

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background Study

English is a language that has been widely recognized as an international language as well as one of the languages with the largest number of speakers in the world. According to Rayner (2001), English is the most widely used international language worldwide. He explains that English speakers are spread across five continents, and this language is not only used by native speakers but also by the global community, especially in modern contexts. The strength of English lies in its rich idiomatic expressions and its ability to absorb elements from various cultures, making it flexible and relevant in many fields, including science, politics, and economics. As a global communication tool, English is often used as an international language of instruction that facilitates communication and creates a more connected world, allowing people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to understand each other more deeply.

English also functions as a key means of communication for individuals with different mother tongue backgrounds to connect with one another. In the era of globalization, supported by rapid technological development, the role of English as a global language has become increasingly significant. Crystal (1995), in his book explains that English has developed into a global language used by approximately 1.5 billion speakers in various sectors, including science and business. English has become a *lingua franca*, which refers to a language used as a bridge among people from different linguistic backgrounds worldwide. The widespread use of English among non-native speakers highlights its importance in globalization, making English proficiency an essential skill for accessing broader opportunities in various fields.

Learning English in every country has now become very important as a bridge that connects cultures, economies, and technologies around the world in the globalization era. Oktavia (2021) emphasizes that mastery of English is crucial in

modern times. She states that the ability to speak English is not only an added value but also a fundamental skill that individuals must possess in order to compete and adapt in an increasingly interconnected global environment. English serves as the main language for international communication. Moreover, English proficiency provides access to wider knowledge and resources, such as professional literature, international training, and diverse career opportunities. By learning English, individuals can gain broader insights and increase their chances of obtaining better employment opportunities. Lubis, Fitri, and Ridwan (2024) also states that English proficiency can facilitate job searching and expand career opportunities, especially for migrant workers.

English as a foreign language poses challenges for Indonesian learners, particularly prospective migrant workers. Many of them have relatively low educational backgrounds and limited exposure to English, making it a completely new language for them. According to Ellis (1997), effective language learning depends on meaningful input and opportunities for real communication. Poor pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings and disrupt communication, making pronunciation training essential. Since English communication will be a daily necessity for migrant workers in Singapore, mastering pronunciation is crucial to ensure effective interaction. However, current training in many institutions is still limited in terms of time and quality, resulting in insufficient language preparation for prospective migrant workers.

Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) are individuals who leave Indonesia to work abroad. Based on Law No. 18/2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, Article 1 paragraph 2, an Indonesian migrant worker is defined as any Indonesian citizen who will, is, or has worked and received wages outside the territory of the Republic of Indonesia. This profession is closely related to the use of English as an international language for communication. Mastery of English is very important for IMWs because it directly influences their competitiveness in the international labor market. Migrant workers usually go abroad to seek better job opportunities and economic conditions. IMWs also contribute significantly to the national economy. Bank Indonesia (2023) reported that the contribution of IMWs

to national income reached Rp230.81 trillion, or around 10% of Indonesia's total foreign exchange reserves. This shows the important role of IMWs in supporting the national economy. The Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI) is responsible for protecting, regulating, and supervising migrant workers before departure, during employment abroad, and after returning to Indonesia. BP2MI recorded 274,695 migrant workers placed abroad in 2023, an increase of 36.93% compared to 200,082 workers in the previous year. In the period of January to June 2024, there were 160,496 migrant workers placed in various countries, with 79,344 working in the formal sector and the rest in the informal sector.

Singapore is one of the main destination countries for Indonesian Migrant Workers, especially in the informal sector such as domestic work. Over the past decades, the demand for domestic workers in Singapore has continued to increase due to the high participation of women in the workforce and the growing dependence of urban households on domestic services. According to the Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia (2024), Singapore ranks fifth among the destination countries for IMWs, with 5,068 workers as of mid-year. Previously, Sediksi (2023) reported that Singapore ranked sixth with 6,153 workers. Although it is not among the top three destinations, Singapore remains an important country, considering that most Indonesian migrant workers there are employed in the informal or domestic sector. Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023) shows that more than 60% of Indonesians living in Singapore work as domestic helpers, confirming that Singapore is a significant labor market for Indonesian workers.

Considering the high interest of Indonesian migrant workers in working in Singapore, learning English becomes a very important skill that must be mastered by prospective migrant workers. Private Vocational Training Institutions, known as Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja Swasta (LPKS), are privately operated training centers recognized by the government to prepare prospective Indonesian migrant workers prior to their deployment abroad by providing structured programs encompassing both technical and communicative competencies. According to Stoner (1995), communication is a process through which individuals convey messages to provide

understanding and information to others, and English training is therefore one of the most essential aspects that IMWs must acquire to communicate effectively with employers and colleagues in their destination countries. Brown (2004) further states that speaking involves interaction between two or more people who contribute meaningfully to communication, underscoring the need for LPKS to provide learning models that are simple, relevant, and accessible, particularly given that English remains a significant challenge for learners whose mother tongue is not English.

The ability to communicate effectively in English is widely regarded as a critical determinant of migrant workers' successful adaptation to their working conditions overseas. As such, English language instruction should constitute a fundamental component of pre-departure training programs. Within this framework, LPKS assume a vital role in preparing prospective migrant workers with the communicative competencies necessary throughout their journey beginning at the interview stage and extending through their arrival and adjustment in the host country. Central to this preparation is the availability of well-designed instructional materials, particularly English textbooks, which function as structured learning resources for both instructors and learners alike. Richards (2001) underscores that instructional materials play a pivotal role in organizing learning content in a systematic manner while facilitating the development of language skills through purposeful exercises and meaningful learning activities. It follows, then, that such materials must be coherently structured, accessible in terms of comprehension, and closely aligned with the communicative demands learners are likely to encounter in their future workplace environments.

Nevertheless, the success of English language acquisition is largely contingent upon the relevance and quality of the instructional materials employed. In numerous instances, the English textbooks currently in circulation remain overly generic, failing to adequately address the specific communicative requirements of prospective migrant workers, which consequently hinders their ability to transfer classroom learning into authentic workplace situations. Nunan (1988) contends that effective language materials must be grounded in a careful analysis of learners'

needs, ensuring that content selection and instructional design are driven by what learners are ultimately expected to accomplish with the language. This view is further supported by Graves (2000), who maintains that the process of materials development encompasses not only the creation of content but also its systematic evaluation and ongoing adaptation to ensure genuine pedagogical effectiveness. These perspectives collectively reinforce the notion that textbooks function as more than mere repositories of linguistic content; rather, they serve as practical instruments that prepare learners to navigate real-world communicative demands. Consequently, there exists a pressing need to develop English language textbooks that are both contextually grounded and practically oriented, specifically tailored to equip prospective Indonesian migrant workers with the communicative readiness required to meet the demands of their future work environments

This study centers on the persistently low English proficiency levels observed among prospective Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) undergoing training at the Nur Mutiara Bangsa Vocational Training Center (LPKS) in Kebumen, who are being prepared for employment in Singapore. Preliminary observations and interviews revealed that a considerable number of trainees encounter difficulties in mastering basic English vocabulary, comprehending instructions delivered in English, and engaging in effective spoken communication. These constraints, in turn, hinder their capacity to respond appropriately during conversations and to interact with employers in a confident and competent manner. Compounding this issue, many prospective migrant workers find themselves having to undergo repeated interview sessions with prospective employers due to their struggles in answering interview questions in English, a pattern that frequently results in a prolonged and less efficient recruitment process.

In this study, the researcher analyzes the various obstacles faced by Indonesian migrant workers in learning English and proposes solutions through the development of a learning book. Tomlinson (2011), who states that effective learning materials should be designed based on learners' needs and real-life contexts in order to facilitate meaningful language learning. The book includes vocabulary and greeting expressions that are relevant to the type of work performed

by prospective migrant workers. Rather than relying solely on the American Phonetic Alphabet (APA), the researcher emphasizes the use of a printed book combined by audio features. This approach allows learners to listen directly to correct pronunciation while reading the material, making it easier for them to understand and imitate English words accurately. According to Harmer (2007), exposure to audio input plays a crucial role in improving learners' pronunciation and listening skills, especially for beginners.

The integration of audio in the printed book provides a more interactive learning experience, particularly for learners who are unfamiliar with English pronunciation. In addition, the material is supported by repetition drills to help improve pronunciation in a practical and accessible way. According to Nation and Newton (2009), listening and speaking are closely related skills, and learners need sufficient spoken input and are able to speak English. The book is designed to present concise and easy-to-understand content, enabling migrant workers to learn more efficiently.

By focusing on vocabulary and expressions that are directly applicable to everyday work situations, learners are expected to quickly acquire the necessary English skills without requiring excessive learning time. This approach aims to maximize learning outcomes within a limited timeframe, so that prospective migrant workers can be better prepared to face communication challenges in their work environment.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background mentioned above, the problem formulation of this research is.

1. How is the process of developing and designing an English learning book for prospective Indonesian migrant workers?
2. How do stakeholders and users respond to the developed English learning book?

## **1.3 Aims of Study**

Based on the research questions, this research aims to explore various aspects related to the development of learning materials are:

1. To develop an English learning book for prospective Indonesian migrant workers based on their communication needs and learning conditions.
2. To evaluate stakeholders' and users' feedback on the developed English learning book.

#### **1.4 Significance of Research**

This research is expected to provide two major benefits, namely practical and theoretical benefits. Practically, this study is beneficial for prospective Indonesian migrant workers and instructors in vocational training institutions, as the developed English learning book can help improve learners' communication skills through materials tailored to their needs and work contexts. In addition, the availability printed audio-supported book format allows learners to study more flexibly while also supporting pronunciation and listening practice.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of language learning materials by emphasizing the importance of a structured production process. It also supports innovation in educational resources by integrating written content with audio-based digital learning, which can enhance the quality of language learning and serve as a reference for future material development

#### **1.5 Output**

The output of this research is an English learning resource entitled *Smart Migrant Book*, designed for prospective Indonesian migrant workers and developed primarily in the form of a printed book, supported by a digital e-book version to provide wider accessibility and ease of use. The learning material includes practical vocabulary, daily expressions, and simple sentences tailored to the type of work carried out by migrant workers. In addition, the printed bok intergrated with audio features to support learners in improving pronunciation and listening skills through repeated practice. By combining printed learning materials with audio-supported digital learning, this product provides a more interactive and practical learning experience, enabling users to develop their English communication skills more efficiently.