

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English has been recognized as an international language and is also one of the languages with the largest number of speakers in the world. Crystal (2003) explains that English has evolved into a global language used by approximately 1.5 billion speakers in various fields, including the business world. This language is used not only by native speakers but also by people around the world, particularly those involved in modern contexts. Jenkins (2014) explains that English functions as an international language among speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. The strength of English lies in the richness of its idiomatic expressions and its ability to absorb elements from various cultures, making it flexible and relevant in many fields, including the economic sector. In its function as a global language of communication, English serves as the primary tool for people with different first-language backgrounds to communicate with one another. The use of English as a means of communication among non-native speakers highlights the language's importance in the context of globalization and its role in connecting diverse cultures, economies, and technologies worldwide. Furthermore, proficiency in English expands access to a broader range of knowledge and resources, such as professional literature, international training, and a wider variety of career opportunities. By learning English, individuals will gain a more globally open perspective and broader knowledge, thereby opening up wider employment opportunities.

Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) are Indonesian citizens who work abroad to earn income and improve their economic conditions. According to Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, IMWs are individuals who will, are currently, or have worked outside the territory of Indonesia and receive wages for their services. The presence of IMWs plays a significant role not only in improving the welfare of workers and their families but also in supporting national economic development.

The economic contribution of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) can be seen in the remittances they send to Indonesia. Bank Indonesia (2023) reports that remittances generated by Indonesian migrant workers reached Rp 230.81 trillion, accounting for approximately 10% of the country's foreign exchange reserves. This figure demonstrates that IMWs make a significant contribution to national economic stability and foreign exchange earnings. In addition, migrant workers contribute to economic growth and household welfare through remittances, increased income, and the transfer of skills and knowledge acquired while working abroad (Azam et al., 2016).

The number of Indonesians seeking employment abroad continues to rise each year. According to data from the Ministry of Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (KP2MI), there were 297,434 placements of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI). The majority of these placements were concentrated in the informal sector, which saw a growth of 9.17%. In addition, the majority of these placements were made through the Private-to-Private (P to P) scheme, accounting for 79.47% of total placements. These figures indicate that the informal sector remains the primary destination for the placement of Indonesian migrant workers.

The increasing participation of Indonesians in overseas employment is closely associated with economic motivations and the availability of better job opportunities abroad. Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2019) argue that international labor migration is largely influenced by economic disparities, labor demand, and opportunities for improved living standards in destination countries. Similarly, the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2021) highlights that wage differences and limited employment opportunities in countries of origin are among the main drivers of labor migration. Indonesian migrant workers are employed in various countries worldwide, with Singapore being one of the major destination countries, particularly in the domestic work and caregiving sectors.

Singapore is one of the top destinations for Indonesian migrant workers (PMI), particularly those working in the domestic sector. Several factors contribute to this, including geographical proximity, economic stability, and high demand for domestic workers in Singapore. The increasing participation of women in the labor

force and the growing reliance on domestic support services have also driven the ongoing need for migrant domestic workers (Yeoh & Huang, 2010). According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Migrant Worker Protection (KP2MI, 2024), Singapore remains one of the most popular destination countries for Indonesian migrant workers, with 5,068 placements recorded.

In addition to opening up job opportunities, language proficiency is a key factor in helping migrant workers adapt and communicate in their destination country. Singapore is a multilingual society where English serves as the primary language in education, public administration, and workplace communication. The Ministry of Education Singapore (2020) states that English serves as the primary medium of instruction and acts as a bridge between Singapore's various ethnic communities. Therefore, in addition to vocational competencies, Indonesian migrant workers are expected to possess adequate English communication skills to perform their job duties effectively and interact in daily life.

According to Stoner (1995), communication is a process in which a person seeks to provide understanding and information by conveying messages to others. Considering the growing number of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) seeking employment in Singapore, English language proficiency has become an essential skill to acquire before departure. Effective communication enables workers to understand instructions, interact with employers, and perform their duties with greater confidence. Therefore, English language instruction for prospective migrant workers must be designed to be practical, contextual, and easily accessible. Nation and Macalister (2019) state that language learning becomes more effective when instructional materials are developed based on learners' actual needs and the intended purposes of language use furthermore

Proficiency in English communication skills is considered one of the key factors determining the success of migrant workers in adapting to their work environments abroad. Therefore, English language learning must be an integral part of pre-departure preparation programs. In this regard, Private Vocational Training Institutions (LPKS) play a crucial role in equipping prospective migrant workers with the communication skills they need from the interview process through to their

arrival in their destination country. One of the main factors supporting this process is the use of instructional materials, particularly English language textbooks, which serve as structured learning resources for both instructors and learners. Richards (2001) emphasizes that instructional materials help organize learning content systematically and support language skill development through targeted exercises and meaningful learning activities. Therefore, instructional materials must be clearly structured, easy to understand, and relevant to the learners' future communication needs in the workplace.

However, success in learning English depends heavily on the relevance and quality of the instructional materials used. In many cases, the English learning textbooks currently available are still too general and do not sufficiently meet the specific communicative needs of prospective migrant workers, making it difficult for them to apply what they have learned in real-world work situations. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that language learning materials must be designed based on the specific needs and goals of the learners. Furthermore, Tomlinson (2011) states that the development of learning materials involves the design, evaluation, and adaptation of materials to facilitate effective language learning. These perspectives emphasize that textbooks do not merely present language content but also serve as practical tools that prepare learners for real-world communication. Therefore, there is a strong need to develop contextual and practical English language textbooks specifically designed for prospective Indonesian migrant workers to support their readiness to meet the communication demands of their future workplaces.

Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja Swasta (LPKS) Nur Mutiara Bangsa, located in Kebumen, is a training institution that focuses on preparing prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) for employment in the informal sector, particularly as domestic workers, with Singapore as one of the destination countries for placement. In addition to equipping trainees with technical domestic work skills, the institution also provides English language training as part of the pre-departure preparation, given that English communication skills are one of the key requirements in the recruitment process conducted by employers in Singapore.

Based on initial observations at the institution, the main issue addressed in this study is the low level of English proficiency among prospective Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) preparing to work in Singapore. Many trainees struggle to master English vocabulary, understand instructions in English, and communicate effectively in English. These limitations affect their ability to respond appropriately and interact confidently during recruitment interviews with employers, often conducted in English. As a result, prospective migrant workers are frequently required to attend multiple interview sessions before being accepted, which in turn causes the recruitment process to take longer than expected.

To address this issue, this study focuses on the development of the “Smart Migrant Book”, an English language learning resource specifically designed for prospective Indonesian migrant workers, particularly domestic workers bound for Singapore. The materials were developed based on the learners' needs regarding interview preparation, communication skills, and workplace situations commonly encountered in Singapore, with an emphasis on practical and contextual language use. By providing relevant vocabulary, interview preparation materials, workplace expressions, and communication exercises, this book is expected to help learners improve their English communication skills and boost their confidence.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study that has been described, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. How is the process of designing the English learning book “Smart Migrant Book” to meet the needs of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs)?
2. How is the evaluation of the “Smart Migrant Book” based on the feedback from prospective users of the book?

1.3. Aim of Study

Based on the research questions formulated in this study, the aims of this research are:

1. To develop an English learning book entitled “Smart Migrant Book” for prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) at LPKS Nur Mutiara

Bangsa that provides materials relevant to workplace communication in Singapore.

2. To evaluate the “Smart Migrant Book” based on the feedback from prospective users of the book.

1.4. Significance of Research

This study is expected to make a meaningful contribution, both theoretically and practically, to the field of English language teaching materials development. From a theoretical perspective, this study can enrich the discussion on needs-based teaching materials development commonly known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) particularly for Indonesian migrant workers in the informal sector. This study also highlights the importance of designing instructional materials that are contextual, simple, and relevant to real-life situations in an international work environment. Therefore, this study can serve as a reference for future researchers in developing learning materials that accommodate learners with diverse educational backgrounds and limited prior experience in learning English.

From a practical standpoint, this study is expected to provide direct benefits to IMWs in improving their English proficiency, particularly in the communication skills needed to navigate the job interview process and perform daily work activities in destination countries such as Singapore. The materials developed are based on real-world workplace needs, enabling learners to better understand job-related instructions, interact with employers, and perform their tasks more effectively. In addition, these materials are expected to assist instructors at training institutions by providing teaching resources that are more structured, systematic, and easy to understand. Thus, this study not only contributes to improving IMWs’ English language skills but also supports the improvement of training quality at relevant institutions.

1.5 Output

The output of this research is an English language learning book titled “Smart Migrant Book”, developed for prospective Indonesian migrant workers who will be working in Singapore. This book provides practical learning materials focused on

workplace communication and everyday interactions commonly encountered by IMW's. To support the learning process, the book includes practice activities and QR code-based audio features that help learners improve their pronunciation and listening skills. It is hoped that this book will serve as a practical and easily accessible learning resource to support learners during their preparation period before departing for their destination country.