

CHOOSING INDONESIA OVER ENGLISH-SPEAKING NATIONS: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PURSUIT OF EFL TEACHING QUALIFICATION

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Abstract

The study examines the decision making process of international students opting to pursue graduate level education in non-English-speaking country, Indonesia, to become English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers. Through a narrative approach, data was collected by using semi structured interviews with international students from diverse cultural background; South Korea, Brazil, and Mexico. The findings indicate that the ambitions of the international students are influenced by a combination of intrinsic motivations, including personal growth and cultural interest, as well as extrinsic factors such as career prospects, educational quality, and living environment. This analysis examines the impact of Indonesia's educational standards, cultural and geographical attractions, and career advancement opportunities on the decision-making processes of international students. The study indicates that international students perceive Indonesia as a favourable destination for EFL career development. It also identifies opportunities for institutions to better support these students by addressing their specific needs and improving employment pathways after graduation. The findings highlight Indonesia's increasing attractiveness as a destination for international EFL educators and indicate that promoting educational exchange can enhance international cooperation and contribute to the professional development of future teachers. Future research may investigate the educational experiences of international students from varied undergraduate backgrounds to enhance understanding of their journeys toward becoming educators in a global context.

Keywords: *Indonesia, decision-making process, EFL Teacher, International student*

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized society, the exchange of knowledge across borders and cultures has become increasingly commonplace. The scale of this global mobility is unprecedented, with a remarkable rise in the number of international students pursuing higher education abroad. In 2021, the number of such students exceeded 6.4 million, a dramatic increase from just 2 million in 2000 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023). Indeed, engaging in study abroad entails integrating an intercultural component into one's academic curriculum, therefore enhancing a more comprehensive global outlook (Lai & Kan, 2020). In sum, this trend highlights a profound and unparalleled shift towards global academic integration, reflecting both expanding opportunities for educational advancement and the growing recognition of diverse perspectives in the pursuit of knowledge.

International students weigh a range of factors when deciding to embark on education abroad. In recent study by Fakunle (2021), various factors were found to play a significant role in overall evaluation of educational institutions. These factors encompass different aspects with the very first is education offerings. The quality of academic programs, the efficiency of administrative processes, the condition of physical facilities, and the perception of the university's reputation are included (El Alfy & Abukari, 2020). Second, there is a strong drive to improve professional skills and make a valuable impact on others. This is evident in the pursuit of career growth and development (Tran, 2019). Third, Fakunle (2021) also emphasize the importance of experiential goals, driven by the belief that studying abroad will lead to

personal growth and fresh perspectives distinct from their experiences at home. Prieto-Arranz et al. (2023) argue the development of open-mindedness and maturity as the key outcomes of studying abroad. Lastly, international students consider economic factors such as financial capacity to cover expenses and the perceived value of investing in education abroad; the housing issue (Fang & Liempt, 2021).

Many international students often choose English-speaking countries as their top choices for studying abroad. Recent data indicates that the number of international students in educational institution within Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries has surpassed 4.3 million. It's appealing to observe the distribution of these students, 19% United States (US), 14% United Kingdom (UK), while both Australia and Germany account for 9% each (OECD, 2023). Additionally, more than one million overseas students participated in Optional Practical Training (OPT) at US universities and colleges in the 2022/23 school year, making the United States the top destination for international students (Institute of International Education, 2023). The students choose to pursue their studies in English-speaking countries because of the strong opportunities available. Universities in English-speaking countries are recognized for their high quality. QS Quacquarelli Symonds (2022) states, the QS global study report, published indicates that the leading destination countries for international students are the United States, Britain, and Canada. This pertains to the significant competitiveness of universities in the United States that achieve high positions in the World University Rankings. The United States boasts 94 of the top 200 universities globally, representing 47%, while the UK follows with 20 universities, making up 10%. Leading universities globally draw in a larger number of international students by offering sufficient learning resources, exceptional courses, and promising employment opportunities, thereby enhancing their competitiveness considerably (Ke H et al., 2022; Silvhiany, 2019).

Previous studies indicate that English-speaking countries are recognized by international students, leading to their selection as preferred study destinations. However, this does not imply that non-English speaking countries have not drawn any international students thus far. There is an increasing trend among international students to select countries where English is not the primary language. Wu et al. (2021) did a study that showed that foreign students chose to go to China. This is mostly due to the students' natural desire to learn, explore, and take on new tasks. Instead, the most convincing reason for them to move to China is their hope for a bright future there. In other hand, Rhein and Phillips (2022)'s research found that international students often choose Thailand as their study abroad location. The reason behind this is because many students, influenced by their own personal ideas about what it means to be an exotic traveler, see the East as a place of unparalleled natural beauty and cultural immersion. Study also indicates a rising interest among international students in selecting Indonesia as a study destination, one notable study is a survey conducted by Indah and Suyanto (2019), which highlights opportunities such as scholarships and geographical advantages as key reasons. Unusual study destinations like Indonesia are being increasingly selected by students to enrich their educational opportunities (Situmorang et al., 2021). This paper further explores the phenomenon of international students selecting Indonesia as a destination to pursue careers as EFL teachers, despite Indonesia's status as a non-English speaking country. International students, those seeking English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching qualifications often face unique decisions, particularly when choosing to study in non-English-speaking countries, Indonesia, with its distinct educational environment and cultural context, presents a unique setting for such academic pursuits. Martiningsih (2021) argues that adapting to an environment where English is the dominant language rather than the native tongue presents unique difficulties and opportunities for developing language abilities and shaping personal identity. While there is substantial research on international students pursuing

education in English-speaking countries such as United States (Bound et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2018; King & Bailey, 2021; Shu et al., 2020), Germany and UK (Abbas et al., 2021; Jaksztat et al., 2021; Ploner & Nada, 2020), Australia (Dos Santos, 2021; Sidhu et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020). There is a lack of investigation into the factors influencing international students' choice of Indonesia as a study destination. Nonetheless, the investigation into the motivations and decision-making processes of international students selecting non-English-speaking countries, like Indonesia for their EFL teaching qualifications, remains largely unexplored.

This study aims to examine the factors influencing international students' decisions to pursue EFL teaching qualifications in Indonesia. UNESCO (2023) defines international student mobility as the process by which individuals move from their home country to another country for the purpose of pursuing education, highlighting the distinction between the student's origin and destination countries. Hence, the framework that proposed by Schlossberg was used in this study. Schlossberg's Transition Theory helps examining the situation, self, support, and coping techniques during life transitions. Moving to a new country, facing cultural and linguistic barriers, and adapting to a new educational environment is a major shift for international students (Goodman et al., 2006). Schlossberg's theory emphasizes their self-motivation, situation, institutional support, and strategies for managing financial, academic, and cultural stressors. How students traverse these transitions and make career and personal growth decisions is explained by this framework. Subsequently, understanding these motivations and contextual influences provides valuable insights into the broader landscape of global education and career development, helping educational institutions in non-English-speaking countries better support international students and enhance their academic programs.

METHOD

This research utilised a qualitative methodology with a narrative framework. Qualitative research is very beneficial for investigating and comprehensively comprehending certain occurrences. It provides a robust method for acquiring insights on certain occurrences. Cohen et al. (2018) assert that qualitative research fulfils multiple functions, such as elucidating, delineating, documenting, formulating essential concepts, and producing or evaluating theories.

Respondents

International students attending a university in Palembang, South Sumatera, were the subjects of the study. Participants were required to be permanent residents of Palembang, South Sumatera, and enrolled in the study for a minimum of six months. The research encompassed international students originating from South Korea, Mexico, and Brazil.

Instruments

The primary approach of collecting information was semi-structured interviews, which are chosen for their capacity to generate detailed narratives that illustrate the nuanced path of foreign students. This will allow the researcher to analyze the factors of international students' decision to study in Indonesia. Dejonckheere and Vaughn (2019) state that semi-structured interviews, a form of qualitative data collection, offer insightful information about personal and, at times, delicate topics. By using a combination of open-ended inquiries and flexibility, researchers can delve deeply into participants' ideas, feelings, and views regarding particular issues. Moreover, this semi-structured interview consists of eight primary questions accompanied by various sub-questions aimed at elucidating the participants' educational backgrounds, attitudes, influences, academic focuses, and the factors that guided their decision

to pursue studies abroad in Indonesia. It also examines the participants' university selection processes, support networks, and the rationale behind their choice of a teaching major.

Procedures

Throughout the qualitative phase, the researcher reached out to several overseas students and provided them with a concise explanation of the study's goal. The interviews used in this study were semi-structured. During the interview, the researcher gathered information from students from a variety of countries who are currently or previously enrolled in a Master's degree program in language education with the goal of becoming English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. A face-to-face format was used for the interviews. Observations were made on campus for the data collection. The interviews and focus groups were both recorded using a mobile recorder, and the language used for the interviews was English.

Data analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission and transcribed. Etikan et al. (2016) argues that participants of the study should be apprised that they retain the right to decline answering questions or withdraw from the study at any point, even during the interview. Furthermore, the interview data will be analysed thematically. A thematic analysis observes that individuals' subjective experiences shape their knowledge of the world. Thematic analysis and case studies recognize that knowledge is co-constructed in social situations rather than objectively (Guest et al., 2014). After familiarizing with the data, basic codes were created. Each data unit related to the study issue was coded to describe. To create a comprehensive understanding of each student's experience, common codes were grouped into themes that aligned with key domains and were analysed across transcripts. Next, each theme was described to find its uniqueness and specificity.

FINDINGS

This study employed the narrative analysis to investigate the unique experiences of international students in Indonesia. The spoken narratives exchanged by the three overseas students are the particular focus of this qualitative investigation: a 33-year-old female from Mexico, a 30-year-old female from Brazil, a 46-year-old female from South Korea. Their stories provide insight into the decision making process to study abroad for teaching degree in masters in Indonesia as non- English speaking country to become EFL teachers.

Table 1
International Students Identity

Gender	Age	Status
Female	34	3rd semester in The English Language Education Magister Program
Female	36	Graduate of The English Language Education Magister Program
Female	46	1 st semester in The English Language Education Magister Program

Thematic analysis of the interview revealed specific influences on the decision-making process of international master's students without teaching degrees about their pursuit of master degree in English education in Indonesia to become EFL instructors. The influences are in Table 2:

Table 2
Themes and Subthemes about decision making process

Themes	Categories	Examples
1. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Influence	1.1 Travel and Exploration	<i>Julia Roberts she's a woman in her dirty thirty something like that the story is she got divorced she broke up with him also, after that she decides to go to the world to know the world. the first part is she go to the Italy so this is the eat part "eat pray and love" the first part of the movie she goes to the Italy yeah in the Italy they eating, enjoying, life, the food and the second part she goes to India and it's the pray part of the movie and she got involved with praying to the guru in India and Hindu and the third part of the movie is love and she goes to Bali and when we start to watch the movie my roommate she likes the movie a lot and I'd be like okay we watch that again but I like the part of her, I like the part of the food and the part of Bali and she likes the part of India and when we start to watch the movie she fell in love with India and I fall in love with Indonesia... I decided to come to Indonesia 2018 (Nami's interview)</i>
	1.2 Unexpected circumstance	<i>So, it wasn't something that I planned, because I came to Indonesia, I was visiting friends and so on, and COVID hit. I couldn't go back to Brazil, so then I was thinking like, okay, I am here, what should I do? And I didn't want just to spend my time doing nothing, like I couldn't really, jalan-jalan, I couldn't visit places because it was COVID, right? So, and I had friends here, so then.... then I started to apply (Robin's interview)</i>
	1.3 Friend's Recommendation	<i>Okay. I just like traveling and I had a friend first, which is Indonesian. So, I met her in other country. And she was working at that school. And she suggested, okay</i>
2. Quality, Aspiration and Opportunities in Education	2.1 Prior Teaching Experience	<i>I think it was very fortunate to have opportunity to work as a teacher, like in education field. Not like professional teachers, but anyway. So, I just happened to have chance to like share my knowledge. So, that's my like previous years. Then I also, I worked here as a teacher. So, using my previous knowledge. And so, then that made me like interest in education... I was already here. And I chose to study here. It's continuing the life here. And continuing (Lily's interview)</i>
	2.2 Thesis Purposes	<i>So, in that sense, here in Indonesia would provide me with that exposition to many languages and so on, and I wanted to do something good for my thesis also, right? So, I think in that sense, it would, yeah, yeah, fit very well (Robin's interview)</i>
	2.3 Future Career Opportunities	<i>Yeah if I like you know... I don't know like math if I go to the math teaching if there is a position in the school for teachers math they are going to choose their Indonesian teacher not the foreigners but if it is like a position for teaching English teacher it's more possible for me to get that position to get that job in Indonesia it (Nami's interview)</i>
	2.4 Accreditation and Reputation	<i>Especially this school, right? Yes. Yeah, here this... I heard this school is the best one in the town, right? Yeah. There's no other reason? So, that's good? (Lily's interview)</i>
	2.5 Desire to have English degree in different settings	<i>I think, like, I was teaching in Brazil for almost 10 years, and I think, like, maybe it's going to happen with the you also. I think that is a point, you want to do something</i>

3. Cultural and Geographical Appeal	3.1 Language and Culture interest	<i>different. So, I think it was, like, at the turning point, I went to Ireland, I had the experience there and just, like, yeah, living in the country, working and using English, but I didn't have any degree, right, to teach English or something like that. So then, and I was just here, just happened.</i>
	3.2 Safety	<i>So I was very excited when I decided to join the master's here. Because I think Indonesia is, I say like, it's a country inside the country, in a sense that there are a lot of cultures, there are a lot of languages, there are a lot of everything, and food, and people. And I think I was very excited to get to know that a little bit more (Robin's interview)</i>
	3.3 Home-like atmosphere	<i>because I am a foreigner, and I want to connect with people, I want to have the culture experience and so on, but I want to be safe also, because, like, you're coming, I am single, I come to a country that I don't know anyone there yet, and then I go and live in a village. So, I think the experience will be amazing also, of course, but maybe not that safe for me (Robin's interview)</i>
	3.4 Affordability	<i>... because all of the trees the weather is more similar to my grandma because but also it's kind of the city but it's not really like a city city, people live so that Sederhana here I like that because in my home place we've been also living like this and I think it gives me sense of home (Nami's interview)</i>
	3.5 Living Environment	<i>It's so awesome because the internet here is so much cheaper in Mexico even if you don't have internet in the house you can watch Netflix in your phone that's applicable because the internet is cheaper (Nami's interview)</i>
		<i>Well I don't see as the college, but the living in Indonesia. I like Indonesia, I like the weather in Indonesia, I like the people here, I like the food. More than the study part, the living condition (Nami's interview)</i>

1. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Influence

The international students confirmed that selecting Indonesia as a study destination was influenced by intrinsic motivations, such as a growing interest in the country, while others were swayed by extrinsic factors, including recommendations from friends or unexpected circumstances. So, in the decision to pursue further education, specifically a master's degree, one participant, Nami, was primarily influenced by personal motivations. She was influenced by the 2010 movie "Eat, Pray, Love," which starred Julia Roberts. She noted that the lead female character in the movie visits Bali, Indonesia. She was captivated by that region of Indonesia and found herself intrigued by the country as a whole,

"Julia Roberts she's a woman in her dirty thirty something like that the story is she got divorced she broke up with him also, after that she decides to go to the world to know the world. the first part is she go to the Italy so this is the eat part "eat pray and love" the first part of the movie she goes to the Italy yeah in the Italy they eating, enjoying, life, the food and the second part she goes to India and it's the pray part of the movie and she got involved with praying to the guru in India and Hindu and the third part of

the movie is love and she goes to Bali and when we start to watch the movie my roommate she likes the movie a lot and I'd be like okay we watch that again but I like the part of her, I like the part of the food and the part of Bali and she likes the part of India and when we start to watch the movie she fell in love with India and I fall in love with Indonesia”

After being impressed by Indonesia, Nami began to study the country, its language, and its culture, ultimately deciding to visit Indonesia,

“I decided to come to Indonesia and 2018 in February I come to Indonesia for the first time and I stayed here for 4 months I visit Palembang, Batam, Jakarta, Jabodetabek, Bali, Jambi a few part in South Sumatra because I was living in South Sumatra and yeah I when I was here for the first time for like 4 months I like it a lot because I could see the similarities from my culture and Indonesian culture and I wanted to come back when I was in Mexico I started to look for the opportunity to come back”

Nami began exploring the opportunities for living in Indonesia. It appears that obtaining a student visa could be a viable option, as she explains,

“euhm... I like Indonesia. I like Indonesia to live in and I want to live Indonesia in the future and when I was searching for this possibilities how to live in Indonesia for my Visa, one of the possibilities was student visa”

After feeling a sense of enjoyment from her visit, she gathered the courage to speak with her family about her desire to study master degree for English Education in Indonesia and her plans to stay for an extended period. In fact, Nami was a graduate in food engineering, and her family's influence motivated her to pursue a master's degree in education, given their extensive expertise in the field,

“They were shocked at first I explained the reason like I like Indonesia I want to go to visit and when I went back to 2018 and I told them like I like Indonesia so I'm trying to make a plan for further they were still shocked at first but they understand it”

“It's because my parents that they are teachers so I have like the skills to teach, I don't know if it's like the gene or because the environment where I grew up, but I have this skills for teaching so I start to teach and i like it”

The second participant, Lily, enjoys traveling to various locations. Subsequently, she encountered an Indonesian acquaintance in a different nation, who recommended that Lily pursue employment in Indonesia,

“Okay. I just like traveling and I had a friend first, which is Indonesian. So, I met her in other country. And she was working at that school. And she suggested, okay”

The third participant, Robin, was influenced condition or situational factor. She purposely visited Indonesia to celebrate a friend's occasion; nonetheless, her decision to pursue a teaching degree in Indonesia was unplanned and influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The desire to

utilize her time effectively rather than squander it, she pursued a master's degree in English Education,

“So, it wasn't something that I planned, because I came to Indonesia, I was visiting friends and so on, and COVID hit. I couldn't go back to Brazil, so then I was thinking like, okay, I am here, what should I do? And I didn't want just to spend my time doing nothing, like I couldn't really, jalan-jalan, I couldn't visit places because it was COVID, right? So, and I had friends here, so then.... then I started to apply”

2. Quality, Aspiration and Opportunities in Education

The choice of Indonesia as a study destination is influenced by several factors, particularly the perception among international students that the master's programs offered guarantee a high standard of education. Moreover, the pursuit of a teaching degree qualification could provide international students with enhanced opportunities within the education sector. Due to friend's recommendation, Lily was able to work in Indonesia. After two years of work in Indonesia, as computer programmer teacher, Lily is interested in pursuing a master's degree in English Education in University in Indonesia,

“I think it was very fortunate to have opportunity to work as a teacher, like in education field. Not like professional teachers, but anyway. So, I just happened to have chance to like share my knowledge. So, that's my like previous years. Then I also, I worked here as a teacher. So, using my previous knowledge. And so, then that made me like interest in education... I was already here. And I chose to study here. It's continuing the life here. And continuing”

She emphasized that although Indonesia is not an English-speaking country, her pursuit of English education here has fueled her desire to understand how English is utilized in Indonesia

“I just want... Yeah, I hope I can learn the English... Like, teach English. How to teach English applied in different countries. So, this is not English-speaking country, right? Yes. So, yeah. That's then I can... I think I can learn how the language itself is built in the country which is not English-speaking country”

On the other hand, Robin, who holds a degree in Biology education, shared her experience of teaching in Brazil for a decade. She teaches subjects that include English; however, she does not yet hold a degree in English,

“I think, like, I was teaching in Brazil for almost 10 years, and I think, like, maybe it's going to happen with the you also. I think that is a point, you want to do something different. So, I think it was, like, at the turning point, I went to Ireland, I had the experience there and just, like, yeah, living in the country, working and using English, but I didn't have any degree, right, to teach English or something like that. So then, and I was just here, just happened”

Furthermore, she aspires to produce a strong thesis due to Indonesia language exposure,

“So, in that sense, here in Indonesia would provide me with that exposition to many languages and so on, and I wanted to do something good for my thesis also, right? So, I think in that sense, it would, yeah, yeah, fit very well”

She also mentioned pursuing a career as a lecturer. She already has prospects for the future as follows,

“I think it really fit with my plans for future, because I want to teach or become a lecturer one day, never know, right? and I think, still, the master's degree is an education, so that is something that I'm very passionate about, that's what I do for a living, right, to teach. So, and being in English also could give me more opportunities to work in international schools Not just in Indonesia, but if I want to move to another country later. So, I think having the master's degree would help me in the future career or something like that”

Align with Robin, Nami also considered pursuing English education will gave her opportunities for career in schools,

“Yeah if I like you know... I don't know like math if I go to the math teaching if there is a position in the school for teachers math they are going to choose their Indonesian teacher not the foreigners but if it is like a position for teaching English teacher it's more possible for me to get that position to get that job in Indonesia it “

Furthermore, most participants concur that they are cognisant of the fact that the university they choose in Indonesia is the most reputable in the area, regardless of its educational offerings or reputation. Additionally, one of them were recommended by other acquaintances.

“Especially this school, right? Yes. Yeah, here this... I heard this school is the best one in the town, right? Yeah. There's no other reason? So, that's good? “(Lily)

“So, I think I chose this university because I knew the accreditation, yeah, the good accreditation” (Robin)

“When I join Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) Program in Jakarta, someone recommend this university so yeah yeah” (Nami)

3. Cultural and Geographical Appeal

International students chose Indonesia for a variety of reasons, including its welcoming culture and pleasant living conditions. The students felt that Indonesia offers a great place to live. So, the participants' responses primarily expressed their excitement about experiencing the authentic environment of Indonesia. They also note that Indonesia is vast and distinctive, characterized by a rich tapestry of cultures, including a variety of languages, cuisines, and more. As Robin declared,

“So I was very excited when I decided to join the master's here. Because I think Indonesia is, I say like, it's a country inside the country, in a sense that there are a lot

of cultures, there are a lot of languages, there are a lot of everything, and food, and people. And I think I was very excited to get to know that a little bit more”

Nami has also expressed her excitement, as she believes that Indonesia and her country share many similarities,

“I like Indonesia because we have similarities I have been talking with latin American people they think the same thing that we have similiarities even we are so far like the distance but the culture is geographically we are so far and religion is also different in Indonesia the majority is moslem in latin America majority is catholic so you would think that we are so different but when I talk with other latin America we agree that we are more similar than we thought”

Nami also stated that Indonesia provides her with a sense of belonging as a result of the similarities that were identified.

“... because all of the trees the weather is more similar to my grandma because but also it's kind of the city but it's not really like a city city, people live so that simple (sederhana) here I like that because in my home place we've been also living like this and I think it gives me sense of home”

Nami shared that Indonesia provides her with a sense of home and reflects what her country once was. She described Indonesia as a community-oriented nation where people support one another and embody humility,

“if you see someone like in problem maybe you are wearing the car for example and the street you see someone with difficulties with their car maybe like 20 or 30 years ago you will stop and help them especially in the night that's in Indonesia and latin America you helped someone in trouble but now in Latin American because the social politican and social problems if you see someone in trouble at night you don't stop not because you don't want to help them but because you don't know whether they are really in problem or they are criminals”

Nami felt safer while studying in Indonesia, as she stated,

“Yeah everything has bad sides you know but I think that most of the sense of a living in Indonesia that we feel safer than in our country”

Nami places a greater emphasis on the quality of her living conditions, feeling safe, and having a sense of home, which she finds to be significantly better than in her home country. She has expressed that her focus is more on these living aspects than on academic pursuits,

“Well I don’t see as the college, but the living in Indonesia. I like Indonesia, I like the weather in Indonesia, I like the people here, I like the food. More than the study part, the living condition”

Robin shares a similar perspective on feeling safe in Indonesia, particularly in the city where the campus is located,

“Because I am a foreigner, and I want to connect with people, I want to have the culture experience and so on, but I want to be safe also, because, like, you're coming, I am single, I come to a country that I don't know anyone there yet, and then I go and live in a village. So, I think the experience will be amazing also, of course, but maybe not that safe for me”

In addition to feeling secure, Robin noted that the campus has two primary locations: Indralaya and Palembang. She mentioned that both the city of Palembang and Indralaya offer a lower cost of living,

“In terms of living costs, Palembang would be less expensive, yeah, and the location is amazing. So, even, like, it's not in Indralaya, I could take here and commute. So, I could have, like, a household cost, for example, in the Demang area and so on, and then go to the university”

Nevertheless, Lily had a different perspective; there are other cities that are less costly in terms of living expenses.

“I don't think so. Jakarta, yeah. Jakarta is big. But Jogja. What about Jogja? What about Bandung?”

Subsequently, Nami also agrees that the cost of living in Palembang is much cheaper than in Jakarta, where she previously lived for the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) program. Overall, she noted that when compared to her home country, it is also cheaper particularly regarding internet costs.

“It’s so awesome because the internet here is so much cheaper in Mexico even if you don’t have internet in the house you can watch Netflix in your phone that’s applicable because the internet is cheaper”

DISCUSSION

In recent years, it has become a widespread practice among individuals to pursue further education in a different country or location than their previous residence. Globalization has an enormous influence on this phenomena, according to Saha (2021) many students attend these schools to study abroad, gain exposure to different cultures and languages, and participate in what are commonly referred to as international student societies. Moreover, it is common for

students to select English-speaking countries as their preferred study destinations. Research has identified countries such as Australia and the United States as the most sought-after locations for studying abroad, with participants including general students, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) students, and English teachers (Helnywati & Manara, 2019; Mardiningrum, 2017; Nanda, 2019; Sabaruddin, 2019; Ubaidillah & Widiati, 2021). However, these trends do not tend to occur over time. Indonesia, a non-English speaking country, has concisely impressed and attracted international students for achieving teaching degree in English. This research examines the decision-making process of international students as they opt for Indonesia instead of English-speaking countries to become EFL teachers. This research identified several factors that influence international students' decisions when selecting Indonesia, categorized into three themes. The initial two themes addressed the personal and external influences experienced by international students. The second theme addressed the aspirations and opportunities related to education. The third theme addresses cultural and geographical appeal, encompassing aspects such as culture, language interests, and living environments.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influenced international students in several ways. One international student felt a strong intrinsic motivation after watching a movie that delved into Indonesia, sparking the curiosity. Started studying the country through its language and culture, then attempted to visit Indonesia for travel and exploration. According to Yue and Lu (2022), the decision-making process regarding studying abroad was significantly impacted by attainment value and identified motivation, highlighting that the intrinsic factors such as self-worth and goal-setting play a crucial role. To fulfill the curiosity, there was an attempt to learn deeper the language of Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia. The international student took a short course in Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) in Indonesia before applying master degree of teaching education. Solikhah and Budiharso (2020) agree that Bahasa Indonesia language is becoming increasingly popular among academics, with over 29 nations teaching it and 420 BIPA center worldwide. In fact, 45 BIPA centers are operated in Indonesia by the language diplomacy and strategy development (PPSDK) in partnership with educational institutions and training center. In other hand, another international student, while traveling, received a recommendation from an Indonesian friend to work in Indonesia. After two years of work, interest grew in learning how English is used in the country, leading to an application for a master's degree. As noted by Maulana (2020), the use of English in Indonesia is indeed quite distinctive, and individuals often encounter challenges in its application. Furthermore, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) pointed out that local suggestions significantly impact the decisions of overseas students. Many students' decisions to pursue study or employment possibilities abroad are influenced by the advice and support they receive from their personal networks, such as friends and family. The last international student was travelling to meet a friend in Indonesia when an unexpected event occurred: Covid-19. Not wanting to waste time, this participant decided to apply for a master's degree. Researchers have found more evidence that many COVID-19 students used their time and resources to further their education. For example, in order to maintain their academic advancement during lockdowns, many students registered in online courses, according to Almusharraf and Bailey (2021). The significance of resilience and flexibility during educational changes caused by pandemics was also highlighted in a study by Karalis and Raikou (2020).

Prior work experience, foreign worker opportunities, accreditation are also discussed in this study. One international student noted that choosing education in Indonesia rather than English-speaking country represents a phase of ongoing life, as there has been engagement in

teaching and residing in the country for extended time. Indeed, Indonesia has traditionally used foreign workers, which has been supported by the government's goal of fostering investment and growth (Aryani et al., 2022). Furthermore, Indonesia welcomes foreign candidates for English teaching roles, especially in international schools. This offers a positive chance for international graduates to take on these positions. Fauzi and Hashim, (2020) agrees that the rise of globalization and internalization are forcing numerous countries, including Indonesia, to require schools to hire English-speaking teachers. To qualify for the position, an English teaching degree is required; consequently, an application for a master's degree in English education has been submitted by the international students. Indonesia prioritizes English, thus ensuring high quality. It is essential to provide opportunities for foreigners to teach English. Saputra and Saputra (2020) acknowledged that although Indonesia is not an English-speaking country, it recognizes the importance of the English language, and there are specific language policies in place regarding this matter. Na'imah et al. (2022) noted that in Indonesia, there is an increasing movement among various educational institutions where classrooms are utilizing both Bahasa and English, creating a bilingual learning environment. Sending their children to schools where English is the primary language of teaching for bright future, it's parents' role (Silva et al., 2024; Hakim et al., 2024). Alongside the opportunities, a differing viewpoint regarding quality was presented, highlighting that Indonesia, especially the chosen university, has strong accreditation and a reputable standing that can be relied upon for continued education. It similar to Indah and Suyanto (2019) study, the participants declared Indonesia's academic quality influences their participants decision to study there. Some participants of this study also support the idea of pursuing education at that university. As a result, it was concluded that Indonesia serves as a suitable setting for education, with linguistic exposure improving the quality of educational needs, including thesis work. Since there are 700 regional languages in Indonesia in addition to the national language, Alisjahbana (2019) affirms that the country's linguistic diversity is extensive. The language policy of Indonesia is the most remarkable linguistic event that has occurred in recent times.

When exploring the quality, aspirations, and opportunities that influence the choice of Indonesia as a study destination for international students, it is crucial to recognize the cultural and geographical attractions that enhance their educational experience in the country. Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago with 17,508 islands and 360 ethnic groupings. Indonesia is known for its diverse culture, magnificent natural scenery, and delicious cuisine (Embassy of Indonesia in Canberra, 2018). Even though Indonesia is ranked 48th according to Institute for Economics and Peace (2024), the international students in this study viewed Indonesia as offering a positive living environment. It was observed that Indonesia is a welcoming and community-oriented country where individuals support one another, contributing to a sense of safety. Indeed, there is a specific term that has become characteristic of Indonesia. The concept of mutual cooperation within Indonesian communities, known as *Gotong Royong*, refers to the collaborative effort aimed at achieving a specific objective (Kumparan, 2020). A participant highlighted that Indonesia has a similar atmosphere to her home country, which makes studying here feel like studying at home, offering her a sense of belonging and comfort. There is a notable emphasis on the living environment, with a deep appreciation for the culture and surroundings of Indonesia, seemingly overshadowing academic considerations. It is noted that living costs for international students in Indonesia are comparatively lower, especially in relation to the cities where they live. According to InterNations (2019), Indonesia is a welcoming environment. In 2019, Indonesia improved its position by 21 ranks, achieving a placement within the top 30, specifically 29th out of 64 countries. InterNations (2019) adds that the population of Indonesia

exhibits notable warmth and friendliness, an expatriate from India expresses, “It serves as a home away from home.” The survey conducted by Indah and Suyanto (2019) explores the factors influencing international students' choice of Indonesia, highlighting the impressive quality of education, living environment, and scholarship offerings. The study reveals that international students are also captivated by Indonesian culture, including the language, people, and a safer living environment compared to their home countries. Additionally, the findings indicate that these students seek opportunities to work or live in Indonesia, particularly in the field of English teaching, as they believe this profession is favored for foreigners. Their prior teaching experience has also led them to pursue different majors than their undergraduate programs, specifically opting for a master's in teacher education.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this study highlighted that the international students whose career ambition to become EFL teacher encounter complex decision-making processes when deciding to earn a master's degree in a country like Indonesia, where English is not the native language. Significant motivations encompass both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that serve as primary influences from the foreign students. The discourse advanced to examine the dimensions of educational quality at universities, the ambitions of students, cultural and geographical attractiveness which also significantly impacted the considerations of international students. Moreover, the findings indicate Indonesia have the potential to enhance support for international students by addressing their specific needs, fostering greater opportunities for cultural and educational exchange, and acknowledging the advantages of studying within diverse linguistic contexts. International students, in particular, possess significant optimism regarding their career prospects in Indonesia. Institutions have the potential to establish well-defined pathways for international students to explore career opportunities following the completion of their degrees. Ultimately, these findings may enhance international cooperation in EFL teaching and support the professional development of future educators from various cultural backgrounds, promoting a progressive approach among educators and practitioners, given Indonesia's appeal to foreign students. Future research could explore how international students navigate their academic experiences in Indonesia, particularly those with diverse undergraduate backgrounds aspiring to become educators.

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