

# A NARRATIVE STUDY OF LIVED EXPERIENCES INDONESIA INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Friska Ria Sitorus<sup>1</sup> and Wolter Parlindungan Silalahi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> *Dept. Curriculum Design and Human Potentials Development National Dong Hwa University, Hualien, Taiwan*

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the international Ph.D. students' experience who asked their children to stay and study at elementary level in Taiwan. They come from different city in Indonesia. They also come from different cultural backgrounds, educational systems and with different expectations and purposes. They do not speak Chinese. Studying abroad is not easy as the success of international students are related to many factors like sociocultural adjustment, language competency especially communication with society in new country and strategies for getting used to the environment (Aydino, 2013). The data is interpreted by using the theory of Banks, 2010 about multicultural education issues and perspective. Three international Ph.D. students and four their children were recruited to participate in this study. This study was conducted qualitatively. The instruments used are interview and observation. Field notes were taken in order to help the researcher to explore the stories of the participants. The researcher found that many factors encountered by the international students in Taiwan to get survived namely Language, Religion, Age, Ability, culture identity and Economic Class.

**Keywords:** International experience, Multicultural Education, Qualitative

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## INTRODUCTION

International students are “transient visitors” to new and different academic communities and are increasingly a feature of the social, cultural and academic life of many countries (Vu, 2013). Foreign students are the bridges of a nation to the international society. The number of students studying in Taiwan indicates the level of internationalization and international competitiveness of the nation's education, as well as representing the nation's power and ability to attract foreigners increase every year. They are degree-seeking students and exchange students taking degree-level subjects. The foreign students in Taiwan come from 117 countries and the top five nations are Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, and the USA. (Ministry of Education Taiwan, 2007). Globalization is a

multifaceted phenomenon enveloped by economic, political and cultural dimensions that meld 21st century higher education to international endeavors (Prudence, Amy, & S, 2012).

Many Indonesian students prefer universities in Taiwan to Europe as destination to continue their studying because some reasons such as education system which combine between course and research, advanced technology infrastructure of university, detailed laboratory for each major and the most important the educators have higher knowledge who had graduated from USA, sophisticated academic system and also Taiwan well known of IT sophistication. Studying in Taiwan is also a good opportunity for the participants to build the cooperation network of research and business for the

future. That's why Indonesian students' have high expectation studying in Taiwan namely get high education which they could implement in Indonesia for future because some universities in Taiwan the available some up to date reference and sufficient sources for doing research. Taiwan has an environment that tends to be more open and free from social and political side.

(Vu, 2013) states that International students come from different cultural backgrounds, educational systems and with different expectations and purposes. Most international students do not speak their first language as the host countries. Studying abroad could give new experience of international live because will have interaction with many people who come from different country around the world who has diversity of culture and life style. (Aydino, 2013) states that the success of international students depends on many factors sociocultural adjustment, language competency especially communicate with society in new country and strategies for getting used to the environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Multicultural Education**

Since its earliest conceptualism in the 1960s multicultural education has been transformed, refocused, conceptualized and in a constant state of evolution both in theory and practice. Multicultural education as a concept, idea and philosophy, which should be described and set the equal access and treatment for diversity learners in school (Wahab, 2014). Multicultural education explains about the diversity of culture, language, race, class, gender and religion. The diversity should be having an equal opportunity to learn at school, because multicultural education influences students' behavior (Bank, 2010). Multicultural education as mainly comprehend be

project in improving education and social opportunities of culture and linguistic minorities.

### **Social Identity Diversity**

Nowadays, the immigration already well establish in the world. So many of challenges are faced by the educator around the world such as historical, political, social and culture ( Banks, 2008). Unexpected, as international students who are studying in overseas will have a way and adjustment in living in Taiwan. They have to maintain their identity. Identity refers to many aspects in our life. Particularly identity talks about whom we are and our relationship to the world (Creese, Bhatt, Bhojani, & Martin, 2006)

### **Language ability**

Language is a part of communication. Language cannot be separated from communication. Interaction needs language which must be analyzed in term of its effect on people live (Gumperz & Gumperz ,1982). International students concern to be able speaks English fluently. As international students need to have high ability in English. Language ability is one of requirement for entry as international students. Language ability is a big challenge for International students who are non-native speakers.

### **Culture**

Culture is as groups' of ceremonial which are made by people for viability and adjustment in environment. Knowledge, concepts and values are included in cultures ceremonial. Culture closely related with communication, and communication needs language ( Banks & McGee Banks, 2010). Volet and Ang state that "Tertiary institutions have a social responsibility to design learning environments which foster students' developments on intercultural adaptability" (1998:21) cited from (Bamford, 2008).

### **Race, Social Class, and Gender**

Those race, class, language, gender and disability are one package of background learners who can not be separated each other. These elements can be influenced the learners' knowledge and understanding in studying. In doing interaction these elements also have some roles to influence the learners' perception and action (Bank, 2010). For example, in a classroom the learners come from different background of race (Asian, American), class (low class, middle class), language (non-native speaker), gender (male and female) and disability. Thus a number of a group learners historically alienated and oppressed among the classmates.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participant**

Purposive sampling is used by researcher in getting participants in this study. The researcher choosed the participant randomly that need by this research. The number of participants in this qualitative study are three Indonesia international students and four kids are participated in this study. The researcher selected the participants are considered best or most able to contribute in theory formation (Creswell, 1998). Grounded theory studies using theoretical sampling to develop category appear to be more definite and useful and help researchers in identify boundaries concept and suitability categories found (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

### **Interview**

The study was described about the relationship among educational practices. On the other hand, some considerations such as social order, working and individual difference more about their live experience as Indonesia international students and their children. Open ended Interview was conducted

to find more about Indonesia International Students and Their Children. According to Freebody (2003) states that open ended interview are further along this continuum, in which perhaps only a few highly general questions or issues are put to the participant who is free to answer and direct to talk. The participants are engaged in interaction and relevance pattern of interaction will obtain (p.133).

### **Observation**

Observation was conducted to find more about behavior, events or activities of participants in studying. The researcher did tape recording with the participants consent and then the audio recording were transcribed verbatim for analysis and field note were taken to find out more about students activities in their study. According to Djaelani (2013) the purpose of observation is to understand the patterns, norms and the significance of the observed behavior, as well as researchers learn from participants observed.

Marsall and Rossman (1989) states that observation is the systematic description of event, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting for study. By doing observation the researcher observe naturally the learning and live of participants.

Table 1. Parents' Background as International Students

No	Name	City	Occupation	Age	Sex	Religion	Major	Status
1	P1	Kupang	Lecture in Agricultural Polytechnic	45 years old	Female	Catholic	Biology	Agnes's Mother
2	P2	Semarang	Lecture in Private Polytechnic	46 years old	Male	Muslim	Dept of Business Administration	Upin & Ipin's Father
3	P3	Bekasi	Lecture in State Polytechnic	37 years old	Male	Muslim	Material Science	Bimbim's father

Table 2. Children's' Background who study in local elementary school

No	Name	Age	Grade	Sex	Classmate
1	Agnes	9 Years	5 <sup>th</sup>	Female	11 students
2	Upin	7 years	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Male	7 students
3	Ipin	8 years	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Male	11 students
4	Bimbim	8 years	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Male	11 students

## RESULT

The researcher interprets the international students' and their children experiences by multicultural education mainstream. The mainstreams are Language, Religion, Age, Ability, culture identity and Economic Class (Banks & Banks, 2004) and (Banks, 2010). Particularly, in interpreting their experiences the researcher coding all the aspects first. The international students and their children who stay in Taiwan face many challenges to adjust their life. They are trying to survive in order to finish their study. There are five factors that they have to deal in adjustment their life in Taiwan. The factors are language, religion, age, ability, culture and economic class as below:

### Different age and Mix ability classroom

International students come from different countries around the world. Every student has different background of social identity. They compete each

other to reach their own purpose coming in Taiwan. International students as parents who taking Ph.D. degree, it means that they already have experience in studying around 18-20 years. And also their ages are around 37-45 years old. That makes them easier to approach and join with the classroom activity. And also their ages are around 37-45 years old. That makes them easier to approach and join with the classroom activity.

*P1 at all states that. I don't have problem studying in the class. Everything is going well. But I have a difficulty in writing particularly in writing journal for international publishing. It is one of required document to be Ph.D. "*

In Taiwan based on policy maker that learners' age in elementary school are 6-12 years old (Ministry of Education Republic of China, 2014). Indonesia international students who are studying in university, asking their children to study at elementary level in

local school. They have different ages with the local students but they mix the same level. Their ages are around 7-9 years old that are in second, third and fifth grade.

Actually based on the age and their background grade from Indonesia they are not in the grade. But the school has decision to put them on that grade. Finally, in fact they mix with the local students who have different ages and ability with them. They are younger learner in learning process because they don't have much experience in learning at classroom. They have a little experience in learning process. Particularly study in abroad. The ages influence their IQ naturally influence their ability in learning process. The children feel oppress in learning because they are slow to understand the learning.

### **Culture Shock**

Most of international students find culture shock in new place and even new country. Staying in new country exactly in Taiwan, Indonesia international students have culture shock in environment such as: weather, Indonesia doesn't winter season. So, here is the first time for them to have winter season. In addition about food, Taiwan is quite different with Indonesia, because Indonesia is rich of ingredient on cooking. On other hand, Learners' confidence is a part of culture identity which influences the learners' knowledge to interpret what they are learning. Most of the learners filter the knowledge through their culture and family community (Dibrito & Chávez, 2016). Indonesia international learners feel high confidence because they found comfortable culture in Taiwan. Taiwan has almost similar culture with Indonesia.

*P1 at all states that "so far I stay in Taiwan I like the culture. The people are kind and helpful. And about the economic I don't have problem. Indonesia government sent us fund on time".*

### **Social economic class**

Indonesia international students got funding support from Indonesia's government for their education and live based on BPP-LN 2015 budgets (Direktorat Jenderal Sumber Daya Riset, 2015). Indonesia international students got scholarship named "Directorate General of Higher Education (Dikti)." from Indonesia government. Their education and live will be certified by Indonesia government. And also they from social middle class economic, who has permanent work in Indonesia. So, they don't have problem about economic. The Indonesian Government has been providing opportunities for all lecturers to pursue further studies at leading Indonesian higher education institutions through BPPS Scholarships. In addition to this provision, starting from 2008, Directorate General of Higher Education (DIKTI) through Human Resource Directorate (Direktorat Ketenagaan) offers scholarships to support the lecturers who would pursue Master's and Doctoral degree at overseas universities. Additionally, they already have permanent work in Indonesia which also supports them also. So, they do not have problem about funding.

### **Language ability**

Indonesia international students do not have background and ability in both of Chinese and Mandarin. They master two languages skill are Bahasa Indonesia as national language and English as international language. As international students program, English is the main language which they are used in teaching and learning process. Almost all the courses are used English. They feel comfortable in communication in classroom activities. The instructor sand all the members' class are communicate in English. They are non-native speaker. So, their English is a little hard to understand because quite slow in speaking. In addition, their pronunciation a

little different caused of their dialect. In academic process case the Indonesia international students have difficulty in English. (Hay, Wignell, & Evans, 2016) states that within four skills in language, Listening and Speaking were also uttered some difficulties for several terms, such as confounded by the quick pace of the local people accent in pronouncing English. And also, they have difficulty to communicate in barrier language, especially in daily life to communicate in neighborhood. Exactly outside of the class activities like in the market and canteen.

*“PI states at the first I have difficulty in communicate with the local people by using barrier language, because I can’t speak in Chinese. But to figure it out sometimes I use body language to communicate. Sometimes we get misunderstanding.”*

Other case comes from their children who study in local school in Taiwan. The school activities communicate in Chinese in whole teaching and learning process. While teaching and learning activities run by language: through language as a main element, classroom activities are managed by teacher (Bercaw & Wegmann , 2003). Additionally their children have less ability in English and no ability in Chinese. So, their children found difficulties in their learning

*Bimbim states that, at the first I don’t like to study in Taiwan. Because I don’t know everything what happen in the classroom. I can’t follow the classroom activity because there is a big gap namely language. I feel outside because join the learning process.*

Their children have to learn Chinese as long as they study in Taiwan. There are some ways which they do in learning Chinese; those are making friendship with the local kids at school and neighbor. (Bliss, 2012) states that by making friendship with local students will improve language barrier and also adjust for cultural challenges. And also they need Indonesian as translator to help them in their learning process.

*“PI at all states I learn Chinese from my environment by practice simple communication with local people, such as friends around the university and neighbors at apartment. We don’t have special class and time to learn Chinese. Because we have to attend classes and do some reports at university”. But our children they have to learn Chinese and right now they are increase”.*

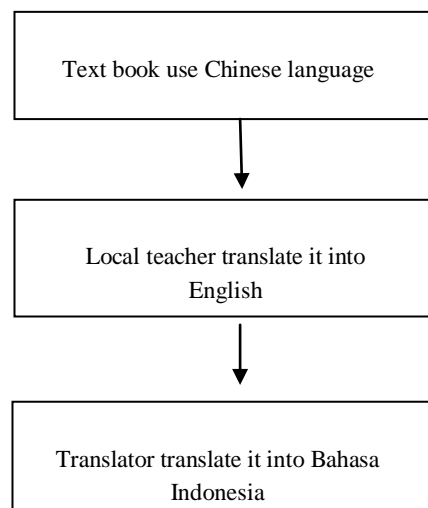


Figure 1. The way their children learn in local school



Figure 2. Classroom Situation for learning Chinese language, Source: Taken by researcher

### Religion and Food limitations

The different story comes from their children who study in local school. Everyday all the students will get lunch together at school. Almost each menu is mix with pork. Their children as Islam they are allowed to consume it. So, their parents have to prepare their own lunch at home. This case makes them feel upset and oppress. Most of their classmates think that they are a little strange because they bring their own lunch and never eat food from school.

*Agnes (Christian) states "I like all food in Taiwan, because food in Taiwan consist of kinds of vegetables and also pork" while Bimbim at all (Muslim) states that "our mother always provide lunch to eat in lunch time at school because we don't allow eating pork. But for snack our parents allow us to eat it".*



Figure 3 having lunch together  
source: <https://www.facebook.com/profile>.

### DISCUSSION

The study shows us some information deal to Indonesia international students' experiences. Through the figure 4 told us five factors which they have to adjust in their life in Taiwan. Based on learners' social identity diversity their children (international students) are oppressed. They are in outside of filter oppression. Because they don't have ability as well as Taiwanese has. Language is the main factor for international students. Language is a toll of communication. The language and communication systems are part of culture; language

could not be separated from the culture. The overlap between language and culture is only partial (Lee, 2013). As new comer in Taiwan, they have to know the barrier language in Taiwan namely Chinese. Actually, Taiwanese loanwords Mandarin language and the interaction between Mandarin and Taiwanese (Hsieh, 2005).

In addition, the next factor is about religion, the population of Taiwanese who embrace the religion of Islam in Taiwan relatively small. In 2007 there were about 53,000 of Taiwanese who are Islam and more than 80,000 Indonesian Islam are becoming workers (TKI) in Taiwan. So, totally populations of Islam there are about 140,000 in Taiwan (Nisa, 2015). That makes Indonesian international students who are Islam find difficulty in adjusting to the environment specific to the food first. Because the rules in Islam, they are not allowed to eat pork. Because it no halal to consume based on Islam's holy bible in QS. Al Baqoroh (2) : 173. To figure out this case they cook by their self at home. And also they must be carefully to eat outside like restaurant.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Indonesia international students' experience lived in Taiwan. They are getting education in overseas. Many factors that they face to adjust in living in Taiwan those are language, religion, age, ability, culture identity and economic class. But more challenging is about language, both for parents and their children. (Hellstén & Prescott , 2004) states that international students have the common assumptions to contribute and participate in the classroom discussion. They found difficult about the language. The international students feel self-conscious that conversational more difficult.

As international students' candidate English as international language and native language are very important. International students' candidates have to

prepare you in language. The native languages of the country which will you stay at least the fundamental. Communication is the most we do in our life. It needs language as the main element. Some complex social systems happen in the classroom through talk by using language. The most important part is the real discussion in order to treat topic (Cazden, 2000). Andrade (2006) & Rydenvald (2015) stated that some studies identify that language is one factor that influence the adjustment and academic achievement of international students. Language and culture are the primary challenging to adjust the international students attributable in new country. This issue will be figured out by making friendship with environment, particularly in social life with friends.

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