreign students will say, "The Chinese people are very punctual in their work, which is different from ours. We Thai people are not very punctual, with bad habits. We will be late for class even the class begins at 8:30, and we cannot get up", "If we have an appointment in Thailand, we will usually be about 15 minutes later than the appointment, which is the custom of Thailand. China is not like this, so when I date with Chinese friends, I will be punctual." Thai students who arrive late will also say "sorry", but they will still be late later. In their own words, they are "used to do it".

Classroom Performance

Whether in Thailand or in China, the classroom management of Thai students is a recognized difficulty for Chinese teachers. According to the different teaching objects and age levels, the difficulties of classroom management show different levels. As far as primary and secondary school students are concerned, they are lively, hard to concentrate, and have poor sense of discipline, which directly affects the quality of classroom teaching. Relatively speaking, in the teaching of Chinese for adult students, the influence of classroom management on the teaching effect is more recessive, and the differences in teaching effect are more likely to be hidden in the consciousness of adult self-discipline. However, both teenagers and adults show a preference for lively classroom atmosphere and diverse classroom activities.

In the process of teaching Chinese vocabulary to the fourth grade students in a Thai elementary school, the teachers first adopted the traditional method of explaining the meaning of new words one by one through grammatical translation by means of new words cards and blackboard writing. At this time, the classroom discipline presents a messy situation. Students lack interest in learning content, do small movements, talk to each other and have other serious problems, and the classroom efficiency is not high. But when the teacher changes the teaching method and adopts the form of group competition, and students in each group are asked to answer the new words on the card, the students show a completely different degree of participation and enthusiasm. Almost all the students listen carefully to the teacher's explanation of the new words, pay attention to the teacher's instructions, and actively participate in classroom activities. Such a transformation is complete and amazing. A similar situation also exists in Thai students in Chinese universities.

The research results show that the Thai students generally show independent and impulsive learning characteristics. They prefer relaxed, lively and varied classroom activities and games, and like cooperation and competition. For the traditional mechanical classroom atmosphere, they tend to show tired psychology, and tend to be distracted and are easy to turn to other things.

Extracurricular Cultural Activities

Compared with the relatively loose learning attitude and time concept, Thai students generally have a high enthusiasm to participate in extracurricular activities. Taking the opening day held in 2013 at Nakhon Pathom XX University in Thailand as an example, the booths of each college are designed and decorated by the students of the college. Without exception, they are all very creative, and their own programs are also wonderful, including percussion bands playing abandoned petrol barrels, food safety colleges for live cooking, art groups on hand-painted campuses, students majoring in Chinese dressed in Hanfu, and so on. In the preparatory stage, Thai students have great talents in design, budget and hands-on work. On the day of their activities, they spared no effort to devote themselves to it. In stationery stores in Thailand, the number and variety of notebooks and writing pens are far less than the manual materials such as card paper, wrinkled paper, non-woven fabrics,

iridescent paper, and so on. It can be seen that such extracurricular enthusiasm is not an isolated case. The same situation exists in the group of Thai students studying in China, who show active interest in participation and high-level expression in various parties and collective activities. In many colleges and universities in China, almost all Thai students (including Southeast Asian students) show strong practical ability, high enthusiasm for participation and unique design ability during the annual Teachers' Day, Simulated Exhibition of Economic Management Major, Dress and Culture Festival, Flower Arrangement Competition, Food Festival and the Loi Krathong Festival, which makes people dizzy and dazzling.

Learning Methods and Progress

Most Thai students are not very clear about the purpose of learning, there is no strong motivation to enter school, participate in competition and acquire certain skills, and it is not difficult to see that their learning attitude is more loose, learning methods are single, lack of systematic learning, with slow learning progress.

Taking the Nakhon Pathom XX Primary School as an example, the school offers classes from kindergarten to grade six, with Chinese teaching covering each grade, meaning that students will be taught Chinese for at least five years through grade six. However, there is no gradient in the Chinese level of students of different grades in the school. Senior students can not read and use elementary Chinese vocabulary, and even they can't spell Chinese Pinyin. It is worth mentioning that the school attaches great importance to Chinese education. The number of Chinese classes is consistent with the main courses such as mathematics and Thai. The Chinese teachers employed by the school are either native Chinese speakers with Thai language teaching ability or Thai graduates with advanced Chinese language background. The Chinese teachers employed by the school are either native Chinese speakers with Thai language teaching ability or Thai graduates with advanced Chinese language background. The selected teaching material is also a typical textbook that accords with the characteristics of children's learners in Thailand. As a result, learners' motivation and attitude affect the learning effect of students.

Thai students often lack a strong incentive to support their Chinese learning strict demands on themselves, follow the teacher's plan to complete the task of learning, and overcome difficulties, so as to carry out systematic learning. Their casual performance is that they seldom take the initiative to review and preview, rarely consciously summarize the characteristics of Chinese, and seldom take the initiative to conduct comparative learning between Chinese and Thai. Even they hope that teachers will not teach too much every semester, otherwise it is not easy to revise for the test. Regardless of the type of class, most students want teachers to teach according to the traditional teaching mode of "vocabulary - text - practice" thinking, and they don't want teachers to change this teaching thinking. They don't like homework, especially composition. It is obvious that learning Chinese or even learning any subject is not an absolute necessity for them. They believe that learning should not be a burden, which is one of the reasons why Thailand is one of the countries that residents have the strongest sense of happiness in the world.

Learning and Life Discipline

Although Thai students generally show a lack of positive attitude towards learning and a general learning efficiency, most of them will strictly observe discipline and maintain the moral bottom line because of the influence of religious beliefs.

Drinking is a major concern in Thailand's colleges and universities. Alcoholic beverages are banned from all supermarkets, shopping malls and convenience stores in Thailand until 7pm, and alcohol products are banned from all convenience stores on campus. Even in the eyes of some students and teachers, drinking is an improper behavior. Thai teacher-student relationship is also very strict. Although Thai students are often late to class and lack discipline, the etiquette between teachers and students is meticulous. Whether in primary and secondary schools or in colleges and universities, when students meet teachers, they must respectfully stand with Namaste. When talking

with their teachers, they must be lower than the teacher and even kneel. Speaking in a low voice and paying attention to order is also a code of conduct strictly observed by Thai students in their mother tongue environment. In a university in Thailand, even during the lunch rush hour when the canteen is crowded with the largest number of people, there is no noise or crowds. The students in the canteen are in good order and everyone speaks softly.

The learning discipline performance of Thai students in China is quite different. According to the statistics of the dormitory management center of a university, the problem of alcohol abuse and late return of Thai students is serious. When facing the teachers, Thai students are also influenced by the habit of study place, which is casual. The biggest contrast is the volume of public conversation. In China, they talk loudly and laugh regardless of their surroundings, showing a lot of differences with the performance in their own universities. This obvious contrast makes people sigh.

Generally speaking, many of the learning behaviors of Thai students studying in China are not compatible with Chinese learning. Students from Southeast Asian countries will also behave differently because of different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, only by mastering the characteristics of foreign students' Chinese learning behavior, can we really choose the right teaching method around the "student" center, find learning behavior suitable for students from Southeast Asian countries, and put forward strategies and paths for improving learning efficiency. Due to the limitation of space, the adjustment and countermeasures of Chinese learning behavior of Southeast Asian students will be analyzed in another article.

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