

Language Proficiency as A Social Capital among Indonesian Migrant Workers: from Language Acquisition to Language Maintenance

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Abstract

The economic and social pressure has led many Indonesian to become migrant workers in some foreign countries for a better life. Their poor language proficiency due to their lack of preparation prior to their departure has hampered them from communicating well in the country of destination which they have lived. This paper presents the analysis of how the Indonesian migrant workers prepared their language proficiency in their country of origin, Indonesia, how they have acquired the language of the receiving country in which they have worked, and how they have maintained the acquired foreign language upon their return to Indonesia as their social capital. This paper found out that language preparation, language acquisition and language maintenance play very important roles in the life of Indonesian migrant workers. Poorly planned language training has made the migrant workers face many problems in communication in the country of destination. This condition can be gradually solved by acquiring the language during their work in the country of destination and this language acquisition through immersion has become their social capital; however, such social capital is not well processed to empower the community in most areas of the country of origin, Indonesia. This fact is worsened by the reality that the formal government structure in the villages seems to neglect this self-empowered group of the community.

Key words:

Economic and social pressure, migrant workers, proficiency, acquired, social capital.

1. Introduction

The number of Indonesian migrant workers deployed to some foreign countries, like Middle East countries, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, has been significantly increasing since the early 1990s (86,264 workers in 1990, 141,287 people in 1994 and 376.000 in 2000 people, all of whom were officially

registered through the Government Office dealing with the issue (Huguet, 2003:119 in Huguet, 2010:47). This number does not include those Indonesian migrant workers who have worked in the receiving countries without being legally processed by the government agencies under the Department of Workforce. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, the number of migrant workers deployed by Indonesia expanded by 47 per cent (474,310 workers, 680,000 workers, and 690,746 workers, respectively, (Sukamdani, 2008: 328, in Huguet, 2010:48). The percentage of the countries of destination the Indonesian workers have gone was at 37.3 per cent to Middle East countries and 62.7 per cent in 2005 (RTWG, 2008:35 in Huguet, 2010:48). Huguet (2010:4) reports that Indonesia is one of the countries which have been frequently cited as the countries with major deployment of females workers, but this deployment sometimes fluctuates due to the government policy changes. These female workers from Indonesia, reaching 80 per cent in 2006 and 78 per cent in 2007, constituted a high portion of the migrant workers (Sukamdani, 2008:328). The decrease of the workers in 2009 took place due to the fact that the government imposed a ban on deploying domestic workers to Malaysia in reaction to various reports of abuse and of non-payment of wages (*op. cit.*, 2010:5).

Huguet (2010:5-6) presents the fact that the average skill level of the migrant workers from Asia is relatively low although this assumption cannot be statistically proved right because the statistic data on labor migration in Asia are not comprehensive yet. To get a better illustration, some relevant data presented show that the Bangladesh Bureau of Management, Employment and Training indicates that of 875,055 in 2008, 0.2 per cent were professional, 32.2 per cent were skilled, 15.2 per cent were semi-skilled and 52.4 per cent were unskilled (*ibid*). The same thing is strongly felt to happen to Indonesian migrant workers with very low skills, one of which is their foreign language proficiency.

Language proficiency of migrant workers plays a very important role. The interview of this research has found out that the better language proficiency of migrant workers is, the better payment they will get. Similarly, those who have low proficiency of a foreign language suffer from earning disadvantages (Chiswick, 1978; McManus, 1985; McManus, 1989; Davila and Mora, 2001). A

lot of researches on migration throughout the world have been seriously conducted, but these mostly cover economic, political and legal sectors. Similarly, the language factors, for example code-switching and code-mixing among the workers have done, mostly in America, Europe, and some Asian countries, such as Taiwan. These researches usually discuss how migrants as a minority in the country of destination in which they have worked maintain their language for their survival (Hornberger, 1998), but those dealing with the language maintenance upon their return to their home country have not yet so far much been conducted. Similarly, the relevant researches on Indonesian migrant workers in Indonesia regarding their language proficiency, in particular how Indonesian migrant workers have maintained the languages they have acquired in the receiving country they have worked, as their social capital have not yet so far been conducted. Some theoretical backgrounds regarding the issues covering language acquisition, and language maintenance as their social capital, will be presented. This will be followed by the discussion, research findings and some conclusions or recommendations in connection with this research.

2. Research Questions

The research questions of this paper are as follows:

1. How did the Indonesian migrant workers acquire a foreign language both through formal training and jobs?
2. How did the Indonesian migrant workers linguistically survive during their work?
3. How have the Indonesian migrant workers maintained their foreign language as their social capital?

3. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research paper are:

1. To find out how the Indonesian migrant workers acquired a foreign language both through formal training and jobs.
2. To search how the Indonesian migrant workers linguistically survived during their work.

3. To identify the activities of how the Indonesian migrant workers have maintained their foreign language as their social capital.

4. Research Methodology

This research is quantitative, followed by some qualitative interpretations on the basis of interviews with the workers, with the following steps: interviewing 148 Indonesian migrant workers from various places, mostly in Java, according to the questions of the questionnaire, transcribing the interview results, and quantifying the questionnaires using SPSS. To get in-depth information of some interviews which underpin the interpretations, further analysis on certain transcriptions were done.

5. Theoretical backgrounds

Language proficiency among Indonesian migrant workers has been our deep concern regarding the migrant workers' issues. The workers must undoubtedly have this proficiency in order that the workers can compete with other workers in the country of destination with adequate language proficiency and this directly improves their bargaining power with their employees in order that they can be employed with better payment.

Language proficiency is defined as the ability to use language knowledge in specific contexts (Taylor, 1988). This definition seems to be closely related to performance rather than competence proposed by Chomsky (1965). Chomskyan tradition argues that competence usually is associated to our abstract knowledge of a language, meaning that what we have in our mind is filled with the rules of the language that a native speaker has (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of language). Performance, on the other hand, is connected to the way how the language is performed by the speaker (the actual use of language in concrete situations). Due to the speakers' background, they have the same abstract grammatical rules, but own their typical ways of performing the language. Chomsky's competence actually deals with native speakers' grammar, enabling native speakers to produce and recognize correct sentences in a language, while the competence in this paper is closely related to competence of Hymes (1970).

Hymes (1970) and Canale and Swain (1980) extend the understanding of these competence and performance to include communicative competence constituting appropriate and correct language behavior and effective language behavior in connection with specific communicative goals (in Ellis (1994:13). This research uses the term proficiency to refer to the learners' ability to use the rules of the language in different tasks or situations (Ellis, 1984:720).

To reach a certain degree of language proficiency, someone must have a certain process of acquiring a foreign language in order that s/he can communicate well in the language of the receiving country in which they work. Most Indonesians are multilingual like African and other Asian people (Ellis, 1994:11). This can be illustrated by the fact that certain people from certain ethnicity backgrounds speak one, two or even three other local languages other than their own local languages. They, therefore, learn Arabic, English, Malay and Chinese languages to equip themselves as their second, third or even fourth language. In language acquisition, these languages are generally considered as the second language (Ellis, 1994:11).

The term acquisition is also debatable among the language acquisition researchers. Krashen (1981) differentiates 'language acquisition' from 'language learning (in Ellis (1994: 14). Language acquisition refers to subconscious process of getting language through exposure; meanwhile, learning to the conscious process of studying it. Ellis (1994:12) distinguishes naturalistic and instructed language acquisition, meaning that whether people learn the second language through natural processes, i.e. communication that occurs in naturally occurring social situations or through formal education helped by the teachers or books. Similarly, Klein (1986) makes a distinction between spontaneous and guided acquisition. The earlier means that someone acquires a language naturalistically and incidentally, and the later refers to a language acquisition where the learner focuses on certain aspects of the language. The informants of this research have experienced both language acquisition prior to their leave for the country of destination and language learning during their work in the country. For that reason, these three pairs of language acquisition will be presented in the discussion part of this research.

In language acquisition and language learning, the description of learner language, external factors (age, sex, social class and ethnic identity), internal factors and individual learner differences must be well discussed (Ellis, 1994:41-159, 191-243, 293-415, and 567-529). It is further argued that the length of learning periods and ‘when to start’ learning the language are equally important. They further agree that those who learn a foreign language at an earlier age will develop better language acquisition than those who learn at a later age. When learners acquire the second language, it is natural that errors in learners’ comprehension and production take place in their acquisition and learning process in the language aspects they experience. Taylor (1986) states that errors can be psycholinguistic matters (dealing with the nature of the second language knowledge system and the difficulties faced), sociolinguistic sources (dealing with the learners’ ability to use the language in the socially correct contexts), epistemic sources (concerning learners’ lack of the world context) and discourse structure (concerning the abilities to organize information into a coherent text) (in Ellis, 1994:57-58). These errors occur according to the individual learner differences with various variables (learning styles, motivation, and personality). When the respondents of this research stay in the foreign countries in which they have worked, they have acquired the foreign languages naturally, in particular through the communication they built with the children of their employers. This has equipped them with good foreign language proficiency. When they return home, they have to maintain the foreign language proficiency they have as their social capital.

Mesthrie (2002:42) states that language maintenance “denotes the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful or numerically stronger language”. Hyltenstam and Stroud (1996:568) and Brenzinger (1997:274) implicitly argue that language maintenance connotes “a contact situation and a power differential between two or more speech communities.” The number of the migrant workers of this research is actually a minority in term of the fact that their population is less than those who are not as migrant workers, but socially they have more economic power than the

others. The factors regarding this language maintenance issue are diverse and complex (Hornberger, 2002:366).

Upon the migrant workers' return to Indonesia as their homeland, they use the language they have acquired during their work in the foreign countries to communicate with other workers in their villages whose population speaks their indigenous languages, like Sundanese, Javanese or Indonesian, as their social capital. Initially, the term 'social capital' was used in community studies, illustrating the key factor of the networks of 'crosscutting personal relationships developed over time that provide the basis for trust, cooperation, and collective action in such communities' (Jacobs, 1965, in Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998:243). Bourdieu (1986:249 in Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998:243) argues that a network of relationships constituting valuable resources for the implementation of social affairs is the key proposition of social capital, with the condition that their members are 'with the collectivity-owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.' Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998:243) argue that much of this social capital is embedded within mutual acquaintance and recognition as presented in Bourdieu (1986), available in through the contacts or connections networks bring discussed in Granovetter (1973) and can stem from membership in particular links, in particular the networking with relatively limited memberships as proposed by Bourdieu (1986), Burt (1992) and D'Aveni & Kesner (1983). This research found many interesting things regarding the ways they have maintained the foreign languages (see Research Discussion).

6. Research Discussion

This research interviewed 118 respondents from various places in West Java (Majalengka, Kuningan, Bekasi, Bandung, Karawang, and Indramayu), Jakarta, Central Java (Kulonprogo, Demak, Salatiga, and Lumajang), Yogyakarta, East Java (Banyuwangi and Malang) and Lampung (see Table 1) with various ages ranging from 20-60 years old (see Table 2). We selected these areas because many Indonesian migrant workers come from the areas. The research respectively presents the research analysis according to their areas of origin, education, countries of destination, migration frequency, migration periods, types of jobs in

the countries of destination, the time flow of the language preparation prior to their departure, of working in the countries of destination in which the workers have lived, and upon arrival from the countries of destination.

a. Language Acquisition

According to this research, most Indonesian migrant workers experienced two kinds of language acquisition (Krashen, 1981; Klein, 1986; and Ellis, 1994): through learning in PJTI (an institution dealing with Indonesian migrant workers) and during their employment. It is true that PJTKI equipped them with foreign language proficiency, in particular Arabic language. This institution did not provide well-planned language training programs as required. There are some reasons regarding this issue. To begin with, the institution did not do the needs-analysis activities to know what the learners want, need, their strong and weak points. Understanding language learners' backgrounds (see Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8) plays an important role to make the language training run smoothly. Most workers complained these facts because the unplanned language training they experienced led them to be in some difficulties. Secondly, the institution did not provide the workers with varieties of language accents (Crystal, 2003). For example, they got Arabic training with the 'standard' Arabic accent they had learned in *Madrassa* (Islamic schools) or *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding institutions). They were not exposed to other Arabic accents they should have obtained but they faced the actual condition in their job. Due to its experience, the institution should have been equipped with the knowledge of various accents of Arabic language which can help the workers in the real job conditions. The next is that the institution never evaluated the learning materials. The same learning material has been used from time to time. The absence of the need analysis has contributed to the poor learning material (Dudley-Evans and St John (1998). The syllabus of this material was not well graded and this leads to poor exposure of language learning. The learning technique regarding the learning material experienced by most Indonesian migrant workers was just memorizing expressions in word level (McCarthy, 1994), instead of in expression level which is more communicative and much better for the

workers (McDonough and Shaw, 1993; Littlewood, 1992). This technique does not well equip them with the communicative skills or strategies which then they could adjust in the receiving country during their employment. The workers, therefore, got stuck to express what they wanted to say due to the absence of the skills or strategies and this fact make them lose their face during the communication (Thomas, 1997). Table 20 illustrates this reality, meaning that when the workers wanted to express their feelings, they used Indonesian language: to express anger at 29.3%, to express surprise at 28.9% and to communicate with other workers at 26%.

The social factors, i.e. ages (see Table 2) and educational backgrounds (see Table 3) of the workers contributed to the difficulties they faced during the training. Most of the workers according to these two tables, ranging from 40-49 years old at 37.5%, 30-39 years old at 28.4% to 20-29 years old at 20.7%. The first two groups of ages are at the difficult period for language acquisition due to some problems regarding their ages; meanwhile, the language acquisition theory argues that the earlier the learners learn a foreign language, the sooner and better result it will be (Phillipson, 1993; and Bleakly and Chin (2002).

What we found interesting in the research regarding the language acquisition during their employment is that most migrant workers successfully acquired a foreign language, in particular Arabic language, within 1-3 months at 69% and 3-6 months at 14% through their communication with their employers and employers' children (see Table 18 and Table 24). This contradicts with their acquisition through formal training they attended which took much longer time with limited results. Most workers stated that the most effective way of foreign language acquisition is communication with children while babysitting them. They acquired the language perfectly because they knew how to use the language contextually, meaning that the workers were empowered by pragmatic strategies leading them to speak with their employers and their family members more confidently. Their frequency of migration (see Table 5) and migration duration (see Table 6) are also other positive values for them because they got more exposure regarding the foreign language acquisition naturally. In this period of employment, the migrant workers had a lot of exposure to the foreign language

proficiency to the native speakers of the foreign language: talking to their employers or super-ordinates at 93.3%, to other migrant workers at 5.7% and representatives of Indonesian Manpower Offices at 1.1% (see Table 13). To my surprise, regardless the countries of destination, English is a favorite because this language was used between migrant workers with their employees, while Indonesian language was used when they communicated with other workers (see Table 16). They even used their indigenous languages, such as Java, Sunda and Madurese, when communication among the workers took place in the country of destination.

There is a unique language acquisition found in this research. Some migrant workers directly acquired foreign languages without acquiring Indonesian language. They ‘jumped’ from their indigenous languages into foreign language, passing by Indonesian language as their national identity. Usually, local people learn Indonesian language very well and then learn a foreign language. This fact violates this assumption. It certainly needs further research regarding the issue and I am sure I have not read such research so far.

To sum up, the migrant workers believe that they have successfully acquired the foreign language from the time they acquired the foreign language through training in the country of origin, Indonesia, during their employment in the country of destination, to the time when they returned to Indonesia (see Table 23).

b. Language Maintenance

Usually language maintenance refers to the efforts how a community maintain their indigenous language from language shift or language death due to a stronger language. In this paper, language maintenance is associated with the way how Indonesian migrant workers maintained their foreign language they have acquired in the country of destination. Table 21 depicts that those who have maintained the acquired foreign language is at 38.1 %; meanwhile, those who do not maintain such language is at 61.9%. This illustration shows the contradictory conditions between those who maintain it and those who do not maintain the language which is actually almost double. The ones maintaining the language feel that they use the

language very well. This is at 45.8% (see Table 23). This percentage implies that migrant workers have a strong commitment regarding the language maintenance in their villages.

There are various ways how the workers maintained the acquired foreign language as listed in the questionnaire (ranked from the highest to the lowest percentage):

Table 1. How the Workers Maintained the Acquired Foreign Language

No.	Activities to survive the acquired foreign language	%
1.	Communication with other migrant workers from the same country of destination.	47.6%
2.	Joking with other migrant workers from the same country of destination.	14.3%
3.	Communicating with other workers who are still working in the country of destination.	9.5%
4.	Communicating with the employers for whom they once worked by phone.	7.1%
5.	Communicating with family, relatives due to unconscious code-switching.	7.1%
6.	Helping neighbors speak the acquired foreign language with their relatives.	4.8%
7.	Teaching their children the acquired foreign language.	4.8%
8.	Speaking with their friends' migrant workers who are still working in the country of destination	2.4%
9.	Communicating with their spouses who worked in the same country of destination	2.4%

The most frequent activity to maintain the acquired foreign language by Indonesian migrant workers is communicating with other migrant workers from the same country of destination at 47.6%. This expresses membership strategies (Riley, 2007:113-124), illustrating that they were in the same boat when they worked in the receiving country, they underwent the same experiences in joy

and sorrow and they shared similar activities from their employers. In addition, the percentage indirectly depicts the strong ties among them. This depiction is strongly supported by how they used certain expressions in certain situations to pragmatically show their membership to other villagers that they once worked in foreign countries, in particular Middle-East countries, one of which is Saudi Arabia. The following is an example of the expression which took place in Majalengka. Ms. Sumarsih was about to pay what she wanted to buy in a small shop in Pasirayu village and was talking to a villager who is not a migrant worker. Abruptly, Ms. Sunarmah turned up:

- Ms. Santi : Eh... balanja? (Well, buying something?)
Ms. Sumarsih : Muhun. Atos milihan. Sabaraha sadayana ieu teu? (Yes. I've got what I wanted to buy. How much?)
Ms. Sunarmah : Lahmuddik wa lahmulgholam..? (Chicken and mutton?)
Ms. Sumarsih : La. Hadzal yaum la lahmuddik. Ma'in dinkuudd. Tempe wae! (No. Today not consuming chicken. I'm broke. Only tempe.)

The above dialogue illustrates the code-switching as pragmatic strategies both migrant workers used in their daily conversation. After they had been further interviewed, they stated that they used such code switching strategies in order that they could maintain the required foreign language and proudly inform other villagers who are not migrant workers that they are the villagers who once went abroad as migrant workers. It is clear that they are still proud being migrant workers and feel a bit higher than those who are not.

Making jokes are still practically done by the migrant workers who returned home from the receiving country to maintain the acquired foreign language shown by the second percentage at 14.3%. From the interviews, the contents of the jokes are the ones about the topics regarding their acquired foreign language contexts confidently presented in the foreign languages. The reasons why they keep such jokes are the same as the reasons above.

The wish of many Indonesian migrant workers to work again in the foreign countries in which they once worked is still burning and this is underpinned by the reality that this point is at 9.5%. To maintain the acquired foreign language acquisition, the workers keep on communicating with those who are still working in the country of destination by using the language of the country

in order that they will still be exposed to the language. The workers who are still in the receiving country also get some advantages that they get well-informed regarding their families in Indonesia without spending their money.

Another interesting one regarding the language maintenance is what has happened to some migrant workers in Sukabumi, West Java. They really feel encouraged to maintain the acquired foreign language due to some reasons. First, they keep on using Malay language to communicate with their ex-employers at 7.1% due to some financial and material benefits. These workers told their superordinates that they did not have enough money to buy some basic needs for their daily life. The ex-employers without doubt still send money requested to the workers. They even send milk, foods, clothes and other things to Sukabumi, Indonesia. Many ex-employers visit them in Sukabumi and stay some nights in their houses that they built with the money they earned from their jobs. These Malaysian ex-bosses frequently buy a lot of clothes and other products at Tanah Abang, one of the famous international textile centres. They also like watching Indonesian films and this is proved by the fact that the Malaysian employers send money to the migrant workers to buy the Indonesian films at Glodok, a famous Chinese shopping centre in West Jakarta, and send them to Malaysia as requested. Another reason as they stated in the interview is that they happily maintain Malaysian language because who knows that they are going to Malaysia again due to the fact that so far their ex-employers have warmly invited them to work in their houses again. It is said that many children of the ex-employers are sick and this sickness results from the fact the children are missing them. This shows that the psychological ties between the migrant workers and the families of ex-employers are so strong that their children often sick due to the distance between the two parties.

Teaching Indonesian migrant workers' children the language they have acquired seems to be a challenging fact. Many workers said so doing leads them to maintain the language they have acquired (4.8%) because they teach this language to their children with special preparation and techniques as their exposure. Teaching gives two benefits: one for those who are teaching the language and the other who is learning it. When they are preparing the teaching

program, they remember a lot of vocabulary and any relevant information they got prior their job in the receiving country. Despite small amount of the percentage, they admitted that this is the best way to maintain the acquired language proficiency. They will not teach something wrong regarding the language to their children. In addition, they optimize doing this teaching activity to gain maximum results. Religious reasons contribute to the teaching activities that those teaching something will get 'present life' and hereafter life rewards. This idea is well institutionalized in their minds.

Helping their neighbors speak in a foreign language in order that they can communicate with the neighbors' families who are working in a foreign country is another way to maintain the foreign language they acquired (2.5%). Despite small percentage, the workers feel that this is felt to be an effective way regarding the maintenance. The workers also get advantages to know news in the country of destination, so they always feel up-dated with the current news and any relevant information in connection with working in a foreign country.

Code-switching is another issue regarding the migrant workers' efforts to maintain the acquired foreign language in the country of origin. Many spouses who are migrant workers have found some advantages in reference with using code-switching to maintain the language (2.4%). This percentage seems to be small amount, but the advantages are strongly felt in pragmatic strategies. When they have some secrets that it's only they who should know them, they use code-switching. For example, a couple of migrant workers went to Taiwan to work in different cities for about three years. Over there, they spoke Chinese and English. In Indonesia, they sometimes use English or Chinese mixed with Indonesian and Sundanese. Here is the dialogue:

- Husband : Kumaha masalah sawah teh? Dibeuli wae? (What about the padi field? Should we buy it?).
Wife : Nya terserah akang! Eehh... aya tamu geuning? (Well, up to you, dear! Ehm. A guest coming?) **Well, we'll talk about the padi field later. OK?**
Husband : Sure. **Mangga calik, mang Aris!** (Have a seat, Uncle Aris!)

The above dialogue illustrates the couple intending to hide their secret to buy a padi field because they did not want to let other persons know about their

planning. In Sundanese such plans are usually kept secret because when we let others know, they are considered to show off what they have. Culturally, the way to hide a secret is highly respectable in Sundanese, particularly in Majalengka.

This discussion depicts that the Indonesian migrant workers, at least in this research as representing others, have strong efforts to maintain the acquired foreign language with some economic, psychological and social values.

c. Language Acquisition and Language Maintenance as Social Capital

These two can be called social capital because these factors can equip the migrants with social capabilities to empower themselves and their community by implementing the factors in their social life. The way how they acquired the foreign language through training and employment and language maintenance can lead them to have social capital they actually need in real conditions. However, the proposition of this social capital seems to be different from that used in this research. The differences are that social capital discussed by Bourdieu et al. deals with the social class movement, while the one presented in this paper mostly depicts individual efforts to share their social capital to empower their society with very little help from the government. The individuals tend to organize themselves. An example of this can be seen how the migrant workers in Kuningan set up a simple home library with very poor quality books whose corners are already torn. They help the students surrounding their area to get opportunities to read books to enrich their perspectives. They have also trained those who are going to work as migrant workers in order that they can use Arabic language in a better way, so these migrant workers can reduce the rising problems when they are in Middle-East countries. This training looks like a pre-departure program freely and sincerely conducted. This group is also actively involved in various non-government organizations' activities and the activity has made this group of people well-known and heard by both communities and the local government which has often involved them in the variety of programs to empower the society with the bottom-up approach as highly respected by the local government.

Through the interview lasting for several days, the migrant workers in Majalengka has planned to request our help to prepare a very simple 5-language

‘dictionary’ containing useful but simple expressions in various communicative contacts. Five languages are Indonesian, Arabic, English, Korean, Chinese and Malaysian. Malaysian language is included in the dictionary due to the fact that Indonesian and Malaysian languages have many differences leading Indonesian migrant workers experience pragmatic failure in their oral and written communication. This plan was proposed to be done in cooperation between migrant workers with rich language experiences and language specialists. They really expect that this dictionary can be used as a tool for those who want to be migrant workers in order that they become self-confident when they communicate with native speakers of the languages.

7. Conclusion

The above discussion leads us to the conclusion of this paper that it is clear Indonesian migrant workers need good preparation for all, in particular language proficiency, in order that they can be empowered to enable them to communicate well with anybody in the process of employment, while-employment and post-employment because this can make them more convenient. What the workers have got from their experiences, particularly language, can function as their social capital for their family, relatives and community but this undoubtedly important capital is not well processed to empower the community in most areas of the country of destination, Indonesia.

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LIST OF TABLES

Daerah

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kuningan	33	28,0	28,0	28,0
	Majalengka	29	24,6	24,6	52,5
	Bekasi	11	9,3	9,3	61,9
	Bandung	1	,8	,8	62,7
	Karawang	1	,8	,8	63,6
	Indramayu	1	,8	,8	64,4
	Demak	1	,8	,8	65,3
	Salatiga	1	,8	,8	66,1
	Lampung	1	,8	,8	66,9
	Malang	12	10,2	10,2	77,1
	Jakarta	2	1,7	1,7	78,8
	Lumajang	8	6,8	6,8	85,6
	Yogyakarta	17	14,4	14,4	100,0
	Total	118	100,0	100,0	

Table 1 Areas of Origin

Usia

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-29 th	24	20,3	20,7	20,7
	30-39 th	33	28,0	28,4	49,1
	40-49 th	43	36,4	37,1	86,2
	50-59 th	12	10,2	10,3	96,6
	>60 th	4	3,4	3,4	100,0
	Total	116	98,3	100,0	
Missing	System	2	1,7		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 2 Ages

Pendidikan

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Tidak lulus SD	5	4,2	4,4	4,4
	SD	44	37,3	38,9	43,4
	SMP	29	24,6	25,7	69,0
	SMA	32	27,1	28,3	97,3
	Diploma	3	2,5	2,7	100,0
	Total	113	95,8	100,0	
Missing	System	5	4,2		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 3 Education

Negara Tujuan

Category label	Code	Pct of Count	Pct of Responses	Cases
Arab Saudi	1	102	51,5	86,4
UEA	2	9	4,5	7,6
Kuwait	3	6	3,0	5,1
Jordania	4	1	,5	,8
Mesir	5	1	,5	,8
Oman	6	2	1,0	1,7
Malaysia	7	36	18,2	30,5
Singapura	8	4	2,0	3,4
Brunei Darussalam	9	1	,5	,8
Taiwan	10	9	4,5	7,6
Korea Selatan	11	6	3,0	5,1
Hongkong	12	21	10,6	17,8
		-----	-----	-----
Total responses		198	100,0	167,8

Table 4 Countries of Destination

Berapa kali pergi bermigrasi

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 kali	69	58,5	58,5	58,5
	2 kali	28	23,7	23,7	82,2
	3 kali	12	10,2	10,2	92,4
	4 kali	6	5,1	5,1	97,5
	5 kali	3	2,5	2,5	100,0
	Total	118	100,0	100,0	

Table 5 Frequency of Migration

Category label	Code	Durasi		Cases
		Pct of Count	Pct of Responses	
<2 th	1	11	5,6	9,3
2 th	2	107	54,0	90,7
3 th	3	46	23,2	39,0
4 th	4	20	10,1	16,9
5 th	5	11	5,6	9,3
>5 th	6	3	1,5	2,5
		-----	-----	-----
	Total responses	198	100,0	167,8

0 missing cases; 118 valid cases

Table 6 Migration Duration

Total Durasi bermigrasi

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid <2 th	6	5,1	5,1	5,1
2-4 th	61	51,7	51,7	56,8
4-6 th	27	22,9	22,9	79,7
6-8 th	12	10,2	10,2	89,8
8-10 th	11	9,3	9,3	99,2
>10 th	1	,8	,8	100,0
Total	118	100,0	100,0	

Table 7 Total of Migration Duration

Pekerjaan di negara tujuan

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid PRT	67	56,8	56,8	56,8
Baby sitter	6	5,1	5,1	61,9
Perawat (lansia, anak cacat dll)	7	5,9	5,9	67,8
Supir	4	3,4	3,4	71,2
Florist	1	,8	,8	72,0
Buruh Pabrik	24	20,3	20,3	92,4
Buruh Bangunan	4	3,4	3,4	95,8
Buruh Perkebunan	1	,8	,8	96,6
Penjahit	1	,8	,8	97,5
Kerja di Restoran	1	,8	,8	98,3
Petugas Salon	1	,8	,8	99,2
Agen	1	,8	,8	100,0
Total	118	100,0	100,0	

Table 8 Jobs in Countries of Destination

Bahasa yang dikuasai sebelum pergi

Category label	Code	Pct of Count	Pct of Responses	Cases
Indonesia	1	104	31,5	88,1
Jawa	2	43	13,0	36,4
Sunda	3	52	15,8	44,1
Arab	4	63	19,1	53,4

Inggris	5	20	6,1	16,9
Melayu	6	23	7,0	19,5
Mandarin	7	16	4,8	13,6
Korea	8	6	1,8	5,1
Madura	9	3	,9	2,5
		-----	-----	-----
Total responses		330	100,0	279,7

0 missing cases; 118 valid case

Table 9 Languages Mastered Prior to Their Departure

Bahasa yang dikuasai setelah pergi

Category label	Code	Pct of Count	Pct of Responses	Cases
Indonesia	1	104	31,5	88,1
Jawa	2	45	13,6	38,1
Sunda	3	50	15,2	42,4
Arab	4	63	19,1	53,4
Inggris	5	20	6,1	16,9
Melayu	6	23	7,0	19,5
Mandarin	7	15	4,5	12,7
Korea	8	7	2,1	5,9
Madura	9	3	,9	2,5
		-----	-----	-----
Total responses		330	100,0	279,7

0 missing cases; 118 valid cases

Table 10 Languages Mastered upon Arrival

Tingkat penguasaan bahasa sebelum pergi

Category label	Code	Pct of Count	Pct of Responses	Cases
Tidak Bisa	1	33	10,0	28,0
Cukup	2	84	25,5	71,2
Lancar	3	212	64,4	179,7
		-----	-----	-----
Total responses		329	100,0	278,8

0 missing cases; 118 valid cases

Table 11 Levels of Language Proficiency prior Their Departure

Tingkat penguasaan bahasa setelah kembali

Category label	Code	Pct of Count	Pct of Responses	Cases
Tidak Bisa	1	3	,9	2,5
Cukup	2	87	26,4	73,7
Lancar	3	239	72,6	202,5
		-----	-----	-----
Total responses		329	100,0	278,8

0 missing cases; 118 valid cases

Table 12 Levels of Language Proficiency Upon Arrival

Bahasa setempat digunakan dengan

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Majikan/Atasan	82	69,5	93,2	93,2
	Tenaga kerja migran dari negara lain	5	4,2	5,7	98,9
	Perwakilan/Perantara PJTKI	1	,8	1,1	100,0
	Total	88	74,6	100,0	
Missing	System	30	25,4		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 13 Languages of Receiving Countries Used

Bahasa Inggris digunakan dengan

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Majikan/Atasan	10	8,5	55,6	55,6
	Anak Majikan	4	3,4	22,2	77,8
	Tenaga kerja migran dari negara lain	3	2,5	16,7	94,4
	Pembeli/pelanggan	1	,8	5,6	100,0
	Total	18	15,3	100,0	
Missing	System	100	84,7		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 14 To Whom English Used

Bahasa selain bahasa setempat/Inggris digunakan dengan

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Majikan/Atasan	2	1,7	66,7	66,7
	Perwakilan/Perantara PJTKI	1	,8	33,3	100,0
	Total	3	2,5	100,0	
Missing	System	115	97,5		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 15 To Whom Other Languages (Other than English) Used

Bahasa Indonesia digunakan dengan

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Majikan/Atasan	3	2,5	3,0	3,0
	Rekan sesama TKI	96	81,4	97,0	100,0
	Total	99	83,9	100,0	
Missing	System	19	16,1		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 16 To Whom Indonesian Used

Bahasa daerah (Jawa/Sunda/Madura) digunakan dengan

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rekan sesama TKI	86	72,9	100,0	100,0
Missing	System	32	27,1		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 17 To Whom Local Languages Used

Waktu dibutuhkan untuk dapat bercakap-cakap dengan bahasa asing di tempat kerja

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sudah bisa/lancar sebelumnya	4	3,4	4,0	4,0
	<1 bulan	4	3,4	4,0	8,0
	1-3 bulan	69	58,5	69,0	77,0
	3-6 bulan	14	11,9	14,0	91,0
	6-9 bulan	6	5,1	6,0	97,0
	9-12 bulan	3	2,5	3,0	100,0
	Total	100	84,7	100,0	
Missing	System	18	15,3		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 18 Time Needed for Foreign Language Acquisition

Apakah pernah menggunakan bahasa sendiri (mother tongue) di Negara tempat bekerja?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ya	104	88,1	90,4	90,4
	Tidak	11	9,3	9,6	100,0
	Total	115	97,5	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,5		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 19 Using Own Local Language in Country of Destination

Kesempatan berbahasa Indonesia

Category label	Code	Pct of Count	Pct of Responses	Cases
ketika marah	1	72	29,3	63,2
ketika kaget	2	71	28,9	62,3
ketika ingin bergurau	3	27	11,0	23,7
ketika tidak tahu bahasa yang digunakan	4	9	3,7	7,9
ketika bertemu/berkomunikasi dengan TKI	5	64	26,0	56,1
ketika kesal dengan anak majikan	8	1	,4	,9
ketika mengobrol dengan anak majikan	9	2	,8	1,8
		-----	-----	-----
	Total responses	246	100,0	215,8

Table 20 Opportunities of Using Indonesian

Setelah pulang, apakah responden masih menggunakan bahasa asing tersebut?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ya	43	36,4	38,1	38,1
	Tidak	70	59,3	61,9	100,0
	Total	113	95,8	100,0	
Missing	System	5	4,2		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 21 Using Foreign Language upon Arrival in Indonesia

Jika ya, dalam kesempatan apa responden menggunakan bahasa asing tersebut?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Berkomunikasi dg eks TKI negara yang sama	20	16,9	47,6	47,6
	Berkomunikasi dg teman TKI yang masih bekerja di sana	4	3,4	9,5	57,1
	Berkomunikasi dg teman TK migran yang masih bekerja di sana	1	,8	2,4	59,5
	Membantu tetangga berkomunikasi dg kerabatnya	2	1,7	4,8	64,3
	Bercanda dg eks TKI negara yang sama	6	5,1	14,3	78,6
	Berkomunikasi dg eks majikan (melalui telpon)	3	2,5	7,1	85,7
	Berkomunikasi dg pasangan yg jg eks TKI dr negara yg sama	1	,8	2,4	88,1
	Mengajarkan anak	2	1,7	4,8	92,9
	Berkomunikasi dg keluarga/tetangga (masih terbawa2)	3	2,5	7,1	100,0
	Total	42	35,6	100,0	
	Missing	System	76	64,4	
Total		118	100,0		

Table 22 Occasions of Using Foreign Language Mastered in Indonesia for Language Maintenance

Jika ya, seberapa lancar responden menggunakan bahasa asing tersebut?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	sangat lancar	22	18,6	45,8	45,8
	masih bisa membuat kalimat	18	15,3	37,5	83,3
	Hanya beberapa kata	8	6,8	16,7	100,0
	Total	48	40,7	100,0	
Missing	System	70	59,3		
Total		118	100,0		

Table 23 Fluency of Using Foreign Language Upon Arrival in Indonesia

Yang mengajarkan bahasa asing

Category label	Code	Pct of Count	Pct of Responses	Cases
PJTKI	1	25	19,1	26,9
Kursus	2	4	3,1	4,3
Majikan	3	47	35,9	50,5
Anak majikan	4	35	26,7	37,6
Teman TKI	6	17	13,0	18,3
Teman tenaga kerja migran dari ngr lain	8	1	,8	1,1
Keluarga (adik/kakak) yang masih di ngr	9	2	1,5	2,2
		-----	-----	-----
Total responses		131	100,0	140,9

25 missing cases; 93 valid cases

Table 24 Persons/Institutions Teaching Foreign Language

Language Proficiency as A Social Capital among Indonesian Migrant Workers: from Language Acquisition to Language Maintenance

Diding Fahrudin
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Abstract

The economic and social pressure has led many Indonesian to become migrant workers in some foreign countries for a better life. Their poor language proficiency due to their lack of preparation prior to their departure has hampered them from communicating well in the country of destination which they have lived. This paper presents the analysis of how the Indonesian migrant workers prepared their language proficiency in their country of origin, Indonesia, how they have acquired the language of the receiving country in which they have worked, and how they have maintained the acquired foreign language upon their return to Indonesia as their social capital. This paper found out that language preparation, language acquisition and language maintenance play very important roles in the life of Indonesian migrant workers. Poorly planned language training has made the migrant workers face many problems in communication in the country of destination. This condition can be gradually solved by acquiring the language during their work in the country of destination and this language acquisition through immersion has become their social capital; however, such social capital is not well processed to empower the community in most areas of the country of origin, Indonesia. This fact is worsened by the reality that the formal government structure in the villages seems to neglect this self-empowered group of the community.

Key words:

Economic and social pressure, migrant workers, proficiency, acquired, social capital.

1. Introduction

The number of Indonesian migrant workers deployed to some foreign countries, like Middle East countries, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, has been significantly increasing since the early 1990s (86,264 workers in 1990, 141,287 people in 1994 and 376.000 in 2000 people, all of whom were officially