

## THE QUEST OF DEVELOPING A BETTER ENGLISH TRAINING MATERIAL FOR MIGRANT WORKER CANDIDATES IN INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** The scarcity of job opportunities in Indonesia has encouraged some of its citizen to work abroad; these workers are commonly known as PMI (*Pekerja Migran Indonesia* –Indonesian migrant workers). One of the salient challenges encountered by PMI occupied in the semi-skilled and unskilled employment, which shared the highest percentage of PMI, is limited English proficiency. This has caused a range of formidable impacts ranging from misunderstandings between the employer and PMI to making PMI less preferable compare to workers from other countries. This research aims to (1) evaluate materials used in the English training programs by BLKLN (*Balai Latihan Kerja Luar Negeri* -Overseas Training Centre for Indonesian Migrant Workers); (2) Identify PMI's perceptions concerning their English language needs. Forty-five PMI in Malaysia and Thirty-Six PMI in Singapore were involved in this case study research. Findings from the study revealed that there are gaps between how English is taught at BLKLN and PMI's language learning needs to the extent of materials and method. Hence, findings from this research put an urgent call to improvement in the English language training at BLKLN in order to meet the PMI's learning needs.

**Keywords:** *Indonesian migrant workers (PMI); English training materials; BLKLN (Training Centre for Indonesian Migrant Workers)*

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a vast number of populations with the fourth rank in the world after China, India, and the United States. Hence, it is a little surprise that the

needs of employment rate relatively high in Indonesia. Unfortunately, jobs can be considered as scarce as the numbers of employee outweigh employment opportunities. As a consequence, many

Indonesian migrate to find jobs abroad commonly known as PMI (Pekerja Migran Indonesia – Indonesian migrant workers).

Data from the Research and Development Centre of Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, hereafter BNP2TKI) in 2020, showed that although the number of PMI is decreasing from 283.640 in 2018 to 276.553 in 2019, this number is still regarded as high which implies that working abroad an alternative for job seeker in Indonesia. Raharto (2017) argued that of the reasons why PMI migrates is that they want to look for a better and fixed income to ends meet.

Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore have become target counties for most PMI. Malaysia is relatively preferable for PMI because the language used in the country is moderately similar to Bahasa Indonesia; thus, PMI need not to struggle to communicate in English (Salleh, Nordin & Rashid, 2012). Being proficient in English is actually pivotal for migrant workers as English is commonly used as means of communication in most target countries. This also means that lack of English competence can hamper migrant workers for job opportunities. As an illustration, in Taiwan migrant worker from Filipino is more preferable as they have good English competence which is not surprising because English is a second language in Philippines (Loveband, 2003; Tan, 2003).

To the extent of language competence, BNP2TKI as the governing board dealing with PMI has specified that it is compulsory for migrant to be able to communicate in English; therefore, all PMI candidates must have undergone English language training program prior to their departure to the destination country. However, enabling PMI with good English competence can be challenging due to the following reasons. First, unlike in Malaysia and Philippines, English is a foreign language in Indonesia which means the context of learning English is not available in the society (Rahmi, 2015). Second is the wide array of PMI's educational background, from high school to elementary graduates, which can make learning and designing a language program complicated (BNP2TKI 2019 Report, 2020). Third, In Indonesia, the importance of improving PMI's English skills is supported by evidence that language teaching projects in development context

are often underpinned by a perceived relationship between English language ability and economic development (Azam et al, 2010; Aslam et al, 2010; EIA, 2010; Chiswick and Miller in Coleman, 2010; Pinon and Haydon, 2010; Shamim, 2011; Erling, 2015). Last, as Novalita (2008) reported materials provided by BLKLN (Balai Latihan Kerja Luar Negeri -Overseas Training Centre for Indonesian Migrant Workers) have not yet in line with PMI's needs as they are more Indonesia-oriented instead of target country oriented.

Departing from this point it is important to establish English training program that can support PMI in the target country. However, despite the importance of such program, there remains a paucity of evidence on how English language program for PMI should be carried out. Only few studies have investigated this landscape. For example, Astuti (2008) focused her study on rationales for English language training for migrant workers. Astuti (2008) delineated specific points on how learning and language learning can be implemented in the context of migrant workers; however, the study is merely conceptual-based that information on how it is implemented in real life setting cannot be attained. Another study in the same areas was conducted by Hermayanti (2018) who focused her study on functional English design for domestic migrant workers. Although Hemayanti's (2018) study has shed light on materials and implementation, as she mentioned in her study it has not designed to support PMI in official and scientific situations. Hakim, Abidin, and Adnan (2019) also focused their study on designing English language training for migrant workers using ASSURE model. However, this study is limited to PMI in Penang, Malaysia; hence it may not be suitable to be adopted by various English training for PMI who are planning to work in various different countries.

In light of the great contribution made by TKI to Indonesia commonly known as Pahlawan Devisa (Foreign Exchange Heroes) needs to be appreciated and supported by providing effective English language training as their preparation before the departure to the destination country. Considering the global competition situation, Indonesians working both in formal and informal sectors overseas such as in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, establishing English language training is pivotal as it can support PMI to survive and also

communicate in various different context in the target country.

This study will take an initial step in establishing English language programs for migrant workers by evaluating current English language training materials at BLKLN and also conducting needs analysis which data taken from PMI in Malaysia and Singapore.

Nowadays, the tasks of need analysis are much more complex: it aims at collecting information about the learners and at defining the target situation and environment of studying ESP. According to Duddley-Evans and St. John (2009), there are eight components in today's concept of need analysis which have been grouped into five broad areas including:

*Target situation analysis and objective needs analysis* (e.g., tasks and activities learners will use English for) which includes necessities, lacks and wants of the learners. Necessities refer to what the learners have to know for functioning effectively in the target situation. Accordingly, finding out what the learners know already is crucial to decide any necessities that the learners lack. In addition, learners' view as to what their needs are should also be taken into consideration despite the possibility that their views may conflict with other interested parties such as teachers or institutions.

*Linguistic analysis* such as register analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis (i.e., knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situations). Register analysis is any analysis in the word and sentence level to make it relevant to learners' needs. Further, discourse analysis refers to a textual analysis above the level of sentence in which identifying how sentences are combined into a discourse used as an act of communication and functions of materials. It may overlap with genre analysis in which discourse analysis studies cohesive links between sentences, paragraphs, and or the structure of the whole text while genre analysis focuses on distinctions of structures in one type of text compared to another.

*Subjective needs analysis* (i.e., learners' wants, means, subjective needs-factors that affect the way they learn e.g., previous learning experiences, reasons for attending the course, expectations). The voices of the learners are involved which includes relevant aspects before and during the course is implemented. Learners' background and opinions are important in the analysis.

*Present situation analysis* to identify learners' current skills and language use. It represents the current condition of some aspects in the teaching and learning situation such as learners' characteristics, staffing, materials, syllabus and academic records which contain the data of their language learning. It also covers the information of their current proficiencies and ambitions in learning the language.

*Means analysis* (i.e., Information about the environment where the course will run) covers the logistics and pedagogy which may impact on the implementation of the course. Some considerations included in the means analysis are classroom culture, staff, pilot target situation analysis, status of service operations, and study of change agents.

Widodo (2016) stated that "as part of ESP instructional design, needs analysis serves as the basis for informed curriculum practices, such as syllabus design, materials development, and instructional design. Thus, the values of needs analysis should go beyond the prediction of what should be taught and learned." A long time before, Stern (1992) as cited in Zakaria, et.al (2018) distinguished four types of ESP teaching objectives: proficiency, knowledge, affective, and transfer. Further, Hutchinson & Waters (1992) observe that if we know why learners need English, the content of the language can be adjusted accordingly, and the teaching process will focus on these needs. These ideas have been in line with the findings of several recent research (Masoupanah and Tahririan, 2013; Alsamadani, 2017; Sulistio, 2016; Sincer, 2017) which expressed that 'needs should be stated in terms of goals and objectives which, in turn, can serve as the bases for developing tests, materials, teaching activities and evaluation strategies.' (Brown & Lee, 2020).

In the context of PMI English language training, need analysis should be done to identify specific English language materials and content in order to suit the PMI English language needs especially when they have already stayed and worked abroad. Each content material should lead to specific goals and objectives that must be reached through right and well-constructed classroom activities and evaluation strategies.

Before PMI can work in foreign countries, it is a must for them to have passed the training held at BLKLN (*Balai Latihan Kerja Luar Negeri*) which is provided both by the government or by private

institutions. Based on Ministry of Manpower Regulation No. 17/MEN/VI/2007 Article III, BLKLN can be held by the Indonesian Government or Private sector job training institutes. The Private job training institution should have a legal license issued by the head of the agency responsible for manpower affairs in the district or city. English language training is one of the training provided by the BLKLN to improve the quality of PMI to be able to work professionally in the destination countries as well as improving their qualification. The English training curriculum discussed in this study is designated to the whole body of English knowledge that PMI, as the learners, acquires in BLKLN, as the training institution.

There has been a very little empirical investigation into the English language training activities held at BLKLN in Indonesia. On the other hand, teaching English for vocational purposes especially for PMI in Indonesia was found to be far from satisfactory in terms of customizing ESP courses by using the real needs of learners or the language situation at the workplace as the input to feed ESP courses. One implication of this is that when the specific language needs are not defined based on language use, TKI may end up being troubled with the language proficiency level that they achieve once they join the workplace. Bad quality of specific language proficiency and the low level of communicative ability of TKI has been reported to create many problems in foreign countries.

An English learning program specifically for Indonesian domestic workers held by Astuti (2008) mentioned some components and process to be considered such as learning interaction and teaching activities with communicatively purposeful activities such as conversation, dialogue, role play and simulation; teacher functions as the facilitator as well as the organizer of the learning recourses and activities; instructional material function that is authentic such as signs, advertisement, documents, realia, and other visual sources around, and; syllabus design that is built around the notion of communicativeness with functional or task based. Nevertheless, Lubis (2011) pointed out that it was suggested that this need analysis requires the involvement of ex- Indonesian domestic workers or those who have experienced the target situation.

Accordingly, Hermayawati (2018) found out that the PMI candidates are still asked to memorize a list

of words and their meanings. Thus, in her study of functional English design for domestic migrant workers, the material was designed by developing the use of “imparting and seeking factual information” language category of the training program and broken down into eight units namely greeting, answering a call, accepting a guest, organizing the house, caring for children, giving direction, going to the market, and writing a memo with an addition of phonetic spelling and transcriptions. Unfortunately, this design turned out to have limited learning outcomes in the mastery of speaking skills and limited use of language just for survival needs.

According to Novita (2019), English teaching for Indonesian migrant workers should be in accordance to SKKNI (Standar Kompetensi Kerja Nasional Indonesia) or Indonesian National Work Competency Standards. This standard is defined as a formulation of work capabilities which includes the aspect of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in relevance to the implementation of required tasks and vocation according to the provisions of legislation. During the observation in her study, it was found out that the teacher asked learners to repeat the material previously given. Learners were expected to know and understand all vocabulary given by the teacher. The review was done by the teacher saying the vocabulary in Bahasa Indonesia and followed by the learners saying the word in the English version. Only simple sentence is used during the class considering the limited communication with the employers in the target situation (Lubis, 2011). It can be seen that the strategy used by the teacher is input to output strategies which focus on providing learners with input from the teacher as the basis for production (output). Accordingly, considering the big influence of teachers to the learner’s learning, good quality teachers are required, not only those having experienced working in the destination country or ex-Indonesian migrant worker, but also those having a certification.

Another study was also conducted by Hakim and Abidin (2019) in developing an English instructional module for Indonesian migrant workers focusing on speaking and writing activities. Some topics covered are daily conversation, business communication, basic writing, speech delivery, news reading, and tourism conversation.

Providing English training program to the PMI candidates can improve their basic English as well as their self-awareness towards the importance of the target language, and further planning of the program is necessary and highly suggested in a more practical management (Metboki and Ledo, 2017). The planning can begin by conducting an evaluation of the current materials used by the English training program. In order to evaluate a course book, four criteria need to be taken into considerations (Cunningsworth in Mukundan et.al, 2011). First, it should correspond to learners' needs by matching the aims and objectives of the learning program. Second, it should reflect the uses (present or future) that learners will make of the language to help equip students to use language effectively for their own purposes. Third, it should take account of students' needs as learners and should facilitate their learning processes, without dogmatically imposing a rigid "method". Last, it should have a clear role as a support for learning. Like teachers, it mediates between the target language and the learner.

## METHOD

In relevance to the nature of the research questions and theories underpinning the study, a case study is selected as the research design. This method is particularly useful in studying detailed information of a program that can be considered as a case (Yin, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Among the three types of case studies outlined by Yin (2018), this study employed a multiple (or collective) case study model. The overall study involved two cases: TKI in Singapore and Malaysia.

Three sources of data were collected for this study: document reviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions (hereafter, FGD). The documents consist of the English training program guideline and module used in the BLKLN. To find out the strengths and weaknesses further on the module as well as to evaluate its effectiveness, a checklist for evaluation and selection of course books (Richards, 2017) was used. The checklist includes some elements such as aims and approaches, design and organizations, language content, skills, topics, methodology, teachers' books, and practical consideration.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part aimed to identify participants'

perceptions of their language needs and capabilities; the questions in this part were developed based on Li and Richard's (1995) questionnaire who was working on needs analysis on Cantonese. The questionnaire explored the PMI's needs as learners for English, attitudes towards English, and their perceptions of English training they have taken.

The questionnaire asked the participants to identify (a) situations in which they need English, (b) their present level of ability in English, (c) their experience in learning English, (d) their preferences for classroom activities in an English class, and (e) their attitudes towards English as a language. Another instrument employed in this research was FGD. The FGD was conducted in TKI communities in Singapore and Malaysia. The FGD aims to obtain further information from the questionnaires data and to clarify several points from the questionnaire that need deeper understanding.

This study employed purposive sampling (Creswell, 2015) and participants were selected based on their relevant profiles to the purpose of the study (Flick, 2014). Stake (2006) as cited in Ebneyamini & Moghadam (2018) contented that there are three criteria for selecting cases: relevancy, diversity, and opportunities to get an insight about the subject being investigated. In line with this idea, the participants involved in the study are Indonesian migrants who have worked for several years in Malaysia and Singapore.

As mentioned previously, data for this study were derived from questionnaires, FGD, and documentation. Before collecting the data, the researchers had a meeting with the BLKLN representative to ask for permission. Having gained permission to enter the research site, data collection began with access to relevant documents of English language training material for TKI candidates such as the learning syllabus and module. The questionnaires were distributed to Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia and Singapore and the data was codified before conducting the FGD session as an aim to identify several points which were interesting, or still unclear which needed further clarification. The FGD was held in Bahasa Indonesia, and each FGD which lasted for 60 to 90 minutes was audio recorded. Documents as another source of data for this study were acquired during the process of collecting data from questionnaires and FGD.

The process of making meaning from the collected data or data analysis (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2014) was adapted from Creswell (2015). The collected data from the questionnaires were coded based on the questions. An initial reading was conducted having transcribed the audio recording from the FGD. Codes were labeled based on research questions. An Excel spreadsheet was selected as a platform to analyze the data as it provides more flexibility in managing the data. Since the data collected in this research were in Bahasa Indonesia, they were first translated before they were displayed.

*Results*  
*English language training material at BLKLN*  
 Work competency-based training program (*Program Pelatihan Berbasis Kompetensi Kerja*) in BLKLN covers some units of competencies for the PMI candidates. One of the units of competence is to communicate in the language of the destination country (*melakukan komunikasi dengan menggunakan bahasa negara penempatan*). This unit of competence includes the knowledge, skills, and work attitudes required to have a verbal communication and to use any communication tools in a relevant manner to the language of the destination country.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1. *Communication unit*

<b>Elements of competence</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>To use a verbal communication</b>	Vocabulary is pronounced accurately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to explain how to pronounce the vocabulary correctly and accurately</li> <li>- Able to pronounce the vocabulary correctly and accurately</li> <li>- Must be accurately and clearly</li> </ul>
	Sentences are structured clearly and accurately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to explain how to structure a sentence clearly and correctly</li> <li>- Able to structure the sentence clearly and correctly</li> <li>- Must be thorough, precise, and careful</li> </ul>
	Communication is done in a polite manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to explain how to have a communication in a polite manner</li> <li>- Able to have a communication in a polite manner</li> <li>- Must be thorough, precise, and accurate</li> </ul>
<b>To use communication tools</b>	Communication device is identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to explain how to identify a communication device</li> <li>- Able to identify a communication device</li> <li>- Must be thorough, effective, precise, and accurate</li> </ul>
	Communication device is used according to the procedure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to explain how to use the device according to the procedure</li> <li>- Able to use the device according to the procedure</li> <li>- Must be thorough, effective, precise, and accurate</li> </ul>
	Telephone communication is done in a polite manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to explain how to have a communication on the telephone in a polite manner</li> <li>- Able to have a communication on the telephone in a polite manner</li> <li>- Must be correct and accurate</li> </ul>
	Communication device is taken care of.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to explain how to take care of communication devices well to keep functioning</li> <li>- Able to take care of communication devices to keep functioning</li> <li>- Must be through, precise, and accurate</li> </ul>

It is followed by the variable context in which this case the unit is for workers in the scope of domestic such as housekeeping, babysitting, childcaring, caretaking, family cooking, gardening, and family driving. The communication is not limited to receiving guests, at the market, at the

hospital, at the airport, at the bank. Overall, it is meant to cover the use of vocabulary and simple sentences in the working environment. This syllabus is then translated into a module as the source of learning material. The module content is listed below:

Table 2. *Module content*

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Theme</b>
<b>Lesson 1</b>	Alphabets
<b>Lesson 2</b>	Numbers
<b>Lesson 3</b>	Pronouns, Examples of using 'can' (ability), Question words
<b>Lesson 4</b>	General expressions (greeting, apologizing)
<b>Lesson 5</b>	General expressions (question words)
<b>Lesson 6</b>	General expressions
<b>Lesson 7</b>	General expressions
<b>Lesson 8</b>	General expressions
<b>Lesson 9</b>	Personal data, experience and others
<b>Lesson 10</b>	Some questions and answers
<b>Lesson 11</b>	Some questions and answers
<b>Lesson 12</b>	Prepositions of place and time
<b>Lesson 13</b>	Imperatives (give me, don't, commands), want to
<b>Lesson 14</b>	Let me, let's
<b>Lesson 15</b>	Days, months
<b>Lesson 16</b>	Want
<b>Lesson 17</b>	Telling time
<b>Lesson 18</b>	A list of verbs
<b>Lesson 19</b>	Personal data, experience and others
<b>Lesson 20</b>	Some lists of vocabulary (articles of clothing, objects in bedroom, objects in living room, objects in the house, kitchen utensils, family members, miscellaneous, vegetables/plants/flowers, objects in the bathroom, food/drinks/fruits)

*English language needs of TKI candidates*

The first part of the questionnaire is to identify the situations in which English would be useful for the PMI. From 14 situations given in the questionnaire, all situations are considered as useful. The five situations considered as most useful are (ranked in order): (1) Getting information about services and goods I want to buy. (2) Buying things in stores and supermarkets. (3) Asking for directions. (4) Ordering food in a restaurant/canteen/cafeteria. (5) Talking to colleagues at work. (6) Making travel arrangement

The situations mostly rated by the participants are interactional needs in which they have to interact socially with other speakers. In addition to the situations in the list, some additional situations are listed such as emergency, culture shock, mental health, rights and duties as PMI, employment contract, and communities or organizations.

Then, participants are asked to indicate their current level of ability in English: (1) Basic (lower): 45%. (2) Basic (upper): 15%. (3) Intermediate (lower): 0%. (4) Intermediate (upper): 10%. (5) Advanced: 30%.

Most of participants indicate themselves to have the basic level of English and some others have an advanced level. The lower basic level of proficiency

means that they know a few words and fixed expressions; cannot manage conversational exchanges; respond to question and answer exchanges on a few topics; have very limited vocabulary, grammar, and knowledge of idioms, and have pronunciation heavily influenced by mother tongue. The second biggest percentage is the advanced level that is defined as being able to converse fluently and naturally on most topics; having a little difficulty with vocabulary, idioms, grammar, and pronunciation. Reflecting on their proficiency level, the participants were then asked about the three biggest contributors to their success.

Next, the questionnaire also addressed those who previously had studied English but who gave up studying the language. The most frequent reasons cited for giving up their language study were (ranked in frequency order): (1) I did not have time to continue. (2) I was not given any opportunity to use English outside the classroom. (3) The lessons were not useful because I found the vocabulary too difficult to master. (4) The lessons were not useful because I found the language too difficult to master. (5) The lessons were not useful because I found the pronunciation too difficult to master. (6) The lessons were not useful because I found the grammar too difficult to master.

Next, the learning style preferences of the participants are addressed. There are some ways indicated by the respondents that they found useful (in a rank order): (1) Watching or listening to people speaking English around me. (2) Trying to use English whenever I have the opportunity. (3) Memorizing bilingual vocabulary lists. (4) Watching TV in English at home. (5) Talking to friends in English. (6) Making myself understood even if I make a lot of mistakes.

The other need to be considered in an analysis is the preferences in teaching and learning activities. The following is a list of what participants felt important for the teacher to do in class (in rank order): (1) Explaining new grammar points before practicing them. (2) Correcting my mistakes of pronunciation. (3) Correcting my mistakes of grammar. (4) Using both Bahasa Indonesia and English. (5) Correcting any mistakes in front of others immediately. (6) Practicing before explaining new grammar points. (7) Using English only.

Next, attitude towards the language is considered to be an important attribution. The result of the questionnaire shows the following attitude of the participants: (1) English is a fascinating language. (2) English is very useful language in Malaysia/Singapore. (3) English is a language where pronunciation is very important. (4) English is a language with a rich vocabulary. (5) English is a polite language.

The statements above show positive attitudes among participants towards English.

### *Discussion*

#### *English language training material at BLKLN*

After analysing some supporting documents used by BLKLN in Jakarta to prepare PMI candidates before their departure, it was found out that the English training is conducted at least once a week, in addition to other courses such as Cantonese for those going to Taiwan, to support their future work, especially in the scope of domestic work such as housekeeping, babysitting, childcaring, cooking, and gardening. Despite the high necessity of English for migrant workers, the role of BLKLN is currently not supporting. According to the document analysis, the BLKLN has a set of English syllabi with two main competencies, to communicate verbally and to use as the means of communication. Both competencies are followed by some broad indicators which emphasize the

knowledge of PMI about English instead of the use of the language itself. Accordingly, the materials provided in the module and then given to learners are broken down into several lessons which consist of a list of vocabularies, phrases, and expressions for drill and practice and expect learners mainly to pronounce and arrange sentences properly and politely. This method does not work effectively since PMI as learners need a more meaningful lesson that can be put into practice later at the workplace and in the destination country. In other words, its aims and approaches do not correspond with the aims of the program and with the needs of the learners. The learning materials of the training are covered in one module for both teachers and learners with a supporting book resource namely *My Home* (English for early childhood) published by Kanisius.

In terms of the design and organization of the module, it has no specific organization (structure, functions, topics, skills) or sequence (complexity, learnability, usefulness) used in the content. Each lesson starts with a title, a subtitle, and learning content. After the cover, no table of content is provided for both teachers and learners to find a way around the module. Due to the unavailability of specific English proficiency tests from the government or institutions for the PMI candidates, it cannot be identified whether the module meets the requirements. Regarding the language content, the module has some parts of reference section for grammar such as the use of *can, want, let me, let's*, but it covers only the meaning of the word along with a list of sentences as examples and their translations in the Indonesian language. No further explanation is available to give learners an understanding of its functions and contexts to use. Additionally, phonetic transcriptions are provided for each word, phrase, and expression included in the module. Strikingly, the phonetic transcription is not written in the standardized International Phonetic Alphabets, but in Indonesian alphabets representing the way how teachers would pronounce. In some parts of the module, it provides a list of questions along with a specific answer for each question to be practiced and memorized by learners to interact with their future employers and/or other workers.

To prepare PMI candidates' skills, the topics of the module used by BLKLN are mainly in the scope of domestic work with some additional and random



topics included such as in the market with a very limited amount. In fact, the syllabus clearly mentions that the program prepares PMI candidates to have good communication in a hospital, an airport, and a bank. From the module, it can be seen that all learners are categorized into only one language level of proficiency with the same content for all. Further, considering some different destinations countries of PMI candidates as learners such as Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and even some Middle East countries, no social and or cultural context of diversity is presented in the module. Additionally, working in a foreign country allows PMI to meet people with various backgrounds, but no group represented concerning ethnic origins, occupations, disabilities, etc. Overall, the approach to language learning taken by the module is grammar-translation which is not appropriate to the learning and/or teaching situation for PMI candidates as learners. As previously mentioned, the level of active involvement can be expected from learners is by memorizing the listed words, phrases, expressions, and sentences, responding to the listed questions with particularly listed answers and doing written translation, which overall does not match students' learning styles and expectations. In other words, the skill taught to learners is a communicative ability that is based on the script which is randomly listed without any supporting and clear contexts or situations.

The module is the main and only available material with no teacher's book available. Thus, in line with the description in previous paragraphs, the teacher just uses the module as the guidance in learning with no information of teaching techniques, language items such as grammar rules, and culture-specific information to teach. Interestingly, in practice, the teacher or trainer has no English teaching background. The trainer is an ex-TKI who graduated from Open University in Taiwan teaching English with the help of a module. It results in limited lessons delivered by the trainer without any further practice in conversation or further explanation in grammar. In terms of practical consideration, no cost is required in which students write the materials down on their book or make a copy of the book. Since it is a copy, the material is not too strong or long-lasting, with not attractive in appearance. Overall, no supporting device or equipment is needed such as a language

laboratory, listening center, or video player, no equipment needed.

The worse thing is that not all migrant workers were provided with the training before their departure. It varies among them, some had it, while others did not. Some of them had it but only in a short time. According to them, the training is given based on the recruitment type, either by the agency or the employer directly. Particularly for undocumented workers, which in fact is in a big number in both Malaysia and Singapore, never attended any English language training. Despite the variability in the recruitment process, the training is a part of the regulation to be provided. For those who had some lesson earlier before going, they were provided with several words, phrases, and expressions to be memorized in line with the finding in the document analysis. In fact, at the workplace, they didn't find it to be useful since they were not sure in which situation context to use which phrases or expressions and were lack of confidence to speak up.

In addition to the skills required at the job, the ability to communicate in English is crucial for PMI. According to the findings, there have been many cases of violence towards PMI due to miscommunication between them and their employers. Having the ability and confidence to speak up in English minimizes this possibility to happen and creates a better working environment. English helps PMI to create a mutual understanding with the employer, especially in case any of their rights are violated. Other than that, the ability to understand English needs to be prepared since most of the documents and information provided in the destination country will be in English, especially in Singapore where another language spoken by its majority after English is Mandarin.

English is highly important not only in Singapore wherein English is the main language of the country, but also in Malaysia despite its less use by the majority of the people. The Malay language is quite similar to Bahasa Indonesia that is spoken by PMI in the home country. The exposure to speak English in Malaysia may not be as big as that in Singapore, but the ability of English will give a better understanding in some cases in which Malaysians cannot be understood well due to some different meanings in the language. For example, PMI needs to fill out the form to register passport, visa renewal, bank account, or checklist report at

work. Most of them are written in English, even though sometimes dual languages are provided (Malay and English), and certainly they cannot depend only on their limited Malay because it is somehow different in some cases.

In both countries, Malaysia and Singapore, all PMI found that having English ability at the workplace is to be more respected and valued, especially in terms of salary. Foreign workers from other countries commonly generalize PMI to not be able to speak in English, mock, and look down at them. By showing their English, PMI has more confidence in themselves to be surrounded by others. The respect comes from the employer itself, too. Compared to other workers from the Philippines with the same job position, the findings from the discussion revealed that Pilipino earns a higher salary for they speak English. Thus, English gives more bargaining power to the PMI so that they can negotiate with the employer on any concerns that they have related to issues at work.

#### *English language needs of TKI candidates*

After evaluating the module used in the BLKLN preparing PMI candidates, another data was collected by distributing a questionnaire to PMI in Malaysia and Singapore. According to the results, after having work experience in the foreign country, they are aware of the importance of English for them as workers, especially in some situations such as to get information about the service and goods to buy, to buy items from shop/supermarket/market, to ask for directions, to order food from restaurant/canteen/café, and to talk with friends or other workers at the workplace. It can be seen that even though they should have been prepared to have communication not only at the workplace, especially in the domestic area, but also in some public places. Most workers consider themselves to have a basic proficiency level in English in which they know some words or expressions but are not able to exchange information in a conversation, are able to respond by exchanging questions and answers only in certain topics, have a very limited vocabulary, grammar, and structure, and certain expressions, get strongly influenced by mother tongue in which Bahasa Indonesia. Here, it shows the importance of giving PMI candidates more opportunities and exposure to practicing English as a language of communication to be more confident starting from the preparation phase.

In addition to the English language training provided by BLKLN to some PMI, some workers tried to get connected with a group/organization/association/community of PMI and have been actively participating in an English language class provided for them. According to the workers' previous experience in learning English there, most of them have limited time to continue their learning. Only half of them have a chance to use the language out of the classroom which may be due to their limited access to the outside environment since most of them work as domestic workers living in their employer's place. It shows the importance of English to support them working and living in a foreign country. PMI realizes that learning English is useful, and it is not difficult to master in terms of pronunciation and structure, and grammar, but they consider English vocabulary challenging to master. Related to their English learning experience in some communities, they consider the materials to be interesting and challenging, not difficult and meet their needs. The teacher taught them English well and they like it. So far, they feel that they have made improvements in their English. Since they have been working in the destination country for a long time, those who had a chance to receive English training in the preparation phase have no clear memory of how their learning experience was. Thus, their experience represented in the results mostly refers to their latest learning experience in the community.

As PMI, there are some activities that the workers find useful during the class according to their experience such as watching or listening to people speaking English around them, speaking English at any time they have a chance, watching TV/videos in English during free time, speaking in English with friends, supporting and motivating themselves to understand even though they make many mistakes, memorizing a list of vocabulary in both languages, English and Indonesian. It can be seen that they need a more communicative and interactive learning environment for them to improve their skills in English so that their confidence can be improved beyond memorization. In terms of the teacher, the workers would prefer the teacher explain the new structure before the practice, correct any mistakes made especially in pronunciation and structure, use Bahasa Indonesia and English. These points can be some takeaways

for developing an English curriculum and materials for PMI candidates in the future.

To have a better and deeper understanding of PMI in the foreign country, a focused group discussion was held. Despite a lack of English language training in the preparation phase, some workers can significantly improve their English ability after working for many years in the destination country, more than ten years. Some of them could have successfully adapted themselves to the new environment very well and learn the language both Malay, for those working in Malaysia, and English independently or in autodidact from their employers and workplace. Nevertheless, those who struggle in adapting themselves they would tend to stay for a shorter time in the foreign country relying on the kindness and patience of their employers who are willing to teach them and have them stay. Otherwise, it is always possible that the employers would end the contract or treat them in a bad manner such as giving their salary less than the minimum standard. The workers realize the impact of inadequate and insufficient English language training before their departure such as they may struggle in having communication with their employers which results in some misunderstanding or miscommunication, in some occasions, they are unable to reject or stand for themselves when being asked to do some harmful tasks, they will be reluctant to ask the people around or the security officers when they get lost once going outside for grocery shopping, they may find a difficulty in understanding the employment contract which may deceive them, they will be unable to negotiate once their salary is below standard.

In accordance to the findings and discussion above, several needs of English to be provided to PMI candidates are as follow:

#### *An emergency*

Living in a foreign country must be anticipated with any unexpected situations such as getting lost in a new place, having a health problem, experiencing any problems with the employer, etc. Bringing up some emergencies situations theme in learning English provides the PMI candidates to be more prepared with the situation in the new workplace and environment later on.

#### *Culture shock*

The destination country must have its own culture which might be similar or even totally different

from that of the home country. It is since most of the PMI candidates come from villages and regions to work in the employers' place where mostly are located in the big city in which there must be a lot of differences in terms of how the work is done. Learning English on this topic provides some help for PMI in case any differences occur at the workplace to have better communication and understanding with the employer. This culture shock includes the accent of how the people of the destination country speak English which may cause unfamiliarity with the language itself.

#### *Mental health*

Working in a new environment comes with a lot of new people and situations to adapt to. Any pressures come from the surrounding may cause any problems to the mental state of the PMI. Knowing it earlier before going to the workplace provides PMI with any possible pictures to happen in the future and any alternatives to tackle the problems are available to avoid too much stress and depression during work.

#### *Rights and duties of PMI*

Another urgent matter to be discussed in preparing English is the rights of migrant workers in applicable law of the respective country so that while doing their duty, they are aware of what they can and cannot do. In addition, they can speak up at any time their rights are violated by the employer.

#### *Employment contract /official letter*

In some situations, PMI needs to deal with some official documents, especially employment contracts. This contract is where the PMI depends on during the work with any terms and conditions applied. Having some fundamental information and knowledge about the contract, which is commonly given in English, despite some in dual languages, PMI was well informed with the given agreement to be signed. Some other important documents are such as application to health insurance, bank account, visa renewal, etc.

#### *Communities or organizations*

There have been several organizations and communities for PMI to gather on the weekends provided by Indonesian government and private institutions. By joining the communities or organizations available abroad, PMI will have more opportunity to share their current condition and get immediate help if they need it. Having more friends abroad will also help them to deal with culture shock or mental health problem. PMI should be

aware that they have the rights to join this communities in their working countries. More than that, some learning opportunities are also offered such as English, computer, sewing class, and many more hard skills.

*The importance of need analysis in designing the English language training at BLKLN*

The study set out with the aim of assessing to what extent the available English language training for Indonesian migrant workers align with PMI's needs. The most obvious findings to emerge from the analysis is that there is a discrepancy between the English language training and what PMI's considered to be central as they live in the target country.

The gaps can be categorized into two major respects. First concerns with the learning materials in which the English language program only focused on language for survival and language use in domestic context. In comparison, PMI perceived that they needed to communicate beyond domestic context such as in a bank, hospital, restaurant and so on. Second, findings from the research revealed that the English language trainings emphasizes language learning on grammar translation method, commonly known as GTM, (Brown & Lee, 2020). These findings are consistent with those of Novita's (2019) findings which showed that English language learning BLK EKA management focused their teaching on translating between English and Bahasa Indonesia specifically on simple sentences and vocabularies. However, findings from interviews with PMI revealed that they preferred to learn English in real life, and thus implementing communicative language teaching (CLT) is more suitable for the English language training.

These findings raise an issue regarding the nature and extent of how BLKLN design English language program in order to support PMI in target countries. A possible explanation for this might be that there have not been any serious concerns manifested in the English language training. Moreover, standard qualification for teachers taught at the training has not yet established; as a result, teachers could not empower themselves as they are dealing with textbooks which do not support their learners. In fact, developing learning materials is part of teachers' role (Harmer, 2015). Furthermore, material development is not always complicated, as Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) pointed out the

activity of adding, reducing, and/or extending learning materials from the prescribed textbook can also be considered as materials development.

Overall, findings from this study, while preliminary, has important implications form developing quality textbook that provide guideline for teachers who taught at the program as well as allow flexibility for teachers to innovate their teachings. The process in carrying out the materials development should be comprehensive that it aligns PMI's needs. For example, it may adapt Richards' (2017) needs analysis procedures that needs analysis does not merely involve stakeholders, students, and teachers, but also situation analysis.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings showed that the English language training materials provided by BLKLN were quite far from effective to prepare the migrant workers. It is due to the teaching approach, material provided and method applied that were not in line with PMI candidates' language needs. The worst case is the fact that not all PMI candidates are provided with English training before their departure to the destination country.

The existing English language training materials for PMI candidates at BLKLN require betterment for preparing them at the workplace. The betterment can be made by designing the materials on more relevant topics to their work such as emergency, culture shock, mental health, migrant workers' rights and duties, employment contract, and communities. Those topics provide TKI candidates with more knowledge and information to deal with any problems that they may find at the workplace in particular, and in the destination country in general. This need is offered by taking into account PMI's wellness and safety in the foreign country wherein no relatives or friends are available at any time, especially in the early time of arrival.

In addition, to let the PMI candidates practice, it is to encourage them to be more confident in speaking up and using the language. This goal can be achieved by designing the materials and learning activities which encourage PMI candidates to use the language during the training between them as students and the trainer, and among all students, both in pairs or groups. By having lots of interactions during the training, students' reluctance to speak up will be getting less and less, while their confidence keeps improving at the same time. In

addition, the more practice PMI candidates have during the training, the more feedback is given by the trainer for their improvement in using the language.

Following the conclusions of this research, some suggestions are made for respective parties. First for Training Center of Foreign Labors (BLKLN) to break down the topics presented previously into English materials in communicative approach for PMI candidates. The design of materials can be done by having some consultation with English teaching experts and the teaching should be delivered by trainers who have competencies in English language teaching so that the learning objectives can be met by the end of the training. As an alternative, the available trainers can be given training of some basic principles in English language teaching so that the training will be more effective for PMI candidates.

The second suggestion is for Protection Agency and the Indonesian Manpower Placement (BNP2TKI) to take account of the need for the English language with the presented topics to be applied to all BLKLN. Finding out the fact that not all BLKLN delivers standardized training, BNP2TKI should put these needs in the guideline to be followed by all BLKLN and monitor the program regularly to make sure that its application is following the criteria provided. A regular monitor of the program will maintain the quality of how PMI candidates have been prepared during the program.

Last for Indonesia, the regulation of English training before the departure needs more enforcement and regulation. More enforcement will lead to a better quality of BLKLN in delivering the language training which then eventually impacts on the better Indonesian workforces to be sent to other countries. A bilateral agreement between Indonesia and the destination country would be beneficial for PMI to have an access to join in a union wherein they are able to join in some educational programs of the union to improve their quality and capacity especially in English and generally in many other skills. This protection covers not only those who are documented but also those who are undocumented.

The last but not least recommendations to the government especially to BLKLN is to manage an English proficiency test for migrant worker candidates before their departure to the target country and to handle and prepare a short English

course for migrant workers candidates who has low language skill and ability based on the level of English proficiency scores.

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*The quest of developing a better English training material for migrant worker candidates in Indonesia*