












## Volume 14 (2018): Issue 1 (Apr 2018)

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## The Growing Interest of Indonesian Students Studying in China Post Suharto Era

### 后苏哈托时代的印尼学生去中国留学的学习兴趣的发展

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#### Abstract

In the Suharto era (1966-1998), there were eight discriminatory regulations toward regarding Chinese Indonesians that effectively banned the use of Chinese language and culture in public. For three decades, these regulations forced Chinese Indonesians to forget about Chinese language and culture and embedded anti-Chinese sentiment into non-Chinese Indonesians. After the end of the Suharto era, some regulations annulled the previous regulations, thus allowing Chinese culture including Chinese language to be practiced in public again. It created an unexpected Chinese boom. An increasing number of Indonesian students went to China to study the Chinese language. Today, many Indonesian students (Chinese Indonesians and non-Chinese Indonesians) not only study Chinese but have started to enroll in various faculties for degree programs in Chinese universities. This article uses statistical data and interviews in an attempt to explain Indonesian students' reasons for studying in China and their degree preferences.

#### Keywords

Chinese Indonesians – non-Chinese Indonesians – Chinese Language – Post-Suharto era – Xiamen University

#### 摘要

苏哈托时代（1966-1998年），印尼实施了8个歧视华人的法规，并禁止在公共场所使用华文和创中华文化。30多年里，这些规定迫使印尼华人忘掉了华文和中华文化和对非印尼华人嵌入反华情绪。苏哈托政权崩溃后，政府通过了一些新法规，废除了歧视性法规，允许中华文化包括华人在公众场所实践。这些法规使出现了意外的华文繁荣现象，越来越多印尼学生去中国学习华文。现在，许多印尼学生（印尼华人和非印尼华人）不仅学习华文，还去中国大学攻读各种专业的学位和课程。本文通过统计数据和深入访谈，试图解释印尼学生考虑去中国留学的原因以及他们学位课程的偏好选择。

#### 关键词

印尼华人 – 非印尼华人 – 华文 – 后苏哈托时代 – 厦门大学

#### Introduction: Discrimination against Chinese-ness (Ethnicity, Language, and Culture) in Indonesia

As is well known, regime changes in Indonesia have often been accompanied by anti-Chinese violence (Coppel 1983; Mackie 1976; Purdey 2006; Twang 1998). Chinese Indonesians are always blamed for crises in Indonesia (Koning 2007) since they dominate the country's economy. By 1998, with only three per cent of the Indonesian population, seventy per cent of Indonesian private businesses were controlled by Chinese Indonesians (Chua 2003: 43). Violence, discrimination, and oppression of Chinese in Indonesia have featured ever since the Dutch period (1740-1942), the Japanese period (1942-1949), the Sukarno period (the Old Order, 1949-1965) and the Suharto regime (the New Order, 1965-1998). It has therefore been prominent in the literature on Chinese Indonesians (Dieleman et al. 2010).

Unlike in Malaysia, where Chinese-medium schooling is still strong, Chinese education in Indonesia ended when Suharto came to power in the New Order era (Suryadinata 2010). Suharto eliminated the three pillars of Chinese culture in Indonesia by suppressing Chinese-language newspapers, closing down all Chinese schools and banning Chinese socio-political organizations to make all Chinese Indonesians assimilate into the "indigenous" Indonesian community (Suryadinata 2010). Before the closure, there were at least 1,600 Chinese schools in Indonesia with a total student population of more than 425,000 (Choi 2010). The

government implemented discrimination seriously. Chinese characters were listed alongside explosives, pornography, and narcotics on the customs declaration forms that all visitors had to complete when entering the country; Chinese names for persons, organizations, and businesses had to be "Indonesianized" (Heryanto 2008). These regulations prevented people born in the Suharto era (1966-1998) from knowing about Chinese language or culture. Chinese Indonesian culture and identity were in many ways "erased" or at least hidden from public view (Coppel 1983; Hoon 2008; Suryadinata 1978). Many scholars like Hoon (2007) and Suryadinata (2008) describe the post-1965 generation of Chinese Indonesians as a "lost generation" because they have never learned Chinese and possess little or no knowledge of Chinese culture and had been made to feel ashamed about being Chinese because of government regulation.

After the downfall of Suharto, some new regulations allowed Chinese culture, including Chinese language to be practiced in public again. The reforms after the downfall of Suharto showed a dramatic revival of Chinese language, media, and socio-political organizations. It led to an unexpected Chinese boom, and an increasing number of Indonesian students studied in China. The revival of Chinese education was demonstrated by the rise of Chinese-language tuition centers, Chinese subjects in some schools, the establishment of tri-lingual schools using Indonesian, Chinese, and English, better known as "national plus," and the start of Chinese language majors in some universities. Chinese-language education experienced an unprecedented boom after 1999 (Hoon 2007) and became a popular pursuit, encouraging people to learn Chinese after school or after work, and an increasing number of Indonesian students studied in China.

This research aims at demonstrating the acceptance of Chinese language and the desire to study it in China, based on the specific case of Xiamen University as the representative of a university with an internationalized program, in order to find out exactly why Indonesian students make the decision to study overseas after some decades of anti-Chinese sentiment. The anti-Chinese mindset began as early as the Dutch colonial period and the discrimination reached its peak in Suharto's New Order era (1966-1998) when the government issued regulations banning Chinese language, education, and culture. Now, after 33 years of restrictions, Chinese culture and language are again allowed to be publicly displayed in Indonesia. This study seeks to show how the Indonesian younger generation (Chinese Indonesians and non-Chinese), in the face of the new tolerance of Chinese Indonesians, responds to China and the Chinese language that was prohibited for decades. This article, by way of statistics and interviews, attempts to explain Indonesian students' reasons for wanting to study in China and their degree preferences.

### The Increasing Number of Indonesian Students Studying in China

As the Chinese economy rises, increasing numbers of students from around the world want to study in China, including students from Indonesia, although Indonesians have been subjected to anti-Chinese propaganda for decades as a result of discriminatory regulations. In 1998, there were only 1000 Chinese Indonesian students studying at universities in China, on one- or two-year Chinese-language courses. The first group of Indonesian students went to China because of the anti-Chinese riots in May 1998. Some Chinese Indonesians went there to find a safe place with a lower cost of living and wanted simply to acquire Chinese-language skills to interact in China. Before 1998, not many people thought Chinese language was important, so they did not want to study Chinese language. Some were even afraid to study Chinese because it was not allowed in public. After 2004, following China's development in various fields including education, the number of Indonesian students pursuing further studies in China continued to increase (<http://www.antaraneews.com/en/news/85291/indonesian-student-in-china-set-up-association>). Based on Institute of International Education data, there is an increasing number of Indonesian students in China. In 2015, that number rose to 12,694 (See Figure 1). Chinese Indonesians and non-Chinese Indonesians went to China not only for the language but also to get degrees in further education. In 2014, Indonesia sent the sixth biggest number of students (3.6%) to China, and in 2015 it sent the ninth biggest (3.2%). The top ten highest numbers of international students at Chinese Universities were South Korea, the United States, Thailand, India, Russia, Pakistan, Japan, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, and France (<http://www.iie.org/Services/Project-Atlas/China/International-Students-In-China>).

### Indonesian Students (Indonesian and Chinese Indonesian Students) Studying in China (Xiamen University)

China recently became the world's second-largest economy after the US and is increasingly important and influential in the global economy. The Chinese language has become an important tool of communication for trading and dealing with China. Many people from around the world have started to enroll on Chinese-language programs or degree programs within China. UNESCO (2013: 20) suggests some of the reasons why more and more international students are studying in China: China's economic success attracts more students from all over the world to study and do research; the quality of education has improved and China has signed protocols with more than 34 countries,

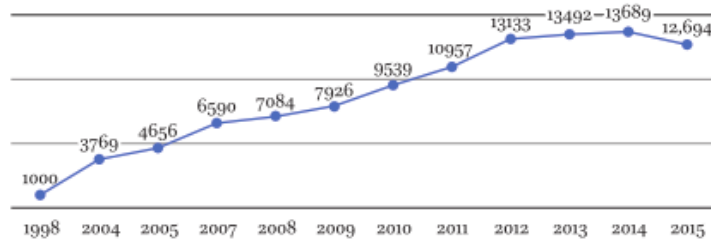


FIGURE 1 Indonesian students in China.

mutually recognizing each other's academic degrees and qualifications; in order to strengthen mutual friendship and to boost cooperation, the Chinese government allots scholarships to international students, teachers, and scholars to undertake learning and research in China; and foreign students have bright employment prospects in China's foreign companies after graduation. The Chinese government sees this as a means of advancing the quality of its higher-education institutions; whereas individuals see it as a further boost to their own careers both at home and on the international employment market (UNESCO 2013).

This article presents detailed data about Indonesian students who have studied in China up to October 2015. Using specific data from Xiamen University Overseas Student Affairs and interviews, it seeks to give a comprehensive perspective on Indonesian young people studying in China.

Xiamen is a coastal city in Fujian province, southeastern China. Xiamen means the "door to the house," referring to the city's centuries-old role as an international gateway to China. The city was a treaty port, starting in the nineteenth century, and one of China's earliest Special Economic Zones opened to foreign investment and trade when China began economic reforms in the 1980s. For many Chinese Indonesians, Xiamen and the surrounding countryside have a special meaning, as it is the ancestral home of large communities of overseas Chinese from Southeast Asia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xiamen>), given that Xiamen is the nearest door to other countries in Southeast Asia.

Xiamen University was the first higher-education institution in China to be founded by an overseas Chinese. It was established by Tan Kah Kee, an overseas Chinese, in 1921. Xiamen University had the vision to internationalize its education. It strongly supports foreign students from different countries by offering degree programs in Chinese and English. Up until 2014, it had 3607

foreign students from 130 different countries, pursuing degrees or short-term programs at Xiamen University ([http://ice.xmu.edu.cn/english/showosao.aspx?news\\_id=3785](http://ice.xmu.edu.cn/english/showosao.aspx?news_id=3785)). According to the "University Undergraduates Teaching Assessment" and "Chinese Universities Evaluation Standings," the university is ranked eleventh in China and has stayed in the top 20 universities in China. Its curriculum includes economics and management, fine art, law, chemistry, journalism, communication, and mathematics (<http://www.admissionpool.com/xiamen-university-xmu.html>).

Many Indonesian students choose to study at Xiamen University because they still have relatives in Fujian; Xiamen is not far from Indonesia, so the seasonal temperature differences not too large and cultural differences are not too obvious; Xiamen University has a good reputation and an international vision, and strongly support foreign students.

*Lisa (Chinese Indonesian): "I chose to study in Xiamen because my parents suggested it. They considered factors such as: Xiamen University is good university; their friends have relatives here in Fujian, so it will be easier if I need any help; the seasonal temperature difference is not too large since Indonesia only has two seasons, there is not much pollution, and [Xiamen] has a better learning atmosphere than other big cities."*

#### Indonesian Students' Age and Gender

There is an age limit on students applying for a scholarship to study in China. However, Indonesian students themselves do not think that age or gender boundaries should restrict their desire to study in China. Quite a few students from the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s generations still have a desire to study in China, where study in Indonesia will be easier than to study abroad since they have to leave their job, wife/husband, and children behind. Most of the students are from the 1990s generation (See Figure 2), the age for them to study at the university level.

The data (see Figure 3) show that Xiamen's Indonesian students are 42.7 per cent men and 57.3 per cent women. There is not much difference between men and women Indonesian students in higher education before the 1990s. For the generations since 1990, more women are seeking education. Female Indonesian students are more interested in higher education (MAS, PhDs) than male Indonesian students (See Figure 4). For language and BA studies, there is a similar number of students, but for MAS, there are 9 men (6%) as against 22 women (14.7%), i.e., 2.5 times more women than men. In the PhD category, there is only one man (0.7%) as against five women (3.3%).

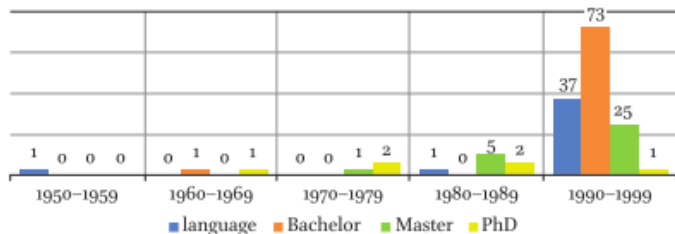


FIGURE 2 Student's year of birth (by degree).

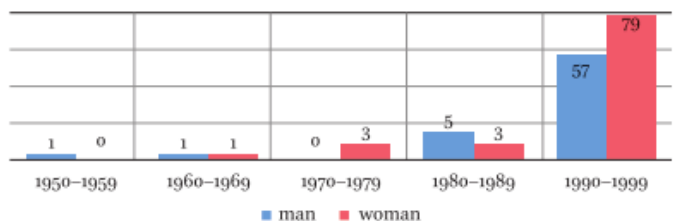


FIGURE 3 Student's year of birth (by gender).

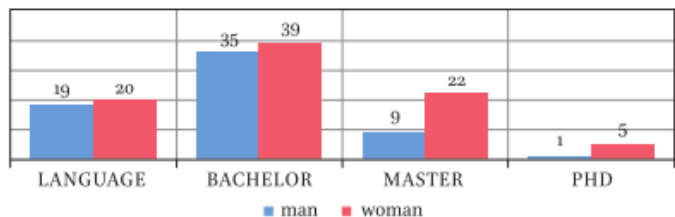


FIGURE 4 Gender vs degree.

**Language Program and Degree Program Preferences in Specific Fields**

Based on the data from Xiamen University Overseas Student Affairs Office, up until October 2015 (See Figure 5), 150 Indonesian students studied at Xiamen University; 39 of them studied language, 74 did a BA (72 of them studied in

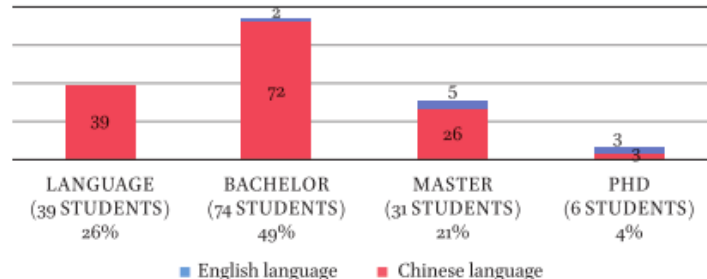


FIGURE 5 Indonesian students studying at Xiamen University.

Chinese and two in English), 31 study did an MA (26 in Chinese and five in English), and six did a PhD (three in Chinese, three in English). So only 26 per cent chose to follow the language program and 74 per cent followed degree programs. In 1998, most students went to China to study the language, but now more and more are entering specialized fields. They are willing to face up to the difficulty of learning both daily conversational Chinese and the specialized type of language required for their respective fields of study.

*Agung (non-Chinese Indonesian): "The first time I came here was to learn the language, but when I learned the language, I realized China is great, especially in terms of economic development. Now I major in Economy and Trade, and dream of taking knowledge back home, to apply it in Indonesia, especially in my hometown, Kalimantan."*

*Celine (Chinese Indonesian), Frestasya (Chinese Indonesian): "I chose to continue my Bachelor in China because as a kid, I had already learned Chinese from a private tutor, so wanted to directly practice and study more deeply in China."*

Ten of the students (7%) on degree programs are studying in English (See Table 1). This shows that they are pursuing something beyond the mere language. There are a number of reasons why they choose courses in English. They include the cheaper cost of living than in other countries that use English for teaching, the better quality of education than in some other countries, the fact that their research field focuses on China, government financial support in the form of scholarships, and the existence of bilateral cooperation agreements between China and Indonesia.

TABLE 1 *List of Indonesian students' study preferences at Xiamen University*

School	Chinese language	English language	Total of students
Overseas Education College	39 (Language), 41 (Bachelor), 16 (Master), 1 (PhD)	–	97 (64.7%)
College of Economics	8 (Bachelor)	2 (Bachelor)	10 (6.7%)
School of Journalism & Communication	6 (Bachelor), 1 (PhD)	–	7 (4.7%)
School of International Relations/Southeast Asia Research Institute	3 (Master), 1 (PhD)	2 (Master), 1 (PhD)	7 (4.7%)
School of Architecture and Civil Engineering	5 (Bachelor)	–	5
School of Management	3 (Bachelor)	–	3
Medical School	3 (Bachelor)	–	3
College of Art	3 (Bachelor)	–	3
Coastal and Ocean Management Institute	–	3 (Master)	3
College of Ocean & Earth Sciences	2 (Master)	1 (PhD)	3
College of the Environment and Ecology	1 (Master)	1 (PhD)	2
School of Life Science	2 (Master)	–	2
School of Humanities	2 (Master)	–	2
School of Law	1 (Bachelor)	–	1
School of Software	1 (Bachelor)	–	1
School of Computer and Information Engineering	1 (Bachelor)	–	1
School of Public Affairs	–	–	–
School of Physics and Mechanical & Electrical Engineering	–	–	–
College of Chemistry & Chemical Engineering	–	–	–
School of Information Science & Technology	–	–	–
School of Foreign Languages & Cultures	–	–	–
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39 (Language), 72 (Bachelor), 26 (Master), 3 (PhD)</b>	<b>7, 2 (Bachelor), 5 (Master), 3 (PhD)</b>	<b>150 students</b>

*Yeremia (non-Chinese Indonesian): "I choose to study in China because I am interested in knowing more about China, especially its society, politics, economy, and culture. The language barrier is too high if I take the courses in Chinese because I am not someone who can speak Chinese. However, coming to China, I have also learned the language. Although courses are offered in English, I took the opportunity to learn directly and to interact directly with Chinese lecturers, Chinese professors, and Chinese students."*

There are nearly twice as many students studying BAS (49%) than of those studying language (26%). Another 25 per cent have chosen a higher-education program (MA and/or PhD). Students that progress from a language program to a BA have an incentive to continue to a higher level (MA and/or PhD).

#### *Faculties that Indonesian Students Prefer*

The first choice for Indonesian students is Chinese language, international Chinese-language education, or teaching Chinese as a foreign language at the Overseas Education College (See Table 1). An estimated 64.7 per cent of students study Chinese language for only one year and then go on to study it on BA, MA, or PhD programs. For Indonesian students, it is very important to know the language, so they can teach it when they arrive home. The Chinese language has become the second most important language after English in Indonesia. Over the last decade, many international schools have opened up in Indonesia, teaching courses in English and Chinese or both. Didi Dawis, president of the Indonesia Fujian Association, reported: "With the Chinese language playing an increasingly important role in employment, many local high schools and universities have started Chinese courses. Indonesia has only about 1,000 Chinese teachers, far too few to meet the demand ([http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/12/content\\_22159542.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/12/content_22159542.htm))."

*Cindy (Chinese Indonesian): "I chose to study Chinese language on the bachelor degree program because now Chinese language has become more important and it is not enough merely to study everyday Chinese language. I want to study Chinese more deeply, Chinese idioms, Chinese literature, Chinese history, and culture. And after graduating, it will be easier for me to find a job as a Chinese teacher in Indonesia."*

The second biggest choice, by 6.7 per cent of students, was Economics, Finance, and International Economics & Trade at the School of Economics (SOE). Trade between China and Indonesia is on the rise, especially since the implementation of the ASEAN — China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) in early 2010.

In 2003, trade between Indonesia and China reached only USD 3.8 billion, but by 2010 it had multiplied around ten times to reach USD 36.1 billion (Chandra & Lontoh 2011). Didi Dawis explained: "With increasing trade between China and Indonesia, more and more companies have established joint ventures or liaison offices. Many companies and institutes need a large amount of talent skilled in Chinese ([http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/12/content\\_22159542.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/12/content_22159542.htm)).

*Robby (Chinese Indonesian): "I chose International Economics and Trade because of current economic and business developments — China is increasing rapidly and doing very well."*

*Lisa (Chinese Indonesian): "I studied Chinese language when I was in high school. I really love Chinese language, but my parents want me to study International Economics and Trade. They hope I will work in a business field with additional Chinese-language capability."*

The third choice (4.7%) is for the School of Journalism and Communication. Since 1998, Indonesians have been free to use the Chinese language in media such as newspapers, radio stations, and television. This freedom to use Chinese language in communication has encouraged many Indonesian students to enter this field. The School of International Relations/Southeast Asia Research Institute is also the third preference (4.7%). As China and Indonesia now cooperate in trade, some students are interested in studying and researching news, communications and international relationships, especially those between China and Indonesia.

*Xiti (Chinese Indonesian): "I study in the School of Journalism and Communication. Chinese language has become more popular in Indonesia, including in broadcasting news, but Chinese-language journalism is still completely absent from Indonesia. I really like the Chinese language, and I hope to get a job in the Chinese journalistic field since the competition is still not too extreme."*

*Yeremia (non-Chinese Indonesian): "I study in the School of International Relations. My goal is to know more about China, I want to be a person who has specific expertise about China because I worked as a lecturer at a university, so I have to have a deeper understanding of China, to strengthen my specialty in the field of China Studies in Indonesia. I also want to help Indonesian people know more about Chinese politics, economy, society, and culture. Therefore I chose to study in China directly, in order to experience Chinese life and China's political and economic dynamics."*

### *Funding Support from China to Encourage Indonesian Students to Enroll in Degree Programs*

Over the last decade, China has become a major student destination, with a total of 397,635 international students enrolled in 2015 (<http://www.iie.org/Services/Project-Atlas/China/International-Students-In-China>). China has set up many scholarship programs to encourage international students to study in China. There are some scholarships for studying at Xiamen University, they include Chinese Government Scholarships, Xiamen University Scholarships for International Students, Fujian Provincial Government Scholarships, and Confucius Institute Scholarships. Thirty-four per cent of students go to China to study because they get support from a scholarship, while the other 66 per cent must provide their own funds to study in China (see Figure 6). Many Indonesian students want to study in China even at their own expense; they do not go to China just because they have received a scholarship. Many students studying at their own expense choose a language program (38 students) and a bachelor program (51 students). In early 2000, China supported Indonesian students studying language with the help of a scholarship, but as the number of Indonesian students studying Chinese increased, China has started encouraging Indonesians to continue in further education. Now Chinese authorities give scholarships only for degree programs and no longer give them to study on language programs. A full scholarship encourages Indonesian students to enroll for MAS and PhDs. For MAS, only nine students fund their own study, while twenty have a scholarship. As for PhDs, only one student studies at his/her own expense, while five have full scholarships.

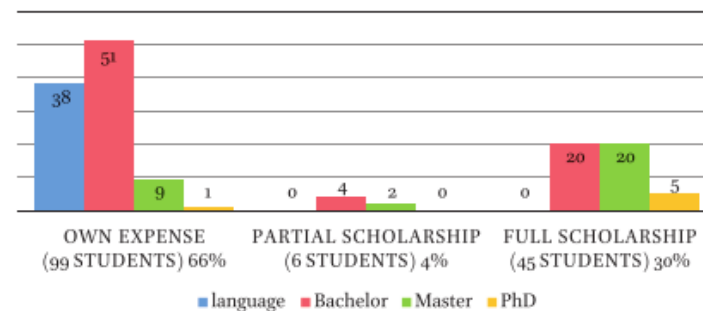


FIGURE 6 Funding method.



### Studying Overseas: Problems and Benefits

Travelling abroad for a short time is a very pleasing experience, but studying abroad for a longer time is not the same. Students have to deal with everyday-life problems and to take responsibility in everyday affairs and especially learning outcomes. The problems experienced by international students are caused by cultural differences and difficulties in adjustment. Studies on international students' adjustment patterns discuss a range of problems that international students face: living in a foreign culture (new roles and behavioral expectations, ethnic differences, language problems, accommodation difficulties, reactions to separation from their families, dietary restrictions, financial stress, social difficulties, homesickness), problems of young adults asserting their emotional and intellectual independence, and the academic problems associated with higher education (dealing with university and other authorities and academic difficulties) (Furnham & Tresize 1983; Novera 2004).

*Robby (Chinese Indonesian): "There are cultural differences in learning behavior in China, the teachers require independent study and provide a lot of lesson materials, but there is a lack of guidance."*

*Frestasya (Chinese Indonesian): "I do not really feel the cultural differences here. However in terms of learning, Indonesian students are more passive, while Chinese students are more active and very diligent in going to the library."*

It should be easier for Chinese Indonesians to study in China since the culture resembles their family's culture, but it is very difficult for non-Chinese Indonesians to do so. They have difficulties with the culture, religion (especially Islam), and food. Much of the food cooked in China is pork-based, and other meat is not processed and prepared according to halal methods. Moslem students find it quite difficult to find food, even halal chickens. They are supposed to concentrate on their studies, but they also have to struggle with the problem of following a halal diet. However, this has not affected their decision to study in China. Twenty per cent of Indonesian students are Moslem (See Figure 7) and they are able to eat in a halal canteen or in Moslem restaurants.

*Agung (non-Chinese Indonesian): "I have difficulties with food because I am a Moslem. My religion does not allow me to eat things that are not halal; the most striking example is pork. For other meats, how they process the meat makes it non-halal. Eating food without halal-labeled is risky. The last time*

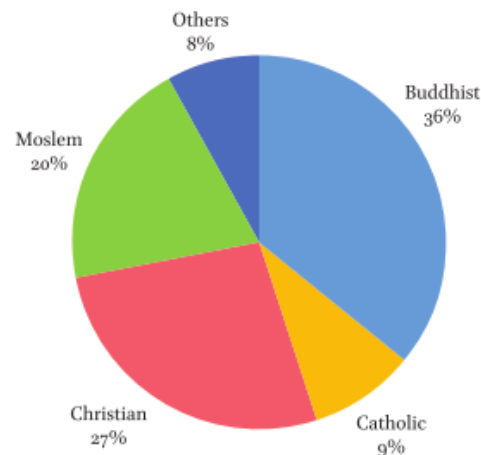


FIGURE 7 Indonesian students' religion.

*I came back home for holiday, I consulted an ustad (Moslem leader) about the food problem here."*

*Yuni (non-Chinese Indonesian): "I am a Moslem, and it is not easy to find halal food in China. I usually eat at the halal canteen, and when I am not really busy with my study, I sometimes cook together with other friends."*

*Basuki (non-Chinese Indonesian): "I often miss Indonesian food, but I think study is more important than food. I am happy to have this opportunity to study in China."*

Students who experience adjustment problems can respond negatively and this can affect their academic performance. However, the support of family and friends helps them cope. They also have a pressing need to return home with the inner satisfaction and the outward measure of successful academic achievement (Else 1990: 46). They are motivated to succeed and make the most of their opportunities.

*Clarissa (Chinese Indonesian), Netty (Chinese Indonesian), Lisa (Chinese Indonesian): "The first time I came to China, I was surprised by the oily food, as well as my substandard language ability to communicate. However, interacting with many foreign friends facilitates my speaking the language more fluently."*

Xiamen University is an international university with foreign students from 130 countries; this also adds value from the point of view of Indonesian students studying there. They can make friends from countries across the world and broaden their knowledge about other cultures. Studying abroad helps students recognize and respect cultural differences and develop skills and a willingness to adapt to that difference (Engle & Engle 2003: 19). For students and academics, cross-border education provides opportunities to engage with rich cultural, linguistic, academic, geographical and social experiences (Marginson & McBurnie 2004).

*Robby, (Chinese Indonesian), Paolo (Chinese Indonesian): "We have many friends other than Chinese, so we can broaden our relationships, especially if we go to other countries, having friends in widespread places."*

*Netty (Chinese Indonesian): "Studying here helps me to experience organizing students' events and to hang out with friends of different countries and cultures."*

*Angela (Chinese Indonesian), Eric (Chinese Indonesian): "Besides Chinese friends, we also make friends from many other countries and get to know their culture."*

### Summary

The study of Chinese language has become popular among young Indonesians and China has become a popular destination for all Indonesian students, not only for Chinese Indonesians but also for non-Chinese Indonesians. The Indonesian young generations are excited about the Chinese language. This is not only because Chinese Indonesian students can reconnect with their Chinese-ness but also — and even more so — because of the rise of the Chinese economy. Many non-Chinese Indonesians also want to study Chinese language, although in the past politics and government regulations led many people to dislike Chinese. Regulations regarding ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have put barriers in the way of blending and accepting multicultural differences, compounded with a politics that discriminates against ethnic Chinese. This creates an anti-Chinese sentiment, including in regard to the Chinese language and Chinese culture. The discrimination embedded for decades in Indonesia made people hostile to everything relating to Chinese-ness, including ethnic Chinese people, China as a nation, the language, and the culture. Chinese born in the Suharto era felt ashamed of their Chinese-ness because of the discrimination, and non-Chinese Indonesians tend to

have an anti-Chinese perspective, including in regard to Chinese culture and language, as a result of government regulations. Chinese and non-Chinese in that era had little wish to learn Chinese language or even go to China; they did not think it important because of official attitudes in Indonesia. In the case of Chinese Indonesians, some families still speak Chinese at home and study Chinese with a private teacher, but it would have been almost unthinkable for non-Chinese Indonesians to study Chinese. Chinese and non-Chinese in the Suharto era preferred to learn English as their second language and to study in the US, the UK, Australia or Singapore.

After 1998, discrimination and anti-Chinese sentiment started to fade, and many Indonesian people became interested in the Chinese language and even went to China to study. The Government allowed public expression of Chinese-ness and this led to an increase in the use of Chinese. Interest on the part of Indonesian students (Chinese Indonesian and non-Chinese Indonesian) in studying in China grew, and so did multiculturalism, especially after the decades of regulation that fostered anti-Chinese sentiments came to an end.

The generations from 1967 until 1998 experienced the degradation of Chinese culture, but the generation since then wants to study Chinese, and their parents support them financially to do so, even though many of their parents themselves have little understanding of Chinese culture or the Chinese language. My research shows a significant acceptance on the part of Chinese Indonesian and non-Chinese Indonesian students alike of China and the Chinese language, as evidenced by the increasing number of Indonesian students studying in China each year. The young generations choose to study Chinese language, economics, and other fields, and some stay in China for up to four years. Learning Chinese does not mean they become less "Indonesian" and hence more "Chinese" (Hoon 2004). The Chinese language is no longer seen as an identity exclusive to a single ethnic group but as a skill that needs to be mastered to become more competitive on the job market, given China's rise.

This paper not only discusses the situation in the wake of the presidential decree allowing the teaching of Chinese language but also the way in which current Indonesian students are eager to learn a new language that became officially accessible seventeen years ago to Indonesian citizens. The growth in the number of Chinese Indonesian students and non-Chinese Indonesian students shows the need for such people to study at Chinese universities. As China's economy grows and bilateral relations between China and Indonesia increase, studying in China will, from now on, not only be about learning the language. With closer bilateral ties between China and Indonesia, there will be an ever growing need for young generations of Indonesians to become proficient in the Chinese language, and to know about the Chinese economy and

China's international relations. They will learn by studying degree programs, mainly at BA level, although around 25 per cent of the Indonesian students are already doing MAS or PhDs. So language learning and undergraduate study in China does not rule out the possibility of continuing in the direction of post-graduate education in China.

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