Education, Language Use and Shifting Identities among Ethnic Chinese Indonesians

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Introduction

Of all the peoples who have settled in the Indonesian islands over the last centuries, ethnic Chinese and their descendants form the largest group today. Issues regarding their political status, social and economical involvement, their assimilation into the host country, their education, and so on, have generated controversy and attracted much scholarly attention, from Dutch colonial times to the present. Building on existing scholarship, this research note traces changes to the education of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, especially in Surabaya, over the past century. It considers how political transformations and outside influences have together affected educational and language policies and caused changes in language use and ethnic identity among the Chinese minority. It concludes with a discussion of the impact of these changes on identity formation among young ethnic Chinese nowadays, with supporting evidence drawn from my recent research in Surabaya.

Before going further, it seems useful to summarise briefly the various categories that I will use in this note, and which have been applied to Indonesian Chinese both by themselves and others, during the twentieth century. Although most Indonesians have tended to see the Chinese as a single homogenous community, in reality the Chinese minority was historically far more diverse, and is still today divided into a number of subgroups, as scholarly research has long shown. Suryadinata (1976: 770, 1978: 142, 2002: 59), for instance, found the Chinese in Indonesia heterogeneous and complex, with contemporary differences stemming from the provenance of ancestral immigrants, early settlement patterns, cultural orientation, religion, social class, etc. Taher (1997) agreed that ethnic Chinese in Indonesia formed a socially and linguistically diverse community whose distinct differences were often overlooked by outsiders. The results of these disparities still appear in such things as languages spoken, socio-cultural behaviour and practices, socio-economic situation, and educational background, to mention a few.

The oldest division between Chinese groups goes back to the Dutch colonial era, when ethnic Chinese were traditionally divided into Indonesian-speaking peranakans and Chinese-speaking totoks (Suryadinata, 1978). This was when large numbers of mainland Chinese began to migrate to what is now Indonesia. They joined the existing stratum of Malay-speaking, ethnically-intermixed longer settled Chinese, called peranakan (meaning 'child of the [local] soil') in the literature. Peranakan were offspring of Chinese men who came as traders to Java hundreds of years ago. Most originated from Fujian Province, spoke Hokkien and married local Javanese, Balinese or Sundanese women. Their offspring developed a distinctive culture with an integrated set of cultural traits and language behaviours that were neither purely Hokkien nor purely Javanese (or Sundanese). Typically they spoke a distinct Hokkien-coloured

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2 I use the term etnis Tionghoa 'ethnic Chinese' to refer to Chinese Indonesians, since most of my subjects preferred the term "etnis Tionghoa" to "Cina" as they felt it did not sound as harsh and discriminatory. Some people have suggested that this term is a misnomer, since the major large ethnic groups in Indonesia such as Balinese, Sundanese, Javanese etc, tend to be named after their place of origins and/or vernacular languages. On the other hand, Chinese in Indonesia are of different provenances and ancestral languages, and thus belong to different ethnic groups in their ancestral land. See Feith and Castles, 1970: 318-354 for further discussion on sukuism “ethnicity” of Chinese Indonesians.
variety of Malay (in terms of syntax and lexicon) as well as Javanese or Sundanese at home or in public. Once established, they tended to marry among themselves. (Suryadinata, 1978b:9).

The totok (literally, ‘of pure blood’) arrived in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. They came from a variety of Chinese provinces and spoke dialects like Hakka, Cantonese, Foochow, Foochia, Hingwa, etc. These non-Fujianese immigrants were highly concentrated on the islands outside Java. At first they rapidly assimilated into the existing peranakan community and married peranakan women (Skinner, 1963:105); but as Chinese women also migrated late in the nineteenth century, intermarriage between immigrants soon followed, enabling them to preserve their cultural heritage, beliefs, values and language. Totok tended to be self-employed rather than professionals. After the colonial Dutch government ceased Chinese immigration in the 1930s, no others have migrated there legally. In time the totok community outgrew the peranakan community, not just in numbers but also in terms of its political and economic power, especially during the New Order period.

Finally, another important distinction cross-cuts peranakan and totok. Legally, ethnic Chinese Indonesians are either Warganegara Indonesia (WNI) or Warganegara Asing (WNA). Warganegara Indonesia includes any Chinese who holds Indonesian citizenship, while Warganegara Asing are classed as aliens without Indonesian citizenship. This division arose in 1955 when the Indonesian and Chinese governments agreed to abolish dual nationality for Chinese people in Indonesia, who were then required to take either Indonesian or Chinese citizenship. Many Chinese were indecisive, while others misunderstood what was happening and left their choice too late. By the time they finally opted for Indonesian citizenship it had already become very difficult to achieve, even for Chinese families with long histories in the country. Having a legal status of WNI plays a major role in an individual’s life as it entails better opportunities in education, business and many other spheres of life. Although many Chinese Indonesians’ roots go back several generations and they have been Indonesian citizens all their lives, the wider population still commonly differentiates them as Orang Cina or Tionghoa [Chinese], warga keturunan/WNI Cina, [Indonesian citizen of Chinese descent] or non pribumi [non-indigenous] as opposed to “pribumi” [indigenous]. However, if outsiders see them in this way, many current generation members of these communities do not so identify themselves, as I will discuss later.

Having established these various distinctions, I now want to turn to how the political and legal status of ethnic Chinese Indonesians is a crucial determinant in the choice of education or schools for their children.

Changing Socio-Political Situations: Changing Educational and Language Policies

The formal education of Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia has undergone substantial change in the last one hundred years, from the Dutch colonial era to today, as the following discussion shows. This section, which rests on published sources, interviews with subjects of my study, and personal experience and observation, provides a chronological overview of the subject, from colonial to contemporary times.

Pre-Independence (Dutch period)

Prior to the twentieth century, little is known about local Chinese education as there were, generally speaking, no Chinese schools. Wealthy peranakan families invited private tutors to teach their sons, normally in Hokkien. On 17 March 1901, however, under the influence of political movements in China, the Batavia peranakan Chinese community founded the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan or All Chinese Association [hereafter THHK]. Later branches established Chinese-language schools with the same name in

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major towns in Java, with classical Chinese the language of instruction. The students were the already localised peranakan who mostly spoke no Chinese except for some Hokkien terms and a few formulaic expressions.

Fearing the loss of control, and wanting to prevent peranakan from becoming too China-oriented, in 1908 the Dutch began building HCS Hollandsch–Chineesche Scholen [Dutch–Chinese schools] modelled on existing government schools for Europeans. Mostly well-to-do peranakan Chinese attended them, leaving native schools for lower class pupils. Dutch and some Malay served as the language of instruction. Largely due to their belief in the value of a good education for future employment opportunities, and also because the THHK only provided primary education outside a few big cities like Batavia, Surabaya, Tegal and Malang, peranakan students increasingly preferred Dutch schools to Chinese ones. Totok children, however, remained in the Chinese schools. Thus from the 1910s different kinds of schools with different curricula and languages of instruction existed alongside each other, catering for peranakan and totok Chinese of different social classes, cultural orientation, etc. The Dutch language schools thus opened divergent educational paths for peranakan and totok Chinese. From that time on dual educational systems—Dutch and Chinese—offered completely different sets of political, cultural and ideological values to each community, something that could only widen existing differences.

Further development occurred in the early 1930s, with the emergence of a totok community whose educational needs were serviced by the Kuomintang party that had successfully unified post-imperial China. Kuomintang schools used Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction, even though they were established and owned by various dialect groups and their associations—Hokkien, Hakka, Foochow, etc. Most teachers were Indonesian-born totok Chinese. As their economic power and political status rose, they also took over some of the schools formerly run by peranakan Chinese. By the late 1930s, most THHK schools were run by totok, for mostly totok children, while the majority of peranakan students either attended Dutch or Malay/Indonesian schools.

The eruption of World War Two changed this situation. Soon after the Japanese invasion in 1942, all Dutch and Dutch–Chinese schools were closed, forcing peranakan children at these schools to choose between Chinese, or Malay/Indonesian, language schools. Most opted for Chinese schools (Suryadinata, 1986:89). During this time, with more and more peranakan attending Chinese medium or Malay/Chinese medium schools, for the first time they were required to learn Mandarin Chinese. Thus, from 1942 to 1945, and even up to 1957, many peranakan children attended totok-operated Chinese-language schools. During the war, an Indonesian-oriented curriculum was also introduced, including some Japanese language classes.

In summary, during the first half of the twentieth century, four types of schooling catered specifically for ethnic Chinese. Three served peranakan students, who were spread among Dutch–Chinese schools, whether private or government sponsored, Malay–Chinese schools, which were predominantly government subsidized, or Chinese language schools. In class terms, elite children went to Dutch schools, where they were westernized; the middle class utilized Chinese schools where their children underwent re-sinification; the lower-class sent their children to Malay–Chinese schools, native schools (Malay), or none at all. Totok Chinese, on the other hand, went to Chinese schools that were mostly China-oriented. In turn, these different educational backgrounds, with different languages of instruction at school, guided the choice of languages in communication. Educational background also served as a rough indicator of cultural values, orientations, lifestyles, and affiliations, whether with the Dutch, with China (Beijing or Taiwan) or with local Malay people (Indonesia).

**Early Independence**

Early in 1945 the Japanese, who were losing the war, urged Indonesians to plan for their independence, including an independent educational system using incipient Indonesian as the medium of instruction. The Indonesians declared their independence
on 17 August 1945, but Allied forces soon reclaimed the country for its former colonial rulers. Dutch schools reopened, and the peranakan returned to them. Only after the Dutch officially transferred sovereignty to independent Indonesia on 27 December 1949 did all Dutch-affiliated schools close for good. In the meantime, thanks to educational grants for Chinese school graduates offered by both Communist and Nationalist China, more Chinese language schools were being established. With the end of colonialism, the peranakan Chinese had to choose once more between Chinese or Indonesian schools when, in 1950, a new Indonesian educational system began throughout the archipelago. Low standards in the new government schools, however, encouraged most ethnic Chinese parents to send their children to private schools, which also taught the national curriculum (Bocquet-Siek, 1985), or to Chinese schools.

The next important development came on 6 November 1957, when PM Djuanda, the Indonesian Minister of Defence, issued a decree aimed at the strict control of Chinese schools (Suryadinata, 1972, Greif, 1991, Clark, 1965). From 1 January 1958 all Indonesian citizens had to go to Indonesian schools, forcing most peranakan children into Indonesian-medium schools. From that time, only totok children who were classed as aliens went to Chinese schools where Indonesian was to be taught as a compulsory subject. Then on 16 October 1958, all Chinese schools operated by countries without diplomatic relations with Indonesia were officially shut. Thereafter Chinese schools started to diminish and the number of Chinese Indonesians literate in Chinese equally began to decline.

After 1958 the number of educational systems catering for Chinese Indonesians fell to two, based solely on legal status. Peranakan and totok Chinese with Indonesian citizenship went to Indonesian schools, while aliens, who were mostly totok, attended Chinese schools.

The Era of the New Order Government
In 1966, all formal Chinese schools were closed by the New Order government that had seized power after what was claimed to be an abortive coup d'etat in 1965 by elements of the Beijing-backed Communist party. Worse would soon follow. In 1967, a presidential decree on Chinese religion, beliefs and tradition (known as Presidium Instruction or Inpres No. 14/1967) prohibited all public expression of Chinese cultural traditions or associated activities. Chinese associations, Chinese mass media, Chinese literature and especially the use of Chinese characters all disappeared from public view. Chinese were also urged to change their names and discouraged from giving their children Chinese names. Since then, very few Indonesian Chinese, apart from WNA aliens, have used their Chinese names.

After being deprived of any education for almost three years, from 1968 students of former Chinese-language schools were accepted in Indonesian-language schools provided they had a special study permit from the minister of education and culture. Most of those affected by this ruling were alien totok. “Alien” students could also go to the special schools called Sekolah National Project Chusus (SNPC) [special project national schools], established by Presidential Decree No. B 12/Pres./1/1968. By 1975, all these schools had been converted into regular Indonesian schools or Sekolah National Swasta [private national schools], whose language of instruction was Indonesian, although Chinese was also taught for some hours a week.

Since 1975, the national educational system, with Indonesian as the language of instruction, has been the only one applied throughout the country. As a result, all ethnic Chinese Indonesian children can read and write in Indonesian but virtually none are

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5 Resolution no. 32, 1966 (TAP MPRS No. 32/1966) of the Provisional People’s Consultative Assembly expressly banned the use of Chinese characters in public.
6 The decree issued by Presidium Cabinet No. 127/U/Kep/12/1966 concerned name changing for Indonesian citizens who had Chinese names. Then a Presidium Directive No. 240/1967 (Inpres No. 240/1967) was issued to mandate assimilation of ‘foreigners’ and to support the previous directive of 127/U/Kep/12/1966 for Indonesian Chinese to adopt Indonesian-sounding names.
literate in Chinese. This educational system imposed a new frame of reference for both peranakan and totok children. It introduced new cultural models, a new cultural identity, new cultural values and new norms in language behaviour, all different from those of previous generations. The present generation of totok children have become Indonesianized, just like their peranakan counterparts, as is obvious in their typical use of colloquial Indonesian. These young people perceive themselves and their ethnicity quite differently from their parents and grandparents. Most consider themselves as either Chinese Indonesians or just Indonesians, with no Chinese labels attached. Although there are still differences in terms of lifestyle, family standing, social class, etc. within the ethnic Chinese community itself, this revolution in educational policy seemed to have blurred the former distinction between the two big groups of ethnic Chinese Indonesians, peranakan and totok.

Finally, another change worth mentioning is the rise of English as the only compulsory foreign language to be taught at all educational levels, including secondary and tertiary levels. In 1990 Presidential Decree No. 28 ordered that English be taught from the fourth year of primary school (Dardjowidjjo, 1998). Since then, many private schools allocating more time for English have been established, enabling parents who could not afford to send their children to study abroad to send them to these “special schools” instead. These schools have boomed in large cities like Jakarta and Surabaya. Many ethnic Chinese families, from both peranakan and totok backgrounds, sent their children to this type of school, including one of the four families I interviewed.

To sum up, under the New Order there was only one educational system, although some schools had more English in their curricula. The New Order’s insistence that all Chinese Indonesian children attend Indonesian schools removed one of the main barriers that had segregated the two main segments of the ethnic Chinese population. Both peranakan and totok children alike were shaped by the unitary Indonesian school system.

Post New Order Government
The toppling of the New Order regime, following the May riots in 1998, gave rise to a series of governments that seem more lenient towards the ethnic Chinese. In September 1998, President B. J Habibie issued a legislative reform which ended the discriminatory use of pribumi [indigenous] and non pribumi [non-indigenous]. Then in May 1999 he promulgated a presidential instruction permitting the teaching of Mandarin and lifted the regulation that required ethnic Chinese to produce proof of Indonesian citizenship when enrolling their children in schools or lodging other official applications. Since 1999 Chinese cultural activities have started appearing in public again. On 17 January 2000, all these activities were legalized by one significant socio-political change: President Abdulrachman Wachid’s Presidential Decree No.6/2000 annulled the already mentioned Inpres No. 14/1967 which had prohibited all public expression of Chinese culture and traditions. On February 2001 he also lifted the ban on using Chinese characters in public and on importing, distributing and trading all printed material using them, under a decree by the minister for trade and cooperation, No. 286/KP/XII/78. Chinese people were also allowed to use their original names, but most no longer cared to and have kept their Indonesian names. The young generations in particular, who identified as Indonesians, preferred their existing Indonesian-sounding names.

Following the government’s new policy on Mandarin Chinese, many private schools, especially those called “national plus” schools, teach Mandarin as a foreign language, either as an elective or a compulsory subject. A characteristic feature of “national plus” schools is, according to the association’s website, that “English is used as the predominant language for student learning in at least the core subjects of English, Mathematics, and Science [and that] students are able to communicate
formally and informally in both Indonesian and English”. These schools are mushrooming in big cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Batam, Pekanbaru, etc. Many have developed from the previously mentioned “special schools”, and have adopted their curriculum from schools in Singapore, Hong Kong, Beijing, Canada, etc. Mandarin is taught, using English as the language of instruction. Mandarin is offered in many formal educational institutions at all levels (from kindergarten to university) to Indonesian students from all ethnic backgrounds, including ethnic Chinese children who learn Mandarin as a foreign language.

To sum up, at present most children from ethnic Chinese backgrounds attend Indonesian schools although some prefer the “national plus” schools that also cater to ethnic majority children. Thus there seems to be another “division” in the educational system in Indonesia which affects Indonesian children from all ethnic backgrounds.

In conclusion, this section has outlined how political changes over the past century have reshaped educational systems and language policies. For ethnic Chinese Indonesians, these changes have, at different times, helped further segregate already heterogeneous Chinese communities or, as today, gradually neutralize or even unite the formerly divided peranakan and totok groups, in a process of Indonesianization for all. With intermarriages increasing between people with similar lifestyles and who now speak the same language (i.e. Bahasa Indonesia), this traditional division is no longer deemed appropriate.

Different Education and Language Use within Four Ethnic Chinese Families in Surabaya

It is now over forty years since Chinese schools closed in 1966. The younger generation of both traditional groups have emerged with languages and educational experiences different from their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and even in some cases from their siblings. The post-1965 generation of totoks, in particular—like their peranakan counterparts—are keen for their children to receive a good education. Thus, most of the young generations nowadays go to universities, either in Indonesia or overseas. Otherwise they enter the workforce in companies, factories, banks, etc. These young people now differ from each other in terms of educational and socio-economic or class backgrounds rather than in terms of socio-political or socio-cultural backgrounds.

As shown earlier, changing twentieth-century educational systems included changes in languages used for instruction. The complex outcomes of these policy shifts at the grass-roots level is revealed in the following short description of language use within four ethnic Chinese families from Surabaya, each of which contain members with different educational and language backgrounds. My data were collected from within families because, after forty years of closure, Chinese schools were not available for study. In any case, the family domain was the best place to find the richest variety of language use because family is a haven for discouraged or “forbidden” languages, as has always occurred for minority languages. In what follows “family” refers not only to the nuclear family but also to extended family members.

The first family is totok Chinese whose ancestral language is Hakka. The first generation, born in China in 1910s, migrated to Indonesia in the late 1920s. They

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7 http://www.anpsonline.org
8 Then many Chinese families had children who went to schools with different curricula. The eldest might have gone to Chinese schools while the youngest went to only Indonesian schools, while those in between went to both Chinese and Indonesian schools (the transitional generation).
9 Ethnic Chinese from different cultural or traditional backgrounds (peranakan and totok) and various political and dialect backgrounds (Cantonese, Hakka, Foochow, Hingwa, Teocheow, etc) all live in Surabaya (East Java) the second largest city in Indonesia. Both THHK and Dutch schools operated there.
10 Furthermore, when this research began, restrictions against the public use of Mandarin in Indonesia were still in effect.
11 I use the term ‘totok’ for simplicity of presentation and more specifically to refer to subjects with a distinctive totok cultural heritage i.e. the older generations who were brought up as such.
spoke Hakka, a little Mandarin and Ngoko Javanese. The first Indonesian-born generation, who appeared in the late 1930s, went to Chinese-medium schools and its members speak their ancestral dialect (Hakka), Mandarin, East Java Malay and Ngoko Javanese. They were brought up as totok, exposed to Chinese daily newspapers, periodicals and books, and were culturally oriented towards China. Many still actively speak Mandarin, either in their workplace or with friends and relatives who also speak the language. Some learned a little Dutch at school and can understand it to a certain extent. The generation that was born in the late 1950s initially attended Chinese-medium schools, but they were then forced to move to Indonesian-medium schools. They speak a mixture of Mandarin, East Java Malay/Indonesian and Ngoko Javanese.

Those born in the early 1960s, however, only experienced Indonesian-medium schools and their sole “Chinese” language exposure came from home or from Mandarin lessons with private teachers. At home they usually use Ngoko Javanese, even Peranakan Malay mixed with East Java Indonesian. They also speak standard Indonesian and some English with their siblings. The youngest generation, which was born in the early 1990s, tends to employ East Java Indonesian, which is sometimes mixed with standard Indonesian as their home language. Their parents and siblings address them in the same way. They are more exposed to English and other foreign languages, including Mandarin Chinese in more recent times. Although the first generation saw themselves as Hakka, most other family members perceive themselves as either Peranakan or Indonesians of Chinese descent. The youngest generation, however, views themselves as Indonesians.

The second family is a totok–peranakan Chinese family from a Foochow language background. The generation that was born in the 1920s went to Chinese-medium schools, and at home they speak Mandarin and their ancestral dialect plus East Java Malay. While the generation born from the mid-1940s up to the late 1950s went to Chinese-medium schools at earlier stages of their education, they later had to move to Indonesian medium schools. This family cohort has the richest repertoire of languages: at home they speak Foochow dialect with their parents, and a mixture of Mandarin, colloquial Indonesian and the local languages with siblings, friends and others. Some members of this group studied overseas after Chinese schools closed. Unlike their parents, who were merchants, they are professionals, speak Peranakan Malay and have been “peranakanized”. This group is usually more competent in standard Indonesian or at least colloquial Indonesian than their parents. At home they speak a mixture of Mandarin and their ancestral dialect in addition to East Java Malay/Indonesian and Peranakan Malay.

The third group in this family was those born in the early 1960s, who only experienced Indonesian-medium schools and whose sole “Chinese” language exposure was domestically, or through extra Mandarin lessons with private teachers. They speak Peranakan Malay mixed with East Java Indonesian at home. The youngest generation in this family, born between the 1970s and 1980s, all went to Indonesian and Indonesian–English schools. They employ Peranakan Malay, sometimes mixed with East Java Indonesian, as their home language, especially with their siblings. English and German words and expressions form part of the languages used at home

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12 Ngoko Javanese is the low variety of Javanese. Actually the variety spoken by ethnic Chinese residing in Central and East Java is slightly different from that spoken by Javanese speakers from those areas.
13 East Java Malay is a variety of Malay spoken in East Java.
14 This is a variety of Malay spoken by peranakan Chinese. It is a mixture of Hokkien, Malay, and Dutch or Hokkien, Malay and Ngoko Javanese.
15 East Java Indonesian is a variety of colloquial Indonesian spoken in East Java.
16 They are referred to as such because the first female generation in this family came from a peranakan background which also colours the family language use.
with siblings and some other family members who speak the code(s). They are Indonesian-speaking “totok” but their “totok” identity has been greatly reduced or even replaced by an Indonesian one. They tend to have a different attitude from previous generations towards their ethnicity. Many from this age cohort have become professionals and work in offices in Indonesia or overseas. While those born in the 1920s onwards perceived themselves as ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, and welcomed the idea of totok and peranakan, the youngest (the 1970s and 1980s) consider themselves as Indonesians or even overseas Indonesians for those working abroad.

The third family is peranakans whose ancestors spoke Hokkien. The generation born in the late 1920s went to Dutch-medium and Chinese-medium schools. At home they speak Peranakan Malay mixed with some Mandarin words and expressions. Sometimes they use Ngoko Javanese sentences as well as some Dutch. The next generation was born in the 1950s and went to Indonesian-medium schools. At home they speak a mixture of Peranakan Malay, East Java Malay/Indonesian and Ngoko Javanese. The next-to-youngest generation was born from the late 1970s onwards and attended Indonesian-medium schools. At home they speak Peranakan Malay mixed with East Java Indonesian. Some of them have recently taken up Mandarin, partly motivated by economic interests and partly out of curiosity. The youngest generation was born between the late 1990s and early 2000s, and two of them are learning Mandarin as a foreign language at school. The older generation considered themselves peranakans or Chinese Indonesians, while the young ones (1970s onwards) prefer to call themselves Indonesians.

The fourth family is also peranakan Chinese with a Hokkien background. All the generation born in the mid-1920s went to Dutch-medium schools. At home they speak Peranakan Malay with Dutch words, sentences and expressions mixed in. The younger generation was born in the 1950s and went to Indonesian schools. At home they speak Peranakan Malay with a few Dutch words and idiomatic expressions. The youngest generation was born between the late-1970s and late-1980s. They attended Indonesian-medium schools and speak East Java Indonesian mixed with standard Indonesian words, phrases or sentences as their home language. Later they studied overseas, so they use some English words and expressions in conversation with siblings and sometimes with parents, too. None of the youngest generation learns Mandarin. All members in this family viewed themselves as Indonesians, though some of the older ones affiliated themselves with Dutch as many of their relatives live there. Some among the 1980s age cohort are now professionals who speak European languages and frequently travel around the world. Interestingly, they identify themselves as multinationals, not just Indonesians.

To summarize, the data show that different age cohorts in each family attended schools with different languages of instructions which resulted in their different language use. From the foregoing it can be shown that changes in Indonesian socio-political conditions in the past century have not only caused variations in language use (repertoire) but, along with many other factors, these changes also helped shift the perception of their ethnicity among the youngest generations of these ethnic Chinese families. These shifts in ethnic identification cut across generations and group divisions.

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17 Some members of this generation studied overseas and acquired the language(s) spoken in the country(s) where they studied. They continued to speak those language(s) with their siblings when they came back to Indonesia.

18 Some include the motivation for integration and assimilation, a changing view of the world and their ethnicity, and also the discriminatory treatment at the hands of government and fellow countrymen from other ethnic groups.
Conclusion

Twenty-three years ago, Leo Suryadinata (1986: 204) observed that:

the younger generation totoks have rapidly become peranakanized. It appears that the new generation peranakans are being Indonesianized more rapidly than peranakanized totoks … in a continuum: totok is being peranakanized while the peranakan is being Indonesianized.

This observation no longer seems completely true. While totok children in the transitional period apparently underwent a process of peranakanization, in the next generation this process has led to both peranakan and totok becoming ‘Indonesianised’, so that differences between the younger generations of these communities have been neutralized. Consequently, I agree with Tan (1997: 44) who questioned the validity of the distinction between peranakan and totok, especially the distinction into totok. The young generation of totok descent also speak Indonesian like other modern Indonesians nowadays, in addition to the local, regional and foreign languages to which they are exposed. In her earlier study, Tan (1991) also found that the younger generation of ethnic Chinese identified themselves socially as Indonesian and were also Indonesian-oriented culturally. Tan’s conclusions well match my own observations of, and interviews with, young ethnic Chinese. Greif’s 1991 study of ethnic Chinese in urban Java and Bali also revealed that those in their 30s and 40s—who would now be in their 40s and 50s—also identified themselves as Indonesians rather than Chinese. In both cases, there is a shift in the perception of ethnicity among the young generation of ethnic Chinese communities towards being Indonesians.

In conclusion, changing socio-political constellations in the country have, directly or indirectly, changed educational and language policies in Indonesia. Consequently, different age cohorts and generations in the four Surabayan families in my study use different linguistic varieties, resulting in a complex language mix within each extended family. Although the four families began with different ancestral language and socio-economic backgrounds, they experienced similar socio-political and cultural changes over time and these produced similar trends in language change. Even though the findings of this study as reported here are not meant to be generalized, the subjects’ language behaviour, especially for the younger subjects, might be considered to reflect more generally the language behaviour of young ethnic Chinese in Surabaya or possibly even Indonesia nowadays, as do the shifts reported in their perception of their ethnicity.

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