

Overseas Study Motivations: Comparisons between Thai and Chinese EFL Undergraduates

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Abstract: This study investigates some Chinese and Thai EFL (English as a Foreign Language) undergraduates' overseas study motivations in terms of their future improvement, experiencing success, future immigration. The subjects are 15 Chinese EFL undergraduates at YNU (Yuxi Normal University, Yunnan, China) and 15 Thai EFL undergraduates at CRRU (Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Chiang Rai, Thailand).

Nowadays it is quite common for students all over the world to study overseas. YNU has been establishing relationships with some universities outside of China in order to send its students for overseas study. In the past 10 years, YNU sent lots of Chinese EFL undergraduates to Thailand to study. At the same time, some Thai EFL undergraduates were sent to YNU to study too.

A person must be motivated for certain reasons before making decision to study abroad (Tiehua and Yanan, 2006:63; Xin and Yanghui, 2014:154; Tianer, Yangyong, and Li, 2013:37). This study therefore aims to investigate and compare the Chinese and the Thai EFL undergraduates' overseas study motivations.

1. Research Questions

This study attempts to find out how the Chinese and the Thai EFL undergraduates are motivated to study overseas in terms of (1)future improvement, (2)experiencing success, and (3)future immigration.

2. Literature Review

2.1 General Information about Chinese Students' Overseas Study

With the globalization of the high education in the world, the number of Chinese people who choose to study abroad has been increasing. According to Hongxia (2013:114) and Lin and Fan (2007:23), only 50 Chinese people studied in America in 1978. But in recent years there are 10 thousand Chinese people studying in America every year. The number of Chinese people who choose to study abroad has been increasing since 2005.

2.2 Overseas Study Motivation

From the psychological perspective, overseas study motivation can be defined as a person's psychologically unseen behavioral processes.

A person's overseas study motivations can be indirectly observed via a series of his actions, such as getting an idea for overseas study, starting, readjusting, and stopping(Hongxia, 2013:114).

The categories and subcategories of overseas study motivations are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 The categories and subcategories of overseas study motivations

categories	subcategories	examples
Self-Caused Motivations	motivations for future improvement	To share more English learning resources; To learn more skills of using English.
	motivations for experiencing success	To have a sense of success; To be admired.
	motivations for future immigration	To think that a foreign country is always better.
Non-Self-Caused Motivations	motivations caused by people around	To be motivated by classmates and friends.

(Tiehua and Yanan, 2006:63; Hongxia, 2013:114)

Table 1 shows that overseas study motivation is categorized into two types: self-caused motivation and non-self-caused motivation. Self-caused motivation refers to the motivations caused by a person himself. Non-self-caused motivation refers to the motivations caused not by a person himself but by people around him.

3. Methodology

3.1 Subjects

15 Chinese EFL undergraduates at YNU and 15 Thai EFL undergraduates from CRRU were invited to participate in this study. The 15 Chinese EFL undergraduates have ever been to Chiang Mai University, Thailand to study English. The 15 Thai EFL undergraduates were studied at YNU in 2017.

3.2 Instrument

A questionnaire was designed for collecting the data. 18 overseas study motivation items, displayed in Table 2, are included in the questionnaire. The first 12 items are about the motivations for future improvement. Items from 13 to 16 are about the motivations for experiencing success. Items 17 and 18 are related to the motivations for future immigration.

4. Data Analysis

Data in this study were analyzed quantitatively only. The data was computed on the SPSS Version 11.5 for descriptive statistics, including mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation, and percentage.

5. Results and Discussion

The results of the study are presented based on the three research questions mentioned previously.

Table 2 The Chinese and the Thai EFL undergraduates' overseas study motivations in terms of their future improvement

Motivation Items	Responses					
	given by Chinese EFL undergraduates			given by Thai EFL undergraduates		
	S D	\bar{x}	Interpretation	S D	\bar{x}	Interpretation
1. Know more English education ideals.	.5 2	4. 47	agree	.6 8	4. 2	agree
2. Experience more English teaching methods.	.5 2	4. 53	strongly agree	.7 2	4. 3	agree
3. Share more English learning resources.	.7 4	4. 47	agree	.5 9	4. 1	agree
4. Be challenged more.	.4 6	4. 73	strongly agree	.8 6	4. 2	agree
5. Learn more English knowledge.	.5 1	4. 6	strongly agree	.2 6	4. 9	strongly agree
6. Learn more practical skills of using English.	.5 1	4. 6	strongly agree	.2 6	4. 9	strongly agree
7. Widen eyes for major.	.5 6	4. 8	strongly agree	.8 8	4. 2	agree
8. Be more competitive in finding a job after graduation.	.9 6	3. 7	agree	.7 4	4. 5	strongly agree
9. Learn how to be more independent in life.	.5 1	4. 6	strongly agree	.5 1	4. 4	agree
10. Know more about a foreign country culturally and historically.	.4 9	4. 7	strongly agree	.5 1	4. 4	agree
11. Take this opportunity for better self-knowing.	.5 6	4. 2	agree	.7 4	4. 5	strongly agree
12. Make more friends for future connections.	.7 4	3. 6	agree	.5 1	4. 6	strongly agree
13. Have a sense of achievement.	.7 4	3. 4	undecided	.5 2	4. 5	strongly agree
14. Get more senses of achievement.	.5 2	3. 5	agree	.6 8	4. 2	agree
15. Be admired more by friends and relatives.	1. 03	3. 1	undecided	.9 1	4. 1	agree
16. Honor family members.	1. 03	2. 3	strongly disagree	.7 2	4. 3	agree
17. Love the environment and the life style in a foreign country.	.9 6	3. 3	undecided	.7 0	4. 3	agree
18. Dream of immigrating to a foreign country in the future.	1. 13	1. 9	disagree	.6 4	4. 5	strongly agree

Regarding overseas study for future improvement, both the Chinese and the Thai EFL undergraduates are motivated because they strongly believe that they can improve themselves in this way. Considering sharing more English learning resources, widening eyes in major, learning how to be more independent in life, and being challenged, it is interestingly found that the Chinese EFL undergraduates were motivated more. At the same time, the Thai EFL undergraduates strongly agree that overseas study can make them more competitive in finding a job after graduation, can help them to know themselves better, and can help them to make more friends for future connections.

With respect to overseas study for experiencing success, it can be seen in Table 2 that the Thai EFL undergraduates believe that they can get more senses of achievement through overseas study. Moreover, they hold that they can be admired and their family members can be honored once they study abroad. On the contrary, the Chinese EFL undergraduates believe that they can get more senses of achievement through overseas study. But, they do not have a sense of achievement and are not admired more by friends and relatives. At the same time, they don't think that their overseas study can honor their family members. This is maybe because many Chinese people think that the best countries for Chinese EFL undergraduates to go and study should be English-speaking countries like England and America.

Considering the motivations for future immigration, the Chinese EFL undergraduates do not love the environment and the life style in a foreign country, and thus they do not dream of immigrating. The Thai EFL undergraduates' ideas are, on the contrary, dreaming of immigrating to a foreign country in the future.

6. Implications

The completion of this study mainly helps offer the following implications.

1) Most EFL undergraduates believe that they can improve better through overseas study. Therefore, their teachers should be well-informed enough in order to guide them toward overseas study.

2) For further research, in order to know more reasons why the Chinese and the Thai EFL undergraduates are motivated differently, an interview for in-depth data is needed. To make a more convincing and objective conclusion about the Chinese and the Thai EFL undergraduates' motivations for overseas study, the number of the subjects should be increased.

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