

Chinese Language Investment

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Chinese Language Investment: Pesantren and Social Reproduction Challenges

استثمار اللغة الصينية : نظام Pesantren التعليمي وتحديات إعادة الإنتاج الاجتماعي

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Abstract

Pesantren, the most dominant Islamic educational institution, has existed long before Indonesian independence. To answer the challenge of modernity, many *pesantrens* reform their curriculum. A *pesantren*, Nurul Jadid, follows this step by offering foreign languages, besides Arabic. Inspired by China's economic rise, Nurul Jadid includes Chinese in its curriculum. This study investigates how Nurul Jadid promotes Chinese among its students so that the students invest in the language. This study employs a qualitative research design and draws on the concept of global language (Crystal 2003), Bourdieu's cultural capital and social reproduction theory (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Data are obtained through in-depth interviews with 13 participants. The findings show that Nurul Jadid promotes Chinese through the creation of the school's image and the use of religious guidance. These efforts transform Chinese into a cultural capital its students can accumulate for the sake of their mobility. In so doing, the students, most of whom come from working-class background, invest in Chinese, which then functions as a symbolic capital that helps them challenge social reproduction.

Keywords: language investment, *pesantren*, social reproduction.

خلاصة البحث

لقد كان نظام التعليم *Pesantren*، والذي يشكل المؤسسة التعليمية والإسلامية المهيمنة في أندونيسيا، موجودا قبل الاستقلال الإندونيسي. وللإجابة على تحديات الحداثة، فالعديد من مدارس *Pesantrens* قامت بإصلاح المناهج. حققت مؤسسة نور الجديد فقرة نوعية من خلال استثمار اللغات الأجنبية، بالإضافة للغة العربية. وبسبب تأثير التجربة الملهمة

للاقتصاد الصيني، فقد قامت مؤسسة نور الجديد بتضمين اللغة الصينية في مناهجها. تقوم هذه الدراسة ببحث كيفية قيام مؤسسة نور الجديد بترويج اللغة الصينية بين الطلبة بحيث يتمكن الطلبة من استثمارها لغويا. وتتوسل الدراسة بنموذج بحثي نوعي، إذ تنكس على مفهوم اللغة العالمية (كريستال، 2003)، ونظرية بورديو لرأس المال الثقافي، ونظرية إعادة الإنتاج الاجتماعي (بورديو وباسيرون، 1990). تم جمع البيانات من خلال مقابلات مكثفة أجريت مع 13 مشارك. ولقد بينت النتائج أن مؤسسة نور الجديد قد روجت للغة الصينية من خلال ابتكار صورة للمدرسة وطلابها، والتي تشكلت لإحداث فعالية حيوية. وبناء عليه، فقد استثمر الطلبة القادمون من خلفية الطبقة العاملة اللغة الصينية، والتي لعبت دورا وظيفيا بوصفها رأس مال رمزي يساعدهم على تحدي إعادة الإنتاج الاجتماعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استثمار اللغة، النظام التعليمي *Pesantren*، إعادة الإنتاج الاجتماعي

1. Introduction

China's economic rise has led to the trend of learning Chinese worldwide. Indonesia has also seen the booming of learning Chinese. In many cities, people can find a number of Chinese language centers. This situation is a stark contrast with the one in 1965-1998, when the New Order regime issued policies that banned Chinese language and culture. As a result, Indonesians of Chinese descent ¹ who were born and grew up during the New Order era ¹ "were practically stripped of their heritage language" (Kurniawan and Suprajitno 2019, 1). The fall of the regime in 1998 reversed these policies. Today, Chinese is one of the most popular foreign languages taught and learned in Indonesia due to the increasing needs of human resources skillful in Chinese in various industries. Indonesians, regardless of their ethnicity, are eager to learn the language (He 2019, 109). Consequently, many schools include Chinese in their curriculum. Some of them are those whose students are mostly non-Chinese, such as public schools. Islamic boarding schools, locally known as *pesantrens*, also follow this step by offering Chinese to their students (Napitupulu 2015; Yudono 2012).

While traditionally emphasizing Islamic studies and traditional instructional methods, many *pesantrens* in Indonesia have made adjustment to modernity, by integrating and adapting their traditional curriculum into that of modern schools (Lukens-Bull 2001; Patriadi 2018). In their efforts to align their curriculum to meet the changing needs of the society and the effects

of globalization, some *pesantrens* choose Chinese, a high-in-demand language, as a foreign language taught.

There are *pesantrens* that put special emphasis on the Chinese course they offer. Some of them are, among others, Al-Majidiyah in Pamekasan, Ar-Risalah in Kediri, and Nurul Jadid in Probolinggo. Besides offering traditional Islamic education, those schools also offer education based on the national curriculum, namely, elementary, middle, and high schools. The high schools of those *pesantrens* require their students to take ¹ *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK)*, an international standardized test of Chinese proficiency that assesses non-native speakers' ability in using Chinese in their daily and professional lives, administered by China-based Hanban ²⁹ (Office of Chinese Language Council International). Their students also participate actively in Hanban-held *Chinese Bridge Competition*, a Chinese proficiency competition for students, and earn national recognition for that (Basri 2019; Ilimie 2018). Out of some *pesantrens* including Chinese in their curriculum, Nurul Jadid is the one that is well-known for its Chinese program.

Nurul Jadid High School started offering Chinese in its curriculum in 2004. Since then, supported by various scholarships, it has sent many of its graduates to pursue higher education in China (Yulianto 2017). After finishing their study, some of them returned to Indonesia to teach Chinese at Nurul Jadid and other smaller *pesantrens* affiliated with Nurul Jadid. The alumni who graduated from China founded *Ikatan Keluarga Alumni Tiongkok Nurul Jadid (IKAT NJ)*, an association of Nurul Jadid China graduates. Grants received from Hanban and Indonesian Ministry of Education allowed Nurul Jadid to invite native speakers of Chinese to teach there for some years. Local Chinese language centers and institutions frequently visit Nurul Jadid to appreciate what it does in promoting Chinese among Indonesians, especially those who do not have Chinese ethnic background (Sun 2019; Zhang 2015). Today, its Chinese course has become its flagship program in its high school language specialization program.¹

¹High school education in Indonesia lasts three years (grades 10 to 12). In grade 10, students receive a common general academic core curriculum. In grades 11 and 12, students can specialize in sciences (physics, chemistry,

The inclusion of Chinese in Nurul Jadid's curriculum highlights the importance of social aspects in approaching second language acquisition, especially in today's globalized world. Duff (2019) states that the nature of language teaching and learning is multifaceted, and the social dimensions of learning receive considerable prominence. Duff's statement underscores the importance of social dimensions of Chinese in examining Nurul Jadid's endeavors in offering Chinese, a language which has no religious and cultural connections with the school, and its students' motivation to invest in the language. In analyzing the trajectory of Chinese in Nurul Jadid, we focus our inquiry on the social context ² of the school and the students, including the school's history and networks, and the imaginary communities of its alumni and Chinese speakers. Hence, this study specifically investigates two questions: (1) how does Nurul Jadid promote Chinese language learning? (2) why do its students invest in Chinese language?

2. Theoretical Framework

In answering those research questions, we draw on Crystal's concept of global language (2003). He opines that in order to attain a global status, a language should penetrate community of non-native speakers of the language. This can be achieved if the language has a strong fundamental, namely, "the power of its people" (Crystal 2003, 9), which in the past, was the military power. However, nowadays the power that can transform a language into a global language is the political and economic power.

It is no doubt that English is still the dominant global language. However, currently there are a few contenders for the status of global language, one of which is Chinese. The ascendancy of Chinese as a global language is ²¹ the result of the success of China's economic development, which started in 1978. In its report in 2019, The World Bank wrote that China's GDP was the

and biology), social sciences (economy, sociology, and geography), or languages in which English is a compulsory subject, and other foreign languages depending on the resources schools have. Other foreign languages Nurul Jadid offers are Arabic and Chinese, which many of its students choose to study.

second highest in the world (World Bank 2019). Its economic success transforms China into “an important engine of world economic growth” (Xie 2019, 103), which makes China politically and economically more powerful than it used to be, and this renders China increasingly influential in the world’s stage. According to Crystal, the language of a country that is internationally important ¹ “would suddenly have found itself with a global status” (2003, 10). China’s political and especially economic power, thus, has laid a strong foundation for Chinese to acclaim it ¹⁵ as a global language. The new role of Chinese as a global language creates a strong demand for learning Chinese around the world, a phenomenon scholars describe as “Chinese fever” (Scrimgeour 2014).

“Chinese fever” has also been sweeping over Indonesia, triggering a sharp increase in the number of people learning Chinese in Indonesia. This occurs because Chinese is perceived a key that opens door to golden opportunities, namely, Chinese can pave the way for a better future. The interest of ³ learning Chinese is also supported by the policy issued by the Ministry of National Education in 2004, which formalized Chinese as a second foreign language subject set in curriculum and taught in public schools (Sutami 2007; Zong and Liu 2007). The issuance of this policy “strengthens the position of Chinese language in Indonesia and attracts people to learn it” (Kurniawan and Suprajitno 2019, 2). Learning the language is seen as an investment they do through language education. That is why many educational institutions, including Islamic schools, offer Chinese language subject. Offering Chinese in Islamic educational institutions is often seen as a bold step because traditionally, Chinese is not associated with Islam. Quoted by Antara news portal, Fachrul Razi, the Minister of Religious Affairs, said that the mastery of Chinese would sharpen the competitive edge of the graduates of Islamic school (Prihantoro 2020). Islamic educational institutions should prepare their students “to be able to cope with the modern world” (Azra 2015, 59), because not all Islamic school graduates become “religious experts,” and that is why ⁶ “Indonesian Muslim society had demonstrated a need for

more schools that give students non-religious subjects combined with some religious values and practices” (Zuhdi 2006, 420). Due to the importance of Chinese in contemporary world, teaching the language in Islamic educational institutions would provide an added value for their students. Bourdieu’s theory of social field can explain this phenomenon succinctly.

According to Bourdieu (1998), social field refers to a network of structures and relations, in which interactions, transactions, and events occur. The occurrence of interactions, transactions, and events influence and are influenced by a set of dispositions, such as beliefs, perception, attitudes, and practices acquired and formed through experiences in life. Quoting Bourdieu, Thompson (2014) writes that social field is a like football field, and

² the game that occurs in social spaces or fields is competitive, with various agents using differing strategies to maintain or improve their position. At stake in the field is the accumulation of capitals: they are both the process in, and product of a field. (Thompson 2014, 67).

The phrase “at stake” in the quotation above emphasizes the importance of capital in social field.

Originally, the term “capital” is used in economics. However, Bourdieu uses it ⁴ “in a wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks or circuits within and across different fields” (Moore 2014, 99). Bourdieu divides capital into two, economic capital, associated the possession of material wealth and assets, and symbolic capital, associated with the possession of legitimacy, prestige, and honor. Symbolic capital, according to Bourdieu, is like ¹¹ “a ‘credit’ which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees ‘economic’ profit (1993, 75). Thus, although it is not quantifiable in monetary value, symbolic capital has the potentials to be converted into economic capital.

Bourdieu (in Moore 2014) mentions that symbolic capital has some forms, two of which are ²⁵ social capital and cultural capital. The form that is relevant to ^{the} analysis in this paper is cultural capital. Cultural capital is intangible resources that people can have. These resources are, among others, educational qualifications, knowledge, skills, and behaviors. The possession of desired form of cultural capital can improve the position and status of those who have it, and give them better access to material possession and wealth. In this way, cultural capital is indirectly convertible to economic capital in the social field. An example of social field, in which cultural capital (in the form of the mastery of a language) is converted to economic capital is linguistic market (Bourdieu 1991).

Coined by Bourdieu, the term “linguistic market” is widely used in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Linguistic market is a field in which linguistic resources, as forms of cultural capital, are used for ¹⁷ “procuring a certain material or symbolic profit” (Bourdieu 1991, 66). In line with Bourdieu’s statement, people who have the mastery and/or competencies in languages that are in demand can capitalize on their linguistic skills. They can use their linguistic skill to acquire material and economic gain, which they employ as a springboard for challenging social reproduction.

According to Bourdieu, social reproduction is closely related to education, family, and social class (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). He contends that education legitimates social reproduction. As a cultural capital, education plays ²⁸ a central role in the process of social reproduction, due to ^{the} fact that the inequality in cultural capital reflects the inequality in social class. Instead of mitigating the inequality, schools perpetuate the cultural capital of the dominant class. This is done by rewarding students who have such cultural capital and punishing those who do not. Bourdieu is of the opinion that school is important in preserving the social exclusion by imparting the cultural capital of the dominant class. In this paper, we argue that while it maintains the social exclusion, imparting the cultural capital of the dominant

class can help disadvantaged students navigate social structures that are unfavorable to them. By acquiring the cultural capital of the dominant group, those who experience inequality can climb the social ladder.

¹⁹
3. Methods

3.1. Participants

In this study, we employed a qualitative research design. A total of thirteen people participated in this study. They were teachers, students and alumni of Nurul Jadid High School. Data were gathered through in-depth interview sessions with the participants. The interviews were conducted at Nurul Jadid and in Surabaya where the alumni we interviewed are currently working. At Nurul Jadid, we held six interview sessions with teachers and students. In Surabaya, we held one interview session with the alumni. We use pseudonyms in order to maintain privacy and confidentiality of the participants. ¹⁴ Table 3. 1 shows the demographic information of participants.

Table 3. 1: Participants' demographic information

| Pseudonym | Gender | Occupation | Age | Number of Years Teaching | Graduated from Nurul Jadid |
|----------------|--------|---------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Leni | Female | High school student | 18 | - | - |
| Wati | Female | High school student | 18 | - | - |
| Yeni | Female | High school student | 17 | - | - |
| Andi | Male | High school student | 17 | - | - |
| Mahdi | Male | High school student | 18 | - | - |
| Salim | Male | High school students | 18 | - | - |
| Erwin | Male | Nurul Jadid Chinese teacher | 23 | 1 | Yes |
| Kamil | Male | Nurul Jadid Chinese teacher | 33 | 14 | No |
| Eni | Female | Nurul Jadid Chinese teacher | 22 | 4 | Yes |
| Fatimah | Female | Nurul Jadid Chinese teacher | 22 | 4 | Yes |
| Sandi | Male | Nurul Jadid Chinese coordinator | 28 | 8 | Yes |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|---|----|-----|-----|
| Wawan | Male | Islamic elementary school Chinese teacher | 22 | 0.5 | Yes |
| Desi | Female | Islamic elementary school Chinese teacher | 22 | 0.5 | Yes |

The students were studying in languages specialization, with Chinese as their concentration. All the male teachers interviewed are currently teaching Chinese courses, while the female teachers interviewed are teaching extracurricular Chinese in the *pondok* (dorm) only.

3.2. Procedures and Data Analysis

Each interview session lasted 40 to 90 minutes. We employed semi-structured and open-ended questions for the interview. In designing the questions, order to ensure the validity of the interview, we used Castillo-Montoya’s interview protocol refinement framework (2016), which consists of four phases, ²⁴ in order to ensure the validity of the interview questions. First of all, we made sure that the questions aligned with our research questions. Next, the questions we drafted in the first phase were modified in such a way that those questions were like inquiry-based conversation, namely, ²⁶ “an interview protocol that balances inquiry with conversation” (Castillo-Montoya 2016, 828). After that, we tried to get the feedback from our colleagues on the questions that we had modified. We used their feedback to improve the clarity, simplicity, and answerability of the questions. In the last phase, that is, “piloting the interview protocol,” ¹³ we tried “simulating the actual interview in as real conditions as possible” (Castillo-Montoya 2016, 827). We piloted the questions with the people who mirrored the characteristics of our participants. In this phase, we paid attention to what we could improve, and made the final revisions.

We categorized our participants into students, teachers, and alumni, and accordingly, we designed three sets of questions. The questions for the students revolved around how and why they learned Chinese, the challenges in learning, and their plan for the future, both in local and

national context. The questions for the teachers were about their experience in teaching Chinese, school vision and mission, curriculum, and challenges in teaching the language, and the ones for the alumni were related to how and why they learned Chinese, the use of learning Chinese, and their current working experience. During the interviews, we used Indonesian to get richer and deeper insights about the participants' views on learning and teaching Chinese. All the interview sessions were audio recorded.

To maintain data validity, we did the following: (1) we crosschecked the data we gathered from one informant by comparing them to the data we gathered from other informants; (2) after transcribing the interview, the transcription was given back to participants for member checking. Each participant was invited to read the transcripts thoroughly for data clarity and accuracy.

The data obtained were then analyzed using the framework of narrative inquiry, that is, a qualitative approach that examines experiences and present them in the form of narrative. ⁷ Narrative inquiry focuses on “how individuals assign meaning to their experiences through the stories they tell” (Moen 2006, 60), and its sample size can be quite small, usually less than 20 informants (Kim 2016). This occurs because the researchers work with narrative text, namely, qualitative data, which is usually rich in detail, and each unit of data has “many hundreds of ‘bites’ of information” (Lewis and Nicholls 2013, 117), and the adequacy of sample is dependent upon the appropriateness of data, not the number of the informants ¹⁰ (O’Reilly and Parker 2012). Narrative inquiry ⁵ is a useful approach in research on education because it can ⁵ “tap the social context or culture in which teaching and learning takes place. ... and illuminate ⁵ complex problems in teaching and learning” (Webster and Mertova 2007, 13). Because of this reason, we apply narrative inquiry in this project. It helps us understand our participants’ experiences. We are aware that the inquiry is subjective. Nevertheless, it can uncover the complexities of meanings reflected in the narratives our participants tell us.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Findings

The research questions of this study concern (1) how Nurul Jadid promotes Chinese language learning, and (2) why its students invest in Chinese language. Results of the in-depth interviews yield findings concerning Nurul Jadid's endeavors in promoting Chinese language learning, and the reasons why its students invest in the language.

4.1.1. Nurul Jadid's Endeavors in Promoting Chinese Language Learning

Nurul Jadid started to offer Chinese in 2004. Kamil, the senior Chinese language teacher, explained the rationales of offering Chinese. He said,

...from religion, yes, we do have a bit of, what is it? ... a kind of guidance, namely, "Go to China to seek knowledge," actually becomes our motivation to learn. So (it is) from there, from (our) Prophet's saying, "Go to China to seek knowledge." That is one of the foundations. Second, looking at China's economic development back then in 2004 was better than other countries, was more stable at that time. Third, now this third one is the real motivator which supported us. We got grant, from the government at that time, this school, this building, so we got building, we got funding, but not in the form of money. We were provided a place, building complete with its facilities. So, these three aspects became our rationales.

Kamil, who was one of a few teachers initiating the inclusion of Chinese in the school's curriculum, said that they were driven by the ¹⁶Hadith (the sayings) of the prophet Muhammad that encouraged His followers to ¹⁶seek knowledge as a far as China, the rise of China, and the funding from Indonesian government. Among the three driving factors, it seemed that at first the funding was the basis of the inclusion of Chinese in the curriculum. It occurred because financial resources were needed to run an educational program. However, as time went by, the

China factor and the religious guidance played more stable roles in driving the Chinese language program in the long run.

Before offering Chinese to its students in 2004, Nurul Jadid received a grant from the government. The grant was used for improving the quality of Nurul Jadid's education, by constructing a building and changing the structure of its curriculum. In this way, Nurul Jadid tried to improve the quality of its education. One change that Nurul Jadid made was including Chinese in its curriculum. Chinese was chosen because, in Kamil's opinion, China's economic development created a strong demand for speakers of Chinese. In Bourdieusian term, this development changes the linguistic market in Indonesia. Before, Chinese was seen as a language that is less valuable. Now, it is seen as a language that has greater values compared to some other foreign languages. Thus, this factor drives Nurul Jadid to promote Chinese. In so doing, Nurul Jadid demonstrates at least two endeavors.

Nurul Jadid's first endeavor is creating the school's image, that is, an Islamic school, a *pesantren* with top notch Chinese program. The school promotes itself as being more than capable to produce human resources skillful in Chinese, through publicizing the achievements of its students, such as winning various Chinese language competitions and obtaining scholarships to pursue college (undergraduate up until graduate) degree in China. Sandi, a junior teacher, describes this endeavor succinctly.

Recently after Novi [a Nurul Jadid alumnus who is pursuing his doctoral degree in China now] went to China, we have been more widely recognized outside, so that the sounding of our school starts to increase, especially its language specialization program. ... We started to get more attention when Novi won the competition and went to China. And we got another alumnus who went again, and again continuously. We also won in some [Chinese competition] events, ... The school started to pay attention and promote Chinese language.

In Sandi's opinion, the school at first did not think that the course would attract students and potential new enrollments although it had already decided to offer Chinese and received grant from both Indonesian and Chinese government that enabled the school to have native Chinese language teachers for a number of years. However, it changed its mind when it saw the achievements of some Chinese language students. Students who won Chinese language competitions and obtained scholarship in China became the school's poster boys/girls for its Chinese language program. Sandi tells an encounter he once had with students who hoped that they could study in China later when they graduated, and with potential enrollments who said that many Nurul Jadid students went to China.

The image of Nurul Jadid as a school that enables its students who did not learn Chinese prior to their study there to win Chinese language competitions and to get scholarships to study in China is very good for the school. Erwin, another teacher, says that the fact that Nurul Jadid can train its students to win Chinese language competition and help them get scholarships is very positive for the school's image. In Erwin's and his fellow teachers' opinions, the achievements of Nurul Jadid students help the school's effort in creating an image of a school offering good Chinese language program.

Nurul Jadid's second endeavor in promoting Chinese language learning is using religious guidance. Nurul Jadid's characteristics as *apesantren*, which is definitely founded on the principles of Islam, make it difficult to include Chinese in its curriculum because the language has no cultural or religious connections to Islam. Before the inclusion of Chinese in its curriculum, there was a fear that teaching Chinese in Nurul Jadid would devalue Arabic. Arabic is the most important language in Islam because it is the Quran, the Hadith, and religious knowledge of Islam is ⁹ written in Arabic; "hence, the language has taken a premium position, above and beyond, all other languages" (Buang 2010, 38). There was also another fear that teaching and learning Chinese would lead to deviating from Islam. These fears served as the

barrier for Nurul Jadid to offer Chinese to its students. So, guidance from the religious perspective was needed to handle the fear.

To overcome the barrier, Nurul Jadid used the religious guidance from two sources, namely, the Hadith and the advice of a *kyai* (religious leader). As Kamil mentioned, since the prophet Muhammad encouraged His followers to seek knowledge as far as China, teaching and learning Chinese was not against Islamic principles. Nevertheless, it was still not easy to offer Chinese. Since teaching and learning a language cannot be separated from the culture in which the language is embedded, Nurul Jadid and its students could not avoid Chinese culture in teaching and learning Chinese. This would give them problems because there were some elements of Chinese culture which might be unsuitable to Islamic laws. Kamil recalled his experience in solving this problem:

We consulted our *kyai sepuh* [regarding the plan to include Chinese language in the curriculum]. He supported us, really supported us. He just said this, “Just learning the language is not a problem. ... Learning [Chinese] religion is prohibited, but learning the language is alright.” Then, he conveyed to us that the barrier is culture. If the culture carries religious association, it is prohibited. As long as the culture does not contain any religious elements, we are allowed [to study the culture]. That is from *kyai sepuh*. I convey that also to my students and [fellow] teachers here.

Finding support from the *kyai sepuh*, Nurul Jadid proceeded with the plan.

Nurul Jadid’s endeavors in promoting the teaching and learning Chinese in its school are successful. Inspired by its success, Nurul Jadid consistently provides Chinese classes for its students. Currently, the school’s Chinese language specialization program has six classes, divided into two in accordance to gender segregation in Islamic tradition, three for male students and three for female students. Each class has twenty to thirty students. There are also two special classes, dubbed as excellent classes, one class for male students, and one class for

female students, which put and promote Chinese as the “marker of excellence.” Students wishing to join this special class have to pass a selection process. Most of them who are admitted to this class are passionate in their Chinese learning. Obviously, Nurul Jadid spends a lot of financial resources in providing such classes for its Chinese language specialization program. Nevertheless, being an Islamic school, Nurul Jadid still maintains its Islamic identity by demanding its students to take religious subjects, besides the secular ones, as stipulated in the national curriculum. By so doing, Nurul Jadid creates an image of itself as a *pesantren* that embraces modernity, in this case, offering Chinese to supplement the traditional religion learning. Chinese, in this case, is depicted as a perk students can get in Nurul Jadid.

To sum up, realizing the importance of Chinese due to China’s economic rise, Nurul Jadid includes Chinese in its curriculum. It believes that mastering Chinese can sharpen the competitive edge of its alumni. So, in current linguistic market, Chinese language proficiencies can produce linguistic profit. Chinese language learners are able to exchange their competence in Chinese for economic gain, such as employability. Thus, by teaching Chinese as a subject that gives employability to its graduates, Nurul Jadid, “[is] not only capable of maintaining its existence, but is also able to respond to the changing needs of the society” (Azra 2015, 63). However, it is not easy to teach a language that is hardly related to Islam. So, in promoting Chinese, the school uses religious guidance from an authoritative religious text, the popular Hadith, and an authoritative religious leader, the *kyai sepuh*. The China factor and the religious guidance serve as ideological underpinnings of the continuity of the inclusion of Chinese in Nurul Jadid’s curriculum.

4.1.2. Reasons of Nurul Jadid Students’ Investment in Chinese

Language has a connection with economy. Language resources can be converted into sources of economic capital. This is the case with the students of Nurul Jadid who choose

language specialization program. Since its introduction in Nurul Jadid in 2004, Chinese has been able to attract students' interests in learning the language. Their perception that Chinese is not compatible with their faith has been quashed by the guidance from the authoritative religious texts and leader.

Most students interviewed admitted that China's economic rise amazes them. This is a stark contrast with the situation during the New Order era. Herlijanto (2017) writes that in general, the perception of Indonesian public toward China is getting more and more favorable. In line with Herlijanto's findings, Nurul Jadid teachers and students have favorable perception toward China. The students translate their favorable perception into the interest in learning Chinese language and culture, which they think as unique and fascinating. Sharing first "contact" with Chinese, some students reveal their fascination with it. A male student, Salim, says:

Well, it is interesting [to learn Chinese]. Different from other languages, in other languages, we probably learn probably grammar only. In Chinese, there are three [parts of a Chinese character], *shengmu*[initial], *shengdiao*[tones], *yunmu*[final]. and also *Hanzi*[Chinese characters].

Wati, another student, adds:

I never found any languages as beautiful as Chinese. It is because of the tones, the melodious pronunciation, and the beautiful writings. If I write *Hanzi*, I feels like drawing. So, Chinese is fascinating, ... [It]challenges me more to learn [the language] because it is different from other languages.

Positive perception toward the rise of China and Chinese traditional culture, reflected in the language, makes the country attractive for Nurul Jadid students. Their cultural background, which renders Chinese culture foreign to them, contributes to this interest because Chinese culture is something new for them. Their interest and motivation in learning Chinese are getting

bigger when they realize that they can get ²⁰ a wider range of symbolic and material resources by investing in Chinese, which, in Bourdieusian terms, is a cultural capital.

Studying in an Islamic educational institution, students interviewed reveal that the religious guidance, which does not prohibit them to learn Chinese, also motivates them to learn Chinese. They said that the ¹⁰ Hadith that encouraged Muslims to seek knowledge as far as China encouraged them to study Chinese. They also said that Chinese taught in the school was in line with Islamic principles, namely, Chinese language and culture, even taught by the native speakers, did not contain any Chinese religious elements. Thus, the condition surrounding the teaching and learning Chinese does not compromise their religious belief. Surely, it gives them peace of mind. Therefore, their parents are supportive. One student, Maman, said:

No, [my parents] do not force me [not ¹ to learn Chinese]. ... I should be able to manage my time to learn Chinese, as well as to learn religion.

Another student, Andi, explained:

At first, [my parents] asked me [to study Islam] because I will graduate as a *santri*, a *pesantren* alumnus, who must know Islamic scriptures. But that is my father. My mother is different. She is more like “it is up to you, just follow your passion.” She does not press me to learn anything, but she allows me to do what I like.

Religious guidance and parental support make students who have decided to study Chinese believe that there is nothing wrong in studying the language. They are even motivated more by the fact that many of their seniors won Chinese language competitions and received scholarship to pursue their college education in China.

The teachers interviewed explained proudly that many Nurul Jadid students won *Chinese Bridge Competition* at the regional level, so they represented East Java in the competition at the national level, usually held in Jakarta. Those who won the national level competition would represent Indonesia at the international level, usually held in China. One teacher, Erwin, said

that the students participating in *Chinese Bridge Competition* had never been to Jakarta and China. So, the fact that they went to the capital and overseas, with all expenses were paid by Confucius Institute, really bolstered their confidence, and thought that their investment in Chinese language was not fruitless. Even this fact made their juniors think of studying Chinese. Besides that, he also stated that it had been ten consecutive years where Nurul Jadid graduates were awarded scholarships from Chinese government that allowed them to study in China. Echoing the talk among students, Sandi, one teacher, said:

They are like ‘Oh, many Nurul Jadid students went to China.’ So, probably, it is also an information for them that ‘later can study in China, too.’

A student, Desi, said,

I was amazed, seeing our seniors can be like that [winning the competition and being awarded scholarship]. That is one of the things that motivated me [to study Chinese].

Upon graduation, most of all Nurul Jadid alumni who got scholarship to study in China return to Indonesia to pursue their career here. Only a few work overseas as professionals. Some work at Nurul Jadid as teachers. Occasionally, there are some who go back to Nurul Jadid to share their experience and to motivate students to get a scholarship and to study in China. One notable alumni, Novi Basuki, is said to inspire his juniors to study Chinese diligently. A student, Wawan, said,

So, at first, I was motivated [to study Chinese] because of our senior, Novi Basuki. ... He is very successful, for example participating in competitions. ... He is a native Indonesian, but in terms of language skill, he indeed possesses the skill just like the (Chinese) people there and... he has a lot of capabilities.

Another student, Salim, said.

Wang Xiaoming [Novi Basuki’s Chinese name]. I want to follow his steps. ... He used to share his experience here.

To motivate their students to study Chinese, the teachers often emphasize the importance of getting scholarship to study in China. Kamil said,

The students want to study in China. So, the school shows them the successful alumni in order that they emulate their success. ... So, I motivate them. I just tell them the success stories of the alumni. ... I tell them the experience of their seniors [who were awarded scholarship]. ... I just tell them so that they can get motivated.

Thus, for current students, their seniors who have succeeded in getting scholarships to study in China become their role models. They represent the image of a Nurul Jadid student, that is, a student who has knowledge and modern skills, in this case, the mastery of Chinese, and a firm foundation of Islamic faith.

In a nutshell, Nurul Jadid's endeavors in offering Chinese bear fruits. The school's image, in Zuhdi's opinion (2006), the blend of modern skill with religious value, namely, a school that offers top-notch Chinese language course equipped with Islamic values, attracts students to learn Chinese. All students admitted to Nurul Jadid had no Chinese experience prior to studying there. However, as proven by the success and achievement of the senior students and alumni, the school is able to motivate the students to learn the language. The success of learning Chinese, is objectified as the perceived benefits of investing in the language, for example, increasing their chance to get scholarship for their college degree and helping them get a good job upon graduation.

4.2. Discussion

An interesting finding of this study is that Nurul Jadid is successful with its Chinese language program. The success is due to the efforts it crafts carefully, that is, projecting itself as a school that offers Chinese language course. This is not against Islamic principles, as seen in the religious guidance it gets from the authoritative religious text and leaders. It portrays

itself as a school that teaches modern skills, in this case, Chinese language skill, and religious knowledge, which are necessary for “Muslims to be able to cope with the modern world” (Azra 2015, 59). The achievements of its alumni and senior students attest its success. They also motivate the junior students to learn Chinese.

Heller (2010) writes that language skills have become a factor for value assignment, the process of which hierarchizes languages and their speakers. Arabic is undoubtedly the most important language in Islamic studies. However, because of China’s economic prowess and close Sino-Indonesian economic relationship, Chinese will be more beneficial in the economic sphere. Thus, seen from this perspective, Chinese language skill is “sellable.” That is why students who are interested in Chinese are motivated to invest in the language. They believe that competence in Chinese can be converted into some forms of material gains. So, in line with the discourse of language as profit (Heller and Duchêne 2012), they take Chinese a cultural capital they can accumulate for its perceived benefits.

Along the lines of Nurul Jadid students’ investment in Chinese language, further discussion is divided into two parts: acquiring social mobility and challenging social reproduction.

4.2.1. Acquiring Social Mobility

According to Norton (2013),⁸ language learners invest in a target language because they want to acquire a wide range of symbolic and, later, material resources. The target language serves as a cultural capital which breeds perceived benefits that they can reap in future. Norton’s opinion describes the students studying Chinese at Nurul Jadid well.

Due to its extensive network, Nurul Jadid often gets scholarship offers for its students to continue their study in China, provided that they meet the requirements. Many of them speak Chinese, which increases their chance of getting the scholarship. Hence, the cultural capital imparted by the school and accumulated by the students enables them to have mobility,

something that they cannot have, if they do not have the mastery of Chinese. Up to now, it has been ten consecutive years in which Nurul Jadid alumni get the scholarships to study in China.

The mobility of the alumni and teachers, as some teachers also continue their study in China, is also reflected in the form of transnational network, which is maintained by IKAT NJ (*Ikatan Keluarga Alumni Tiongkok Nurul Jadid*, an association of Nurul Jadid China graduates. The success stories of IKAT NJ members motivate Nurul Jadid students to acquire cultural capital, that is, Chinese language skills. Once they acquire enough cultural capital, namely, good proficiency of Chinese, they can make use of their Chinese proficiency for the sake of their mobility. Better Chinese proficiency means higher chance of getting scholarships. Getting scholarships to study in China is, then, seen as a kind of prestige, a symbolic capital. Had they not got scholarship, they would not have had a chance to study abroad because most of Nurul Jadid students were from working-class background. They acquire this symbolic capital by converting their cultural capital, namely, the mastery of Chinese. Teachers often emphasize the importance of getting scholarship to study in China, as a stimulus to accumulate as many cultural capitals as possible.

Many Nurul Jadid students imagine themselves to be a part of the community of students pursuing college degree in China upon completion of their study. Because all the students interviewed stated that they really wanted to go to college in China, their imagined community affects their Chinese language investment. They envision themselves as successful Chinese university students. Their vision can come true if they get scholarship, and the chance of getting scholarship is higher if they speak Chinese well. According to Nomura and Yuan (2019), this long-term motivation in language learning relates to the motivation to participate in the L2 speaking communities. So, Nurul Jadid students' motivation to participate in Chinese speaking community, i.e., studying in China, influences their long-term motivation, i.e., getting an overseas degree for their upward mobility. In the social field of Nurul Jadid students, there are

changing values of particular capitals, in this case, Chinese language, which used to be seen as unimportant, is now being valued. As Bourdieu mentions (quoted in Thompson 2014), social fields are like games, and therefore they are competitive. Each player tries hard to get a better position in order to win the game. Similarly, in this social field, Nurul Jadid students try to do their best to accumulate capitals, which help them get a better position. Viewed from this context, Chinese is needed as an instrument to get scholarships. Getting scholarship serves as a symbolic capital to earn prestige and socially upward mobility. In this way, the transnational network of Nurul Jadid alumni and teachers further influence the formation of the imagined community these high school students envision. The alumni's success stories highlight the importance of getting symbolic capital, namely, scholarship to pursue college education in China, and accumulating cultural capital, that is, Chinese language proficiency. Finishing their study in China, they use this cultural capital for challenging social reproduction.

4.2.2. Challenging Social Reproduction

Most Nurul Jadid students are from working-class family background, with limited financial resources. Because of coming from such a family background, their primary reason of choosing a school is affordability. Studying in Islamic schools, like Nurul Jadid, is a good choice. Firstly, it offers an education that fits with Islamic values, which many Muslim families view as important. Secondly, while there are a number of Islamic schools that charge their students expensive tuition fee, there are those offering cheaper alternatives. The schools that belong to the latter category are relatively affordable (Asadullah and Maliki 2018, 8). Nurul Jadid is one of Islamic schools belonging to the second category. However, despite the affordable education it offers, Nurul Jadid does not want to compromise its quality of education. It strives hard to provide an education which fits with the religious values it upholds and which increases the employability of its graduates. It adopts "balanced" curriculum, that is, a

curriculum that adheres to its religious values and that helps students develop their skills that increase their employability. In so doing, to use Nilan's word (2009), Nurul Jadid uses the "spirit of education" to help its students challenge social reproduction.

Bourdieu writes that education can legitimate social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Due to their limited cultural, economic, and social capital, students from working-class families may not be able to afford education that helps them build up their upward social mobility. Without external help, most probably they socially reproduce themselves, being unable to get out of their working-class status. Nurul Jadid is aware of the condition of their students. Although it is an Islamic school, it believes that not all of its graduates will continue their studies in Islamic studies and become experts in Islam. Some may do that, but many would probably pursue secular studies, or go into job market upon finishing their studies there. That is why Nurul Jadid offers courses that provide a skill helping its graduates increase their chance to be upwardly mobile. Chinese is chosen for that.

At first, Nurul Jadid chose Chinese because of funding consideration. Kamil said that Indonesian government awarded Nurul Jadid a grant for constructing a building and laboratories, and Chinese government provided resources for teaching Chinese, including sending native Chinese language teachers. Grants from both Indonesian and Chinese government financially helped Nurul Jadid offer Chinese course.

Due to financial and human resources – teaching/learning facilities and the availability of qualified native Chinese language teachers, students taking Chinese language specialization program excel academically. Those who are excellent often get scholarships from Chinese government. According to Kamil, in 2013, there were seven Nurul Jadid graduates studying in China, supported by scholarships from Chinese government. Those who do not continue their education can find a job relatively easily due to their good Chinese proficiency, as a result of rigorous training at Nurul Jadid. The mastery of Chinese increases the employability of its

graduates. Thus, Nurul Jadid views Chinese a key to socially upward mobility. Being aware of the perceived benefits of mastering Chinese, the school facilitates Chinese teaching and learning process. Due to the school's efforts in motivating them to learn Chinese, the students strive to accumulate Chinese language as symbolic capital. This occurs because, as exemplified by its graduates, Chinese enabled them to get scholarships to study in China and to give them higher chance of finding a job upon graduation. Chinese serves as a capital that they can use for challenging the social reproduction. This is also reinforced by religious guidance, in the forms of the Hadith concerning seeking knowledge in China, and of the advice of the religious leader who says that studying Chinese is not against Islamic principles. Social reproduction ¹⁸ “connects institutional educational practice and the construction of legitimate knowledge” (Darvin and Norton 2015,43). In Nurul Jadid's case, the Hadith and the advice of the religious leader renders Chinese to be constructed as legitimate knowledge accessible by their students ²³ who come from working-class background. Thus, ²⁷ the mastery of Chinese – their cultural capital – can be converted into other forms of capital in Indonesia's linguistic market, which increase the chance for their upward mobility and thus, challenge their social reproduction.

5. Conclusion

Nurul Jadid students' investment in studying Chinese is closely related to the school's endeavors in offering Chinese course. As a *pesantren*, Nurul Jadid is successful in integrating Chinese into its religiously-infused curriculum. Its endeavors are reinforced by the perceived benefits Chinese language offers, which can transform Chinese language into a cultural capital. Chinese language is objectified and commodified. It comes to be valued and acquired for the materials gains it can give through conversion in the linguistic market. Bourdieu uses the word market as a metaphor for highlighting that people use linguistic resources as a way of acquiring material or economic profit. In the case of Nurul Jadid students, their Chinese proficiency, which serves as cultural ²² capital, is converted into economic capital, that is, in the form of better

job prospect. Through Chinese language teaching and learning, the students can accumulate this cultural capital which they can convert into other forms of capital that they can use for their upward mobility, with which Chinese is indexically linked. This, in turn, becomes the driving force for Nurul Jadid to spur Chinese language learning for the next batch of students. This continuous cycle of acquiring and converting cultural capital, reinforced by the mobility and networking of Nurul Jadid alumni, sustains the students' Chinese language investment. In addition, due to the family background of most of its students, the Chinese language investment allows the students coming from working-class status to challenge social reproduction, or even to have socially upward mobility.

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