

The Image of Nation: Case Study on Chinese Student Perception about Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: *Image of Nation is one of important aspect in International Relations today. It can influence the attitude of people and country to another and every country try to attract people and government from another country through the public diplomacy which is focuses on culture. To develop positive image, as part of Indonesian public diplomacy, Indonesia invites foreign student to learn and study Indonesian culture and Bahasa Indonesia. This article focus on analyze the reason of Chinese student from Guangxi Normal University to study Bahasa Indonesia and what is the image of Indonesia after they studied almost one year in Indonesia. The result shows that Bahasa Indonesia is one of prospective language and gives opportunity relate with job opportunity because of Indonesia-China raising relations. In other hand, Indonesia have positive image on the culture, tradition, polite, open minded, familiarity, kindness and friendship. However, Indonesia also have negative image on traffic, time and corruption. Those image describe how Chinese student percepts Indonesia as foreign country. According to this study, there are opportunity and challenges on Indonesian image development.*

KEYWORDS: Perception, Public Diplomacy, Chinese Student, *Bahasa Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

As like other countries, Indonesia placed the image of nation as the important point on its international relations. Indonesia have negative image on terrorism in 2000-2003, travel warning from other countries, sectarian conflict and especially on Indonesia-China relations, the Jakarta riots in 1998, contribute on negative perception from Chinese. Learning from those experiences, Indonesia tries to develop positive image trough many ways including public diplomacy by promoting Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia* learning. Guangxi Normal University in Guangxi Province of China, develop *Bahasa Indonesia* department to teach Chinese students who want to learn *Bahasa Indonesia*. In 2014-2015, they sent about 20 students to learn *Bahasa Indonesia* and Indonesian culture to Indonesia under cooperation of both government and also with some Indonesian universities. This study focuses on the analyses toward Chinese students reason and motivation to learn *Bahasa Indonesia* and chose it as their major. Second, it also analyses the image of Indonesia from their perception after they live and learn in Indonesia for almost one year. This study is significant in two reasons. First, it describes Chinese student motivation and reason to learn *Bahasa Indonesia* which will contribute on program evaluations. Second, as focus on the image of Indonesia, this study gives description about the image of Indonesia, especially from Chinese student perspective which contribute to thinking about opportunities and challenges on Indonesian image development.

Research Method

This study is based on a survey toward Chinese student from Guangxi Normal University, Guangxi University for Nationalities, UNIMED and Ningbo University, who learn *Bahasa Indonesia* and Indonesian culture, mainly in Malang area. They are 3 boys and 18 girls who participate in this survey. They study *Bahasa Indonesia* in some area like Surabaya and Bandung but mostly in Malang, East Java. The survey focuses on three main questions, such as, the reason to learn *Bahasa Indonesia*, positive and negative image of Indonesia and their perception about the image of Indonesia.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND BAHASA INDONESIA

In the globalization era, when the relations between peoples have more complex, public opinion have strong influence in the foreign policy of the state. It is also influenced by the democratization in many countries especially in the developing countries. In the late twenty first century there are about 60 countries in the world throughout Europe, Asia, Latin America and Asia take democratization process, it was look like global trend on that era (Huntington, 1992). Democracy has been brought the people more free to express their political opinion. It is not in the domestic level but also in international. It is also supported by the economic globalization with its market economy which tried to open the state border and also by the rise of technology and information where internet is to be familiar equipment in the human communication and relations. Distance and time is not as difficulties now. So that is why, the public opinion became important and influence the foreign policy of the state.

What is the public diplomacy? The concept of public in the diplomacy term is brings two implications. First is public as the object in the meaning of the public in the other countries as the object or goal of state's diplomacy. Second is public as the subject in the meaning of domestic public involve in the state's diplomacy activities. The public diplomacy phrase first time was used by the London Times in January 1856. They were used this phrase to criticize President Franklin Pierce policy, and suggested him to give an example to the people as the public diplomacy. Or in other hand, the public diplomacy in this context was defined as the way to explain to the public. In January 1871, The New York Times reported a debate in Congress about secret intrigue to annex Republic of Dominica. He said that the policy has to opened to public to get the public opinion in the public diplomacy. From the mass media context, the phrase of public diplomacy also used by the political leader like President Wilson in 1918 to called his four principles. But in this period, the public diplomacy was defined as the effort to open the policy to the public, it means that the diplomacy was inward looking or to explain to the domestic peoples. Post World War, the term of public diplomacy was used as the cover of propaganda (Cull, 2009).

Begin in 1960s, the practice of diplomacy was changed. Professor Mowat in his book *Diplomacy and Peace* divided diplomacy in three growing periods. They are in 467-1475 as the dark periods, the diplomacy was not organized, in 1473-1914 as Europe State System and post Open Diplomacy as the Woodrow Wilson ideas in 1918 (Hermawan, 2007). In open diplomacy, Wilson said that "... open covenants openly at, after which there should be no private international understanding of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view". This opinion noted the era of democratic diplomacy when public can view, and take their aspiration related with diplomacy as the foreign policy tools. This is so

rational because every impact of foreign policy by diplomacy has on public, so public should to involve in diplomacy.

From academic view, the growth of public diplomacy is one aspect of the respon for recent security concept. World politics is on the track of changing from realist to neo-realist approach to view the security concept. There are five dimension of the changing toward neo-realist. They are about the origin of threats, the nature of threats, changing response, changing responsibility of security and core values of security (Perwita, 2005). From this view, we can analyze that both in the perception and responses of world problems about security now is not dominate of state. Responsibility of this issues now several done by public.

In public diplomacy, society both in group and individual can give initiative for government policy and included in the activities that should to be made the public opinion in other state. Public diplomacy has also decreasing the state border. In the global communication, the public opinion has influenced effectively the government's behaviour. Activity and influence of non-government has growth both in amount and types. Public diplomacy has also known as an instrument of politics. It is used by states, associations of states and non-state actors to understand culture, attitudes, and behaviour, build and manage relationship, and influence opinion and actions to advance interests and values. In the twenty first century, the changing of the globalism, network structures and new technologies are transforming scholarship, governance and state-based public diplomacy (Gregory, 2008). These changing has brought the non-state actors as the main actor as like as the government or official diplomacy. They can use their capability that sometime not directly related with politics so it can be understood easier by other. That's why the public diplomacy is very useful to made mutual understanding to avoiding the conflict that has caused by misperception. And one of the important implementation is by exchange programs (Hoge, 2003).

Public diplomacy has three main points. They are about communication for the political purposes using both official and unofficial ways. Some main activities in public diplomacy are building relationships; understanding the needs of other countries, cultures and peoples; communication our point of view; correcting miss perception; looking for areas where we can find common causes (Leonard, 2002). Mark Leonard proposed one concept that can explained the function and purposes of the public diplomacy. The concept is about public good. It is mean that public diplomacy based on the premise that image and reputation of a country are publics goods which can create either an enabling or disabling environment of individual transaction. Leonard also mentions the hierarchy impact of public diplomacy which described in following table.

Table 1. The Hierarchy impact of Public Diplomacy

Hierarchy	Activities
Increasing people's familiarity with one's country	Making them think about it, updating their images, turning around unfavourable opinions
Increasing people's appreciation of one's country	Creating positive perceptions, getting others to see issues of global importance from the same perspective
Engaging people with one's country	Strengthening ties from education reform to scientific co-operation; encouraging people to see us an attractive destination for tourism, study, distance learning; getting them to buy our products; getting to understand and subscribe to our values
Influencing people	Getting companies to invest, publics to back our positions or politicians to turn to us as a favoured partner

Source: Mark Leonard et al., 2002, *Public Diplomacy*, The Foreign Policy Centre, London, p.8

Scondi also tried to distinguished the public diplomacy and nation branding. He proposed the five different types about relationship between public diplomacy and nation branding (Scondi, 2008). The first type has argued that there is no similarities between public diplomacy and nation branding. Or in the other hand they are separated and truly different. Nation branding has viewed as the effort to appearing the special differences or comparative advantages in the economic term (like 'us' and 'them' term). The public diplomacy has viewed as the effort to identified the history, culture, or people that unite rather than separated 'us'. Nation branding has more symbolized appearance and public diplomacy has more behaviour appearance.

The second type has argued that public diplomacy is a part of nation branding. This argument like told about the commercialization of foreign policy and public diplomacy. Or in the other word it can be said that how the public diplomacy also played as branding tools of state (Anhold, 2007). This approach usually used by the small countries (for example: Latvia, Estonia or Monaco) that lack of human and financial resources so they would preferred to use the nation branding than public diplomacy. The third type argued that nation branding is a part of public diplomacy. This argument based on the constructivism approach in the international relations studies (Ham, 2001). The state have option to construct the identity, image and role, as well as putting emphasis of values and norms. In other word it could be said that public diplomacy played more role than nation branding. Public diplomacy has protecting the country's reputation and correcting poor images and stereotypes or at least attempting to neutralize them. The fourth type argued that between public diplomacy and nation branding shared field and values. They have approach differences but playing in the same field and shared some stuff like culture, identity, norm and image (Melissen, 2005). For example, the positive image is the main objective of the nation branding because it can be influenced on the 'consumer' point of view. In the other hand, the positive image also the main objective of public diplomacy because it made easier for to explaining the foreign policy. The fifth type argued that there is no difference between public diplomacy and nation branding. They playing together in the same objectives and activities. Some scholar viewed that both public diplomacy and nation branding was based on propaganda.

As the biggest and dominant country in Southeast Asia region, Indonesia have opportunity to strengthening its position by use *Bahasa Indonesia* as instrument of diplomacy, or promoting *Bahasa Indonesia* as regional language (Effendi, 2014). This argument is based on some reasons. First, as the biggest country in population, of course *Bahasa Indonesia* is the most used by people in the region. Second, the improving Indonesian economy and trade as member of G20 with good economic growth, increasing other countries motivation to strengthen economic and trade relations with Indonesia. In other hand, this condition makes Indonesia more important in the region, so *Bahasa Indonesia* have opportunity to become important as trade language in the region. Third, politically, Indonesia as the biggest democratic country can support the importance of *Bahasa Indonesia* in the region. Fourth, from cultural side, Indonesia is included to Malay nations, so *Bahasa Indonesia* have some similarities with Bahasa Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, and easy to learn by Singaporean, Thai and Filipino. So this condition also supporting the opportunity of *Bahasa Indonesia* as regional language in Southeast Asia.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge and perception about Indonesia

The survey shows that most of respondents knew Indonesia from geography course at school when they studied in junior and senior high school. But, some of them also knew Indonesia from media like TV from special moment like Tsunami disaster in 2004. One of them knew Indonesia since was in kindergarten and from family because her grandmother and father lived in Indonesia before back to China. Their perception about Indonesia for the first time are various as the big country with big population like China, rich of natural resources with rich of cultures, far from China and have different climate and also the archipelago country. They also view Indonesia as beautiful country from its scenery with many tourism destinations. Bali is the most famous island they know about Indonesia.

Learning Bahasa Indonesia

Respondents study *Bahasa Indonesia* from some reasons. Mostly they select *Bahasa Indonesia* because in current time, China have good relations with Indonesia. It means that there will be many opportunities for them to get a job because of their *Bahasa Indonesia* capability. Other reasons are because they want to live and work in Indonesia and also they think that *Bahasa Indonesia* is simple and easy to learn. Because of those reasons, they think that by visit and learn *Bahasa Indonesia* directly in Indonesia they will not only improve their language ability but also to know more about Indonesian culture and people.

Positive and Negative impression about Indonesia

For almost a year study in Indonesia, respondents get many experiences not only language learning but also about Indonesia in general include culture, tradition and people. They also get some impression both in positive and negative based on their experience live and study in Indonesia, especially in Malang. They think that Indonesian people is kind and familiar. Indonesian are open minded and easy to create friendship with them. They like to help and religious people. Indonesia also get positive impression especially because of its good tradition and beautiful scenery. However, respondents also note some negative impression like many traffic jams, public transport, and need to improve infrastructure development. They also think that Indonesian is more relax and sometime they are not respect to the time. After live for a year in Indonesia their impression and perception about Indonesia is as beautiful country with some social problems like health, economy, traffic, development and emerging economic. Indonesian people are so kind, open, easy to help, rich of culture and tradition, religious people and have many opportunities to grow fast both in economy and infrastructure.

The result of study shows that Chinese students think that *Bahasa Indonesia* will bring opportunity for them, especially in job market because it is special than English in the context of the raising relations between Indonesia and China. Second, Indonesia have positive images on friendship, open mind, familiar, warm, polite, rich of culture, tradition and natural resources and also many tourism spots. Third, however, Indonesia also have negative images on traffic, road, time respect and corruption image. In general, they think that Indonesia is the good place for living although need some improvements in some aspects.

From the public diplomacy point of view, *Bahasa Indonesia* have good opportunity to be develop as public diplomacy tools. It can help Indonesia to improve its positive image. Indonesia should to improve the program by invite more foreign student to come and learn in

Indonesia. However, it should be supported by economic and social development to decrease the negative image. Indonesian government should be aware and use this opportunity, because although there is some negative image but there are also many positive images from the respondents. The government should create programs and situations which develop them as subjects to introduce Indonesia to Chinese people. As public diplomacy level mentioned by Simon Anholt, what government done by the program is still in the second level as introducing and increasing familiarity and appreciation. It should be improved to be third and fourth level as well as the engagement by other programs. In other hand, to improve the positive nation branding, Indonesia should focus on important points that create positive identity like culture, tradition or religious people.

CONCLUSION

Indonesian images from Chinese student's perspectives show there are some opportunities to boost Indonesian positive image by improving some aspects like infrastructure, time management and law enforcement especially in corruption. Indonesia has many "image capital" that need to be explored more. However, the negative image also creates challenges to improve Indonesian economy, people respect on time and educational supports.

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