

Helena Verusha Ali
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SOCIAL CLASS, LANGUAGE, AND MIGRANT AGENCY

Indonesian Workers Navigating Transnational Labour Pathways

**Narratives of Power, Identity, and Mobility in a Middle
Eastern Migration Context**

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FOREWORD

Migration is frequently represented through statistics, policies, labour-market demands, remittance flows, and economic indicators. Yet behind every migration corridor, employment contract, and remittance figure is a human life: a person who leaves familiar places, languages, relationships, and routines in pursuit of security, opportunity, dignity, and a more hopeful future. When migration is understood primarily through institutional or economic categories, migrant workers can easily be reduced to units of labour, sources of foreign exchange, or objects of regulation. Their voices, knowledge, and lived experiences become secondary to the systems that recruit, classify, employ, and govern them.

This book begins from a different premise. It approaches Indonesian migrant workers not merely as participants in transnational labour markets, but as thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting subjects whose lives illuminate the complex intersections of social class, language, identity, power, mobility, and human agency. Through their narratives, migration becomes visible not as a distant demographic or economic phenomenon, but as a lived process shaped by aspiration and obligation, opportunity and inequality, sacrifice and uncertainty, resilience and hope.

Social Class, Language, and Migrant Agency: Indonesian Workers Navigating Transnational Labour Pathways makes a timely contribution to contemporary scholarship on labour migration. Drawing together applied linguistics, migration studies, social theory, and narrative inquiry, the authors offer a nuanced account of how Indonesian migrant workers navigate unequal transnational labour systems within an anonymised Middle Eastern setting. The decision to anonymise the host-country context, workplaces, institutions, and participants reflects an ethical commitment to protecting those whose experiences inform the book. At the same time, anonymisation directs analytical attention beyond one particular national setting towards wider patterns of labour stratification, linguistic inequality, institutional power, and migrant vulnerability.

One of the book's most important contributions is its challenge to homogenising representations of migrant workers. The category "Indonesian migrant worker" often obscures profound differences in educational background, occupational history, gendered expectations, linguistic repertoire, migration route, social networks, legal position, and access to institutional resources. These differences shape not only the work migrants perform, but also the authority they can exercise, the risks they face, the recognition they receive, and the futures they are able to imagine.

By examining both blue-collar and white-collar pathways, the book demonstrates that transnational mobility is never experienced equally. Migrants do not cross borders from identical social positions, nor do they enter host-country labour markets with equal access to economic, cultural, social, linguistic, or symbolic capital. Inequality does not begin only after arrival. It is already present in access to education, language learning, recruitment channels, documentation, professional credentials, financial resources, and social connections. Migration may transform these inequalities, but it rarely erases them.

The book also makes a significant intervention in applied linguistics by refusing to treat language as a neutral instrument of communication. Language operates within social fields in which particular languages, accents, registers, and communicative styles receive unequal value. For migrant workers, linguistic resources may facilitate access to employment, workplace participation, institutional recognition, personal safety, and occupational mobility. They may also determine whether a worker is heard, trusted, promoted, marginalised, or misunderstood.

At the same time, linguistic hierarchies can reproduce broader social inequalities. Judgements about accent, fluency, grammatical accuracy, or communicative style may become indirect judgements about intelligence, competence, professionalism, nationality, and social worth. The book therefore shows that language is not simply something migrants possess or lack. It is a socially evaluated resource whose value depends upon the workplace, institution, community, and power relations within which it is used.

Through its discussion of linguistic capital, multilingual practice, translanguaging, informal learning, and migrant linguistic agency, the book challenges narrow assumptions about communicative competence. Migrants frequently communicate by combining partial linguistic knowledge with gesture, observation, repetition, translation, social networks, digital tools, emotional awareness, and practical workplace knowledge. These practices reveal not deficiency but resourcefulness. They demonstrate that communication in migrant settings is adaptive, relational, embodied, and shaped by the need to act under conditions that are often unequal.

Equally compelling is the book's treatment of agency. Migration scholarship has sometimes moved between two simplified representations: migrants as powerless victims of structural inequality, or migrants as heroic individuals who overcome adversity through determination and resilience. This book resists both positions. It presents agency as relational, situated, and exercised within constraint.

Agency is found in overt acts of negotiation and resistance, but it is also present in quieter practices: learning workplace language independently, seeking assistance from peers, choosing when to speak, concealing hardship to protect family members, sustaining religious and moral commitments, managing emotion, preserving dignity, and imagining alternative futures. These actions may appear ordinary, but they are central to understanding how people continue to live, decide, and act within unequal social conditions.

Importantly, recognising these quieter forms of agency does not mean romanticising hardship. Patience should not be celebrated in ways that obscure exploitation, and resilience should not become an excuse for weak institutional protection. The book maintains a careful distinction between recognising migrants' capacities and shifting responsibility away from employers, recruitment systems, governments, and other institutions. Migrant agency is real, but it is often costly, constrained, and exercised in circumstances that should themselves be transformed.

The book also draws attention to the moral worlds within which migration takes place. Decisions about leaving, staying, enduring, returning, learning, resisting, and supporting others are rarely individual decisions alone. They are shaped by family obligations, religious commitments, gendered expectations, community relationships, economic pressures, and imagined responsibilities towards future generations. Migration is therefore not only an economic strategy or occupational movement. It is also a moral, emotional, linguistic, and relational undertaking.

The treatment of faith and family is especially valuable. Religious practice is not presented merely as private belief or passive consolation, but as a source of ethical orientation, emotional regulation, solidarity, and action. Similarly, family responsibility is shown to be both sustaining and burdensome. Families may give migration its meaning, yet financial and emotional obligations may also limit a worker's capacity to refuse unsafe conditions or leave insecure employment. In this way, the book reveals the ambivalent relationship between care, obligation, and agency.

Another strength lies in the book's attention to return migration. Returning home is not treated as the simple completion of a migration cycle. Migrants may return with new linguistic resources, professional knowledge, habits, confidence, expectations, and ways of understanding themselves. Yet these transformations are not always recognised by families or communities, which may evaluate migration primarily through visible material outcomes. Return therefore involves re-entry into a familiar social world from the position of a changed self.

The authors also remind readers of the ethical responsibilities involved in representing migrant lives. Narratives are not merely collections of facts waiting to be extracted and classified. They are situated interpretations of experience, expressions of identity, and forms of knowledge in their own right. What participants say, how they say it, what they leave unsaid, and how their accounts are translated and interpreted all matter.

Throughout the volume, migrant workers are treated not as passive objects of inquiry but as narrators and knowledge producers whose perspectives deepen our understanding of language, labour, inequality, mobility, and human possibility. The book's commitment to anonymisation, reflexivity, and contextual interpretation reflects an effort to balance analytical rigour with respect for the people whose experiences make the analysis possible.

Its interdisciplinary scope further strengthens the volume. By bringing social class theory into conversation with sociolinguistics, migration studies, narrative inquiry, critical social theory, labour studies, and social justice, the book provides a comprehensive framework for understanding contemporary labour migration. It moves from global and structural contexts to lived narratives, cross-cutting interpretation, and practical implications for education, policy, migrant preparation, and institutional support.

This movement is important because personal narratives and social structures should not be treated as separate levels of analysis. Individual experiences are shaped by labour markets, migration regimes, recruitment systems, linguistic hierarchies, gender relations, and unequal access to capital. At the same time, broader systems become visible through the everyday experiences of those who live within them. The book shows how personal stories can illuminate structural inequality without reducing individuals to illustrations of theory.

The volume will be valuable to scholars and students in applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, migration studies, anthropology, sociology, labour studies, education, and international development. It will also be relevant to teachers, policymakers, migrant-support organisations, advocates, and practitioners seeking more informed and humane approaches to labour governance, language preparation, migrant protection, and reintegration.

For educators, the book challenges language programmes that prepare migrants only through decontextualised grammar and vocabulary. For policymakers, it reveals the limitations of protection frameworks that exist formally but remain difficult for workers to

access. For researchers, it demonstrates the value of treating migrants' stories as theoretically significant forms of knowledge. For advocates and practitioners, it highlights the importance of listening to workers when designing programmes intended to support them.

At its core, this book invites us to listen differently. It asks readers to hear not only stories of geographical movement, but also stories of movement across social positions, linguistic markets, occupational identities, moral worlds, institutions, and imagined futures. It asks us to recognise the expertise embedded in everyday labour, the creativity embedded in multilingual communication, and the dignity embedded in ordinary acts of care, perseverance, learning, and negotiation.

Ultimately, this is not only a book about Indonesian migrant workers. It is a book about recognition: about whose voices are heard, whose labour is valued, whose knowledge is considered legitimate, and whose experiences are permitted to shape public understanding. It challenges us to reconsider the categories through which migration is commonly perceived and to recognise migrant workers not merely as economic actors, policy subjects, or recipients of protection, but as full human beings and producers of knowledge.

Its message is both scholarly and profoundly human. More equitable transnational labour pathways cannot be created through economic calculation or regulatory reform alone. They require a deeper transformation in how migrant workers are seen, heard, taught, protected, and valued. Justice begins with recognition, and recognition begins by taking migrant lives, experiences, languages, and stories seriously.

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PART I
MIGRATION, LANGUAGE,
AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY



UNIT 1

GLOBAL LABOUR MOBILITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

A. Mobility in an Unequal World

Human mobility has become one of the defining characteristics of the twenty-first century. People move across national borders for education, employment, family reunification, refuge, entrepreneurship, and professional advancement. Contemporary societies are increasingly interconnected through global flows of capital, information, technology, commodities, and people. Yet despite frequent celebrations of globalization as a process that creates unprecedented opportunities for mobility, movement itself remains profoundly unequal. Not everyone has the same capacity to cross borders, access opportunities, or benefit from global interconnectedness. Mobility is therefore not simply a matter of movement; it is also a matter of power.

The ability to move internationally is shaped by access to economic resources, educational qualifications, linguistic competence, social networks, citizenship status, and institutional recognition. Highly skilled professionals often travel through relatively privileged pathways supported by universities, multinational corporations, international organisations, or professional networks. Their mobility is frequently framed as evidence of global citizenship, talent circulation, or international career development. By contrast, millions of migrant workers from the Global South move through far more precarious channels characterised by recruitment intermediaries,

temporary labour contracts, debt-financed migration, restrictive visa arrangements, and unequal bargaining power. While both groups participate in transnational mobility, they do so under markedly different conditions.

These inequalities reveal an important paradox at the heart of globalization. Capital, technology, and information may move across borders with increasing speed and flexibility, yet human mobility remains highly regulated and unevenly distributed. Borders have become simultaneously more open and more restrictive. Certain forms of mobility are encouraged, while others are carefully monitored, controlled, and constrained. Consequently, migration cannot be understood merely as an individual decision to relocate in search of better opportunities. It is embedded within larger political, economic, historical, and social structures that determine who is able to move, under what conditions, and with what consequences.

Migration scholars have long argued that international migration reflects broader patterns of global inequality rather than isolated personal choices (Massey et al., 1993). Labour migration, in particular, emerges from the interaction between labour demand in receiving countries and structural pressures within sending countries. Uneven economic development, regional disparities, limited employment opportunities, wage differentials, demographic shifts, and changing labour-market needs collectively shape migration flows. Workers move not only because they aspire to improve their lives, but also because larger systems of inequality make migration appear necessary, desirable, or sometimes unavoidable.

B. Global Labour Migration and the Contemporary Economy

Labour migration occupies a central place within contemporary global capitalism. Across the world, migrant workers sustain industries and occupations that are essential to economic growth and social reproduction. Construction projects, hospitality services, domestic work, caregiving, agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, logistics, and numerous service-

sector occupations depend heavily upon migrant labour (Bacchetta et al., 2009). In many countries, entire sectors of the economy would struggle to function without migrant workers.

The increasing demand for migrant labour reflects broader transformations in global economic organisation. Processes of globalization have intensified international economic integration, creating labour shortages in some regions while generating labour surpluses in others. Wealthier economies frequently depend upon workers from developing countries to fill occupations that local populations may be unwilling to perform under existing wage structures or working conditions. At the same time, many developing countries continue to experience unemployment, underemployment, limited economic diversification, and uneven regional development. Migration therefore emerges as one mechanism through which these global inequalities become interconnected.

The movement of labour across borders is often presented as mutually beneficial. Receiving countries obtain workers needed to sustain economic activity, while sending countries benefit from remittances, reduced unemployment pressures, and increased foreign exchange earnings. Yet this apparently straightforward narrative obscures the complex realities of migrant lives. Labour migration frequently involves separation from family members, cultural adaptation, linguistic challenges, uncertain legal status, emotional strain, and exposure to unequal power relations. The economic benefits associated with migration often coexist with significant social, emotional, and political costs.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted both the importance and vulnerability of migrant labour systems. Border closures, travel restrictions, and economic disruptions interrupted migration flows across the globe. Many migrant workers found themselves stranded abroad, unable to return home, while others experienced sudden unemployment, reduced income, or delayed departures. Yet the rapid recovery of migration flows after the pandemic demonstrated that labour migration is not

merely a temporary response to economic fluctuations. Rather, it reflects deeper structural conditions that continue to shape global labour markets (International Labour Organization, 2018; OECD, 2021). The persistence of migration despite global crises illustrates the extent to which contemporary economies have become dependent upon transnational labour mobility.

C. Migration, Social Inequality, and the Question of Class

Although migration is often discussed in terms of economics, labour markets, or policy, it is also deeply connected to questions of social inequality. Migrants do not enter transnational labour systems from equal starting points. They carry with them different educational experiences, linguistic repertoires, occupational histories, social networks, economic resources, and forms of cultural knowledge. These differences influence not only their opportunities for migration but also the kinds of work they obtain, the recognition they receive, and the futures they are able to imagine.

Social class remains one of the most important yet frequently underexamined dimensions of migration research. As Block (2015) argues, social class continues to shape access to resources, opportunities, and social mobility even within contexts characterised by increasing globalization and transnational movement. Crossing borders does not erase class differences. Rather, migration often reorganises existing inequalities across new geographical and social spaces.

Bourdieu's work provides a particularly useful framework for understanding these processes (Bourdieu, 1993, 2002). Individuals enter migration trajectories with unequal distributions of economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. These forms of capital influence how migrants navigate recruitment systems, access employment opportunities, communicate across linguistic boundaries, and negotiate institutional structures. Two individuals may both be classified administratively as migrant workers, yet the resources

available to them and the conditions under which they experience migration may differ dramatically.

Migration therefore should not be understood solely as movement between countries. It is also movement through unequal social worlds. It involves the transportation, transformation, and negotiation of classed identities across borders. The opportunities available to migrants are shaped not only by what they do after migration but also by what they bring with them before migration begins.

UNIT 2

WHY SOCIAL CLASS STILL MATTERS IN MIGRATION

A. Social Class in a World on the Move

Few concepts have been as influential - and as contested - as social class. Throughout the twentieth century, class occupied a central position in explanations of inequality, social mobility, education, labour, and political power. Yet in recent decades, some scholars have questioned whether class remains as relevant as it once was. The growth of globalization, international mobility, digital communication, and transnational social networks has encouraged arguments that contemporary societies can no longer be understood through traditional class frameworks alone. Increasing movement across borders appears to challenge older assumptions that people remain tied to the social structures of a single nation-state. If individuals can relocate, pursue new opportunities, acquire new skills, and participate in multiple social worlds, does social class still matter?

This question has become particularly significant within migration studies. Migration is often imagined as a mechanism through which people improve their lives, overcome local constraints, and pursue social mobility. Stories of successful migrants frequently reinforce the idea that determination, hard work, and opportunity can enable individuals to transcend the conditions into which they were born. International migration, from this perspective, appears to offer the possibility of reinvention. Crossing borders may create access to higher wages,

better education, new social networks, and alternative futures. Mobility itself is often associated with freedom, aspiration, and personal transformation.

Yet beneath these narratives lies a more complicated reality. Migration may create opportunities, but it does not erase inequality. The capacity to move, the routes through which mobility occurs, and the outcomes that follow migration remain deeply shaped by social class. Not everyone enters migration from the same starting point. Individuals possess different levels of education, different forms of cultural knowledge, different linguistic resources, different social connections, and different access to economic capital. These differences influence who migrates, how migration becomes possible, what opportunities become available after migration, and how migrants are positioned within transnational labour markets.

Consequently, migration should not be understood simply as movement across geographical space. It is also movement through unequal social structures. Workers carry classed histories with them when they migrate. They cross borders, but they do not leave behind the social conditions that shaped their lives before migration. Educational experiences, family background, language abilities, occupational trajectories, and access to institutional resources continue to influence how mobility is experienced long after departure.

This unit argues that social class remains one of the most important analytical tools for understanding contemporary migration. Rather than disappearing under globalization, class has become increasingly transnational. It shapes access to mobility itself, structures opportunities within labour markets, influences language learning and communicative participation, and affects how migrants are recognised, valued, and treated across borders. Understanding migration therefore requires more than examining movement between countries. It requires examining how inequality travels, transforms, and reappears within transnational spaces.

B. Rethinking Social Class Beyond Income

One reason social class is often misunderstood is that it is frequently reduced to income alone. In everyday discussions, class is commonly associated with wealth, occupation, or economic status. Individuals are categorised as lower class, middle class, or upper class according to their financial resources. While economic position remains important, contemporary social theory suggests that class encompasses much more than material wealth.

Bourdieu's work is particularly valuable because it expands the understanding of class beyond economic resources (Bourdieu, 1984; 2002). For Bourdieu, class is not merely a matter of income. It involves access to multiple forms of capital that shape how individuals navigate social life. Economic capital includes money, property, and financial resources. Cultural capital includes educational qualifications, cultural knowledge, and valued forms of competence. Social capital refers to networks, relationships, and connections that provide access to opportunities. Symbolic capital involves recognition, prestige, legitimacy, and social value.

These forms of capital rarely operate independently. Rather, they interact to produce unequal opportunities across social fields. Individuals with stronger educational backgrounds may gain access to occupations that provide higher income. Those with broader social networks may encounter opportunities unavailable to others. People whose linguistic practices align with institutional expectations often receive greater recognition than those whose communicative resources are not socially valued. Class therefore emerges through the accumulation and interaction of multiple resources rather than through income alone.

This broader understanding of class is particularly important for migration research because migrants often experience changes in one form of capital while experiencing limitations in another. A migrant may improve their economic circumstances while simultaneously losing symbolic status. A

university graduate working abroad in a low-status occupation may earn substantially more money than before migration yet experience reduced professional recognition. Conversely, a worker may acquire valuable linguistic and cultural capital through migration even when economic gains remain modest. Migration therefore complicates simplistic understandings of social mobility.

The significance of recognition is especially important here. Fraser and Honneth (2003) argue that inequality involves not only the distribution of resources but also the distribution of recognition. People seek not only economic security but also dignity, legitimacy, and social value. Migrants frequently contribute significantly to the economies of both sending and receiving countries while remaining socially marginalised. Their labour may be essential, yet their knowledge, expertise, and experiences often remain undervalued. Understanding migration therefore requires attention to both redistribution and recognition.

C. Migration as a Classed Process

Migration is frequently presented as an individual decision. Economic theories often describe migration as a rational choice in which individuals compare opportunities and move in pursuit of better outcomes. While such explanations capture part of the story, they often overlook the structural conditions that shape who is able to migrate and under what circumstances.

As Massey et al. (1993) argue, migration emerges through the interaction of labour demand, global inequality, social networks, recruitment systems, and institutional arrangements. Individuals make decisions, but those decisions occur within broader social structures. Migration opportunities are not distributed equally across populations. They are shaped by unequal access to education, language learning, financial resources, documentation, information, and social networks.

For this reason, migration pathways are deeply classed. Some migrants enter transnational labour markets through professional recruitment, university credentials, corporate sponsorship, or recognised expertise. Others depend upon brokers, recruitment agencies, village intermediaries, or debt-financed migration systems. These different pathways create very different experiences of mobility.

Migration therefore reflects not only movement but also stratification. The routes migrants follow, the occupations they obtain, the protections available to them, and the opportunities they encounter are structured by classed distributions of capital before migration even begins.

UNIT

3

LANGUAGE AS CAPITAL IN TRANSNATIONAL LABOUR MARKETS

A. Language as Capital in the Global Economy

Language occupies a central yet often overlooked position within contemporary labour markets. In an increasingly interconnected world, workers do not compete solely through technical expertise, educational qualifications, or professional experience. They also compete through their ability to communicate across linguistic, cultural, and institutional boundaries. Whether in hospitality, healthcare, domestic work, logistics, construction, education, or international business, language has become a valuable resource that shapes access to employment, workplace participation, career mobility, and social recognition.

The growing significance of language reflects broader transformations associated with globalization. Economic activities increasingly extend across national borders, creating workplaces in which employees interact with clients, supervisors, colleagues, and institutions from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As labour markets become more international, communication itself acquires economic value. Certain linguistic resources become associated with employability, professionalism, adaptability, and global competence. Others become less visible, less rewarded, or less institutionally recognised.

These developments challenge the common assumption that language is merely a neutral tool for transmitting information. Contemporary labour markets increasingly treat communication as a form of human capital. Employers frequently seek workers who can interact effectively with customers, coordinate multicultural teams, navigate digital communication platforms, and adapt to linguistically diverse environments. Communication skills are therefore no longer viewed as supplementary abilities but as central components of professional competence.

Yet language is not valued equally. The contemporary global economy operates through linguistic hierarchies in which some languages, accents, communicative styles, and linguistic repertoires carry greater symbolic and economic value than others. English, for example, often functions as a global language associated with education, professionalism, international mobility, and employability. At the same time, local languages, migrant languages, and non-standard varieties may receive less institutional recognition despite their importance in everyday communication. Access to these valued forms of communication is unevenly distributed, often reflecting broader inequalities related to class, education, geography, nationality, and institutional opportunity.

For migrants, these dynamics are particularly significant. Labour migration involves movement not only across geographical borders but also across linguistic markets. Migrants enter workplaces where particular forms of communication are rewarded, expected, and sometimes taken for granted. Their opportunities often depend not only on what they know or what they can do, but also on how effectively they can participate within communicative environments organised by unequal distributions of linguistic value. Understanding migration therefore requires attention to language as a form of capital operating within transnational labour systems.

Migration scholars and applied linguists increasingly argue that mobility and language are inseparable. Workers move through linguistic as well as economic landscapes. Every migration journey involves encounters with new communicative expectations, new language hierarchies, and new forms of linguistic evaluation. Migrants must learn how to navigate these environments while simultaneously managing employment, family obligations, legal requirements, and social adaptation. Language therefore becomes much more than a communicative tool. It becomes a resource through which migrants gain access to opportunities, negotiate social relationships, interpret institutional expectations, and construct new identities.

B. Linguistic Capital and Symbolic Power

One of the most influential frameworks for understanding the relationship between language and inequality comes from Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu challenges the view that language is simply a neutral medium through which information is exchanged. Instead, he argues that language functions within social markets where different ways of speaking carry different values. The value of a linguistic resource is not determined solely by its communicative effectiveness but by the social and institutional conditions under which it is evaluated.

From this perspective, language becomes a form of symbolic capital that can be accumulated, exchanged, and converted into other forms of advantage. Certain accents, language varieties, vocabularies, and communicative styles are recognised as legitimate and authoritative, while others are treated as less desirable or less credible. These evaluations are rarely neutral. They reflect broader relations of power within society.

In labour markets, linguistic capital often influences recruitment, promotion, workplace participation, and professional recognition. Workers whose language practices align with institutional expectations are frequently perceived as

more competent, educated, and employable. Conversely, workers whose linguistic repertoires diverge from dominant norms may encounter barriers despite possessing substantial knowledge, expertise, or experience.

For migrants, these dynamics are particularly significant. Migration often places individuals within linguistic environments where their communicative resources are evaluated according to unfamiliar standards. A multilingual migrant may successfully navigate several languages in daily life yet still be judged as linguistically deficient because their speech does not conform to institutional expectations. Accent, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and perceived nativeness frequently become criteria through which competence is assessed.

Recent studies of Indonesian migrant workers demonstrate how these processes operate in practice. Ali et al. (2025) found that migrant workers frequently encountered accent discrimination, stereotyping associated with “broken English,” and assumptions regarding intelligence based on linguistic performance. Such experiences illustrate how language functions as symbolic power. Workers are not simply evaluated according to what they know but according to how they communicate what they know.

Language inequality therefore cannot be reduced to questions of proficiency alone. It is fundamentally connected to recognition, legitimacy, and social value. As Fraser and Honneth (2003) argue, social justice involves both redistribution and recognition. Migrants may contribute significantly to economic systems while remaining linguistically marginalised within them. Their voices may be understood yet not fully valued. Their multilingual abilities may be useful yet not recognised as expertise. Linguistic capital thus becomes one of the key mechanisms through which broader social inequalities are reproduced and maintained.

C. Language, Class, and Unequal Access

The distribution of linguistic capital is closely connected to social class. Access to language learning opportunities, educational resources, international exposure, and communicative confidence is rarely distributed equally across populations. Rather, these resources often reflect broader inequalities in wealth, geography, educational infrastructure, and institutional support.

Block (2014) argues that discussions of language and mobility frequently underestimate the continuing importance of social class. While globalization has expanded opportunities for international movement, access to valued linguistic resources remains uneven. Individuals from privileged backgrounds often encounter languages such as English through high-quality schooling, private tutoring, international travel, digital technologies, and professional networks. Those from less advantaged backgrounds may have far fewer opportunities to develop comparable linguistic resources.

These inequalities are particularly visible in many labour-sending countries. Access to quality language education frequently varies between urban and rural areas, public and private institutions, and different socioeconomic groups. As a result, individuals often enter migration pathways with substantially different linguistic resources long before departure occurs.

Language inequality therefore reflects more than individual effort. It is shaped by structural conditions that influence who has access to educational opportunities, communicative practice, and institutional support. A worker's linguistic repertoire is often linked to a broader history of social advantage or disadvantage.

Importantly, linguistic inequality should not be interpreted as a deficit on the part of workers. Individuals frequently develop sophisticated communicative strategies through everyday life, multilingual interaction, and practical experience. However, institutional systems do not always

recognise these forms of expertise. Certain linguistic resources receive formal recognition and economic value, while others remain invisible despite their effectiveness.

Consequently, language functions as both a reflection and a reproduction of social inequality. Workers who possess institutionally valued linguistic resources often gain access to more favourable migration pathways, while those whose communicative abilities remain unrecognised may encounter greater restrictions. Class and language therefore become mutually reinforcing dimensions of mobility.

D. Language and Employability in Transnational Labour Markets

The growing importance of communication within contemporary labour markets has contributed to the emergence of language as a marker of employability. Employers increasingly seek workers who can communicate effectively with customers, colleagues, supervisors, and institutions across diverse cultural and linguistic environments. Language proficiency is therefore frequently treated as evidence of professionalism, adaptability, and workplace competence.

English occupies a particularly influential position within this process. Across many sectors, English has become associated with international business, hospitality, tourism, customer service, higher education, and professional mobility. Proficiency in English often enhances access to employment opportunities and can increase workers' visibility within organisational hierarchies.

However, the relationship between language and employability is not always straightforward. Language proficiency does not automatically guarantee employment, nor does limited proficiency necessarily indicate lack of competence. Nevertheless, employers frequently use language as a proxy for broader qualities such as intelligence, professionalism, confidence, and leadership potential.

Kubota and Takeda (2021) argue that contemporary labour markets often operate through neoliberal language ideologies that position certain forms of communication as evidence of individual worth. Within this framework, successful workers are expected to demonstrate flexibility, confidence, self-presentation, and communicative effectiveness. Language becomes closely linked to employability and professional identity.

For migrants, these expectations can generate both opportunities and pressures. Language proficiency may facilitate access to higher-status positions, customer-facing roles, administrative responsibilities, and leadership opportunities. At the same time, workers may experience anxiety, self-doubt, and constant evaluation regarding their linguistic performance.

Language therefore functions as more than a practical skill. It becomes part of the symbolic economy of labour markets, shaping who is recognised as employable, professional, and deserving of opportunity.

E. Multilingualism, Translanguaging, and Everyday Survival

Although labour markets frequently privilege particular languages, migrant communication rarely occurs through neatly separated linguistic systems. Everyday interaction is often multilingual, fluid, and adaptive. Migrants routinely draw upon multiple linguistic and semiotic resources to navigate diverse communicative environments.

Canagarajah's (2013) concept of translingual practice provides an important framework for understanding these realities. Rather than treating languages as separate and bounded systems, translingual approaches emphasise the flexible use of diverse communicative resources. Speakers combine languages, gestures, visual cues, digital technologies, and contextual knowledge in order to achieve communicative goals.

Blommaert (2010) similarly argues that globalization has transformed communication into a complex process involving multiple linguistic scales and resources. Communication is no longer simply about mastery of a single language. It increasingly involves the ability to navigate diverse communicative environments and mobilise available resources strategically.

These perspectives are particularly relevant to migrant workers. In everyday life, communication often involves combinations of Indonesian, regional languages, English, host-country languages, gestures, translation applications, workplace terminology, and embodied interaction. Such practices are not signs of linguistic deficiency. Rather, they reflect communicative creativity and adaptability.

Recent research by Hidayati et al. (2024) further supports this perspective. Their findings demonstrate that multilingual speakers frequently integrate linguistic and multimodal resources to enhance participation, confidence, comprehension, and identity development. Communication therefore extends beyond formal language proficiency and includes the strategic deployment of diverse semiotic resources.

Viewed from this perspective, multilingualism becomes a resource rather than a problem. Migrants are not simply learners of language. They are active communicators who continuously adapt to complex linguistic environments.

F. Language, Identity, and Investment

Language learning is never purely technical. It is closely connected to identity, aspiration, and imagined futures. Norton (2013) argues that individuals invest in language learning because they expect it to provide access to desired identities and opportunities. Language learning therefore reflects not only educational goals but also social aspirations.

Darvin and Norton (2015) extend this perspective by emphasising the relationship between identity, capital, and ideology. Individuals make decisions about language learning

within broader social structures that shape what forms of communication are valued and rewarded.

For migrants, language investment often reflects hopes for social mobility, professional development, recognition, and personal transformation. Learning a language may represent far more than acquiring vocabulary or grammar. It may signify movement toward a different future.

Ali et al. (2025) provide a compelling illustration of this process. Their study documents how an Indonesian migrant worker strategically invested in English language learning while working under restrictive labour conditions. Over time, language learning contributed not only to communicative competence but also to expanded opportunities, increased confidence, and identity reconstruction.

Language learning therefore functions simultaneously as an educational process and a social project. Through language, migrants negotiate who they are, who they wish to become, and how they position themselves within transnational social worlds.

G. Towards Migrant Linguistic Agency

While concepts such as linguistic capital, employability, and language investment provide valuable insights, they do not fully capture the active role migrants play in navigating linguistic inequality. Migrants are not merely recipients of linguistic structures. They actively respond to, negotiate, and reshape communicative environments.

This book proposes the concept of migrant linguistic agency to describe the capacity of migrants to strategically mobilise linguistic, multilingual, and multimodal resources in order to navigate unequal social conditions, pursue recognition, and expand opportunities within transnational labour systems.

Migrant linguistic agency extends beyond formal language proficiency. It includes the ability to interpret unfamiliar situations, adapt communication strategically, seek information, build relationships, negotiate institutional

expectations, and draw upon diverse communicative resources when facing constraints.

Agency does not imply unlimited freedom. Migrants operate within structures shaped by class, labour markets, legal systems, language ideologies, and unequal distributions of power. However, within these constraints, they continuously make decisions, develop strategies, and create possibilities for action.

Understanding migration therefore requires moving beyond simplistic distinctions between linguistic competence and deficiency. What matters is not only what languages migrants know but how they mobilise available resources to navigate complex social environments.

Viewed through this lens, language becomes more than capital. It becomes a site of agency through which migrants pursue dignity, recognition, belonging, and mobility.

H. Conclusion

This unit has argued that language occupies a central position within contemporary transnational labour markets. Language functions not merely as a tool of communication but as a form of capital that shapes access to employment, participation, recognition, and social mobility. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital, the unit has demonstrated how language operates within unequal social markets where particular linguistic resources receive greater value than others.

The unit has further shown that access to linguistic capital is closely connected to social class, educational opportunity, and institutional support. Linguistic inequalities therefore reflect broader patterns of social inequality that influence migration pathways and labour-market participation.

At the same time, migrants are not passive recipients of these structures. Through multilingual communication, language investment, and everyday adaptation, they actively negotiate linguistic environments and create opportunities for

participation. The concept of migrant linguistic agency highlights this capacity to mobilise communicative resources strategically within unequal social conditions.

Understanding migration requires attention not only to where people move, but also to the linguistic resources they carry, develop, and deploy throughout their journeys. Language is therefore not peripheral to migration. It is one of the central mechanisms through which mobility, inequality, recognition, and agency are experienced in everyday life.

UNIT 4 | MULTILINGUALISM, MOBILITY, AND RECOGNITION

A. Mobility as a Linguistic Experience

Migration is often understood as movement across geographical borders. Individuals leave one country and enter another in pursuit of employment, education, safety, or opportunity. Yet migration is never only geographical. It is also linguistic. Every act of migration involves movement across communicative worlds organised by different languages, norms, expectations, and systems of meaning. Migrants do not simply learn how to navigate new places; they must also learn how to navigate new linguistic environments.

This linguistic dimension of mobility is frequently overlooked within migration policy and public discourse. Governments often focus on recruitment systems, labour regulations, remittances, border management, and economic outcomes. Employers may concentrate on productivity, efficiency, and labour-market needs. Such concerns are important, but they do not fully capture how migration is experienced in everyday life. Migrants spend much of their lives communicating: understanding instructions, asking questions, seeking assistance, interpreting rules, managing relationships, resolving misunderstandings, and negotiating social expectations. Language therefore becomes central to how mobility is lived and understood.

For many migrants, mobility involves entering environments where familiar linguistic resources suddenly possess different values. Languages that once provided confidence, belonging, and social recognition may lose institutional significance. Conversely, languages that were previously peripheral may become essential for employment, safety, and participation. Migration therefore reorganises not only social relations but also linguistic hierarchies. Individuals must adapt to new systems of communication while simultaneously negotiating unfamiliar structures of power and recognition.

Understanding migration as a linguistic experience allows attention to dimensions of mobility that are often hidden behind economic statistics and policy debates. It reveals how communication shapes access to opportunity, belonging, dignity, and social participation. Migration is therefore not simply movement across territory; it is movement across communicative landscapes.

B. Living Across Languages

For most migrants, everyday life involves navigating multiple linguistic worlds simultaneously. Communication rarely occurs through a single language. Instead, migrants draw upon diverse linguistic resources that serve different social, emotional, and practical functions.

For Indonesian migrants, Indonesian often remains the language of intimacy, memory, family obligation, emotional expression, and cultural belonging. It is frequently the language through which migrants maintain relationships with family members, reflect on personal experiences, and express complex emotions related to migration. Indonesian provides continuity across geographical distance, connecting migrants to people, places, and identities that remain important despite physical separation.

Regional languages may play equally significant roles. Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Lampungnese, and numerous other local languages often continue to function within family networks and community relationships. These languages may carry meanings associated with trust, familiarity, cultural identity, and shared experience that cannot be fully replaced by national or international languages.

At the same time, migrants frequently encounter new linguistic demands. English may become important for workplace communication, professional interaction, or international mobility. Host-country languages may become necessary for transport, healthcare, shopping, public services, and everyday survival. Communication therefore becomes a process of continuous movement between linguistic repertoires rather than reliance upon a single language.

Living across languages requires more than vocabulary acquisition. It involves learning how to interpret social expectations, recognise cultural meanings, understand interactional norms, and negotiate relationships across different communicative contexts. Multilingualism is therefore not simply a linguistic condition but a social experience shaped by mobility, adaptation, and participation.

C. Multilingualism and Recognition

Communication is not only about transmitting information. It is also about being recognised as a legitimate participant in social life. Recognition involves being heard, understood, respected, and valued within interaction. For migrants, these forms of recognition are often negotiated through language.

Fraser and Honneth (2003) argue that social justice involves both redistribution and recognition. Access to economic resources matters, but so does access to dignity, legitimacy, and social value. Migrants may contribute significantly to workplaces and economies while simultaneously experiencing forms of linguistic marginalisation that limit recognition.

Multilingualism occupies an ambivalent position within these processes. In some contexts, multilingual abilities are celebrated as evidence of adaptability, global competence, and intercultural awareness. In other contexts, multilingual speakers may be evaluated according to monolingual norms that privilege native-like proficiency, standardised forms of language use, or dominant linguistic varieties.

Recognition therefore depends not simply on the number of languages a person speaks but on how those languages are valued within particular social fields. A multilingual worker may possess extensive communicative expertise yet remain institutionally invisible if dominant language ideologies fail to recognise that expertise. Conversely, speakers of highly valued languages may receive recognition disproportionate to their actual communicative abilities.

Understanding multilingualism therefore requires attention to power. Languages do not circulate equally, and speakers do not enter interaction from equal positions. Recognition emerges through broader systems that determine which voices are heard, which forms of communication are valued, and which speakers are granted legitimacy.

D. Translanguaging and Everyday Communication

Traditional approaches often assume that languages exist as separate and clearly bounded systems. Contemporary research increasingly challenges this assumption. In practice, multilingual communication is frequently fluid, dynamic, and adaptive.

Canagarajah (2013) argues that multilingual speakers regularly engage in translanguaging practices that involve moving across linguistic boundaries rather than remaining within a single language. Communication emerges through the strategic use of all available resources rather than strict adherence to predefined linguistic categories.

Similarly, Blommaert (2010) demonstrates that globalization has transformed communication into a complex process involving multiple linguistic scales, repertoires, and resources. Speakers navigate diverse communicative environments by combining language, gesture, visual cues, contextual knowledge, and technological tools.

These perspectives are particularly relevant to migrant workers. Everyday communication often involves combinations of Indonesian, regional languages, English, host-country languages, gestures, facial expressions, translation applications, workplace terminology, and embodied interaction. Migrants routinely assemble communicative resources in creative ways to accomplish practical goals.

Research by Hidayati et al. (2024) similarly highlights how multilingual speakers integrate linguistic and multimodal resources to support participation, understanding, confidence, and identity development. Such findings challenge deficit perspectives that view multilingual communication as incomplete or imperfect. Instead, they reveal the sophistication and adaptability involved in navigating complex communicative environments.

Multilingual communication should therefore be understood as a resource rather than a problem. It reflects the capacity of individuals to respond creatively to diverse linguistic demands while maintaining participation across multiple social worlds.

E. Language, Identity, and Social Positioning

Language is closely connected to identity because communication shapes how individuals position themselves and how they are positioned by others. Migration frequently transforms these processes by placing individuals within new linguistic environments where familiar identities may no longer be recognised in the same ways.

Norton (2013) argues that language learning is deeply connected to identity because individuals invest in language as part of broader efforts to participate in desired social worlds. Learning a language often reflects aspirations for recognition, belonging, mobility, and opportunity.

Darvin and Norton (2015) further emphasise that identity, capital, and ideology are interconnected. Access to linguistic resources influences participation, while broader structures of power shape whose identities become legitimate and whose remain marginalised.

Migration often creates opportunities for identity transformation. Individuals who previously lacked confidence may develop new communicative competencies. Workers who initially depend upon others for interpretation may become translators, mediators, or community resources. New linguistic abilities can create new possibilities for participation and self-understanding.

At the same time, migrants may encounter pressures to modify or suppress aspects of their identities in order to conform to institutional expectations. Language therefore becomes a site where belonging, recognition, adaptation, and resistance intersect.

F. Linguistic Visibility and Invisibility

One of the central contradictions of migrant multilingualism is that linguistic abilities are often simultaneously essential and invisible. Migrants regularly rely on sophisticated communicative skills to navigate workplaces, institutions, and social relationships. Yet these abilities are not always recognised as expertise.

Many forms of multilingual competence develop through lived experience rather than formal education. Migrants learn how to interpret cultural cues, manage misunderstandings, negotiate power differences, and communicate across linguistic boundaries. These skills are often indispensable for everyday survival and social participation.

However, institutional systems frequently recognise only particular forms of linguistic competence, such as standardised language tests, formal qualifications, or native-like proficiency. As a result, migrants' communicative expertise may remain invisible despite its practical significance.

This gap between competence and recognition reflects broader inequalities in how language is valued. Understanding multilingualism therefore requires attention not only to what people can do but also to whether institutions acknowledge and reward those abilities.

G. Mobility, Recognition, and Human Dignity

At its deepest level, the relationship between multilingualism and migration concerns questions of human dignity. Communication shapes the ability to participate, belong, express oneself, and be recognised by others. Migrants seek not only economic opportunities but also meaningful participation within social life.

Recognition is fundamentally connected to dignity because individuals require more than material survival. They seek respect, legitimacy, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to the communities in which they live and work. Language plays a central role in these processes because it mediates relationships, identities, and social participation.

Multilingualism therefore should not be viewed merely as a technical skill. It is a human resource through which individuals pursue recognition, belonging, and agency within increasingly interconnected societies.

H. Conclusion

This unit has argued that multilingualism is a central dimension of contemporary mobility. Migration involves movement not only across geographical borders but also across communicative worlds organised by unequal systems of linguistic value and recognition.

The unit has shown that multilingualism functions as a social resource through which migrants negotiate participation, belonging, and dignity. Drawing on perspectives from translanguaging practice, translanguaging, identity, and recognition, it has demonstrated that communication extends far beyond formal language proficiency. Migrants actively mobilise diverse linguistic and semiotic resources in order to navigate complex social environments.

Understanding migration therefore requires attention not only to labour markets and mobility pathways but also to the multilingual realities that shape everyday life. Recognition, participation, and belonging are deeply connected to communication. As the following units demonstrate, these dynamics become particularly visible within the lived experiences and narratives of migrant workers themselves.



PART II
A FRAMEWORK
FOR UNDERSTANDING
MIGRANT LIVES



UNIT

5

POWER, SURVEILLANCE, AND THE MAKING OF “GOOD WORKERS”

A. Migration and the Mobility of Class

Migration is often associated with movement, change, and opportunity. Individuals cross borders in search of employment, education, security, or a better future, and migration is frequently presented as a pathway toward social mobility. Such representations imply that migration enables people to escape the limitations of their previous circumstances and create new possibilities for themselves and their families. While migration can certainly generate opportunities, it does not erase the social inequalities that shape people's lives before departure. Instead, migration frequently reorganises those inequalities across new geographical and social spaces.

Social class remains one of the most important yet frequently overlooked dimensions of migration. Migrants do not leave class behind when they cross borders. They carry with them educational histories, family backgrounds, linguistic resources, occupational experiences, social networks, and economic circumstances that continue to shape their opportunities after migration occurs. Migration may alter how class is experienced, but it rarely eliminates its influence.

Understanding migration therefore requires moving beyond the assumption that class is simply a domestic phenomenon tied to a single national society. Contemporary mobility demonstrates that class itself is increasingly transnational. The opportunities available to migrants, the

labour markets they enter, the risks they encounter, and the forms of recognition they receive are shaped by resources accumulated across multiple social contexts. Class travels across borders because the conditions that produce advantage and disadvantage also travel with people.

This unit argues that migration reorganises class rather than overcoming it. Social class influences who migrates, how migration becomes possible, which opportunities become available after migration, and how migrants are recognised within transnational labour systems. Understanding migrant lives therefore requires attention not only to economic mobility but also to the movement of social, cultural, linguistic, and symbolic resources across borders.

B. Class Beyond Income: Rethinking Capital Across Borders

One of the most persistent misunderstandings in migration research is the tendency to reduce social class to income alone. Migrants are frequently categorised according to wages, occupations, or remittance contributions, creating the impression that economic improvement automatically indicates social mobility. While economic resources remain important, such a narrow understanding overlooks the multiple dimensions through which class is experienced and reproduced.

Bourdieu's work offers a broader framework for understanding these complexities. Rather than defining class solely through economic position, Bourdieu (1984; 2002) conceptualises social life as structured through unequal distributions of various forms of capital. Economic capital refers to financial resources, property, and material assets. Cultural capital includes educational qualifications, professional knowledge, linguistic competence, and familiarity with valued institutional norms. Social capital consists of relationships, networks, and connections that provide access to information and opportunity. Symbolic capital refers to recognition, prestige, legitimacy, and social value granted by others.

These forms of capital rarely operate independently. Instead, they interact continuously, shaping how individuals navigate social environments and how they are positioned within structures of opportunity and constraint. Migration provides a particularly useful context for observing these interactions because movement across borders often transforms the value of different forms of capital.

A university degree that provides status in one country may carry limited value in another. Professional experience accumulated over many years may become difficult to convert into recognised employment abroad. Conversely, skills acquired through migration - such as multilingual communication, intercultural competence, or transnational networking - may generate forms of capital unavailable before migration. Migration therefore does not simply relocate people geographically; it repositions them within systems of value where different forms of capital gain or lose significance.

This perspective encourages a more nuanced understanding of migrant lives. Migrants should not be viewed solely as workers seeking higher wages. They are individuals carrying complex combinations of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic resources that shape how mobility is experienced and what forms of opportunity become available.

C. Transnational Class Positioning

Migration complicates traditional understandings of social class because migrants often occupy multiple class positions simultaneously. Individuals may experience social advancement in one context while encountering marginalisation in another. Consequently, class can no longer be understood exclusively within the boundaries of a single nation-state.

Anthias (2001) argues that migration requires attention to transnational social positioning. Migrants move through multiple social fields organised by different hierarchies of value, recognition, and belonging. The social status attached to particular occupations, educational backgrounds, language

abilities, or cultural identities may vary significantly across contexts.

This perspective helps explain why migration frequently produces contradictory experiences. A migrant worker may occupy a relatively low occupational position abroad while simultaneously enjoying elevated social status within their home community. Through remittances, financial support, and visible material improvements, migrants often become symbols of responsibility, sacrifice, and achievement within family networks. Yet the same individuals may encounter discrimination, exclusion, or reduced professional recognition within host societies.

Such contradictions reveal that class is not fixed. Rather, it is continuously negotiated through relationships, institutions, and systems of evaluation. Migrants move between different social worlds, each organised by distinct criteria of worth and legitimacy. As a result, class becomes a dynamic process rather than a stable category.

Transnational mobility therefore produces what may be described as layered class experiences. Migrants simultaneously occupy positions shaped by home-country expectations, host-country labour markets, family obligations, institutional structures, and transnational social networks. Understanding migrant lives requires attention to these overlapping and sometimes contradictory forms of positioning.

D. Recognition and Misrecognition

Migration is not only about economic mobility. It is also about recognition. People seek not merely higher incomes but also dignity, respect, legitimacy, and opportunities to participate meaningfully in social life.

Fraser and Honneth (2003) argue that social justice involves both redistribution and recognition. Redistribution concerns access to resources, opportunities, and material well-being. Recognition concerns social value, dignity, and legitimacy. Individuals require both. Economic improvement

alone does not necessarily eliminate experiences of exclusion, disrespect, or marginalisation.

For migrants, recognition often becomes a central yet overlooked dimension of mobility. Workers may contribute substantially to economies while remaining socially undervalued. Domestic workers, caregivers, cleaners, and manual labourers frequently perform labour essential to the functioning of households, businesses, and communities. Yet these contributions are not always accompanied by equivalent recognition.

Misrecognition occurs when individuals' abilities, experiences, and contributions are underestimated, ignored, or devalued. Migrants may be categorised as "unskilled" despite possessing extensive expertise developed through years of work. Their multilingual abilities may be overlooked because institutional systems privilege particular forms of language. Their emotional labour, interpersonal skills, and practical knowledge may remain invisible because they do not correspond to dominant definitions of professional competence.

Such experiences are significant because recognition affects more than self-esteem. It influences access to opportunities, confidence in institutional interaction, willingness to seek assistance, and the ability to convert experience into future possibilities. Recognition therefore functions as a form of symbolic power that shapes migrant lives in profound ways.

E. Classed Migration Pathways

Migration opportunities are not distributed equally. Individuals enter migration systems through pathways shaped by differing levels of capital, education, institutional support, and social connection.

Some migrants pursue opportunities through universities, multinational corporations, professional recruitment channels, or international training programs. Others enter migration through labour agencies, informal brokers, family networks, or

debt-financed arrangements. These pathways create very different experiences of mobility.

Blue-collar and white-collar migration illustrate these differences clearly. Blue-collar migration often includes domestic work, caregiving, construction, manufacturing, maintenance, and other forms of labour requiring significant physical and emotional effort. White-collar migration may involve administration, hospitality management, customer service, education, business operations, and professional sectors.

These categories should not be understood as fixed identities. Rather, they represent positions within broader systems of classed mobility. Migrants may move between them over time, acquire new forms of capital, and experience changing forms of recognition. Nevertheless, access to different pathways remains closely connected to classed distributions of educational opportunity, linguistic resources, institutional literacy, and social support.

Migration therefore reflects not only individual aspiration but also structural inequality. The routes available to migrants are shaped by resources accumulated long before migration begins.

F. Family Obligation, Mobility, and Class Reproduction

Migration decisions are rarely individual decisions alone. They are frequently embedded within family relationships, household strategies, and broader networks of obligation and expectation.

For many migrants, mobility is closely connected to responsibilities toward parents, spouses, children, and extended family members. Migration income may support education, healthcare, housing, debt repayment, or everyday household survival. These obligations are emotional and moral, but they are also deeply classed because households with fewer resources often depend more heavily on migrant earnings.

Family obligations shape not only why migrants leave but also how they experience migration. Decisions regarding employment, contract renewal, savings, return migration, and future planning are often influenced by responsibilities toward others. Migrants may tolerate difficult conditions because family needs limit available alternatives.

Understanding migration therefore requires moving beyond individualistic explanations. Migrants do not simply pursue personal advancement. They frequently act within networks of care, responsibility, and obligation that shape both opportunity and constraint.

G. The Contradictions of Transnational Mobility

Migration often generates contradictory outcomes. Individuals may gain certain forms of capital while losing others. Economic advancement may coexist with symbolic marginalisation. Increased mobility may occur alongside greater dependency.

A domestic worker may achieve significant financial stability while experiencing limited social recognition. A professional worker may acquire international experience while encountering discrimination based on nationality or migrant status. A return migrant may possess valuable intercultural knowledge and multilingual competence while struggling to convert those experiences into recognised opportunities at home.

These contradictions reveal that migration cannot be evaluated solely through economic indicators. Mobility involves complex transformations in class position, recognition, identity, and opportunity. Gains in one domain do not necessarily eliminate disadvantages in another.

Migration therefore produces uneven forms of mobility. Some resources become more valuable, while others lose significance. Some opportunities expand, while others remain constrained. Understanding migrant lives requires attention to these complexities rather than simplistic narratives of either success or victimhood.

UNIT 6

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLIC POWER

A. Language Beyond Communication

Language is often understood as a tool for communication. People use language to exchange information, express ideas, build relationships, and coordinate social activity. While these functions are important, they do not fully explain why language occupies such a significant place within social life. Language does more than communicate meaning. It also distributes power, shapes recognition, establishes legitimacy, and influences access to opportunity.

For migrants, these dimensions of language become particularly visible. Migration places individuals within unfamiliar communicative environments where language functions not only as a practical necessity but also as a source of evaluation. Migrants are often judged through how they speak, what languages they use, how confidently they communicate, and whether their linguistic practices align with institutional expectations. Language therefore becomes one of the primary mechanisms through which inclusion and exclusion are organised within transnational settings.

Understanding language solely as communication risks overlooking its broader social significance. Migrants may communicate effectively yet still encounter forms of linguistic inequality. They may be understood but not respected. They may participate in interaction but remain excluded from decision-making processes. They may possess multilingual abilities yet

receive limited recognition because their linguistic resources are not institutionally valued.

This unit argues that language functions as symbolic power. Drawing on Bourdieu's work, it examines how language shapes legitimacy, recognition, participation, and inequality within migrant lives. Language is not simply something migrants use. It is also something through which migrants are evaluated, classified, recognised, and positioned within broader systems of power.

B. Bourdieu and Linguistic Markets

One of the most influential approaches to understanding the relationship between language and power comes from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of linguistic capital and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993). Bourdieu challenges the assumption that language functions as a neutral medium through which individuals simply exchange information. Instead, he argues that language operates within social markets where different forms of speech possess different values.

From this perspective, language is not merely something people use. It is also something that is evaluated. The value attached to a particular language, accent, vocabulary, or communicative style depends on the social field within which it is performed. Certain ways of speaking are recognised as legitimate, professional, educated, or authoritative, while others may be dismissed as informal, inappropriate, or inferior.

The concept of linguistic market is particularly useful for migration research because migrants move between social environments organised by different systems of linguistic value. A communicative style that is perfectly acceptable in one context may receive less recognition in another. Similarly, a language that carries prestige in one setting may possess limited institutional value elsewhere.

This does not mean that some languages are inherently superior to others. Rather, linguistic value is socially produced. Institutions, employers, governments, educational systems, and

professional organisations collectively determine which forms of language become recognised as legitimate. As a result, language becomes closely connected to broader systems of social inequality.

For migrants, these dynamics are especially important because migration frequently involves entering unfamiliar linguistic markets. Migrants must learn not only new vocabulary or grammar but also the social rules governing whose speech is valued, whose voices carry authority, and which communicative practices receive recognition.

C. Language, Legitimacy, and Recognition

Language is deeply connected to recognition because communication is one of the primary ways individuals participate in social life. To be recognised is not simply to be understood. It is to be treated as a legitimate participant whose voice deserves attention, respect, and consideration.

Fraser and Honneth (2003) argue that recognition is a fundamental dimension of social justice. Individuals require not only material resources but also opportunities to participate as respected members of society. Recognition therefore concerns dignity, legitimacy, and social value.

For migrants, recognition is often mediated through language. The ability to communicate effectively can influence access to employment, institutional support, legal assistance, healthcare, education, and social participation. Yet recognition does not depend solely on communicative competence. It also depends on how others evaluate particular linguistic practices.

A migrant worker may communicate clearly yet still encounter assumptions about competence based on accent, nationality, or linguistic background. A speaker may be understood perfectly but receive less authority because their speech does not align with dominant expectations regarding professionalism or expertise. Conversely, speakers associated with prestigious languages may receive greater recognition even when their actual communicative abilities are relatively limited.

Recognition therefore operates through language but is not reducible to language itself. It emerges through broader social processes that determine whose voices are considered credible, legitimate, and worthy of attention. Understanding migrant experiences requires attention to these processes because linguistic recognition often shapes access to wider forms of social participation.

D. Linguistic Hierarchies in Migration

Migration makes linguistic hierarchies particularly visible. Individuals move across borders carrying diverse linguistic repertoires, yet not all of these resources receive equal recognition within transnational environments.

Blommaert (2010) argues that globalization has not produced linguistic equality. Instead, it has generated increasingly stratified systems of linguistic value. Some languages and communicative practices acquire significant economic and symbolic importance, while others remain marginal despite their practical usefulness.

These hierarchies frequently influence migrant experiences. Research by Ali et al. (2025) found that Indonesian migrant workers encountered accent discrimination, stereotyping associated with non-native English use, and assumptions regarding competence linked to linguistic performance. Workers were often evaluated not simply according to what they communicated but according to how they communicated it.

Such experiences demonstrate that language functions as a mechanism of classification. Accent, pronunciation, vocabulary, and communicative style can become markers through which migrants are categorised and positioned within labour markets and social environments. These evaluations frequently intersect with nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, and occupation, producing complex forms of inclusion and exclusion.

Importantly, linguistic hierarchies are not always explicit. They often operate through everyday interactions, workplace expectations, hiring decisions, customer evaluations, and institutional routines. As a result, migrants may experience unequal treatment without encountering overt discrimination. Language becomes a subtle yet powerful mechanism through which broader social inequalities are reproduced.

E. English, Prestige, and Global Mobility

Among contemporary global languages, English occupies a particularly influential position. Across many sectors of the international economy, English functions as a language of business, education, tourism, diplomacy, technology, and professional communication. Consequently, English proficiency is frequently associated with employability, professionalism, and global competence.

For migrants, English often represents both opportunity and aspiration. Proficiency may facilitate access to employment, improve workplace participation, and enhance interactions with institutions. Workers who possess recognised English skills may gain access to positions involving customer interaction, administrative responsibility, or professional visibility.

At the same time, the symbolic value attached to English can create new forms of inequality. Access to quality English education is rarely distributed equally. Opportunities for language learning often reflect broader differences in class, geography, educational infrastructure, and economic resources. As a result, English proficiency may reproduce existing inequalities while appearing to reward individual merit alone.

Kubota and Takeda (2021) argue that contemporary labour markets frequently operate through neoliberal language ideologies that equate linguistic performance with personal worth. Workers are expected not only to communicate but also to display confidence, flexibility, professionalism, and intercultural competence. Language therefore becomes

intertwined with broader expectations regarding employability and self-presentation.

English consequently functions as both a resource and a hierarchy. It can expand opportunities while simultaneously creating new forms of exclusion. Understanding migrant experiences requires recognising both dimensions.

F. Multilingual Repertoires and Unequal Value

Although English often occupies a privileged position, migrant communication is rarely limited to a single language. Most migrants navigate complex multilingual environments in which different languages perform different social functions.

Indonesian migrants, for example, may draw upon Indonesian, regional languages, English, host-country languages, religious expressions, workplace terminology, digital translation tools, gestures, and visual communication strategies. These resources are combined flexibly according to context and communicative need.

Canagarajah (2013) argues that multilingual speakers engage in translanguaging practices that move across linguistic boundaries rather than remaining within clearly separated language systems. Similarly, Blommaert (2010) emphasises that communicative competence involves the ability to navigate multiple linguistic resources across diverse contexts.

However, not all multilingual resources receive equal recognition. Languages associated with education, professionalism, or global mobility often carry greater symbolic value than those associated with family life, local communities, or informal interaction. Consequently, migrants may possess extensive communicative abilities that remain institutionally invisible.

This uneven valuation is important because it influences how migrants understand themselves and how others perceive them. A multilingual speaker may demonstrate remarkable communicative flexibility while still being categorised as linguistically deficient according to dominant standards.

Recognition therefore depends not only on communicative ability but also on the social value attached to particular forms of language.

G. Language, Silence, and Power

Language is often associated with speaking, expression, and participation. Yet silence can be equally significant. In many migrant contexts, silence functions not as absence but as strategy.

Workers may remain silent because they fear retaliation, wish to avoid conflict, protect relationships, or navigate unequal power relations. Silence may reflect careful judgement rather than passivity. It can represent a form of self-protection within environments where open confrontation carries significant risks.

This perspective challenges assumptions that agency is visible only through speech. Migrants frequently exercise agency through selective participation, indirect communication, strategic ambiguity, and careful management of information. Understanding migrant experiences therefore requires attention to both what is said and what remains unsaid.

Silence also reveals the limits of linguistic capital. Even when migrants possess strong communicative abilities, structural inequalities may discourage open expression. Language creates opportunities for participation, but participation itself remains shaped by broader relations of power.

Recognising the significance of silence is particularly important because later units demonstrate that migrant narratives often contain moments where meaning emerges not only through speech but also through hesitation, omission, and strategic restraint.

H. Conclusion

This unit has examined language as a form of symbolic power operating within transnational labour systems. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of linguistic capital and symbolic power, it has argued that language functions not merely as a tool of

communication but also as a mechanism through which recognition, legitimacy, and inequality are organised.

Migrants move through linguistic markets characterised by unequal distributions of value. Some languages, accents, and communicative practices receive greater recognition than others, shaping access to employment, participation, and social legitimacy. These hierarchies influence not only how migrants communicate but also how they are perceived and positioned within broader social structures.

At the same time, migrants actively navigate these conditions through multilingual communication, strategic adaptation, and selective participation. Language therefore operates simultaneously as a resource, a constraint, and a site of negotiation.

Understanding language as symbolic power provides an essential foundation for the next unit, which explores how migrants construct, negotiate, and transform identities across multiple social, linguistic, and transnational contexts.

UNIT 7

IDENTITY IN MOTION

A. Identity Beyond Fixed Categories

Identity is often treated as something stable and self-evident. People are described through categories such as nationality, occupation, gender, ethnicity, religion, or social class, creating the impression that identity consists of a set of fixed characteristics that individuals carry with them throughout life. Yet migration challenges such assumptions. When people move across borders, languages, institutions, and social environments, they frequently encounter situations that require them to rethink who they are, how they are recognised, and where they belong.

For migrant workers, identity is rarely a simple matter of self-definition. It is shaped through movement, interaction, recognition, memory, obligation, and aspiration. Migrants do not leave one identity behind and acquire another upon arrival. Rather, they continuously negotiate multiple identities across different contexts. A person may simultaneously be a worker, a parent, a child, a spouse, a migrant, a community member, a language learner, a religious subject, and a provider. These identities do not always align neatly. They may reinforce one another in some situations while creating tension in others.

This unit approaches identity as dynamic, relational, and continually in motion. Rather than viewing identity as a stable possession, it understands identity as something that is negotiated through everyday participation in social life.

Migration does not simply relocate individuals geographically. It transforms the social relationships, communicative practices, and institutional structures through which identities are produced and recognised.

Norton (2013) argues that identity is multiple, changing, and closely connected to access to material and symbolic resources. This perspective is particularly valuable for understanding migrant lives because migrants move through environments where recognition is unevenly distributed. How individuals are perceived may depend on language proficiency, occupation, nationality, legal status, gender, religion, or class position. Identity therefore emerges not only from how migrants see themselves but also from how they are positioned by others.

B. Transnational Lives and Multiple Belongings

One of the most important developments in migration studies has been the recognition that migrants do not simply leave one society and become absorbed into another. Instead, they frequently maintain ongoing social, economic, emotional, cultural, and moral connections that extend across national borders. Migration therefore creates forms of life that are simultaneously rooted in multiple places.

Vertovec (2009) describes this condition as transnationalism, emphasising the ways migrants sustain relationships, obligations, identities, and activities that connect home and host societies. Through remittances, digital communication, family responsibilities, religious practices, social networks, and imagined futures, migrants remain engaged with more than one social world at the same time.

For Indonesian migrant workers, transnationalism is not merely a theoretical concept. It is an everyday reality. Workers may spend years living abroad while remaining deeply involved in family decision-making at home. Parents continue guiding children's education through video calls. Adult children support ageing parents through remittances. Siblings coordinate household responsibilities across continents. Family

celebrations, illnesses, financial emergencies, and religious events continue to shape everyday life despite geographical separation.

This condition creates complex experiences of belonging. Migrants often belong to multiple places simultaneously while feeling fully settled in neither. In host societies, they may remain categorised as temporary workers, foreigners, or outsiders regardless of how long they have lived there. Yet returning home can also generate unexpected feelings of distance and unfamiliarity. Years abroad may transform perspectives, habits, language practices, aspirations, and social expectations.

As a result, belonging becomes dynamic rather than fixed. Migrants continuously negotiate attachments to home, host societies, and transnational communities that exist between them. Identity emerges not from a single location but from movement across multiple sites of social participation.

C. Identity Across Time and Space

Migration does not only transform where people live. It also transforms how they understand their past, present, and future. Identity is therefore deeply connected to experiences of time and space.

De Fina (2015) argues that migrant identities are frequently constructed through narratives of movement. Rather than describing themselves through static categories, migrants often explain who they are by telling stories about journeys, transitions, challenges, and transformations. Identity becomes organised around trajectories rather than labels.

This perspective is closely connected to the concept of chronotopes. Originally developed within literary theory and later adapted by discourse scholars, chronotopes refer to socially meaningful configurations of time and space. They provide frameworks through which people organise experiences and construct narratives about themselves and others.

Migration narratives are particularly rich in chronotopic structures. Migrants often describe their lives through recurring moments and locations that carry powerful symbolic significance. The hometown before departure, the training centre, the airport, the first day abroad, the workplace, the dormitory, the first salary, the video call home, the return visit, and the imagined future all function as important chronotopic sites.

These moments are not simply locations or events. They become symbolic reference points through which migrants understand personal transformation. The village may represent obligation, memory, or hardship. The airport may symbolise uncertainty and possibility. The workplace may become associated with discipline, learning, struggle, or achievement. The future home built with remittance income may represent dignity, success, and fulfilment.

Through these chronotopic narratives, migrants make sense of change. Identity becomes organised through movement across meaningful times and spaces rather than through fixed social categories.

D. Imagined Futures and Possible Selves

Identity is not only about who people are. It is also about who they hope to become.

Norton (2013) argues that language learning, participation, and social action are often shaped by imagined identities. Individuals invest in particular practices because they believe those practices may bring desired futures within reach. Identity therefore involves aspiration as much as experience.

Darvin and Norton (2015) further emphasise that imagined futures are closely connected to power and access to resources. Not all individuals possess equal opportunities to pursue desired identities. Aspirations emerge within social structures that both enable and constrain possibility.

For migrants, imagined futures frequently provide motivation during periods of hardship. Migration projects are often sustained by visions of future achievement, family well-being, professional advancement, or personal transformation. These imagined futures help migrants endure uncertainty because present sacrifices are interpreted as investments in future possibilities.

Importantly, imagined identities vary across migration pathways. For some migrants, future aspirations may centre on home ownership, children's education, debt repayment, or family security. For others, aspirations may involve professional recognition, international careers, entrepreneurship, or continued mobility. These differences reflect unequal access to economic, cultural, social, and linguistic capital.

Yet regardless of specific goals, migrants are engaged in forms of future-making. They do not simply respond to present conditions. They actively construct narratives about possible selves and desirable futures. These imagined identities become powerful resources for sustaining motivation, resilience, and hope.

E. Language and Identity Negotiation

Language occupies a central position within identity because communication shapes how individuals understand themselves and how they are recognised by others. Migration frequently intensifies these processes by placing individuals within unfamiliar linguistic environments.

Different languages often become associated with different aspects of selfhood. Indonesian may carry meanings related to family, intimacy, humour, and emotional security. Regional languages may evoke memories of home, local identity, and cultural belonging. English may become associated with professionalism, education, and international mobility. Host-country languages may represent independence, participation, and everyday survival.

Consequently, identity shifts across linguistic environments. Migrants may feel more confident, vulnerable, authoritative, dependent, or socially connected depending on the language through which interaction occurs. These shifts do not necessarily indicate multiple separate identities. Rather, they reflect the dynamic relationship between language, social context, and self-understanding.

Language also influences access to recognition. The ability to communicate directly with employers, institutions, colleagues, or service providers can transform how migrants experience participation and autonomy. Conversely, linguistic barriers may produce frustration, dependency, or exclusion.

Identity negotiation therefore occurs not only through what migrants say but through the linguistic resources available for saying it. Communication becomes a central site where belonging, legitimacy, and selfhood are continuously negotiated.

F. Digital Identity and Migrant Visibility

Contemporary migration is increasingly shaped by digital communication technologies. Mobile phones, social media platforms, messaging applications, and video calls allow migrants to maintain connections across geographical distance in ways that were impossible for earlier generations.

Digital communication reduces some forms of separation while creating new forms of visibility. Migrants remain connected to family members, friends, and communities despite living abroad. Everyday experiences can be shared instantly through photographs, videos, voice messages, and social media posts.

However, digital visibility is rarely neutral. Migrants often engage in careful identity management online. Social media platforms become spaces where success, responsibility, resilience, and achievement are performed for audiences at home.

Images of leisure, travel, consumption, or workplace success may communicate competence and progress. At the same time, experiences of loneliness, discrimination, exhaustion, or emotional distress may remain hidden. Digital communication therefore allows migrants to remain socially present while selectively controlling what aspects of life become visible.

Identity in digital spaces is consequently shaped by both connection and performance. Migrants remain emotionally connected to home while simultaneously managing expectations regarding success, responsibility, and mobility.

G. Relational Identity and Family Obligation

A central limitation of many Western theories of identity is their emphasis on individual autonomy. While personal agency remains important, migrant identities are often deeply relational. Individuals understand themselves through relationships of responsibility, obligation, care, and interdependence.

For many Indonesian migrant workers, migration itself is inseparable from family responsibility. Decisions to migrate are frequently motivated by obligations toward parents, children, spouses, siblings, or extended family members. Economic mobility is rarely pursued solely for personal benefit. Rather, it is embedded within broader networks of care and obligation.

This relational orientation shapes identity profoundly. A migrant may understand herself primarily as a mother supporting children's education. A son may define his success through the ability to support ageing parents. A daughter may measure achievement through contributions to family well-being rather than individual advancement.

Such identities generate both meaning and pressure. Family responsibility can provide purpose, motivation, and emotional resilience. At the same time, it can create significant burdens. Failure to meet expectations may be experienced not simply as economic difficulty but as moral disappointment.

Understanding migrant identity therefore requires attention to relationality. Migrants are not isolated individuals pursuing personal projects. They are participants in networks of obligation that shape how they interpret success, failure, belonging, and responsibility.

UNIT 8

AGENCY UNDER CONSTRAINT

A. Beyond Resistance: Rethinking Agency

Agency is often associated with freedom, choice, independence, and resistance. Within many liberal traditions, an agentive individual is imagined as someone who openly challenges authority, rejects domination, and acts autonomously in pursuit of personal goals. This understanding has been influential because it emphasises voice, participation, rights, and self-determination within unequal social conditions.

Such perspectives remain important for migration research because they challenge portrayals of migrants as passive victims of global labour systems. Migrant workers are not simply moved by economic structures. They make decisions, evaluate risks, pursue aspirations, interpret opportunities, and negotiate complex social environments. Migration itself frequently requires considerable initiative, courage, and planning.

Yet defining agency solely through visible resistance creates significant limitations. Many migrants live within conditions where open confrontation may carry serious consequences. Employment contracts, legal dependency, recruitment debt, family obligations, linguistic barriers, and unequal institutional protection often restrict the range of actions that appear realistically available. Under such circumstances, meaningful action may not take the form of public protest or direct opposition.

A worker who remains silent during conflict is not necessarily passive. A domestic worker who avoids confrontation with an employer may be protecting employment essential for family survival. A migrant who appears compliant may be calculating risk carefully while preserving future possibilities. A worker who endures difficult conditions may be acting strategically rather than submitting uncritically. Agency therefore cannot be understood only through what is publicly visible.

This unit adopts a broader understanding of agency that recognises action within conditions of constraint. Drawing on Mahmood (2005), Bourdieu (1993), Norton (2013), and Ahearn (2001), it argues that agency may appear through adaptation, endurance, emotional discipline, language learning, moral commitment, relational responsibility, and strategic negotiation. Migrants do not act outside structures of power. Rather, they act within them, often in ways that remain unnoticed by institutional observers yet profoundly shape everyday life.

B. Agency, Obligation, and Relational Life

A central limitation of many conventional understandings of agency is their tendency to assume that individuals act primarily as autonomous decision-makers pursuing personal interests. While personal aspirations certainly matter, migration frequently reveals a more relational reality. Decisions are often made within networks of responsibility, obligation, care, and interdependence.

For many Indonesian migrant workers, migration itself emerges from relationships rather than individual ambition alone. Workers leave home to support children, assist parents, repay family debt, fund siblings' education, secure housing, or improve collective family well-being. These responsibilities do not merely constrain action. They frequently provide the very motivation that makes migration meaningful.

This relational dimension complicates simplistic distinctions between freedom and constraint. A migrant who remains abroad despite hardship may appear constrained from one perspective. Yet from another perspective, remaining abroad may represent a deliberate commitment to family obligations and future aspirations. The decision to endure difficult circumstances is therefore not necessarily passive. It may reflect a meaningful exercise of responsibility within a particular moral and social context.

Relational agency is particularly important in societies where personhood is strongly connected to family, community, and collective responsibility. Actions are often evaluated not solely according to individual achievement but according to their consequences for others. Success becomes intertwined with care, sacrifice, and contribution. Migrants therefore frequently understand themselves not only as workers but also as providers, parents, daughters, sons, spouses, and caretakers.

Recognising this relational dimension allows a more culturally grounded understanding of agency. Migrants do not simply pursue individual goals. They act within webs of obligation that simultaneously create purpose, pressure, possibility, and constraint.

C. Classed Possibilities for Action

Although all migrants possess agency, they do not possess equal opportunities to exercise it. The possibilities available to individuals are shaped by unequal distributions of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital.

Bourdieu's framework is particularly useful here because it demonstrates how resources influence what forms of action become possible. Economic capital may provide financial flexibility, allowing workers to leave undesirable employment, pursue further education, or absorb temporary periods of unemployment. Cultural capital, including educational qualifications, professional experience, and linguistic competence, may facilitate access to information, institutional

processes, and alternative opportunities. Social capital provides access to networks that offer support, advice, employment leads, and practical assistance. Symbolic capital contributes legitimacy and recognition, influencing whether individuals are taken seriously within institutional settings.

These forms of capital shape agency by affecting the range of options available. A worker with substantial savings may negotiate employment conditions differently from someone burdened by recruitment debt. A migrant with recognised language skills may communicate directly with employers, institutions, or service providers, while others remain dependent on intermediaries. Access to resources therefore influences not only outcomes but also the capacity to act.

This perspective helps explain why agency appears differently across migration pathways. White-collar migrants often possess forms of capital that expand opportunities for negotiation, mobility, and self-positioning. Blue-collar migrants frequently encounter more restrictive environments characterised by stronger surveillance, greater dependency, and fewer recognised resources. Yet both groups exercise agency. What differs is not the existence of agency but the conditions under which it operates.

Agency is therefore not simply a personal attribute. It is a socially distributed capacity shaped by access to resources, opportunities, and recognition.

D. Language as a Resource for Agency

Language occupies a particularly important place within migrant agency because communication shapes access to participation, information, recognition, and opportunity. Migrants frequently act through language long before language becomes visible as an outcome.

Norton (2013) argues that language learning should be understood as investment rather than simple skill acquisition. Individuals invest in language because they anticipate that linguistic resources may provide access to desired identities,

relationships, and opportunities. Language learning therefore becomes a future-oriented practice connected to broader aspirations for mobility and recognition.

For migrant workers, learning English or the host-country language often represents much more than acquiring communicative competence. It may facilitate interaction with employers, understanding of workplace regulations, access to healthcare, navigation of public services, or participation in social networks. Through language, migrants gain greater independence and reduce vulnerability within unfamiliar environments.

At the same time, language operates within unequal systems of recognition. Migrants may invest significant effort in communication while continuing to encounter accent discrimination, stereotypes, or assumptions regarding competence. As Blommaert (2010) demonstrates, communicative resources do not circulate equally within globalised environments. Some forms of language receive greater value and legitimacy than others.

Despite these inequalities, migrants continuously mobilise language strategically. They learn new expressions, adapt communicative styles, seek translation assistance, combine linguistic resources, and develop multilingual repertoires that enable participation across diverse contexts. Language therefore becomes one of the most important resources through which agency is exercised in everyday life.

E. Embodied and Emotional Agency

Agency is often discussed in terms of speech, decision-making, or visible action. Yet migrant experiences demonstrate that agency is also embodied. Individuals act through bodies, emotions, routines, and everyday practices that are rarely recognised as political or agential.

Much migrant labour requires sustained emotional regulation. Workers may manage frustration, suppress anger, conceal homesickness, display politeness, maintain

professionalism, and continue performing expected roles despite emotional strain. Such efforts are not merely psychological reactions. They involve active forms of self-management that shape how individuals navigate unequal environments.

The ability to remain composed during conflict, maintain dignity under pressure, or continue functioning despite uncertainty often requires considerable effort. Migrants frequently cultivate emotional practices that enable survival within demanding conditions. These practices may include humour, self-discipline, emotional restraint, peer support, reflection, or religious devotion.

Embodied agency also includes everyday routines. Waking early, adapting to unfamiliar schedules, learning workplace expectations, managing fatigue, and maintaining physical and emotional well-being all involve forms of action that contribute to survival and participation. Such practices may appear ordinary, yet they are essential for navigating transnational labour systems.

Recognising embodied agency expands understanding beyond visible resistance. Action occurs not only through dramatic moments of confrontation but also through the continuous labour of sustaining oneself within unequal conditions.

F. Faith, Morality, and Endurance

Religious and moral practices play a significant role in many migrant lives. These practices are often dismissed as coping mechanisms or private beliefs, yet they can also be understood as important forms of agency.

Mahmood's (2005) work is particularly valuable because it challenges the assumption that agency must always involve resistance to social norms. She argues that agency may emerge through ethical self-formation, discipline, and the cultivation of particular ways of being. Individuals do not act only by opposing structures. They also act by shaping themselves within them.

For many Indonesian migrants, faith provides a framework through which hardship, uncertainty, and sacrifice become meaningful. Prayer, religious gatherings, Qur'anic recitation, reflection, and trust in divine justice offer resources for interpreting difficult experiences. These practices support emotional stability while also reinforcing commitments to family, responsibility, and future aspirations.

Religious practices therefore function as more than personal comfort. They are active processes through which migrants organise experience, sustain hope, preserve dignity, and continue acting despite difficult circumstances. Faith becomes part of the moral infrastructure that supports endurance.

Importantly, recognising religious agency does not mean romanticising suffering. Rather, it acknowledges that migrants often draw upon moral and spiritual resources in order to navigate unequal social realities.

G. Negotiated Compliance and Strategic Adaptation

Between resistance and submission lies a wide range of practices that characterise everyday migrant life. Workers frequently navigate unequal conditions through adaptation, compromise, selective participation, and strategic decision-making.

Negotiated compliance refers to situations in which migrants outwardly accept particular conditions while simultaneously pursuing alternative goals, protecting future opportunities, or minimising risk. Such actions may not appear transformative, yet they often represent careful responses to constrained circumstances.

A worker may remain silent during conflict while documenting mistreatment privately. Another may comply temporarily with workplace expectations while searching for alternative employment. A migrant may avoid confrontation because maintaining income is essential for family survival. These actions reflect calculation rather than passivity.

Strategic adaptation similarly involves the creative use of available resources. Migrants learn institutional rules, build support networks, interpret power relations, and identify opportunities for action within existing constraints. Adaptation therefore should not be interpreted as surrender. It often represents an important means of maintaining dignity, security, and possibility.

Understanding agency through negotiated compliance allows attention to forms of action that fall between heroic resistance and complete submission. It recognises that migrants frequently act pragmatically within conditions they did not choose and cannot

UNIT 9 | TOWARDS A THEORY OF MIGRANT LINGUISTIC AGENCY

A. Why a New Concept is Needed

Migration research has generated extensive scholarship on labour mobility, social class, identity, language learning, multilingualism, and migrant adaptation. Studies have demonstrated that migrants move through unequal social structures shaped by economic conditions, institutional regulations, language ideologies, and transnational power relations. Research has also shown that migrants actively negotiate these conditions through everyday practices of communication, learning, relationship-building, and self-positioning.

Despite these important contributions, existing approaches often examine language, identity, and agency separately. Some studies focus primarily on language proficiency and communicative competence. Others examine social class, labour-market participation, or identity formation. Still others investigate migrant agency through resistance, adaptation, or resilience. While each perspective provides valuable insights, there remains a need for a framework capable of explaining how language, mobility, identity, and agency interact within the lived realities of migrant workers.

This need is particularly evident among migrants whose lives unfold within unequal transnational labour systems. Migrants do not simply possess or lack linguistic resources. Nor do they merely respond to structural constraints. Rather, they

actively mobilise multilingual, cultural, social, emotional, and communicative resources in order to navigate complex social environments. Through language, they seek recognition, maintain relationships, negotiate institutional demands, construct identities, and pursue desired futures.

The central argument of this book is that these practices can be understood through the concept of migrant linguistic agency.

B. Defining Migrant Linguistic Agency

Migrant linguistic agency refers to the capacity of migrants to strategically mobilise linguistic, multilingual, multimodal, and socially situated communicative resources in order to navigate unequal social conditions, pursue recognition, maintain relationships, and expand opportunities within transnational labour systems.

This definition highlights several important features. First, migrant linguistic agency is not equivalent to language proficiency. Individuals may possess advanced language skills yet exercise little agency if they lack opportunities, confidence, recognition, or institutional access. Conversely, migrants with limited formal proficiency may demonstrate substantial agency through creative communication, multilingual resourcefulness, and strategic adaptation.

Second, migrant linguistic agency is relational. Communication occurs within relationships involving employers, colleagues, family members, institutions, religious communities, and broader social networks. Migrants use language not only to express themselves but also to sustain social ties, fulfil obligations, negotiate expectations, and manage power relations.

Third, migrant linguistic agency is situated. Communication always occurs within specific social contexts shaped by class, language ideologies, labour systems, legal structures, and institutional expectations. Agency therefore

emerges within conditions of constraint rather than outside them.

Finally, migrant linguistic agency is future-oriented. Migrants invest in communication because language often provides access to imagined futures, professional opportunities, personal transformation, and social mobility.

C. The Four Dimensions of Migrant Linguistic Agency

Drawing upon the preceding units, migrant linguistic agency may be understood through four interconnected dimensions.

1. Communicative Agency

Communicative agency refers to the ability to participate meaningfully in interaction. This includes asking questions, seeking information, clarifying misunderstandings, negotiating workplace expectations, accessing services, and expressing personal perspectives.

At its most basic level, communicative agency concerns participation. Migrants who develop greater communicative confidence often gain increased access to information, support, and opportunity.

2. Relational Agency

Relational agency concerns the use of language to sustain social relationships across transnational spaces. Migrants maintain family connections, fulfil obligations, provide emotional support, and negotiate social responsibilities through communication.

Video calls, voice messages, text messaging, social media interaction, and multilingual family communication all demonstrate how language enables migrants to remain socially present despite geographical distance.

3. Identity Agency

Identity agency refers to the use of language in constructing, negotiating, and transforming selfhood. Through communication, migrants position themselves as

workers, parents, professionals, community members, learners, religious subjects, and future-oriented individuals.

Language enables migrants to narrate experiences, reinterpret challenges, imagine futures, and develop new understandings of themselves across different social contexts.

4. Mobility Agency

Mobility agency refers to the role of language in expanding access to opportunities. Language may facilitate occupational mobility, educational advancement, institutional participation, professional recognition, and broader social inclusion.

Migrants frequently invest in language learning because communication creates possibilities that extend beyond immediate workplace demands. Language becomes a resource for pursuing future mobility.

D. Migrant Linguistic Agency Under Conditions of Constraint

Importantly, migrant linguistic agency does not imply unrestricted freedom. Migrants exercise agency within environments characterised by unequal power relations, labour-market hierarchies, language ideologies, and institutional constraints.

This insight distinguishes migrant linguistic agency from highly individualised understandings of communication. Migrants do not simply choose freely among unlimited possibilities. Their actions are shaped by available resources, workplace regulations, immigration policies, family obligations, educational opportunities, and broader structures of inequality.

Yet constraints do not eliminate agency. Rather, they shape how agency is exercised. Migrants may negotiate rather than confront. They may adapt rather than resist openly. They may remain silent strategically while pursuing long-term goals. They may combine languages creatively when formal proficiency is limited.

Agency therefore emerges not despite constraint but through ongoing engagement with it.

E. A Conceptual Model of Migrant Linguistic Agency

The framework proposed in this book conceptualises migrant linguistic agency as emerging through the interaction of four domains:

1. Structural Conditions

- a. class
- b. labour markets
- c. migration policies
- d. language ideologies

2. Linguistic Resources

- a. multilingual repertoires
- b. communicative competence
- c. digital communication
- d. translanguaging practices

3. Identity Processes

- a. belonging
- b. recognition
- c. imagined futures
- d. relational obligations

4. Agentive Practices

- a. negotiation
- b. adaptation
- c. investment
- d. participation
- e. strategic communication

Migrant linguistic agency emerges through the dynamic interaction of these domains rather than through any single factor alone.

F. Contributions to Applied Linguistics and Migration Studies

The concept of migrant linguistic agency contributes to applied linguistics by extending discussions of language learning, multilingualism, investment, and identity beyond educational settings into transnational labour environments.

It contributes to migration studies by demonstrating that communication is not merely a secondary aspect of migration but one of the central mechanisms through which mobility is experienced, negotiated, and transformed.

Most importantly, it provides a framework for understanding migrants not as passive recipients of structural forces nor as heroic individuals overcoming all obstacles. Instead, migrants are understood as communicative actors who continuously navigate unequal social worlds through strategic, relational, and future-oriented uses of language.

G. Conclusion

This unit has proposed migrant linguistic agency as a framework for understanding how migrants mobilise communicative resources within unequal transnational environments. Building on discussions of class, language, multilingualism, recognition, identity, and agency developed throughout this book, the unit argues that communication occupies a central role in how migrants navigate mobility.

Language is not merely a skill. It is a social resource through which migrants sustain relationships, pursue recognition, negotiate constraints, imagine futures, and create possibilities for action. Understanding migration therefore requires attention not only to where people move, but also to how they communicate, adapt, and act through language across the complex social worlds they inhabit.

The next unit turns from theory to methodology, explaining how narrative inquiry provides a suitable approach for researching migrant lives and examining how these processes become visible through migrants' own stories.

UNIT 10

TOWARDS A MODEL OF MIGRANT LINGUISTIC AGENCY

A. From Theory to Model

The previous unit introduced the concept of migrant linguistic agency as a framework for understanding how migrants mobilise communicative resources within unequal transnational environments. While the concept helps explain the relationship between language, identity, mobility, and agency, a broader question remains: What conditions enable migrant linguistic agency to emerge?

This unit proposes a conceptual model of migrant linguistic agency developed from the theoretical discussions presented throughout this book. Rather than viewing agency as an individual trait or personal characteristic, the model conceptualises agency as an emergent phenomenon produced through the interaction of multiple social, linguistic, relational, and institutional forces.

The model argues that migrant linguistic agency emerges through six interconnected domains: social class, linguistic capital, multilingual practice, faith, social networks, and institutional constraints. These domains do not operate independently. Rather, they interact dynamically within migrants' everyday lives, shaping both opportunities for action and the limits within which action becomes possible.

B. Social Class as the Foundation of Agency

The first dimension of the model is social class. Class shapes access to education, language learning opportunities, migration pathways, social networks, and material resources long before migration occurs.

Migrants do not enter transnational labour systems from equal starting points. Differences in economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital influence what forms of agency become possible and which opportunities remain inaccessible. Class therefore forms the structural foundation upon which other dimensions of migrant linguistic agency develop.

C. Linguistic Capital and Communicative Opportunity

The second dimension is linguistic capital. Language functions not only as a communication tool but also as a resource that provides access to recognition, participation, and opportunity.

Migrants with greater access to valued linguistic resources often possess expanded opportunities for workplace participation, institutional engagement, and social mobility. However, linguistic capital is not limited to formal proficiency. It also includes the ability to navigate diverse communicative environments strategically. Linguistic capital therefore serves as a bridge between structural conditions and everyday action.

D. Multilingual Practice as Strategic Adaptation

The third dimension concerns multilingual practice. Migrants rarely communicate through a single language. Instead, they mobilise diverse linguistic and semiotic resources according to context and communicative need.

Through translanguaging, code-switching, interpretation, digital communication, gesture, and contextual adaptation, migrants create communicative possibilities even when formal linguistic resources appear limited. Multilingual practice transforms language from a static skill into a dynamic resource for action.

E. Faith as Moral and Emotional Infrastructure

The fourth dimension is faith. Religious belief and moral commitment provide many migrants with frameworks through which uncertainty, hardship, sacrifice, and endurance become meaningful.

Faith contributes to migrant linguistic agency by supporting emotional resilience, sustaining hope, reinforcing ethical commitments, and providing interpretive resources for understanding difficult experiences. Rather than existing outside agency, faith often functions as one of its central foundations.

F. Social Networks and Relational Agency

The fifth dimension is social networks. Agency is rarely exercised alone. Migrants depend upon relationships that provide information, emotional support, practical assistance, and access to opportunity.

Family members, friends, co-workers, religious communities, digital networks, and transnational connections all contribute to migrants' capacity to act. Social networks therefore transform individual resources into collective possibilities. Agency emerges through relationships as much as through personal capability.

G. Institutional Constraints and Unequal Possibilities

The sixth dimension concerns institutional constraints. Migration occurs within systems of law, labour regulation, employer authority, language ideology, and organisational control.

These structures do not eliminate agency. However, they shape the range of actions that become realistically available. Migrants negotiate opportunities and limitations simultaneously.

Institutional constraints therefore function not as the opposite of agency but as one of the conditions through which agency becomes visible.

H. The Dynamic Interaction of the Model

The model proposed here does not assume that any single dimension determines migrant outcomes. Rather, migrant linguistic agency emerges through the dynamic interaction of all six domains.

Social class influences access to linguistic capital. Linguistic capital shapes multilingual practice. Faith supports emotional resilience. Social networks provide resources and opportunity. Institutional constraints define the conditions within which action occurs.

Together, these dimensions produce varying forms of migrant linguistic agency across different migration pathways and life trajectories.

I. Conclusion

This unit has proposed a model of migrant linguistic agency that integrates social class, linguistic capital, multilingual practice, faith, social networks, and institutional constraints into a single analytical framework.

The model represents the principal conceptual contribution of this book. It shifts attention away from language proficiency alone and toward the broader social processes through which migrants use communicative resources to navigate unequal transnational environments. Migrant linguistic agency is therefore understood not as an individual attribute but as an emergent capacity produced through the interaction of structure, language, identity, relationship, and action.



PART III
RESEARCH DESIGN
AND NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS



UNIT 11

RESEARCHING MIGRANT LIVES THROUGH NARRATIVE INQUIRY

A. Why Narrative Inquiry?

This book begins from a simple but important assumption: migrant workers are not merely labour units moving through economic systems. They are narrating subjects who interpret, remember, evaluate, and make sense of their lives. Migration is not experienced solely through contracts, policies, recruitment systems, wages, or mobility statistics. It is also experienced through memory, emotion, language, aspiration, obligation, dignity, and everyday acts of meaning-making.

For this reason, narrative inquiry provides an especially appropriate approach for studying migrant lives. Rather than treating experience as a collection of measurable variables, narrative inquiry focuses on how people construct meaning through stories. Individuals do not simply report events. They interpret them. They connect past experiences to present realities and future possibilities. Through storytelling, people explain who they are, how they arrived where they are, what they value, and what they hope may still become possible.

This perspective is particularly important in migration research because mobility is rarely experienced as a single event. Migration unfolds across time. Departure, arrival, adaptation, work, family separation, language learning, success, disappointment, return, and future planning all become interconnected through narrative. Stories therefore provide access not only to what migrants have experienced but also to how those experiences become meaningful.

Following Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Riessman (2008), and Chase (2011), this study approaches narratives as socially situated interpretations of lived experience. Stories are neither objective mirrors of reality nor fictional inventions detached from experience. They are meaning-making practices through which individuals organise memory, construct identity, negotiate relationships, and position themselves within broader social worlds.

B. Migration as a Storied Experience

Migration is often represented through numbers. Governments count migrant workers, economists calculate remittances, and policy reports document labour flows. While such information is valuable, it does not fully capture how migration is lived.

From a narrative perspective, migration is a storied experience. People understand movement through stories of departure and return, sacrifice and achievement, hope and uncertainty, belonging and displacement. These stories connect personal experiences to wider social structures. Through narrative, migrants explain how class, language, family obligation, religion, labour, and mobility become part of everyday life.

Importantly, migrant stories rarely follow neat chronological sequences. Participants often moved between memories of childhood, reflections on present circumstances, and visions of possible futures. A workplace experience might trigger recollections of family sacrifice. A discussion of language learning might lead to reflections on identity and belonging. Such movement across time was treated not as disorder but as an important feature of narrative meaning itself.

Migration therefore emerged not as a linear journey but as a complex process of interpretation extending across multiple temporal and social worlds.

C. Participants as Knowledge Co-Constructors

The six participants in this study were not approached as sources of data to be extracted and analysed from a distance. Rather, they were understood as co-constructors of knowledge whose stories contributed directly to the development of the book's theoretical arguments.

Narrative inquiry differs from many research traditions because knowledge is produced relationally. Stories emerge through interaction between researcher and participant. Questions, responses, silences, memories, emotions, and shared understandings all influence what becomes tellable.

This perspective is particularly important when working with migrant populations. Migrants often occupy positions shaped by institutional surveillance, employer dependency, financial obligation, and unequal social recognition. Under such conditions, trust becomes a precondition for meaningful storytelling. Participants who feel monitored or judged may produce cautious narratives. Participants who feel respected are often more willing to discuss contradiction, vulnerability, uncertainty, and aspiration.

The narratives presented in this book therefore emerged through relationships rather than extraction. Trust was not a methodological accessory. It was part of the knowledge-making process itself.

D. Multilingual Storytelling and Narrative Meaning

One of the distinctive features of this study is its attention to multilingual storytelling. Participants frequently moved between Indonesian, regional languages, English, and host-country linguistic resources while narrating their experiences. These multilingual practices were not treated as interference or methodological complications. Rather, they formed part of the stories themselves.

Language choice often reflected emotional meaning. Indonesian enabled participants to discuss family responsibility, religious commitment, shame, patience, and personal struggle in

culturally resonant ways. English frequently appeared in workplace narratives, professional identities, and moments associated with institutional recognition. Host-country language expressions often emerged in relation to everyday survival, public interaction, and local belonging.

Following Blommaert (2010) and Canagarajah (2013), multilingual traces were understood as evidence of movement across linguistic markets and social worlds. Language therefore became both the subject of inquiry and the medium through which experience was narrated.

E. Ethics as Ongoing Practice

Ethics in narrative inquiry extends beyond formal procedures such as consent forms and anonymity agreements. Ethical responsibility continues throughout the research process because stories involve people whose lives remain embedded within social relationships and institutional structures.

All participants were assigned pseudonyms, and identifying details were modified or removed where necessary. However, ethical representation required more than protecting names. It involved careful reflection on how stories were interpreted, translated, analysed, and presented to readers.

Narrative inquiry also requires attention to what participants choose not to say. Silence, hesitation, emotional shifts, and incomplete stories often carry important meaning. Respecting these absences is as important as analysing what is spoken openly. Ethical research therefore involves recognising that some experiences remain difficult, painful, or risky to narrate.

F. From Stories to Theory

The analytic process moved recursively between participant narratives, thematic interpretation, and theoretical reflection. Rather than beginning with rigid categories imposed in advance, analysis developed through sustained engagement with participants' stories.

Themes such as language learning, family obligation, symbolic recognition, religious endurance, professional mobility, loneliness, aspiration, and dignity emerged repeatedly across narratives. These themes were then interpreted through the conceptual frameworks discussed in earlier units, including Bourdieu's theory of capital, Norton's concept of investment, Mahmood's understanding of ethical agency, and scholarship on transnational identity and multilingualism.

Importantly, theory was not treated as something applied mechanically to participant accounts. Instead, theory and narrative informed one another. Participant stories illuminated dimensions of migration that existing concepts did not fully explain. This process ultimately contributed to the development of the concept of migrant linguistic agency introduced in the previous unit.

G. Representation, Voice, and Responsibility

Writing about migrant lives involves questions of representation and power. Researchers decide which stories to include, which quotations to highlight, how experiences are interpreted, and how participants become visible within academic discourse.

This book therefore approaches representation as a responsibility rather than a technical procedure. The aim is neither to romanticise migrant resilience nor to reduce participants to victims of structural inequality. Migrant lives contain achievement and hardship, confidence and uncertainty, mobility and constraint, recognition and marginalisation. Preserving these complexities is essential because human experience rarely conforms to simple narratives.

The participants presented in this book are therefore not examples illustrating pre-existing theories. They are individuals whose stories challenge, refine, and extend how migration itself is understood.



PART IV
NARRATIVE WORLDS
OF INDONESIAN MIGRANTS
IN A MIDDLE EASTERN HOST
COUNTRY



UNIT 12

“GOING ABROAD”: HOPES, PRESSURES, AND IMAGINED FUTURES

Going abroad rarely begins as a purely individual decision. For many Indonesian migrants, departure emerges gradually through household conversations, economic pressure, social comparison, family obligation, neighbourhood stories, and the growing feeling that remaining at home may no longer provide a meaningful future. Migration is therefore not only an economic act. It is also a moral, emotional, and classed project through which individuals attempt to reposition themselves and their families within unequal social conditions.

A person may decide to migrate because household debt continues to accumulate, because agricultural income is unstable, because local employment opportunities are limited, because parents are ageing, because children’s education must be financed, or because remaining at home feels increasingly associated with stagnation and blocked possibility. Yet these motivations should not be reduced simply to poverty. Migration is shaped not only by what migrants lack materially, but also by what they imagine might become possible through mobility. In this sense, “going abroad” becomes attached simultaneously to necessity and aspiration.

This unit approaches pre-departure migration as a socially produced imagination shaped by class background, family morality, community expectation, language ideology, recruitment systems, and unequal access to future possibility. Indonesian migrants do not leave as abstract labour units responding mechanically to wage differences. They leave as daughters, sons,

mothers, fathers, spouses, believers, workers, and future-makers whose decisions emerge within specific social worlds.

Bourdieu's (1993, 2002) concepts of capital and habitus are especially useful for understanding this pre-departure world because migration decisions are shaped by unequal distributions of resources, opportunity, and social expectation long before movement actually occurs. Migrants do not imagine the future from equal starting points. Their aspirations are structured by educational background, family economy, gendered responsibility, linguistic resources, social networks, institutional familiarity, and local understandings of success and dignity.

For many lower-income prospective migrants, migration appears as a practical response to restricted possibility. Local labour markets may offer irregular work, unstable wages, limited mobility, or occupations perceived as lacking long-term dignity and security. Migration therefore becomes associated with movement not only across geography, but across class position. Overseas work may be imagined as a pathway toward debt repayment, household stability, educational mobility for children, land ownership, home construction, or escape from prolonged insecurity.

This does not mean migrants simply chase wealth. Rather, they pursue recognisable forms of dignity within their social worlds. A permanent house, stable remittance flow, financed education, or the ability to support ageing parents may carry enormous symbolic value within local communities. Migration therefore becomes tied to recognition as much as income. To "succeed abroad" is often imagined not only as earning money, but as becoming socially visible as a responsible and capable family member.

For some migrants, leaving Indonesia is connected to the desire to repair an interrupted life trajectory. Migration may follow failed business attempts, unemployment, educational disappointment, family conflict, divorce, bereavement, or the inability to secure respectable work despite prolonged effort. In these contexts, migration can appear as a second chance: an

opportunity to rebuild economic stability, personal dignity, or future direction.

This is why pre-departure narratives frequently contain both desperation and optimism simultaneously. Migrants may describe themselves as “forced by circumstances” while also emphasising courage, determination, and hope. Such narratives reveal that migration decisions emerge within constrained fields of choice rather than through either pure freedom or total coercion. Mahmood’s (2005) discussion of agency is important here because migrants’ actions should not be understood only through liberal ideas of autonomous individual choice. Migrants act within moral obligations, unequal conditions, and culturally shaped understandings of responsibility.

Family responsibility is one of the most powerful forces shaping the decision to migrate. In many Indonesian households, work is not imagined purely individually. Income is connected to collective survival, relational obligation, and moral duty. A daughter’s salary may support parents, younger siblings, nieces, nephews, or children. A son may feel pressure to prove responsibility through financial provision. A mother may migrate to secure educational futures for children despite the emotional pain of separation.

These obligations are not external pressures imposed upon otherwise independent individuals. They are part of how migrants understand themselves morally. To be a good daughter, parent, son, or spouse often means becoming economically useful to the family. Migration therefore becomes emotionally charged because it is tied to love, sacrifice, duty, and fear of failure simultaneously.

Silvey’s (2004, 2006) work demonstrates clearly that Indonesian migration is deeply gendered because mobility itself becomes organised through unequal expectations regarding care, sacrifice, emotional labour, and family responsibility. Women migrants are frequently expected to remain caring mothers and daughters even while physically absent. Men migrants may experience strong pressure to perform breadwinning masculinity through overseas income and visible economic contribution.

This creates painful contradictions. To care for the family, migrants may need to leave the family. To become financially responsible parents, they may need to become physically absent parents. To secure dignity at home, they may need to endure uncertainty abroad. Migration therefore reorganises intimacy and care across distance rather than eliminating them.

Importantly, family pressure does not always appear through direct command. Parents may never explicitly say, “You must work abroad.” Yet unpaid bills, leaking roofs, school fees, unstable harvests, unemployment, or visible household struggle can communicate expectation powerfully without direct instruction. Migration decisions therefore emerge through relational atmospheres of need and obligation rather than simple individual preference.

This complexity demonstrates how agency operates under structural constraint. Migrants make decisions actively, yet the range of available choices has already been shaped by class inequality, labour opportunity, educational access, gender expectation, and household survival needs. Staying home may itself become risky when local opportunities remain limited. Migration thus appears simultaneously voluntary and necessary.

Community narratives play an important role in making migration imaginable. Returned migrants often become visible symbols of possibility within local environments. Renovated houses, motorcycles, smartphones, jewellery, remittance-supported businesses, or children enrolled in better schools become public evidence that overseas work can transform social position. These visible signs circulate through village conversations, neighbour comparisons, religious gatherings, and social media.

People rarely imagine migration abstractly. Instead, they imagine it through someone familiar: a neighbour who returned with savings, a relative who built a house, a friend who regularly sends remittances, or a former classmate posting images from abroad. Migration becomes socially imaginable because examples already exist within the community.

However, these circulating success narratives often conceal the labour conditions making visible success possible. A renovated home may hide years of exhaustion, loneliness, surveillance, or restricted mobility. A cheerful social media image may conceal workplace pressure or emotional isolation. Yet such representations remain powerful because they produce hope and aspiration before departure occurs.

This process demonstrates that migration imagination is socially distributed and classed. Blue-collar prospective migrants often imagine success through visible household transformation: debt repayment, permanent housing, children's education, family support, or economic stability. White-collar prospective migrants may additionally imagine professional recognition, international experience, English-language use, career development, or middle-class mobility.

Both groups imagine improved futures, but they do so from unequal positions and through different forms of capital. Their imagined futures are structured by the resources they already possess and the forms of recognition they hope migration will provide. Darwin and Norton's (2015) framework is especially useful here because it demonstrates that imagined futures are connected to identity investment and unequal access to symbolic resources.

Migration therefore becomes not merely movement toward income, but movement toward imagined selves. A migrant may hope to become recognised as responsible, modern, professional, independent, globally experienced, religiously devoted, or economically successful. The host country becomes imagined as a space where transformation might become possible.

Language occupies an important role within these imagined futures. English, in particular, frequently symbolises professionalism, education, cosmopolitan mobility, and modernity. Workers entering hospitality, customer service, administration, or technical sectors may imagine English proficiency as part of becoming more respected and institutionally visible. Even migrants with limited English may associate the language with social advancement and broader opportunity.

Blommaert's (2010) discussion of linguistic inequality is important here because migrants' imagined mobility is often connected not only to economic movement but also to access to valued linguistic resources. Language becomes part of the migration dream itself. To "speak English," "communicate internationally," or "work professionally abroad" carries symbolic value beyond communication alone.

At the same time, imagined futures remain shaped by unequal information and recruitment systems. Brokers, agencies, returned migrants, and social networks often present overseas work selectively. Recruitment processes may emphasise opportunity, income, modern facilities, or professional possibility while minimising labour discipline, isolation, cultural adjustment, surveillance, or emotional burden.

Training centres frequently prepare migrants not only technically but behaviourally. Prospective workers may be taught punctuality, obedience, emotional control, workplace etiquette, linguistic basics, and institutional discipline. Such preparation already begins shaping migrants into governable labour subjects before departure occurs. Foucault's (1977, 1978) work is useful here because power operates not only after arrival abroad, but already during recruitment and preparation through behavioural normalisation and self-regulation.

The migration project also quickly becomes collective. Families may borrow money, sell possessions, pawn jewellery, or reorganise household plans around expected future remittances even before departure occurs. Future income becomes socially committed in advance. This creates pressure because migration success no longer belongs only to the migrant individually. Entire families may become emotionally and economically invested in the imagined future attached to overseas work.

This pressure helps explain why migrants frequently continue enduring difficult conditions abroad even when early experiences prove disappointing. Admitting hardship may feel like threatening the collective hope already built around migration. Some migrants therefore regulate information carefully. They may

reassure family members despite emotional exhaustion, conceal workplace conflict, minimise loneliness, or send remittances before securing their own comfort.

These practices are not simply forms of concealment. They are forms of emotional and moral labour through which migrants protect family hope and preserve personal dignity. The migrant must continue appearing capable because too many people depend upon the success of the migration project.

This future orientation also shapes endurance. Migrants frequently interpret present suffering through future possibility. The imagined future - a house, educated children, family stability, debt freedom, professional recognition, or respected return - becomes a moral justification for present sacrifice. This does not mean hardship becomes acceptable. Rather, it means migrants often organise suffering through narratives of future transformation.

Such future-oriented imagination is deeply agential because migrants continue acting toward possibilities not yet guaranteed. Yet this hope can also become burdensome. Migrants must keep believing in a future that remains uncertain while navigating unequal labour conditions in the present.

Importantly, imagined futures are not always fulfilled. Some migrants accumulate savings and symbolic recognition. Others experience disappointment, debt, exhaustion, stalled mobility, or complicated return. Yet even when migration becomes difficult, the imagined future remains important because it shapes how migrants interpret endurance, sacrifice, and meaning itself.

This unit therefore approaches “going abroad” as a complex pre-departure world organised through class aspiration, family morality, gendered responsibility, community comparison, language ideology, recruitment systems, emotional pressure, and imagined transformation. Indonesian migrants leave not simply because jobs exist elsewhere, but because mobility becomes imagined as one of the few available pathways toward dignity, recognition, security, and future possibility.

To understand migrant life abroad, it is therefore necessary first to understand this moment before departure: the moment when home becomes simultaneously the reason for leaving, the source of obligation, and the place onto which the imagined rewards of migration must eventually return.

UNIT 13

WHITE-COLLAR PATHWAYS: PROFESSIONAL MOBILITY AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

White-collar migration is often imagined as smoother, safer, and more prestigious than blue-collar migration. In many respects, this perception contains some truth. Migrants who work within offices, hotels, administrative environments, customer-service sectors, retail businesses, or institutional workplaces generally possess greater access to public spaces, more formal workplace structures, and wider opportunities for interaction with supervisors, clients, and institutions. Their work is often more visible socially and more easily recognised as “professional” labour compared with domestic, care, or manual work.

However, white-collar migration should not be romanticised as free from vulnerability or inequality. Indonesian migrants working within professional or semi-professional sectors remain shaped by nationality, temporary labour status, unequal linguistic markets, employer dependency, workplace hierarchy, and racialised assumptions regarding migrant competence. Their mobility may appear upward, yet it remains conditional. White-collar pathways therefore reveal a different form of migration inequality: one in which migrants gain access to recognition and mobility while simultaneously remaining structurally insecure.

This unit approaches white-collar migration not simply as occupational difference, but as a process of negotiating symbolic legitimacy across transnational labour fields. White-collar migrants do not merely seek higher salaries. They seek recognition as competent, modern, professional, trustworthy, and socially valuable subjects. Their migration journeys therefore involve

struggles over language, education, visibility, professionalism, and symbolic capital.

Bourdieu's (1993, 2002) framework is particularly useful for understanding these pathways because white-collar migration depends heavily upon the accumulation, conversion, and recognition of different forms of capital. Educational credentials, language proficiency, workplace conduct, digital literacy, social networks, and professional confidence all function as forms of cultural and symbolic capital that may help migrants reposition themselves within unequal labour systems.

Yet these forms of capital do not travel automatically across borders. A diploma respected in Indonesia may not hold equivalent value abroad. A migrant may possess extensive experience yet still be read primarily through nationality or migrant-worker status. White-collar migrants therefore face a continuous struggle to make their competencies visible and legitimate within host-country workplaces.

Entry into white-collar migration occurs through multiple pathways. Some migrants arrive directly through formal recruitment into hotels, offices, administrative sectors, service industries, retail environments, or customer-facing businesses. Others begin within lower-status positions and gradually move into more visible and institutionally recognised roles after accumulating language skills, workplace familiarity, social networks, and professional confidence.

This movement is analytically important because it demonstrates that migration does not always freeze individuals permanently within the class position they occupied at departure. Migrants may reposition themselves gradually within new labour fields as they accumulate forms of capital recognised within the host-country environment. A worker who initially performs low-visibility labour may later become responsible for customer interaction, document handling, multilingual communication, administrative support, or workplace coordination.

Such repositioning reveals migration as a dynamic class process rather than a fixed occupational category. White-collar mobility therefore involves not only wage improvement, but also movement into spaces associated with visibility, authority, institutional participation, and symbolic legitimacy.

Educational background plays a major role in these processes. Schooling and professional training may not guarantee upward mobility abroad, yet they often provide migrants with forms of cultural capital useful for navigating institutional environments. Workers possessing secondary or tertiary education may feel more familiar with paperwork, workplace hierarchy, formal communication, digital systems, scheduling practices, and professional self-presentation.

These competencies become practical resources within transnational workplaces. They help migrants read contracts, respond to supervisors, communicate through email or messaging systems, interpret institutional expectations, and adapt more quickly to formal workplace routines. Education also shapes self-perception. Migrants who view themselves as educated may resist being reduced psychologically to stereotypical images of low-status migrant labour even when institutional environments attempt to categorise them narrowly.

However, educational capital only becomes powerful when recognised by others. This is why symbolic capital remains central. A migrant may possess qualifications and competence, yet employers may continue evaluating her primarily through nationality, accent, temporary-worker status, or assumptions regarding Indonesian labour. White-collar migrants therefore engage continuously in symbolic labour: they must repeatedly demonstrate professionalism, competence, reliability, and linguistic legitimacy in order to sustain recognition.

Language occupies a particularly important position within these professional pathways. English often functions not merely as a communicative tool, but as symbolic capital associated with modernity, professionalism, education, confidence, and international mobility. Migrants capable of communicating with

clients, writing messages, handling customer interaction, answering calls, or mediating multilingual communication frequently gain greater workplace visibility and institutional trust.

English proficiency may therefore allow migrants to move from backstage labour into more publicly visible roles. Workers who can communicate across linguistic boundaries often become associated with flexibility, professionalism, and promotability. Norton's (2013) concept of investment is especially relevant here because language learning becomes connected not only to communication, but also to identity and future possibility. Migrants invest in English because the language symbolises access to recognition, employability, and expanded social participation.

Yet language also produces anxiety and inequality. English functions simultaneously as opportunity and gatekeeping mechanism. Migrants with stronger English often receive greater trust, responsibility, and institutional visibility, while workers with weaker recognised linguistic resources may remain marginal regardless of practical competence. Accent, pronunciation, fluency, speed of response, and communicative confidence become informal measures of intelligence and professionalism.

Blommaert's (2010) work helps explain these dynamics because global linguistic markets do not value all forms of English equally. Migrants may communicate effectively while still being judged negatively because their speech does not align with dominant expectations associated with professional legitimacy. White-collar migrants therefore frequently monitor their speech carefully, fearing misunderstanding, embarrassment, or symbolic downgrading.

The host-country language adds another layer to this linguistic economy. While English may dominate professional communication within hotels, businesses, or international service sectors, the local language often governs deeper workplace integration and everyday survival. Knowledge of the host-country language allows migrants to understand informal interaction, workplace humour, warnings, complaints, transportation systems, public services, and social expectations.

Migrants capable of using both English and the host-country language often become especially valuable because they can move between formal and informal communicative domains. They may interpret for others, mediate misunderstandings, explain procedures, or build trust across different linguistic groups. Multilingual competence therefore becomes not simply communicative skill, but social positioning. The multilingual migrant gains increased mobility across social and institutional spaces.

Networks are equally important in shaping white-collar pathways. Migrants rarely navigate labour systems alone. Friends, relatives, alumni communities, former colleagues, Indonesian associations, religious groups, and workplace contacts frequently provide information regarding vacancies, salaries, employer reputation, legal procedures, accommodation, and job transitions. These networks function as social capital enabling migrants to reduce uncertainty and access opportunity.

A worker with strong networks may hear about openings before they become public, receive recommendations from trusted colleagues, or gain protection through collective knowledge-sharing. By contrast, migrants lacking social capital may remain dependent upon limited opportunities or exploitative employers simply because alternative pathways remain inaccessible.

Recognition within white-collar migration is not only economic. Symbolic recognition often matters equally. Being trusted with responsibility, included in workplace conversation, addressed respectfully, allowed to manage documents, or asked for professional opinion can reshape how migrants understand themselves socially. Such moments may appear small institutionally, yet they carry deep significance because they allow migrants to reposition themselves from invisible labourers into recognised participants within professional environments.

This symbolic repositioning frequently appears narratively through before-and-after stories. Participants may describe arriving with fear, limited language, uncertainty, and low confidence before gradually becoming individuals capable of negotiating, advising,

interpreting, coordinating, or communicating professionally. These are not merely stories of individual self-improvement. They are stories of class transformation and symbolic mobility.

Migrants begin to move differently through public spaces, speak with greater confidence, dress according to professional expectations, and imagine broader futures for themselves. Their families may also reinterpret them socially through visible signs of changed status: professional photographs, English use, workplace stories, international experience, or evidence of institutional trust.

In this way, symbolic capital travels transnationally. Recognition acquired abroad returns home through remittances, narratives, digital representation, clothing style, communicative behaviour, and visible lifestyle changes. White-collar migrants may therefore gain not only economic improvement, but also increased symbolic prestige within local communities.

However, this symbolic mobility remains fragile and uneven. Migrants may achieve professional recognition within one workplace while continuing to experience exclusion socially or institutionally elsewhere. They may be respected professionally while still remaining temporary, replaceable, or legally dependent workers. They may gain symbolic prestige at home while struggling to convert overseas experience into long-term security after return.

This uneven convertibility of capital is central to migrant life. Mobility upward in one field may coexist with vulnerability in another. A migrant may become linguistically confident and professionally capable abroad while remaining insecure regarding visa status, contract renewal, or future employability.

Gender further shapes these pathways. Women entering white-collar or service-sector roles may experience movement away from stereotypes associating Indonesian women migrants exclusively with domestic or care labour. Becoming an administrator, customer-service employee, office assistant, interpreter, or hospitality worker may provide symbolic dignity and public visibility.

Yet professional women migrants still navigate gendered expectations regarding politeness, emotional management, modesty, and behavioural respectability. Professional recognition often requires careful balancing: confidence without appearing arrogant, competence without threatening hierarchy, visibility without violating expectations of feminine propriety.

For men, white-collar migration frequently intersects with ideals of breadwinning masculinity and professional maturity. Securing office-based or customer-facing employment may strengthen feelings of responsibility, competence, and social adulthood. English proficiency, international work experience, and workplace authority can become important sources of masculine self-worth.

However, these identities also generate pressure. Families may expect visible success and financial progress. Men who encounter disappointment or insecurity abroad may therefore conceal difficulty in order to preserve the image of successful migration expected at home.

Importantly, leverage should not be mistaken for freedom. Education, language proficiency, networks, and professional status provide migrants with more navigational tools, yet they do not eliminate unequal power relations. White-collar migrants remain shaped by sponsorship systems, contracts, institutional hierarchy, temporary-worker status, and employer evaluation.

A migrant may possess the communicative ability to complain while lacking the legal security to do so safely. Another may understand exploitation clearly while remaining dependent upon contract renewal. Another may receive professional respect from colleagues while still being excluded from promotion because of nationality or migrant-worker classification.

Foucault's (1977, 1978) discussion of discipline is important here because white-collar migrants are often governed through professionalism itself. Emotional composure, customer-service performance, punctuality, communication style, appearance, and behavioural flexibility become forms of self-regulation through which migrants maintain employability and symbolic legitimacy.

The significance of white-collar migration therefore lies not simply in salary or occupational title, but in the process of becoming institutionally recognisable. Migrants learn how to navigate linguistic markets, workplace hierarchy, public interaction, digital communication, and professional self-presentation. They convert education into confidence, English into employability, networks into opportunity, and workplace recognition into symbolic status.

At the same time, their stories reveal that recognition remains unstable when legitimacy depends upon unequal labour systems and conditional institutional acceptance. White-collar mobility therefore does not represent escape from migration inequality. Rather, it reveals a more subtle form of negotiation in which migrants continuously struggle to sustain visibility, professionalism, and symbolic value within transnational labour fields.

This unit therefore approaches white-collar pathways as sites where professional mobility and symbolic capital are produced together. Offices, hotels, businesses, customer-service counters, and administrative environments become social fields in which Indonesian migrants negotiate language value, class positioning, gendered respectability, institutional legitimacy, and future identity.

For these migrants, professional mobility is not only about obtaining a better job. It is about becoming readable as competent, modern, trustworthy, multilingual, and worthy of recognition. Such recognition may remain partial and conditional, yet it matters profoundly because it allows migrants to imagine themselves not simply as temporary labourers abroad, but as subjects whose skills, voices, and futures deserve to be taken seriously.

UNIT 14

BLUE-COLLAR PATHWAYS: CARE, SURVIVAL, AND HIDDEN EXPERTISE

Blue-collar migration is often discussed primarily through the language of vulnerability. Indonesian migrants working in domestic labour, caregiving, cleaning, maintenance, technical work, driving, construction, and low-wage service sectors are frequently represented as economically desperate, socially marginal, and institutionally powerless. Such vulnerability is real and must not be minimised. Yet vulnerability alone cannot adequately explain the lived realities of blue-collar migrant workers because it risks reducing them into passive figures defined only by suffering and dependency.

This unit argues that blue-collar migration should also be understood as a field of practical intelligence, emotional labour, survival knowledge, embodied expertise, and relational agency. Indonesian migrants within low-wage labour sectors continuously develop forms of competence that remain socially essential even when they are institutionally invisible. Their work requires judgement, discipline, emotional regulation, adaptability, multilingual communication, physical endurance, and sophisticated understanding of social relationships. These capacities are rarely recognised as “professional” because they do not always appear through formal credentials, institutional titles, or publicly valued forms of symbolic capital.

Blue-collar migrants therefore occupy a contradictory position within transnational labour systems. Their work sustains households, infrastructures, businesses, and everyday social life, yet the expertise required to perform this labour often remains hidden

because the surrounding labour field values formal education, office professionalism, managerial authority, and institutional visibility more highly than embodied or relational forms of skill.

Domestic work reveals this contradiction especially clearly because the workplace is simultaneously a labour site and an intimate household environment. For live-in domestic workers, the employer's home becomes a space of work, rest, surveillance, discipline, emotional management, and social negotiation all at once. The worker may cook, clean, care for children, support elderly family members, organise household routines, prepare guests' needs, and remain available beyond formal working hours.

These tasks often appear ordinary from the outside, yet they require constant practical judgement. Domestic workers must interpret emotional atmosphere, recognise household rhythms, anticipate needs before instructions are given, avoid conflict, manage bodily exhaustion, and maintain dignity within spaces where privacy is limited. Such labour depends not only upon physical effort, but also upon relational sensitivity and emotional discipline.

Silvey's (2004, 2006) work demonstrates that domestic migration is deeply shaped by gendered expectations surrounding care, obedience, emotional availability, and moral respectability. Indonesian women migrants are frequently valued within labour markets because they are imagined as patient, gentle, disciplined, religious, and emotionally manageable. These stereotypes may create labour demand, yet they also restrict how workers are understood socially. The worker becomes valued less for recognised expertise than for perceived manageability.

This dynamic demonstrates how symbolic power operates through labour categorisation itself. Work associated with women, care, cleaning, emotional maintenance, or domestic routine is often treated as naturally feminine rather than professionally skilled. As a result, the labour sustaining everyday life becomes socially invisible precisely because it appears ordinary.

In Bourdieu's (1993, 2002) terms, the forms of knowledge developed through domestic and care work frequently struggle to convert into symbolic capital because the social field does not recognise them as legitimate expertise in the same way it recognises office communication, English fluency, formal certification, or managerial responsibility. A worker may possess extraordinary practical competence while remaining classified socially as "unskilled."

This invisibility extends beyond domestic work into many blue-collar sectors. Technicians, cleaners, maintenance workers, drivers, and manual service labourers frequently perform physically demanding and highly responsible tasks requiring practical intelligence, situational judgement, and bodily discipline. Yet these forms of expertise often remain weakly recognised because they are embodied rather than institutionally prestigious.

Male blue-collar migrants experience this contradiction intensely. A worker may repair machinery, solve technical problems, navigate dangerous environments, manage equipment, or sustain physically exhausting labour routines while still being categorised simply as "labour." The distinction between "worker" and "professional" is therefore not neutral. It shapes wages, respect, authority, and self-perception.

Wright's (1997) discussion of class relations is important here because labour markets do not simply reward skill objectively. They classify forms of labour differently according to broader systems of power and recognition. Blue-collar migrants may possess indispensable expertise while remaining socially replaceable within migration systems organised around temporary labour and unequal nationality hierarchies.

Class, gender, and nationality intersect strongly within these pathways. Many blue-collar migrants depart from lower-income or rural backgrounds where local employment opportunities remain limited and unstable. Migration therefore becomes one of the few available routes toward economic survival and family mobility. Yet upon arrival abroad, workers encounter labour structures already

organised through assumptions regarding who is suitable for care, obedience, cleaning, maintenance, or low-status service work.

These assumptions shape how workers are treated long before individuals demonstrate actual competence. Indonesian workers may be viewed as hardworking yet subordinate, disciplined yet replaceable, emotionally reliable yet institutionally weak. Such classifications influence not only workplace treatment, but also migrants' own access to dignity and recognition.

The body becomes central within blue-collar labour because work is experienced physically as well as economically. Long hours, repetitive tasks, lifting, standing, interrupted sleep, heat exposure, emotional strain, and restricted rest shape everyday life directly. Domestic workers may remain available beyond formal schedules because household labour rarely follows strict time boundaries. Technical and maintenance workers may experience physically dangerous environments, irregular hours, and constant bodily fatigue.

Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power is useful here because blue-collar labour frequently depends upon the production of self-regulating bodies. Workers learn punctuality, responsiveness, emotional control, and behavioural discipline through repeated routines and workplace expectations. The disciplined migrant body is expected not only to work efficiently, but also to appear calm, respectful, grateful, and emotionally manageable regardless of exhaustion or stress.

However, survival within such environments requires much more than obedience. It requires sophisticated practical intelligence. Blue-collar migrants must learn how employers communicate dissatisfaction, how salary systems operate, how to move safely through public space, how to seek help quietly, how to interpret tone and gesture, how to use transportation, how to avoid conflict escalation, and how to maintain limited autonomy within unequal conditions.

This learning often occurs informally through observation, repetition, trial and error, peer advice, and embodied adaptation. Workers gradually develop detailed understanding of the labour

field around them. A domestic worker may learn how to recognise emotional tension before conflict emerges. A technician may learn workplace safety through practical experience rather than formal training. A cleaner may learn precisely how different supervisors evaluate discipline and reliability.

These capacities constitute forms of hidden expertise because they are acquired through experience rather than institutional certification. Yet they are essential for survival abroad.

Language learning forms a major part of this hidden expertise. Blue-collar migrants frequently develop multilingual repertoires through workplace interaction rather than formal classrooms. They learn commands, technical vocabulary, market expressions, transportation phrases, greetings, emergency language, and culturally appropriate politeness practices connected directly to survival and labour routines.

Such communicative practices should not be dismissed as incomplete or deficient. Canagarajah's (2013) work on translanguaging practice demonstrates that multilingual speakers often communicate through flexible repertoires adapted to real-world conditions rather than through neatly separated standard languages. Indonesian migrants combine Indonesian, regional languages, English, host-country vocabulary, gesture, repetition, and digital translation strategically in order to navigate unequal environments.

Yet these multilingual competencies often remain institutionally invisible. A domestic worker capable of managing household interaction across languages may still be categorised as linguistically weak because her repertoire does not match standardised forms of recognised proficiency. A technician who learns task-based multilingual communication may receive little symbolic recognition because his language use remains practical and oral rather than formally credentialed.

This demonstrates Bourdieu's (1993) argument that linguistic value depends upon the field within which language is evaluated. English used within offices or customer-service sectors may appear prestigious and professional, while multilingual survival

communication within domestic or manual labour environments may be treated merely as coping rather than expertise.

Care labour further reveals the hidden emotional dimension of blue-collar migration. Domestic and caregiving workers do not simply complete physical tasks. They manage relationships continuously. They learn children's habits, emotional moods, household tensions, religious routines, food preferences, and interpersonal boundaries. They absorb anger, reduce conflict, maintain calm environments, and preserve household stability.

This emotional labour is exhausting precisely because it requires workers to regulate feeling strategically. A migrant may need to remain patient while exhausted, appear calm during criticism, comfort children while missing her own family, or perform emotional warmth despite loneliness and homesickness.

For migrant mothers, this contradiction becomes especially painful. A woman may care daily for another family's children while remaining separated physically from her own. She may cook meals abroad while worrying about food, schooling, or illness at home. Migration therefore reorganises care across borders rather than eliminating it.

These transnational emotional burdens reveal that blue-collar labour cannot be understood purely economically. Workers carry emotional and moral responsibilities continuously alongside physical labour. Family obligation remains present through remittances, phone calls, digital communication, religious reflection, and imagined futures.

Religious practice often becomes crucial within these conditions. Prayer, Qur'anic recitation, church fellowship, fasting, and spiritual reflection may provide emotional stability and moral orientation when institutional recognition remains limited. Mahmood's (2005) discussion of ethical agency is important here because religious endurance should not automatically be interpreted as passive acceptance of inequality.

For many migrants, religious practice becomes a way of preserving dignity, emotional coherence, and moral selfhood under difficult conditions. Workers may understand patience, discipline,

sacrifice, and endurance not simply as submission, but as meaningful ethical action connected to faith and responsibility.

At the same time, endurance must not be romanticised. Recognising migrants' resilience and hidden expertise should never justify exploitative conditions or weak labour protection. There is always danger that narratives of resilience shift responsibility unfairly onto workers themselves, as though structural inequality can be solved simply through stronger emotional endurance.

This unit therefore insists upon a critical distinction: migrants' hidden expertise deserves recognition not because hardship is acceptable, but because dominant labour systems frequently fail to recognise the intelligence, discipline, and skill already embedded within blue-collar work.

Agency within these pathways often appears through ordinary acts rather than dramatic resistance. A worker may save money secretly to preserve future autonomy. Another may memorise emergency numbers, identify trustworthy neighbours, share information with newer migrants, delay requests strategically, or remain silent temporarily in order to avoid escalation.

Such actions may appear small, yet they reveal complex forms of tactical navigation. Ahearn (2001) reminds us that agency should be understood as the socioculturally mediated capacity to act within unequal structures rather than complete freedom from constraint. Blue-collar migrants therefore exercise agency continuously through adaptation, emotional regulation, practical judgement, and strategic decision-making.

Peer networks become essential within this process. Fellow migrants frequently function as informal translators, advisers, teachers, counsellors, and protectors. Information regarding employers, legal procedures, salaries, transportation, food access, embassy support, religious gatherings, and communication strategies often circulates through migrant networks rather than formal institutions.

Social capital therefore becomes a survival resource rather than an abstract advantage. A worker possessing even limited trustworthy connections may gain greater room for manoeuvre than someone completely isolated.

The hidden expertise of blue-collar migrants becomes especially visible during moments of crisis. When employers become angry, wages are delayed, equipment fails, misunderstandings occur, or illness emerges, workers must assess risk rapidly and carefully. They must decide whether to remain silent, negotiate, seek help, or wait strategically.

These moments reveal forms of practical judgement that standard labour categories rarely recognise. Blue-collar migrants often become highly skilled at reading power relations themselves. They learn when authority may become dangerous, when requests might succeed, and when survival requires patience.

Comparing blue-collar and white-collar pathways reveals clearly that the issue is not absence of expertise, but unequal recognition of expertise. White-collar migrants often possess skills already legible within institutional systems: English communication, administration, digital literacy, customer service, or office professionalism. Blue-collar expertise, by contrast, is frequently embodied, relational, emotional, and practical.

Cleaning efficiently, anticipating household needs, repairing machinery, maintaining emotional calm, enduring repetitive labour, managing conflict quietly, or communicating across fragmented multilingual environments rarely produces formal certification even though such abilities are socially indispensable.

Migration can nevertheless transform migrants' self-understanding. Workers who initially experienced themselves as powerless may gradually recognise their own competence abroad. A domestic worker may discover she can manage an unfamiliar household within another linguistic and cultural environment. A technician may realise his practical skills hold real value internationally. A cleaner may gain trust because of reliability and discipline.

These forms of recognition matter because they reshape identity. Blue-collar migration may therefore produce both hardship and pride simultaneously. Migrants experience inequality while also discovering capacities previously unrecognised within their own lives.

Return migration, however, often reveals another injustice: the difficulty of converting hidden expertise into recognised capital within Indonesia. Workers may return with multilingual survival skills, emotional maturity, practical intelligence, and years of transnational experience while still being treated as low-status labourers domestically.

Families and communities may value visible remittance outcomes - houses, vehicles, consumer goods - more than the actual competencies migrants developed abroad. As a result, migrants' expertise often remains personal rather than institutionally recognised.

This unit, therefore reframes blue-collar migration as a field of care, survival, hidden expertise, and embodied intelligence. Domestic workers, cleaners, technicians, drivers, maintenance workers, and caregiving labourers are not simply replaceable bodies performing low-status tasks abroad. They are multilingual communicators, emotional workers, practical problem-solvers, moral agents, and social navigators whose labour sustains households, infrastructures, and transnational families.

To understand Indonesian migration ethically and analytically, it is therefore necessary to recognise the intelligence embedded within ordinary labour, the agency hidden within endurance, and the dignity that persists even when institutional recognition remains uneven or withheld.

UNIT 15

NAVIGATING POWER AT WORK: COMPLIANCE, PUSHBACK, AND QUIET REFUSALS

A. Reading Workplace Power

Workplace power within migrant labour is rarely experienced only through dramatic moments of conflict, punishment, or confrontation. More often, it emerges through ordinary routines: instructions, schedules, corrections, evaluations, permissions, surveillance, emotional expectations, communication practices, and the repeated demand to remain productive without becoming difficult. Indonesian migrants working abroad quickly learn that labour involves much more than completing assigned tasks. It also requires learning how power operates socially, linguistically, emotionally, and institutionally within everyday life.

Migrants therefore develop the capacity to read power continuously. They learn who possesses authority, when speech is appropriate, what forms of language appear acceptable, which requests are likely to be heard, and which complaints may become dangerous. Workplace navigation becomes not only an economic activity but also an interpretive practice. Workers must constantly assess how far disagreement can be expressed without threatening employment, housing, legal status, remittance obligations, or future opportunities.

Foucault's (1977, 1978) understanding of power is especially useful here because it directs attention away from power as visible punishment alone and toward the ordinary practices through which disciplined subjects are produced. Workplace power operates through routines that encourage

workers to regulate themselves. Arriving punctually, controlling emotional expression, monitoring speech, anticipating employer expectations, and avoiding behaviour interpreted as disruptive gradually become forms of self-discipline. For migrant workers, this process is often intensified by legal dependency, nationality hierarchies, class inequality, and unequal access to linguistic resources.

Time discipline represents one of the most visible forms of workplace control. Domestic workers, particularly those living within employers' homes, often struggle to distinguish working time from personal time because household labour rarely follows clear boundaries. Service-sector, technical, maintenance, and office-based workers encounter different forms of temporal regulation through shift systems, customer demands, performance evaluations, attendance monitoring, and expectations of continual responsiveness. In each case, workers learn whose time is considered valuable and whose time can be extended indefinitely.

Space functions similarly. Domestic workers may have access to certain areas of a household while being excluded from others. Technical workers may move throughout a city while remaining constrained through transportation dependence or supervisory oversight. Office workers may appear more mobile, yet their movement is still structured by organisational hierarchy and contractual obligations. Workplace spaces therefore reveal unequal forms of belonging and authority. Migrants quickly learn where they may sit, wait, rest, speak, eat, or remain visible.

B. Compliance as Strategic Navigation

Within these conditions, compliance should not be understood simply as submission. It is tempting to interpret obedience as evidence that workers accept unequal treatment, yet migrant narratives often reveal something more complicated. Compliance frequently operates as a strategic response to structural vulnerability rather than ideological agreement.

Workers may obey instructions externally while privately rejecting humiliation. Others remain polite while quietly searching for alternative employment. Some tolerate difficult conditions temporarily because immediate resistance would threaten family survival, debt repayment, or future mobility. Compliance therefore often reflects calculation rather than consent.

Mahmood's (2005) work is especially important because it challenges the assumption that agency exists only through visible acts of resistance. Action under unequal conditions may involve endurance, ethical discipline, waiting, compromise, and emotional regulation rather than public confrontation. Such strategies should not be romanticised, yet neither should they be dismissed as passivity. They represent practical responses to circumstances in which open resistance may produce consequences far greater than the injustice being challenged.

This strategic compliance is closely linked to self-monitoring. Migrants learn to regulate their behaviour continuously because mistakes may have consequences extending far beyond the workplace. Dismissal, contract termination, replacement, reduced income, or loss of legal status may affect not only the individual worker but also family members dependent upon remittances. As a result, workers often engage in constant assessment of risk, timing, and possibility.

C. Pushback, Negotiation, and Limited Spaces of Action

Although migrants frequently comply with workplace expectations, they do not simply accept all forms of authority uncritically. Pushback occurs regularly, but it is often highly calibrated. Workers may express concerns through softened language, gradual repetition, humour, indirect appeals to fairness, or mediation through trusted intermediaries. White-collar migrants may utilise formal communication channels, documentation, or professional procedures. Technical workers

may signal dissatisfaction through altered cooperation or emotional distance rather than direct confrontation.

These actions may appear modest institutionally, yet they create limited spaces for negotiation within unequal structures. Migrants continuously assess where movement remains possible and where risk becomes too great. They learn that workplace rules are often more flexible in practice than they appear formally. Trust, familiarity, communication style, and workplace relationships frequently influence how regulations are enforced.

This capacity to identify openings within structures of constraint represents an important dimension of agency. Migrants are not merely responding to authority. They are interpreting it, testing its boundaries, and searching for opportunities to improve their circumstances without exposing themselves to unacceptable risks.

D. Quiet Refusals and the Preservation of Dignity

Among the most important yet least visible forms of agency are quiet refusals. In many migrant workplaces, refusal does not take the form of directly saying “no.” Instead, it emerges through internal boundaries that protect dignity and self-worth.

A domestic worker may continue performing household labour while rejecting the belief that she is inferior. A cleaner may comply with instructions while refusing racist assumptions emotionally. A service worker may remain polite while preserving a strong internal sense of personal value. These refusals often remain invisible because they occur internally, emotionally, and relationally rather than publicly.

Yet such refusals are significant because they preserve the distinction between labour performance and personal identity. Workers may comply with workplace demands without accepting the idea that those demands define their worth as human beings. Quiet refusal, therefore becomes a way of protecting moral selfhood under conditions where open resistance remains dangerous.

Ahearn's (2001) conception of agency as the socioculturally mediated capacity to act is particularly useful here. Agency does not require complete freedom. It emerges through the ability to make meaningful decisions within existing constraints. Migrants continually ask themselves what risks they can carry, what alternatives exist, who can support them, and what consequences their actions may create for others. Such questions reveal the complex ethical calculations underlying everyday workplace behaviour.

E. Language, Networks, and the Expansion of Possibility

Language resources play a crucial role in shaping workplace navigation. Migrants capable of communicating in English or the host-country language may ask questions more confidently, interpret documents, clarify misunderstandings, communicate with institutions, and seek assistance beyond immediate supervisors. Language therefore expands the field of possible action.

Norton's (2013) concept of investment helps explain why migrants often pursue language learning despite exhausting working conditions. Language represents more than communication. It offers greater autonomy, participation, and access to alternative futures. However, linguistic competence alone does not eliminate vulnerability. Workers may communicate effectively while remaining constrained by nationality, sponsorship systems, class position, or workplace hierarchy.

Blommaert (2010) reminds us that linguistic inequality depends not only upon communicative ability but also upon whether institutions recognise particular forms of speech as legitimate. Migrants may speak clearly and accurately while still remaining unheard because they occupy socially marginal positions.

Social networks function similarly. Fellow migrants, religious communities, senior workers, embassy contacts, and trusted friends often provide information, emotional support,

and practical guidance. Social capital becomes a crucial survival resource because it helps workers interpret contracts, evaluate employer behaviour, understand risks, and identify alternatives. Workers facing similar workplace problems frequently respond differently depending upon whether supportive networks are available.

F. Navigating Power as Migrant Agency

This unit has argued that compliance, pushback, and refusal should not be understood as separate categories but as interconnected strategies within migrant workplace navigation. Indonesian migrants do not simply obey or resist. Rather, they assess, interpret, negotiate, wait, endure, compromise, adapt, and sometimes refuse in ways shaped by class position, language resources, gender, legal dependency, social networks, and transnational family responsibilities.

Stories of workplace navigation therefore complicate simplistic understandings of empowerment. A migrant may become more confident, multilingual, and skilled while remaining institutionally constrained. Another may experience exploitation while simultaneously developing sophisticated strategies of survival and stronger forms of self-understanding. Agency often accumulates gradually rather than appearing suddenly. Language abilities improve, savings increase, networks expand, confidence develops, and future alternatives slowly become imaginable.

The unit therefore challenges the assumption that meaningful resistance must always be loud, visible, or confrontational. In many migrant workplaces, loud refusal may simply be unsafe. Quiet refusal may become the form agency takes when legal protection remains uncertain, documents are controlled, language resources are unequal, and family livelihoods depend upon continued employment. Such refusals may not transform labour systems immediately, but they preserve dignity, moral selfhood, and the possibility of future action.

Ultimately, navigating workplace power is not simply about surviving employment. It is about maintaining the capacity to act within unequal conditions. The strategies migrants develop may appear small because the risks surrounding them are enormous. Yet these everyday practices matter profoundly because they reveal how power is lived, negotiated, and sometimes quietly challenged in the ordinary realities of transnational labour.

UNIT 16

FAITH, FAMILY, AND MORAL WORLDS AS SITES OF AGENCY

A. Faith as Ethical Agency

Faith and family are often positioned within migration studies as private concerns existing outside the supposedly more important domains of labour, economics, law, and politics. Yet for many Indonesian migrant workers, such a separation is difficult to sustain. Faith, family obligation, and moral responsibility are not simply background dimensions of migration. They are often the very foundations that make migration emotionally meaningful, morally understandable, and psychologically bearable. Migrants do not only ask practical questions concerning wages, employment opportunities, and financial security. They also confront deeper moral questions about responsibility, sacrifice, endurance, and selfhood. They ask what it means to be a good child, a responsible parent, a faithful spouse, or a morally worthy person under conditions of prolonged separation and hardship. These questions reveal that migrant agency cannot be understood solely through economic decision-making or legal action. It is also ethical, relational, emotional, and spiritual.

Religious practice often becomes one of the most important resources through which migrants interpret hardship and maintain emotional stability abroad. Prayer, Qur'anic recitation, church fellowship, fasting, religious gatherings, private supplication, and everyday expressions of trust in God provide structure and meaning in situations where institutional protection may be limited and family support remains physically

distant. These practices do not eliminate exploitation, reduce inequality, or resolve difficult labour conditions directly. However, they help migrants organise loneliness, fear, uncertainty, disappointment, and exhaustion into forms of experience that become emotionally manageable and morally meaningful.

Mahmood's (2005) work is particularly useful here because it challenges the assumption that agency exists only through visible resistance or rejection of social norms. Agency may also emerge through ethical self-formation, disciplined practice, and the cultivation of moral endurance. For migrants, faith often becomes a way of acting upon the self. Religious practice allows individuals to manage fear, sustain hope, calm anger, preserve dignity, and avoid emotional collapse even when external circumstances remain unchanged. Faith, therefore becomes neither passive acceptance nor simple resistance. It is an active process through which migrants cultivate the moral and emotional capacities necessary to continue living under difficult conditions.

Importantly, this interpretation should not romanticise religious endurance. Faith should not be used as an explanation for why migrants tolerate exploitation, as though prayer could replace fair wages, legal protection, or humane treatment. Such an interpretation would obscure structural inequality. Rather, faith should be understood as one of the resources migrants mobilise after they are already positioned within unequal systems. A worker who prays before beginning work or interprets hardship as a spiritual test is not necessarily accepting injustice as legitimate. More often, that worker is attempting to remain emotionally whole in circumstances where anger alone cannot transform reality. Faith thus becomes a means of holding together vulnerability and strength, suffering and hope, exhaustion and continuity.

Religious communities further strengthen this process because migration frequently produces social isolation. Separated from family, familiar neighbourhoods, local

languages, and everyday social routines, migrants often seek spaces where they can feel recognised as persons rather than merely workers. Mosque gatherings, church fellowships, prayer groups, and religious study circles frequently become sites where migrants exchange advice, share meals, discuss workplace challenges, and receive emotional support. Within the workplace, migrants may be valued primarily through their labour. Within faith communities, they become friends, mentors, believers, elders, and trusted companions. Such recognition is significant because migration systems often reduce workers to functional categories. Religious communities help restore relational personhood and emotional visibility.

B. Family Obligation and the Moral Economy of Migration

Family obligation forms another central moral world shaping migrant life. Indonesian migrants frequently make decisions not as isolated individuals but as members of wider networks of parents, children, spouses, siblings, and extended kin. Income earned abroad is rarely imagined as belonging entirely to the worker. Even before wages arrive, they are often mentally allocated to school fees, medical expenses, debt repayment, home repairs, religious celebrations, and future investments. Migration therefore operates within what might be described as a moral economy, where economic actions are deeply intertwined with relationships, obligations, and social values.

Remittances illustrate this clearly. Sending money home is not merely an economic transaction. It is often experienced as an expression of love, gratitude, responsibility, and care. For many migrants, remittances function as evidence that migration has meaning and that sacrifices made abroad are producing benefits for those left behind. Supporting parents, financing siblings' education, paying for medical treatment, or improving family housing frequently becomes a source of pride and self-worth. Conversely, the inability to send sufficient money may generate guilt, anxiety, and feelings of personal failure. Migration

therefore becomes emotionally demanding because economic success is closely connected to moral identity.

This moral significance explains why migration cannot be understood solely through wage comparisons or labour-market analysis. Income carries relational meaning. A remittance may represent filial responsibility, family dignity, gratitude toward parents, or commitment to future generations. Economic practices are simultaneously moral practices because they express and sustain relationships across distance.

C. Gender, Care, and Moral Burden

These obligations become particularly complex when viewed through gender. Migrant mothers often experience profound contradictions. They leave home because they care deeply about their children's futures, yet physical absence may expose them to criticism regarding motherhood and caregiving. Migration reorganises care across distance rather than eliminating it. Phone calls, digital communication, gifts, remittances, prayers, and emotional support become ways of parenting transnationally. Care continues, but it takes different forms.

Migrant fathers frequently encounter different moral pressures. Migration becomes closely associated with ideals of provision, responsibility, and masculine reliability. Men may feel compelled to appear strong and successful regardless of loneliness, exhaustion, or uncertainty. Difficulties are often concealed because failure abroad threatens not only economic stability but also masculine self-worth and family expectations. In this sense, migration produces gendered moral burdens for both women and men, although the forms of pressure differ.

Extended family relationships further complicate these dynamics. Migrants are often perceived as having easy access to money regardless of actual working conditions. Requests for financial assistance may come from siblings, cousins, neighbours, or more distant relatives. While migrants frequently wish to help, continuous demands can become emotionally

exhausting. Refusing assistance may feel morally uncomfortable, while constant giving may threaten personal stability and future goals. Agency therefore involves difficult moral decisions regarding when to help, how much to sacrifice, and how to preserve relationships without undermining self-protection.

D. Hope, Imagined Futures, and Moral Aspiration

The moral economy of migration is sustained by hope. Hope allows migrants to connect present hardship to future transformation. It appears in dreams of educating children, supporting parents, building businesses, achieving debt freedom, returning home with dignity, or attaining greater social recognition. These imagined futures provide emotional coherence to difficult labour conditions because they transform suffering into purposeful sacrifice.

Darvin and Norton's (2015) concept of imagined identities is especially useful here. Migrants act not only according to who they are now but also according to who they hope to become. The imagined future self - a respected parent, successful provider, educated family member, secure returnee, or professionally recognised worker - shapes present decisions and behaviour. Hope therefore functions not as passive optimism but as an active orientation toward the future. It is sustained through budgeting, saving, language learning, prayer, networking, emotional endurance, and continued effort despite exhaustion.

Yet migrants' moral worlds are rarely free from contradiction. A worker may believe deeply in patience while privately feeling anger. Someone may trust in God while simultaneously feeling abandoned. A migrant may continue supporting family members while feeling emotionally misunderstood or overburdened. These tensions should not be erased because they reveal the complexity of lived experience. Moral worlds are not perfectly coherent systems. They are spaces where duty, disappointment, faith, fatigue, love, and aspiration coexist.

Class further shapes these experiences. Blue-collar migrants often connect remittances directly to immediate household survival. School fees, food, medicine, debt repayment, and housing repairs may depend directly upon income earned abroad. White-collar migrants may also support family extensively, but their aspirations may additionally include professional advancement, educational mobility, symbolic prestige, and longer-term class transformation. Both groups remain deeply shaped by family obligation, yet the forms of pressure and aspiration differ according to social position and imagined futures.

E. Faith, Family, and Moral Worlds as Sites of Agency

This unit has argued that faith and family should not be treated merely as sources of emotional comfort or background context. They are important sites of agency. Through religious practice, migrants cultivate endurance, dignity, emotional continuity, and moral strength. Through family obligation, they organise labour, sacrifice, remittance practices, and future aspirations. Through hope, they connect present hardship to imagined transformation.

These forms of agency are often quiet, relational, and morally embedded rather than loudly individualistic. Yet they remain powerful because they enable migrants to continue acting even when institutional recognition is limited and structural inequality remains severe. To understand Indonesian migrant workers only through employment categories or labour status would therefore miss the deeper moral worlds through which migration becomes meaningful.

Migrants are not simply workers abroad. They are children, parents, believers, providers, caregivers, and future-makers whose lives are organised through the ethical demands of love, duty, endurance, responsibility, and hope. Recognising these moral worlds expands our understanding of agency itself. It reveals that migrants act not only through resistance or economic calculation but also through faith, care, sacrifice, and

the continuous effort to sustain meaningful lives under unequal conditions.

UNIT 17

RETURNING HOME: RE-ENTRY, RECOGNITION, AND REWRITING THE SELF

A. Returning with Symbolic Capital

For many migrants, returning home is accompanied by new forms of symbolic recognition. Years of labour abroad often become visible through material achievements such as renovated houses, improved living conditions, educational opportunities for children, business investments, or accumulated savings. These outcomes serve not only practical purposes but also symbolic ones. They communicate responsibility, sacrifice, perseverance, and economic contribution. Migration therefore becomes socially legible through the material signs it leaves behind.

Bourdieu's (2002) concept of symbolic capital is particularly useful in understanding this process. Economic resources accumulated abroad are often converted into social recognition within local communities. Returnees may gain increased respect because migration is interpreted as evidence of courage, determination, and success. Community members may seek their advice, families may trust them with important decisions, and neighbours may view them as examples of upward mobility.

Yet symbolic recognition is rarely complete. While visible achievements often receive public acknowledgement, the emotional and physical costs of migration frequently remain hidden. Families may admire a renovated house without understanding the loneliness that financed it. Communities may celebrate economic success while overlooking years of

separation, anxiety, discrimination, or exhausting labour. As a result, migrants often experience a tension between recognition and misrecognition. They are praised for what they have achieved but feel that the deeper meaning of their journey remains only partially understood. Return therefore becomes not merely a moment of recognition but also a moment when migrants confront the limits of how their experiences can be understood by others.

B. Family Re-entry and Emotional Repair

One of the most complex aspects of return involves re-entering family relationships that have been maintained across distance for many years. During migration, emotional bonds are often sustained through remittances, phone calls, video conversations, and periodic visits. While these practices help preserve connection, they cannot fully replace everyday physical presence. Consequently, return often requires a process of emotional repair and renegotiation.

Children may appreciate migrants as providers while simultaneously feeling unfamiliar with them as everyday caregivers. Parents may express gratitude for financial support yet become increasingly dependent upon continued assistance. Spouses who spent years managing households independently may struggle to adjust to new patterns of shared decision-making. These challenges do not necessarily indicate weakened relationships. Rather, they reflect the reality that family life continues evolving during migration.

The emotional labour of return therefore involves rebuilding intimacy. Migrants must learn once again how to participate in daily routines, negotiate responsibilities, and establish presence within relationships that have adapted to their absence. Homecoming is often imagined as a moment of reunion, but in practice it is frequently a gradual process of reconnecting. Love remains present, yet everyday closeness must often be reconstructed through patience, communication, and mutual adjustment.

C. Rewriting Identity after Migration

Migration transforms not only material circumstances but also personal identity. Years abroad frequently reshape migrants' understandings of themselves and their place in the world. They acquire new linguistic resources, workplace habits, cultural knowledge, and forms of practical competence. Many become more independent, more disciplined, more confident, or more aware of social inequalities than they were before departure.

Yet these transformed identities are not always recognised after return. Communities often continue interpreting migrants through familiar social categories established before migration occurred. A woman who became highly capable and autonomous abroad may be expected to return immediately to conventional domestic expectations. A worker who developed advanced technical skills overseas may struggle to find local opportunities that recognise those competencies. Returnees therefore find themselves negotiating between identities produced through migration and identities assigned by others at home.

This tension can be understood through Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (1977, 1990). Migration places individuals within new social fields that gradually reshape dispositions, expectations, and ways of acting in the world. When migrants return home, they bring these transformed dispositions with them. However, the social environment to which they return may still expect earlier versions of the self. Comments such as "You have changed" or "You think differently now" often reflect this mismatch between transformed *habitus* and familiar expectations. Return thus becomes a process of rewriting the self while negotiating recognition from others.

D. Class Mobility, Capital Conversion, and New Aspirations

Migration is frequently associated with aspirations for upward mobility, yet return demonstrates that mobility is neither automatic nor permanent. Many migrants return with

economic capital in the form of savings, consumer goods, improved housing, or business investments. However, the long-term value of these resources depends upon whether they can be converted into more durable forms of capital.

Bourdieu's (2002) discussion of capital conversion provides an important framework for understanding this challenge. Economic capital acquired abroad may generate lasting mobility if it is transformed into educational opportunities, professional qualifications, social networks, entrepreneurial ventures, or forms of symbolic recognition. However, such conversion is never guaranteed. A renovated house may increase prestige without producing income. A small business may fail because of market conditions or limited experience. Educational investments may require years before producing returns.

These uncertainties often generate new aspirations. Some returnees dream of entrepreneurship because they no longer wish to work under employers. Others pursue further education, hoping to convert overseas experience into new opportunities. Some consider re-migration, believing that local employment opportunities cannot match the aspirations developed abroad. Others reject migration entirely because its emotional costs outweigh potential benefits. Return therefore becomes a moment when migrants reassess the relationship between past sacrifices and future possibilities.

E. The Afterlife of Migration

Although migration may end physically, it rarely ends psychologically or socially. Returnees continue carrying migration within them through memories, habits, languages, routines, relationships, and ways of interpreting the world. Experiences abroad become part of what might be called the afterlife of migration: the continuing influence of migration long after physical mobility has ceased.

Many migrants retain workplace habits, linguistic expressions, food preferences, religious practices, and emotional memories associated with life overseas. They continue comparing experiences abroad with life at home, interpreting new situations through lessons learned during migration. In this sense, migration becomes part of the self's internal archive, shaping future decisions and understandings of the world.

The afterlife of migration is also visible through community knowledge. Returnees frequently become informal advisors for prospective migrants. They provide guidance regarding recruitment agencies, language preparation, financial management, workplace expectations, and emotional survival abroad. Their stories influence future migration decisions and contribute to collective understandings of mobility within local communities.

Recognition remains central throughout this process. Migrants often seek more than acknowledgement of economic contribution. They hope their courage, endurance, growth, and sacrifice will be understood. Recognition in this sense is not simply praise but a form of dignity. It involves understanding migration as a complex human experience rather than reducing it to remittances or material outcomes. The migrant may have returned physically, but the meaning of the journey continues unfolding through memory, reflection, and the ongoing work of imagining what life after migration might become.

This unit has argued that return should not be understood as the end of migration. Rather, it represents another stage of negotiation involving recognition, family relationships, identity reconstruction, class mobility, aspiration, and memory. Migrants return carrying not only money but also languages, habits, skills, wounds, hopes, and transformed understandings of themselves. Some of these changes are welcomed, while others remain misunderstood or invisible. The journey continues through the ongoing work of rewriting the self and imagining new futures beyond migration itself.



PART V
CROSS-CUTTING ANALYSES:
CLASS, LANGUAGE, AND AGENCY
IN CONVERSATION



UNIT 18

CLASS ON THE MOVE: SHIFTING HABITUS AND BOUNDARIES

Class in migration is never completely stable. It moves, stretches, becomes unsettled, and sometimes transforms as migrants pass through different social worlds. A person may leave Indonesia from a lower-income household, work abroad in a low-wage sector, gradually develop new language abilities and workplace confidence, and later return home with a very different understanding of self and possibility. Another migrant may depart with educational qualifications and professional aspirations only to discover that credentials, nationality, accent, or migrant status reduce the value of what once seemed meaningful. Migration therefore does not simply move people across geography; it moves them across systems of value. What counts as intelligence, professionalism, respectability, skill, discipline, or success changes from one social field to another. Migrants must constantly reposition themselves within these shifting systems while simultaneously carrying memories of earlier class experiences.

Bourdieu's (1984; 1977, 1993) concept of habitus is particularly useful for understanding this movement because habitus refers to the embodied dispositions through which people perceive the world and act within it. Habitus shapes what feels possible and impossible, what feels shameful or respectable, how authority is approached, how money is managed, how language is used, what kinds of futures appear imaginable, and how dignity itself is understood. For Indonesian migrants, habitus begins forming long before departure through family class position, educational experiences, religious upbringing, neighbourhood

expectations, gender norms, and local narratives about overseas work. Migration does not erase these earlier dispositions. Instead, it places them within new social fields where previous assumptions may no longer fit comfortably. It is precisely in these moments of disjuncture that *habitus* begins to shift.

For many migrants from lower-income backgrounds, the decision to work abroad already represents a strategic response to class conditions. Although the hometown may offer belonging, familiarity, and emotional security, it may also be associated with low wages, unstable employment, debt, and limited opportunities for upward mobility. Within such circumstances, migration becomes imaginable as a pathway toward transformation. Labour abroad is often envisioned as something that can be converted into remittances, savings, land ownership, educational opportunities, business ventures, family stability, and social recognition. Even when available jobs abroad are physically demanding or socially undervalued, migration may still appear preferable to remaining constrained by limited local opportunities. In this sense, *habitus* begins to change before departure itself, as the future is no longer imagined solely within local boundaries but increasingly through transnational horizons.

Arrival in the host country, however, often initiates a difficult process of reclassification. Individuals who were respected in Indonesia as capable daughters, educated sons, responsible parents, or skilled workers may suddenly find themselves positioned primarily as foreign labour. Nationality, accent, legal dependency, gender, language ability, and occupational category frequently become more significant than previous achievements or identities. This can produce a painful contradiction in which migrants gain economic value while simultaneously losing symbolic recognition. A worker may become financially indispensable to family members while remaining socially marginal within the host-country labour system. Likewise, migrants may possess considerable practical competence yet continue to be treated as replaceable labour. Such contradictions reveal an important sociological insight: class is fundamentally relational. It depends not only on the resources

individuals possess but also on how those resources are recognised and valued within particular social fields (Bourdieu, 1993, 2002).

At the same time, migration can generate new forms of capital. Economic capital may increase through wages and remittances, while cultural capital can expand through language learning, workplace discipline, technical expertise, customer-service experience, intercultural communication, and familiarity with institutions abroad. Social capital may develop through friendships, religious communities, migrant networks, and workplace relationships. Symbolic capital may emerge when migrants become recognised as individuals who have worked overseas, supported their families, acquired new languages, developed professional skills, or successfully endured difficult circumstances. Although these forms of capital are unevenly distributed and do not guarantee upward mobility, they remain significant because they reshape how migrants understand themselves and how they are perceived by others.

The relationship between class origins and newly acquired forms of capital is often emotionally complex. Migrants may feel proud of becoming more capable while continuing to carry memories of earlier insecurity or experiences of class stigma. A woman may become multilingual and professionally confident abroad while still feeling self-conscious about limited formal education. A technical worker may accumulate years of practical expertise yet remain uncertain whether that expertise will ever receive institutional recognition in Indonesia. For this reason, migration rarely produces straightforward upward mobility. Movement across class boundaries is often uneven, incomplete, and contradictory. Migrants may become more confident without becoming fully secure, more skilled without becoming recognised, and more respected in one social field while remaining marginal in another.

UNIT 19

LANGUAGE AS RESOURCE AND OBSTACLE

Language is one of the most significant resources Indonesian migrants carry with them across borders, yet it is also among the first obstacles they encounter upon arrival in a new country. Language can provide access to employment, friendship, mobility, confidence, recognition, and protection. At the same time, it can expose migrants to misunderstanding, embarrassment, exclusion, dependency, and silence. For migrant workers, language is never simply a neutral instrument for exchanging information. Its value changes according to workplace contexts, audiences, occupational positions, social class relations, and broader structures of power. Indonesian, English, and host-country languages each occupy different positions within migrants' everyday lives, and each can function as either enabling or constraining depending on the circumstances in which they are used.

Bourdieu's (1993) concept of linguistic capital is particularly useful for understanding these dynamics because language varieties are not valued equally across social fields. Certain ways of speaking are recognised as intelligent, professional, modern, and authoritative, whereas others are ignored, corrected, mocked, or treated as inferior. For Indonesian migrants, language therefore becomes closely tied to recognition itself. The question is not simply whether migrants can communicate, but whether their communicative practices are recognised as legitimate within the social environments they inhabit.

Indonesian often remains the language of emotional grounding throughout the migration journey. It is the language through which migrants maintain relationships with family members, remember home, share humour with fellow Indonesians, express fear and uncertainty, discuss sacrifice and responsibility, and preserve emotional continuity with life before migration. Even after acquiring English or the host-country language, Indonesian frequently remains the linguistic medium through which intimacy and moral meaning are most naturally expressed. Concepts such as *sabar*, *ikhlas*, *malu*, *rezeki*, *perjuangan*, and *tanggung jawab* carry layers of emotional and cultural significance that are difficult to translate fully into English without losing important nuances. In this sense, Indonesian should not be understood as a weak language simply because it may possess limited institutional value abroad. Rather, it remains a language of belonging, memory, identity, and selfhood.

English often occupies a very different symbolic position in migrants' lives. For many Indonesian migrants, English is associated with education, professionalism, international mobility, modernity, and the possibility of being recognised beyond low-status labour categories. Within offices, hospitality industries, customer-service environments, international businesses, recruitment agencies, and transnational workplaces, English frequently functions as a form of linguistic and symbolic capital. Workers who can answer telephone calls, write professional messages, read instructions, communicate confidently with customers, or interact with supervisors in English may be perceived as more capable and employable, even when the labour itself requires numerous other forms of expertise and intelligence. English therefore does more than facilitate communication; it contributes to the construction of particular worker identities. Through English, migrants may come to be recognised - and may begin to recognise themselves - as professional, competent, and globally connected individuals.

This symbolic dimension of English is especially important when viewed through Darvin and Norton's (2015) framework of identity and investment. Migrants do not invest in English solely to

exchange information. Rather, they invest because English becomes associated with imagined futures involving professional recognition, workplace mobility, broader participation, increased confidence, and access to new forms of identity. Language learning thus becomes a project of self-transformation as much as a communicative practice.

However, English simultaneously operates as a gatekeeping mechanism. Migrants with stronger English proficiency often gain access to more visible positions, customer-facing roles, institutional interactions, wider social networks, and greater symbolic respect. In contrast, those with more limited recognised English resources may remain concentrated in forms of labour that are less visible and more dependent, despite being highly intelligent, hardworking, and skilled. Consequently, English can produce hierarchy among migrants themselves. The same language that empowers one worker may marginalise another. English therefore functions simultaneously as a resource and a source of pressure, as a bridge and a barrier, and as both opportunity and anxiety.

Many migrants experience persistent concerns about pronunciation, grammar, accent, speaking speed, vocabulary, and the possibility of sounding incorrect. A worker may understand instructions perfectly well yet hesitate to respond because embarrassment itself feels risky. Language anxiety is therefore not merely a matter of communicative competence. It is deeply connected to dignity, recognition, and the fear of social judgement. Blommaert's (2010) work helps illuminate this process by demonstrating that linguistic inequality is shaped not only by what speakers know, but also by whether institutions and listeners recognise their forms of speech as legitimate. The issue is often not an absence of meaning but an unequal valuation of speakers themselves.

The host-country language occupies yet another position within migrant life. Whereas English is frequently associated with professionalism and upward mobility, local languages are more directly connected to everyday survival. Host-country languages allow migrants to navigate markets, transportation systems,

neighbourhood interactions, healthcare settings, religious communities, and public institutions. Even limited proficiency can significantly reduce dependence on employers, brokers, or translators. Knowing how to greet people politely, explain problems, ask for directions, discuss prices, understand numbers, or respond during emergencies can substantially increase both safety and confidence. For many blue-collar migrants in particular, the host-country language may be more immediately useful than formal English because it governs the practical realities of work and daily life.

UNIT

20

MAPPING MIGRANT AGENCY: VISIBLE AND LESS VISIBLE FORMS OF ACTION

Migrant agency cannot be adequately understood if it is reduced solely to visible forms of resistance. Within many discussions of labour migration, agency is most easily recognised when migrants protest openly, report abuse, change employers, refuse instructions, challenge institutions, or speak publicly about exploitation. Such actions are undoubtedly important and should never be minimised. They demonstrate clearly that migrant workers are not passive recipients of recruitment systems, labour regulations, or employer control. Yet if agency is defined exclusively through overt resistance, many of the most meaningful forms of migrant action disappear from analytical view.

Indonesian migrants frequently act within social environments where direct confrontation may be risky, emotionally costly, or practically impossible. Under such circumstances, agency often emerges through adaptation, endurance, negotiation, language learning, religious discipline, remittance practices, emotional management, and the careful preservation of relationships. Although these forms of action may appear less dramatic than public resistance, they are central to how migrants survive unequal conditions, maintain dignity, and preserve future possibilities. Mahmood's (2005) work is especially important here because it challenges the assumption that agency exists only through resistance to authority or social norms. Agency may also emerge through ethical discipline, patience, endurance, and the cultivation of moral selfhood under difficult circumstances. For

Indonesian migrants, action frequently unfolds within relational and moral worlds rather than through individual assertion alone.

A more comprehensive understanding of migrant agency therefore requires bringing together dimensions that are often treated separately in migration scholarship, including resistance, adaptation, care, morality, language, aspiration, and survival. These dimensions are not distinct categories but overlapping aspects of everyday life. A migrant who remains in a difficult job, for example, may simultaneously be adapting to structural constraints, protecting remittance income, caring for children and parents, preserving future plans, and quietly refusing emotional collapse. Agency in migration is therefore layered rather than singular, encompassing multiple forms of action that operate simultaneously across different domains of life.

This perspective also challenges the simplistic distinction between active and passive migrants. A domestic worker who does not openly confront an employer may nonetheless be highly agentive if she is carefully assessing risks, learning new languages, building savings, maintaining support networks, protecting her emotional well-being, and planning future mobility. Similarly, a service-sector worker who appears obedient may in fact be preserving employment strategically while preparing for better opportunities elsewhere. Even professional migrants who communicate confidently in English may remain constrained by sponsorship systems, nationality hierarchies, and institutional dependency. In each case, agency is not a fixed personal characteristic but a situated capacity shaped by class position, gender, language resources, workplace structures, legal status, social networks, and forms of recognition.

Bourdieu's (1993, 2002) framework is particularly useful here because migrants do not act from equal positions within social fields. Their access to economic, cultural, social, linguistic, and symbolic capital shapes which actions become possible, visible, legitimate, or safe. Agency therefore cannot be separated from the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. What appears

as individual choice is often deeply conditioned by broader structures of power and recognition.

For white-collar migrants, agency often appears more visible because it is expressed through forms that institutions already recognise as legitimate. Professional communication, workplace negotiation, formal complaints, customer interaction, document literacy, English proficiency, digital communication, and career planning are all examples of agency that fit comfortably within dominant understandings of competence and professionalism. Migrants working in offices, hospitality industries, administrative environments, and customer-service sectors often possess greater access to recognised cultural and linguistic capital. As a result, they may be better positioned to frame requests professionally, interpret institutional expectations, compose formal communications, negotiate strategically, and utilise professional networks effectively. Their agency therefore appears more legible because it aligns with middle-class norms associated with confidence, education, and institutional participation.

Yet white-collar agency should not be romanticised as a form of unrestricted freedom. Professional migrants may still experience nationality-based discrimination, unequal contracts, visa dependency, limited promotion opportunities, and continual pressure to demonstrate competence. Many avoid open conflict because professional reputations remain fragile, sponsorship systems retain considerable power, and family expectations depend upon continued success. Thus, even highly visible forms of agency remain bounded by structural inequalities. White-collar migrants may speak more openly, negotiate more frequently, and move more freely, but they continue to operate within unequal labour regimes.

Blue-collar migrants, by contrast, often enact agency through less visible repertoires of action. Domestic workers, caregivers, cleaners, drivers, technicians, maintenance workers, and manual labourers frequently work within private households, backstage service environments, workshops, or tightly supervised labour settings. Under these conditions, agency often takes the form of careful observation, emotional restraint, practical intelligence,

selective obedience, humour, peer support, prayer, saving strategies, and quiet refusal. These practices are easily overlooked because they rarely produce immediate structural change. Nevertheless, they remain essential mechanisms through which migrants navigate everyday inequalities and preserve their capacity to endure.

Silvey's (2004, 2006) work is particularly valuable in this regard because it demonstrates that migrant workers negotiate power continuously and strategically even when formal institutional power remains limited. The distinction between white-collar and blue-collar migrants therefore does not represent a difference between agency and non-agency. Rather, it reflects differences in the repertoires of action available under particular labour conditions. White-collar migrants often act through institutionally recognised forms such as professional communication, paperwork, negotiation, self-presentation, and workplace mobility. Blue-collar migrants frequently act through embodied and relational forms including silence, endurance, emotional labour, practical judgement, peer networking, and strategic patience. Both constitute genuine forms of agency. The difficulty lies in the fact that some forms are more easily recognised because they align with dominant assumptions about what meaningful action should look like.



PART VI
REIMAGINING LABOUR
MOBILITY



UNIT

21

LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR FUTURE MIGRANTS

The need for a more transformative approach to migrant preparation becomes particularly clear when migration is understood not simply as labour mobility but as a process of social repositioning. Migrants do not move from one workplace to another. They move between systems of language, power, recognition, and belonging. As demonstrated throughout this book, migration frequently requires individuals to navigate unfamiliar institutions, unequal workplace relationships, linguistic hierarchies, and shifting identities. Preparation must therefore equip migrants not only for employment but also for participation within complex social worlds.

This requires a shift from training for compliance to education for agency. Traditional pre-departure programmes often emphasise rules, procedures, obligations, and behavioural expectations. While such knowledge remains important, an exclusive focus on compliance risks positioning migrants as passive recipients of instruction rather than active participants in their own mobility journeys. Workers may learn what they are expected to do without developing confidence in how to interpret situations, make decisions, seek support, or exercise judgement when faced with uncertainty.

An agency-oriented model of migrant education would encourage prospective migrants to view themselves as decision-makers capable of navigating complex environments. Such an approach would develop not only knowledge but also confidence, critical awareness, communicative flexibility, and problem-solving

capacity. Rather than asking only whether migrants understand the rules, educators would ask whether migrants feel capable of acting when rules fail to reflect lived realities.

Language education occupies a particularly important place within this vision. Throughout this book, language has been shown to function as more than a practical skill. It serves as a resource for participation, recognition, mobility, and agency. Yet language training for prospective migrants often remains limited to functional phrases, isolated vocabulary lists, or narrowly occupational communication tasks. Such approaches underestimate the broader role language plays in migrant lives.

Future-oriented language education should be grounded in authentic communicative situations. Migrants should have opportunities to engage with realistic workplace scenarios, institutional interactions, emergency situations, and everyday social encounters. Role-play activities, case studies, narrative-based learning, and problem-solving tasks can help learners develop not only linguistic competence but also communicative confidence. Learning should focus on meaning-making, interaction, and strategic communication rather than memorisation alone.

Importantly, language education should recognise multilingualism as a resource rather than a deficiency. Migrants do not enter transnational labour markets as blank slates. They already possess linguistic repertoires shaped by Indonesian, regional languages, religious practices, community experiences, and prior forms of mobility. Educational programmes should build upon these existing resources rather than assuming that successful communication depends exclusively on mastery of a dominant language such as English.

A multilingual approach also reflects the realities of contemporary migration. Migrants frequently communicate through combinations of languages, gestures, translation technologies, visual resources, and contextual knowledge. Preparing migrants for real-world communication therefore requires acknowledging the flexible and adaptive nature of

multilingual interaction. The goal is not perfect language performance but effective participation.

Narrative learning may offer another valuable direction for future migrant education. The experiences of former migrant workers represent an important source of knowledge that remains underutilised within many preparation programmes. Returning migrants possess practical insights regarding workplace communication, emotional adaptation, employer relationships, institutional procedures, financial management, and everyday survival. Their stories can help prospective migrants anticipate challenges, recognise warning signs, and develop realistic expectations about life abroad.

Integrating migrant narratives into educational programmes would also challenge deficit perspectives that portray migrants primarily as vulnerable populations requiring protection. Former migrants are not merely beneficiaries of policy. They are knowledge holders whose experiences can inform future generations of workers. Their stories provide forms of expertise that cannot always be found in policy documents, training manuals, or official regulations.

Technology likewise creates new opportunities for reimagining migrant education. Digital platforms can provide ongoing access to language learning, legal information, financial literacy resources, peer support networks, and emergency guidance. Rather than treating preparation as a short-term activity completed before departure, technology makes it possible to view migrant education as a continuous process extending throughout the migration cycle.

This broader perspective requires moving beyond a deployment model of migration governance. In a deployment model, education serves primarily to prepare workers for labour export. In an empowerment model, education serves to strengthen migrants' capacity to navigate transnational environments with dignity, confidence, and agency. The distinction is significant because it reflects different assumptions regarding the purpose of preparation itself.

Ultimately, language education for future migrants should be understood as an investment in human capability rather than merely labour-market readiness. Migrants are not only workers responding to economic demand. They are multilingual, relational, and aspirational individuals whose mobility journeys involve communication, identity, learning, responsibility, and hope. Educational programmes that recognise this complexity are more likely to prepare migrants for the realities they will encounter beyond national borders.

The challenge for policymakers, educators, and migration institutions is therefore not simply to provide more training. It is to imagine a different philosophy of preparation—one that places agency, participation, recognition, and human dignity at the centre of migrant education. Such an approach would better reflect the lived realities of migration and contribute to more equitable forms of labour mobility in the future.

UNIT 22 | MIGRATION POLICY BEYOND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

The intercultural challenges experienced by migrants reveal a broader limitation within many contemporary migration policies. Across much of the world, migration governance continues to be evaluated primarily through economic indicators. Governments measure deployment numbers, remittance flows, labour-market demand, productivity, foreign exchange contributions, and employment statistics. While these indicators remain important, they provide only a partial understanding of migration outcomes.

Migration is not solely an economic process. It is also a human experience involving identity transformation, family separation, emotional adaptation, linguistic negotiation, social participation, and struggles for recognition. Policies that focus exclusively on economic performance risk overlooking dimensions of migration that profoundly influence well-being and long-term social outcomes. A migrant may achieve financial success while experiencing loneliness, discrimination, restricted mobility, linguistic exclusion, or limited opportunities for participation. Economic improvement alone does not necessarily guarantee dignity, recognition, or meaningful inclusion.

The narratives presented throughout this book illustrate that migrants frequently evaluate their experiences through criteria extending far beyond income. Participants discussed communication difficulties, changing identities, family obligations, social isolation, professional recognition, religious practice, emotional resilience, and aspirations for personal growth. These concerns rarely appear within conventional migration indicators,

yet they strongly shape how migrants experience mobility and assess its value.

A broader policy framework is therefore needed. Rather than asking only how migration contributes to national economic development, policymakers should also ask how migration contributes to human development. Such a shift would require attention to migrants' capabilities, opportunities, well-being, and participation throughout the migration cycle. Success would be measured not only through financial outcomes but also through access to rights, communication, education, recognition, and social inclusion.

This perspective aligns closely with Amartya Sen's capability approach (2000), which argues that development should be understood in terms of people's real freedoms to pursue lives they have reason to value. From this viewpoint, migration should not be evaluated solely according to income generation. Instead, attention should be given to whether migrants gain greater capacity to make choices, exercise agency, access opportunities, and participate meaningfully in social life. The question is not merely whether migrants earn more money, but whether migration expands their capabilities as human beings.

Applying a capability perspective to migration policy would have several implications. First, migrant preparation programmes would move beyond deployment readiness and focus more broadly on communication, critical awareness, emotional preparedness, financial literacy, digital literacy, and access to support networks. Second, migrant protection mechanisms would be evaluated not only according to legal compliance but also according to accessibility and practical usability from migrants' perspectives. Third, return migration programmes would recognise migrants not merely as former workers but as individuals possessing new skills, experiences, and forms of knowledge that can contribute to communities and institutions.

Such a shift also requires rethinking the concept of protection itself. Protection is often understood as preventing abuse, exploitation, or physical harm. While these remain essential

objectives, protection should also encompass the conditions necessary for participation and recognition. Migrants require not only safety but also opportunities to communicate, learn, build relationships, access information, and exercise agency. Policies that focus exclusively on risk management may unintentionally portray migrants as vulnerable subjects in need of supervision rather than capable individuals navigating complex social worlds.

The experiences discussed throughout this book further suggest that communication should be treated as a policy issue rather than merely an individual skill. Language barriers influence access to healthcare, legal assistance, education, financial services, workplace rights, and social participation. Misunderstandings arising from cultural difference can affect employment relationships, institutional trust, and emotional well-being. Consequently, communication should not be viewed as a private responsibility belonging solely to migrants. It is a structural concern requiring institutional attention.

Migration policy must therefore move beyond the assumption that successful adaptation depends exclusively on migrants changing themselves. Host institutions, employers, agencies, service providers, and governments also play important roles in creating communicatively accessible environments. Intercultural adaptation should be understood as a shared responsibility rather than a one-sided process of migrant adjustment.

Ultimately, a migration policy framework that extends beyond economic outcomes recognises migrants as more than labour resources. Migrants are multilingual individuals, family members, community participants, learners, caregivers, religious subjects, and knowledge holders. Their experiences cannot be reduced to productivity measures or remittance statistics alone. Policies that acknowledge this complexity are more likely to support forms of mobility that are not only economically beneficial but also socially just and humanly meaningful.

Reimagining migration policy therefore requires a fundamental shift in perspective. The central question is no longer simply how migrants contribute to economic growth. Rather, it becomes how migration systems can support dignity, capability, participation, and human flourishing across borders. Such a vision moves migration governance beyond labour management and toward a more comprehensive understanding of mobility as a human and social process.

UNIT 23

RECOGNISING MIGRANTS AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCERS

The limitations of protection systems reveal a broader issue within migration governance: migrants are often treated as recipients of knowledge rather than producers of knowledge. Governments create policies, agencies design programmes, researchers generate reports, employers establish workplace rules, and international organisations produce guidelines. Migrants are typically positioned as the subjects of these interventions. Their experiences are collected, measured, regulated, and interpreted, but their knowledge is rarely recognised as expertise in its own right.

This hierarchy of knowledge shapes how migration itself is understood. Policy discussions frequently privilege institutional perspectives, statistical indicators, legal frameworks, and expert analyses. Such forms of knowledge are undoubtedly important. However, they often overlook the practical, situated, and experiential knowledge developed by migrants through everyday participation in transnational labour systems. Migrants learn how institutions function in practice rather than merely on paper. They learn how employers exercise authority, how communication unfolds across linguistic barriers, how support networks are built, how contracts are interpreted in everyday life, and how vulnerability is managed under conditions of uncertainty. These forms of knowledge are not secondary to migration. They are central to it.

Throughout this book, participants demonstrated sophisticated understandings of mobility that extended far beyond their formal educational backgrounds or occupational positions.

They interpreted workplace hierarchies, evaluated linguistic expectations, recognised subtle forms of discrimination, navigated bureaucratic systems, and developed strategies for maintaining dignity within unequal environments. Such knowledge emerged not through formal training but through lived experience. Yet it often remained invisible because dominant systems of recognition tend to privilege institutional expertise over experiential expertise.

This imbalance reflects a broader tendency within migration governance to treat migrants primarily as labour resources. Workers are valued for their productivity, economic contribution, and capacity to fill labour shortages, but less attention is given to what they know. The experiences migrants accumulate across countries, languages, workplaces, and social environments represent important forms of transnational knowledge. They possess insights into labour systems, intercultural communication, language learning, institutional barriers, social adaptation, and everyday survival that cannot easily be replicated through policy documents or academic analysis alone.

Recognising migrants as knowledge producers therefore requires a shift in perspective. Instead of asking only how migrants can be prepared for mobility, policymakers and institutions should also ask what migrants can teach us about mobility. Returning migrants often possess valuable knowledge regarding recruitment processes, workplace expectations, communication challenges, legal protection mechanisms, financial management, emotional adaptation, and intercultural interaction. These experiences constitute a significant educational resource that remains underutilised in many migration systems.

This perspective has important implications for migrant education. As argued in the previous unit, pre-departure programmes frequently rely on information produced by institutions, agencies, and regulatory bodies. While such information remains essential, it should be complemented by migrant-generated knowledge. Former migrants can contribute case studies, mentoring programmes, peer-learning initiatives, narrative workshops, and community-based training activities that provide

prospective workers with practical insights grounded in lived experience. In many cases, migrants may be better positioned than institutions to explain how policies operate in everyday practice.

The recognition of migrants as knowledge producers also has implications for research. Migration scholarship has traditionally focused on studying migrants. Increasingly, however, researchers are asking how migrants can participate in the production of knowledge itself. Narrative inquiry, participatory approaches, collaborative research, and community-based methodologies all challenge conventional distinctions between researcher and researched. Rather than treating migrants solely as sources of data, such approaches recognise them as contributors to theoretical understanding and social knowledge.

From an applied linguistics perspective, this shift is particularly significant. Migrants are not merely learners of language. They are users, negotiators, innovators, translators, and interpreters of language within complex multilingual environments. Their communicative practices reveal how language operates under conditions of mobility, inequality, and social change. The stories examined throughout this book demonstrate that migrants actively develop linguistic strategies that enable participation across diverse social worlds. These practices constitute forms of communicative expertise that deserve recognition within both research and policy discussions.

Recognising migrants as knowledge producers ultimately challenges deficit-oriented understandings of migration. Too often, migrants are viewed primarily through the lens of what they lack: language proficiency, institutional knowledge, legal protection, social capital, or economic security. While such challenges are real, an exclusive focus on deficit obscures the resources migrants already possess. Migrants carry knowledge accumulated through movement, adaptation, multilingual communication, family responsibility, work experience, and everyday problem-solving. This knowledge represents an important social resource that can contribute to education, policy development, research, and community life.

Reimagining labour mobility therefore requires more than improving protection systems or expanding economic opportunities. It also requires recognising migrants as intellectual and social actors whose experiences generate valuable forms of knowledge. Migration should not be understood only as the movement of labour across borders. It is also the movement and production of knowledge. When migrants are recognised as knowledge producers rather than merely policy subjects, new possibilities emerge for more participatory, inclusive, and equitable approaches to mobility.

UNIT

24

APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The significance of migrant narratives extends beyond curriculum development and classroom practice. They also invite a deeper reflection on the social responsibilities of applied linguistics as a field of inquiry. If language shapes access to participation, protection, recognition, employment, education, and mobility, then language cannot be treated merely as a technical object of study. Applied linguistics inevitably engages with questions of power and inequality because language itself is embedded within social structures that distribute opportunities unevenly.

This perspective has become increasingly important in contemporary scholarship. Researchers have moved beyond viewing language primarily as a system of grammar or communication and have begun to examine how language intersects with migration, race, class, gender, citizenship, labour, and social justice. Questions of who is heard, whose language is valued, which communicative practices are recognised, and how linguistic differences become sources of inclusion or exclusion now occupy a central place within the field.

The experiences discussed throughout this book illustrate why such questions matter. Migrant workers often encounter situations in which language functions simultaneously as a resource and a barrier. Communication enables participation, yet communicative differences may also become grounds for judgement. Multilingual abilities may facilitate survival and adaptation, yet they are not always recognised as forms of expertise. Workers frequently possess rich communicative repertoires

developed through mobility, labour, family responsibility, and intercultural interaction, but these resources remain undervalued because dominant institutions privilege particular languages, accents, and communicative norms.

From a social justice perspective, the issue is not simply whether migrants learn additional languages. The issue is whether societies recognise the linguistic resources migrants already possess. Applied linguistics therefore has a responsibility not only to investigate language learning but also to challenge linguistic hierarchies that systematically privilege some speakers while marginalising others.

Bourdieu's (1977, 1993) concept of symbolic power remains highly relevant here because linguistic inequality rarely appears as inequality alone. Certain accents are interpreted as professional while others are perceived as deficient. Some communicative styles are associated with confidence and competence, whereas others are treated as evidence of weakness or lack of ability. These evaluations often appear natural, yet they are socially produced. Applied linguistics contributes to social justice when it makes such processes visible and open to critical examination.

The narratives in this book further demonstrate that linguistic inequality intersects with broader forms of social inequality. Workers do not experience language independently of class, occupation, nationality, gender, religion, or migration status. A migrant domestic worker may be judged differently from a professional expatriate even when both communicate through similar linguistic resources. A multilingual worker may remain institutionally invisible because social recognition is shaped not only by language itself but also by the social positions attached to particular categories of people. Understanding language therefore requires understanding the social conditions within which language acquires value.

This insight has important implications for research. Applied linguistics should not focus exclusively on successful communication or educational outcomes. It should also investigate silence, exclusion, misunderstanding, vulnerability, and unequal

recognition. The field contributes to social justice when it examines how communicative inequalities emerge and how they might be addressed through institutional change, educational reform, and public policy. Research therefore becomes not only a process of description but also a means of revealing conditions that might otherwise remain invisible.

The same principle applies to language education. If language teaching is understood only as preparation for examinations or employment, its broader social significance may be overlooked. Language education can also prepare learners to participate critically within diverse societies, navigate unequal communicative environments, and engage ethically with linguistic and cultural difference. Such goals are particularly relevant in contexts of migration, where communication frequently shapes access to rights, services, protection, and social belonging.

Narrative inquiry offers one important pathway toward this broader vision of applied linguistics. By foregrounding lived experience, narrative approaches reveal dimensions of language that cannot be captured fully through proficiency scores, surveys, or policy indicators alone. Stories illuminate how communication becomes intertwined with fear, aspiration, dignity, obligation, resilience, faith, and identity. They remind researchers that language is not simply something people use. It is something through which people experience the world.

The concept of migrant linguistic agency developed in this book reflects this broader understanding of applied linguistics. Rather than viewing migrants as deficient language learners or passive recipients of linguistic norms, the concept recognises migrants as active communicators who strategically mobilise multilingual resources within unequal social environments. Migrants are not merely shaped by language. They also shape linguistic practices, communicative relationships, and social meanings through everyday interaction.

Applied linguistics therefore has an important role to play in reimagining labour mobility. The field can contribute by documenting migrant experiences, challenging deficit narratives,

informing educational programmes, improving communication policies, and amplifying voices that are often overlooked within public debate. Most importantly, it can help shift attention from what migrants lack to what migrants know, do, create, and contribute through language.

Ultimately, social justice within applied linguistics is not achieved simply by expanding access to language learning. It also requires recognition. It requires acknowledging that language is connected to dignity, participation, visibility, and human worth. A socially engaged applied linguistics therefore seeks not only to understand language but also to contribute to more equitable communicative conditions in which diverse voices can be heard, valued, and respected.

In this sense, applied linguistics is not merely a field concerned with language. It is a field concerned with people whose lives are shaped by language. The experiences of migrant workers remind us that communication is never simply about exchanging information. It is also about belonging, recognition, opportunity, and justice. Recognising this reality may be one of the most important contributions applied linguistics can make to the study of migration and mobility in the twenty-first century.

UNIT 25

TOWARDS MORE EQUITABLE LABOUR MOBILITY

A. Beyond Economic Success

Throughout much of the contemporary world, migration is discussed primarily through economic language. Governments measure remittances, labour deployment, productivity, foreign exchange contributions, and labour-market demand. Development agencies emphasise income generation and poverty reduction. Employers focus on labour shortages and workforce mobility. These concerns are important because migration undeniably creates economic opportunities that transform the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

Yet the stories examined throughout this book suggest that migration cannot be understood through economics alone. Migrants do not experience mobility as a collection of financial transactions. They experience it as a process of leaving, learning, adapting, enduring, communicating, caring, and becoming. Migration changes not only income but also relationships, identities, aspirations, and ways of understanding the world.

The narratives presented here demonstrate that migration produces forms of value that are difficult to quantify. Workers acquire multilingual abilities, intercultural competencies, emotional resilience, institutional knowledge, professional expertise, and new perspectives on society and themselves. These forms of learning often remain invisible within conventional indicators of migration success, yet they represent profound dimensions of human development.

A more equitable understanding of labour mobility therefore requires a broader conception of success. Economic advancement matters, but it should not be the sole measure of achievement. Success must also include dignity, safety, recognition, participation, communicative confidence, family well-being, and the capacity to imagine meaningful futures. Migration should be evaluated not only according to what migrants earn, but also according to what migrants become and what opportunities become available to them through mobility.

B. Migrants as Knowledge Producers

One of the most important lessons emerging from this book is that migrants are not merely workers moving through labour markets. They are also producers of knowledge.

The experiences of migrant workers generate valuable insights into language learning, intercultural communication, labour relations, institutional accessibility, family responsibility, social adaptation, and everyday survival within unequal environments. Migrants learn how systems operate not in theory but in practice. They understand the gap between policy and lived reality. They know how workplace hierarchies function, how communication barriers are navigated, how support networks are created, and how dignity is preserved under difficult circumstances.

Yet migration systems often fail to recognise this expertise. Migrants are frequently treated as policy targets, administrative categories, beneficiaries of protection, or sources of labour. Their experiences may be collected through surveys, interviews, and reports, but they are rarely recognised as legitimate contributors to policy development, educational design, or theoretical understanding.

Recognising migrants as knowledge producers requires a different orientation toward expertise itself. Former migrants should be involved in shaping pre-departure education, evaluating migration programmes, improving institutional services, mentoring future migrants, and contributing to

research. Their experiences represent forms of knowledge that cannot be generated solely through policy analysis or academic observation.

Listening to migrants is therefore not simply an ethical gesture. It is an intellectual necessity. Any attempt to understand labour mobility without taking migrant knowledge seriously will remain incomplete.

C. Justice, Language, and Recognition

Language occupies a central place within the pursuit of migration justice. Across the units of this book, language has emerged repeatedly as a resource for protection, participation, identity, opportunity, and agency. At the same time, it has also functioned as a site of vulnerability, exclusion, and unequal recognition.

A worker who cannot explain illness may struggle to access healthcare. A worker who cannot understand contractual language may become vulnerable to exploitation. A worker whose communicative style is judged negatively may encounter barriers to professional advancement despite possessing significant expertise. Language therefore influences not only communication but also access to rights, services, and social legitimacy.

For this reason, linguistic justice must become part of broader conversations about migration justice. Migrants require opportunities to develop communicative resources relevant to the realities they encounter. However, linguistic justice also requires recognising the multilingual resources migrants already possess. Indonesian migrant workers communicate through complex combinations of Indonesian, regional languages, English, host-country languages, gestures, digital tools, and contextual knowledge. These practices are not evidence of deficiency. They are evidence of adaptability, creativity, and communicative expertise.

A more equitable migration system would move beyond narrow definitions of language proficiency and recognise multilingualism as a resource rather than a problem. Such recognition is essential because communication is closely connected to participation, dignity, and belonging.

D. Building Livable Mobility

The concept of livable mobility offers one possible way forward. Livable mobility refers to forms of migration that allow individuals to pursue opportunity without sacrificing dignity, safety, identity, family relationships, or well-being.

This vision requires attention across the entire migration cycle. Before departure, migrants need preparation that extends beyond administrative procedures to include language education, critical awareness, emotional readiness, financial literacy, and realistic expectations. During migration, they require accessible institutions, communicatively responsive services, community support, and meaningful opportunities for participation. After return, they need pathways that recognise overseas experience, facilitate reintegration, and support continued personal and professional development.

Livable mobility also requires structural change. Ethical recruitment systems, transparent contracts, reduced debt burdens, accessible complaint mechanisms, multilingual services, and accountable institutions are all essential components of a more humane migration system. Protection should not be activated only during crisis. It should function as a continuous infrastructure that supports migrants throughout their mobility journeys.

Most importantly, livable mobility requires recognising that migrants are human beings before they are workers. Labour may be the reason mobility occurs, but work should never become the sole basis upon which migrants are valued.

E. A New Imagination of Labour Mobility

This book has argued that migration is fundamentally a human process. It is shaped by class, language, identity, power, faith, aspiration, obligation, and agency. None of these dimensions alone can explain migration fully. Together, however, they reveal mobility as a complex movement across social worlds, systems of value, and imagined futures.

The concept of migrant linguistic agency developed throughout this book provides one way of understanding this complexity. Migrants are neither passive victims nor heroic individuals overcoming all obstacles through personal determination. They are communicative actors who navigate unequal environments through language, relationships, learning, adaptation, and hope. Their agency emerges not outside structures of power but within them.

Recognising this reality requires a new imagination of labour mobility. Migration should not be understood solely as the circulation of labour responding to market demand. It should be understood as a social process involving people whose lives contain memories, responsibilities, aspirations, vulnerabilities, and possibilities. The future of migration policy, education, and research depends upon acknowledging this complexity.

Ultimately, the most important lesson emerging from this book is both simple and demanding. Migration should not require people to become less human in order to become economically useful. More equitable labour mobility begins when migrants are recognised not merely as sources of labour but as full human beings whose voices, experiences, and knowledge matter.

The task before researchers, educators, policymakers, and societies is therefore not only to manage mobility more efficiently. It is to create conditions in which mobility can be experienced with dignity. Such a future will not emerge automatically. It requires listening carefully to migrant lives, taking their knowledge seriously, and recognising that justice

begins when those who move are also recognised as those who know, speak, and contribute.

F. Conclusion: Listening to Migrant Lives

This book began with a concern for the lives of Indonesian migrant workers and the unequal conditions within which labour mobility takes place. It concludes with a broader reflection on what those lives teach us. Migration is not simply about economics, law, or labour. It is also about language, recognition, belonging, identity, care, resilience, and hope.

The stories shared throughout these units remind us that behind every migration statistic is a person navigating uncertainty while imagining a better future. They remind us that communication is never merely a technical skill, that agency is often exercised under constraint, and that dignity remains important even in the most unequal circumstances.

If there is one final message emerging from this book, it is this: migrant workers are not merely participants in global labour markets. They are participants in the making of social worlds. Understanding migration therefore requires more than counting movement across borders. It requires listening to the voices of those who move, recognising the knowledge they produce, and ensuring that the future of labour mobility is built not only upon economic efficiency but also upon justice, recognition, and human dignity.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Illustrative Examples of Narrative Interpretation Purpose and Scope

This appendix provides two illustrative examples of how migrant narratives were interpreted in this book. The first example represents a broadly white-collar pathway and focuses on language learning, workplace recognition, and professional repositioning. The second represents a broadly blue-collar pathway and examines family obligation, emotional endurance, faith, peer support, and quiet negotiation under unequal working conditions.

The examples are included to make the movement from narrative material to interpretation more transparent. They do not reproduce the complete analytic process undertaken across the full dataset, nor are they intended to represent every participant or migration pathway. Instead, they demonstrate how selected narrative segments were read descriptively, coded, interpreted thematically, and connected to the book's conceptual framework.

The excerpts have been adapted, shortened, translated where necessary, and anonymised for publication. They are not presented as complete verbatim transcripts. Repetitions, identifying details, and information unrelated to the immediate analytic focus have been removed. Details concerning the host country, city, workplace, employer, recruitment agency, occupation, and family members have also been omitted or generalised where their inclusion might create a risk of identification.

These adaptations were made to protect participants while preserving the social and emotional meanings of their accounts. The purpose is not to reconstruct participants' stories into more polished or dramatic narratives, but to show how apparently ordinary statements may reveal relationships among language, class, power, identity, recognition, and agency.

The interpretive process followed four broad movements:

1. presenting a short adapted narrative excerpt;
2. describing what occurs within the narrated experience;

3. identifying initial codes related to actions, emotions, relationships, and social conditions; and
4. developing a thematic and theoretical interpretation.

Narrative interpretation is not a mechanical process in which themes simply emerge from neutral data. It involves close reading, repeated listening, comparison across accounts, sensitivity to language choice and silence, and reflexive judgement. The researcher therefore asks not only what happened, but also how the experience is narrated, what identity is being claimed, what forms of inequality are visible, and what kinds of action are possible within the conditions described.

Example 1: A White-Collar Pathway

Language, Recognition, and Professional Repositioning

Context Note

This example illustrates the trajectory of a participant who entered the host-country labour market with some previous exposure to English but initially struggled to use it in a fast-moving workplace. Although the participant possessed prior educational and linguistic resources, these resources were not immediately recognised as valuable. Their value developed through situated learning, workplace participation, peer support, and the gradual acquisition of institutional trust.

Adapted Narrative Excerpt

When I first arrived, I was afraid to speak. I understood some English from school, but in the workplace everything felt different. People spoke quickly, and sometimes I only smiled because I was afraid of answering incorrectly. At first, they gave me simple tasks, so I followed what the others did.

After several months, I began to understand the routine. I wrote down unfamiliar words, asked a friend, and listened carefully when the supervisor spoke to customers. Slowly, I was able to answer the telephone and help with documents. After that, they trusted me more. I also felt different. At first, I was simply someone who came there to work. Later, I felt that I had become someone who could manage responsibility.

Descriptive Reading

The excerpt presents a movement from linguistic insecurity towards greater participation and professional confidence. At the beginning of the account, the participant distinguishes between English learned at school and English encountered in the workplace. School-based knowledge provides some preparation, but it does not automatically enable participation in rapid, socially demanding workplace interactions.

The participant’s fear of speaking is connected not only to linguistic limitation but also to the possibility of being evaluated negatively. Smiling and remaining quiet therefore function as ways of reducing communicative risk. During this early period, the participant is assigned simple tasks and learns primarily by observing other workers.

The narrative then shifts towards active learning. The participant records unfamiliar words, seeks assistance from a peer, observes customer interactions, and gradually participates in communicative tasks. Answering the telephone and assisting with documents signal more than linguistic improvement. These activities indicate that the participant has gained access to responsibilities associated with trust, visibility, and professional competence.

The final part of the narrative presents a change in self-perception. The participant no longer understands herself only as someone physically present in the workplace. She begins to see herself as a person capable of managing responsibility. The story therefore connects language learning with institutional recognition and identity reconstruction.

Initial Coding

Narrative detail	Initial code	Interpretive significance
“I was afraid to speak”	Linguistic insecurity	Fear of judgement within an unfamiliar linguistic and professional environment

Narrative detail	Initial code	Interpretive significance
"I understood some English from school"	Prior linguistic and cultural capital	Formal education provides partial but insufficient preparation
"In the workplace everything felt different"	School-workplace mismatch	Academic language knowledge does not transfer automatically to situated workplace communication
"I only smiled"	Protective silence	Silence and smiling reduce immediate social and communicative risk
"They gave me simple tasks"	Restricted occupational positioning	Limited communicative participation is associated with limited responsibility
"I followed what the others did"	Observational learning	Workplace knowledge is acquired through embodied and situated participation
"I wrote down unfamiliar words"	Self-directed linguistic investment	The participant actively develops communicative resources
"I asked a friend"	Peer-mediated learning	Social relationships support access to workplace language
"I listened carefully"	Strategic observation	Listening becomes a form of informal professional learning
"I was able to answer the telephone"	Expanded communicative participation	Language development enables entry into more visible workplace interaction
"They trusted me more"	Institutional recognition	Workplace trust functions as a form of symbolic recognition

Narrative detail	Initial code	Interpretive significance
"Someone who could manage responsibility"	Professional identity repositioning	The participant reconstructs herself as capable and professionally legitimate

Narrative and Thematic Interpretation

The excerpt contributes to the book's discussion of language as both a communicative resource and a socially valued form of capital. English becomes important not simply because it allows information to be exchanged, but because workplace actors associate it with competence, reliability, and professionalism.

At the beginning of the account, the participant's linguistic resources have limited exchange value. She possesses some knowledge of English, but she cannot yet activate it confidently within the communicative conditions of the workplace. The speed of speech, fear of making mistakes, and possibility of negative judgement restrict her participation. Her existing resources are therefore present but not yet fully recognised.

The assignment of simple tasks reflects this limited recognition. Occupational positioning is influenced not only by technical capacity but also by whether the worker appears communicatively legible to supervisors and colleagues. Because the participant is initially hesitant to speak, she is positioned as someone requiring observation and direction rather than someone capable of independent responsibility.

However, the participant does not remain passive. She creates an informal learning process by writing down words, consulting a friend, observing workplace interaction, and gradually undertaking communicative duties. These practices show that migrant language learning often occurs outside formal classrooms. The workplace itself becomes a learning environment, while colleagues, routines, documents, telephone calls, and customer encounters become linguistic resources.

The phrase "I only smiled" is especially significant. Read superficially, smiling and silence might be interpreted as evidence of submission, limited understanding, or lack of agency. Within the

narrative, however, they function as protective strategies. The participant recognises that an incorrect answer may produce embarrassment or reinforce assumptions about her competence. Silence allows her to remain present while gathering information about the linguistic and social expectations of the workplace.

This interpretation does not imply that silence is always freely chosen. The participant's silence is shaped by unequal conditions in which some speakers possess greater authority to evaluate others. Nevertheless, it also represents a situated response to risk. Her agency is visible in the ways she observes, remembers, records, asks, and waits until she is more able to participate.

The transition to answering the telephone and assisting with documents represents a conversion of linguistic resources into occupational opportunity. Telephone communication often requires immediate comprehension, appropriate interpersonal language, and the ability to represent the organisation to outsiders. Documentary tasks similarly involve access to written institutional practices. Participation in these activities therefore signals movement towards more visible and valued work.

The statement "they trusted me more" marks the emergence of symbolic recognition. The participant's value is not created by English alone; she already possesses observational ability, persistence, practical intelligence, and emotional awareness. However, workplace English makes these capacities more visible within an environment that values particular forms of communication. Language becomes a means through which pre-existing and newly developed abilities are institutionally recognised.

The narrative culminates in an identity shift. The participant does not merely claim that her English improved. She states that she became someone who could manage responsibility. This formulation shows that workplace language learning contributed to professional self-making. The participant comes to recognise herself through the responsibilities that others permit her to perform and through her own experience of performing them successfully.

This is not a simple story of unrestricted upward mobility. Recognition remains dependent on the workplace hierarchy and on institutional judgements about what counts as professional communication. The participant's growing confidence does not remove her vulnerability as a migrant worker. It nevertheless expands her room for action within the workplace and provides access to a more valued professional identity.

Conceptual Reading

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the excerpt illustrates the field-dependent value of linguistic capital. English acquired through schooling does not possess an automatic or universal value. It becomes valuable when it can be mobilised in ways recognised by the workplace. Through situated practice, the participant converts linguistic competence into institutional trust and symbolic recognition.

The narrative also illustrates investment. The participant invests time, attention, emotional effort, and social relationships in language learning because she associates English with expanded participation and a more desirable professional identity. Her investment is oriented towards an imagined future in which she is no longer confined to simple tasks.

The story can additionally be read as an example of migrant linguistic agency. The participant mobilises partial linguistic knowledge, observation, note-taking, peer assistance, and repeated interaction to expand her communicative possibilities. Her agency is cumulative rather than dramatic. It develops through everyday actions that gradually alter her position within the workplace.

The narrative structure itself follows a transformation sequence: initial fear, restricted participation, strategic learning, expanded responsibility, recognition, and changed self-understanding. Yet the interpretation must avoid turning this sequence into a celebratory account in which individual effort alone overcomes inequality. The participant's progress depends partly on whether the workplace permits learning, provides access to interaction, and recognises newly developed competence.

Example 2: A Blue-Collar Pathway

Family Obligation, Emotional Endurance, and Quiet Negotiation Context Note

This example represents a participant working under more restrictive employment conditions, with limited control over time, privacy, and direct communication with the employer. The narrative shows how family responsibility, religious practice, peer relationships, emotional regulation, and careful timing shape the participant's actions.

The participant's responses should not be reduced either to passive compliance or heroic resistance. Her choices are made within a relationship marked by unequal authority and restricted possibilities for refusal.

Adapted Narrative Excerpt

There were times when I wanted to stop. The work was tiring, and sometimes I felt that I had no private time. But when I remembered my children's school fees and my parents at home, I tried to remain patient.

I did not tell my family everything because I did not want them to worry. I usually said that I was fine. When I had a problem, I prayed first and then asked another Indonesian worker what I should do. Sometimes I could not refuse directly, so I waited for the right time to speak. I learned that if I spoke while the employer was angry, the problem became worse. I waited, calmed myself, and asked again later.

Descriptive Reading

The excerpt presents an account of work-related exhaustion, limited privacy, transnational family responsibility, selective communication, religious practice, peer consultation, and carefully timed negotiation.

The participant begins by acknowledging a desire to leave the employment situation. This statement indicates that she recognises the intensity of the conditions and imagines exit as a possible response. However, her decision-making is shaped by responsibilities towards children and parents. Continuing to work

is therefore linked to a moral and economic commitment that extends across national borders.

The participant does not communicate the full extent of her difficulties to her family. She presents herself as “fine” in order to prevent family members from worrying. This selective disclosure requires emotional management and creates a distance between her lived experience abroad and the image of stability communicated at home.

When workplace problems arise, the participant turns first to prayer and then to another Indonesian worker. Prayer provides a space for emotional regulation and ethical reflection, while the peer relationship offers practical advice grounded in shared migrant experience.

The participant also describes a strategy of delayed communication. Because direct refusal may increase conflict, she assesses the employer’s emotional state, postpones the discussion, regulates her own response, and raises the matter again later. Her agency appears through timing, emotional control, consultation, and indirect negotiation.

Initial Coding

Narrative detail	Initial code	Interpretive significance
“I wanted to stop”	Desire to exit	The participant recognises the limits and costs of the working conditions
“The work was tiring”	Embodied labour	Physical exhaustion is central to the experience of work
“I had no private time”	Restricted autonomy	Employment authority extends into personal time and space
“My children’s school fees and my parents”	Transnational family obligation	Migration is sustained by responsibilities towards dependants

Narrative detail	Initial code	Interpretive significance
"I tried to remain patient"	Ethical and strategic endurance	Patience operates as both a moral orientation and a risk-management strategy
"I did not tell my family everything"	Selective disclosure	The participant manages information and emotion across distance
"I said that I was fine"	Performance of stability	The migrant protects family members while concealing personal hardship
"I prayed first"	Religious and emotional agency	Faith provides moral grounding, emotional regulation, and a basis for decision-making
"I asked another Indonesian worker"	Migrant peer support	Social capital provides practical knowledge and emotional reassurance
"I could not refuse directly"	Restricted communicative agency	Unequal power narrows the possibility of open disagreement
"I waited for the right time"	Tactical timing	The participant identifies a safer moment for communication
"I calmed myself"	Emotional labour	Self-regulation becomes necessary within a potentially volatile relationship
"I asked again later"	Quiet negotiation	The participant persists through indirect and carefully timed speech

Narrative and Thematic Interpretation

This excerpt contributes to the book's argument that migrant agency cannot be understood through a simple opposition between resistance and submission. The participant neither accepts her conditions without reflection nor openly confronts the employer.

Instead, she develops strategies that allow her to endure, interpret, and cautiously negotiate her circumstances.

The opening statement, “there were times when I wanted to stop,” is important because it shows that continuation should not be mistaken for complete acceptance. The participant recognises the physical and emotional costs of the work. She imagines leaving, but this possibility is weighed against obligations to children and parents.

Family responsibility constitutes a moral economy of migration. The participant’s labour is meaningful partly because it supports education and household needs in Indonesia. Her decision to remain patient is therefore connected to care, duty, and the imagined consequences of losing income. Economic need and moral responsibility are not separate in this narrative; they operate together.

At the same time, family obligation may intensify vulnerability. Because other people depend upon her earnings, leaving employment or openly confronting the employer may appear too risky. The same relationships that give migration meaning may also narrow the participant’s practical alternatives. Agency is therefore relational: her decisions are shaped not only by personal preference but also by the needs and expectations of people across borders.

The participant’s selective communication with her family reveals another dimension of migrant labour. By saying that she is fine, she protects relatives from anxiety and preserves an image of stability. This action is not simply dishonesty or concealment. It is a form of emotional care performed across distance.

However, such care has a personal cost. The participant must contain difficult experiences without fully sharing them with those closest to her. She simultaneously performs paid labour in the host country and unpaid emotional labour in relation to the home country. The narrative therefore challenges representations of remittance migration that focus only on the transfer of money. Migrants also manage expectations, fears, hopes, and family emotions.

Prayer occupies a central place in the participant's decision-making. It allows her to pause before responding to conflict, regulate anger or fear, and situate her experience within a moral framework. Prayer should not be interpreted automatically as passive coping. Within the participant's account, it is part of how she prepares herself to act.

The participant's religious practice can be understood as ethical agency because it contributes to the formation of a self capable of patience, reflection, and measured response. This does not mean that exploitative conditions become acceptable because the worker is able to endure them. Rather, it shows that migrants draw upon moral and spiritual resources when institutional protection and direct bargaining power are limited.

Peer consultation provides another important resource. The participant asks another Indonesian worker what she should do. This relationship offers more than companionship. It supplies practical knowledge about employer behaviour, communicative timing, risk, and available alternatives. Migrant social networks therefore function as informal systems of interpretation and protection.

The strategy of waiting for the right time demonstrates that silence and delay can carry agential meaning. The participant does not remain silent because she has nothing to say. She delays speech because she understands that communication occurs within an unequal power relationship. Speaking while the employer is angry may increase the risk of punishment, dismissal, or further conflict.

Waiting is consequently both constrained and strategic. It is constrained because the participant does not possess equal authority to speak whenever she chooses. It is strategic because she uses her knowledge of the relationship to identify a moment in which her request may be more safely heard.

The phrase "I asked again later" also reveals persistence. The participant does not abandon the issue completely. She modifies the timing and manner of communication while maintaining the intention to raise the problem. Her action can therefore be described

as quiet negotiation: a form of pushback adapted to an environment in which direct confrontation may be unsafe.

This kind of agency is easily overlooked when agency is defined only as visible resistance, formal complaint, or departure from employment. Yet the participant's actions involve assessment, emotional regulation, religious reflection, consultation, timing, and repeated communication. These practices demonstrate practical intelligence within severely limited conditions.

At the same time, the interpretation must not romanticise endurance. The participant's patience is costly. It emerges partly because she lacks stronger institutional protection and more secure alternatives. Recognising quiet agency should therefore not shift responsibility away from employers, recruitment systems, labour regulations, or state institutions.

The narrative shows both agency and inequality. The participant acts meaningfully, but she should not have to depend primarily on prayer, patience, and informal peer advice to secure basic dignity. Her strategies reveal personal resourcefulness while also exposing the absence or inaccessibility of more formal forms of support.

Conceptual Reading

From the perspective of power, the excerpt demonstrates how workplace authority extends beyond the assignment of tasks. It shapes time, privacy, emotional expression, and the conditions under which speech becomes possible. The participant learns to monitor both the employer's emotional state and her own response.

From the perspective of ethical agency, patience and prayer are not treated simply as resignation. They form part of the participant's moral self-understanding and influence how she evaluates possible action. She seeks to respond in a way that protects herself, fulfils family responsibilities, and remains consistent with her ethical commitments.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, restricted access to economic, institutional, and symbolic capital limits the participant's capacity for direct refusal. Nevertheless, social capital within the

Indonesian migrant community creates a small but meaningful space for advice and coordinated understanding.

The excerpt also illustrates migrant linguistic agency. The participant's agency is expressed not through advanced language proficiency alone but through an understanding of when, how, and to whom she can speak. Communicative agency includes timing, silence, repetition, emotional tone, and the ability to interpret unequal interaction.

From Initial Coding to Narrative Interpretation

The coding tables above are not intended to suggest that interpretation proceeds through a completely linear sequence. In practice, the researcher moved repeatedly between the larger narrative, individual expressions, relevant contextual information, patterns across participants, and theoretical concepts.

Initial codes were used as provisional interpretive labels rather than fixed categories. Their purpose was to identify potentially significant actions, emotions, social relations, and conditions. For example, "I only smiled" was initially associated with silence and linguistic insecurity. When read within the fuller narrative, however, the expression also indicated self-protection, observation, and communicative risk management.

Similarly, "I waited for the right time" could initially be coded as delayed communication. When considered alongside the employer's anger, the participant's limited power, and her later decision to speak again, the phrase became evidence of tactical timing and quiet negotiation.

The movement from coding to interpretation involved three related questions.

What is occurring in the narrated event?

This question focused on the practical content of the story. In the first example, the participant moved from observation and simple tasks towards telephone and documentary responsibilities. In the second, the participant responded to exhaustion and conflict through prayer, consultation, emotional regulation, and delayed speech.

How does the narrator position herself?

Narratives do more than describe events. They also communicate identity and moral orientation. The participant in the first example presents herself as an active learner who becomes worthy of professional responsibility. The participant in the second presents herself as a responsible family member who is patient but not entirely submissive, religiously grounded but still capable of negotiation.

What wider social conditions shape the action?

Individual statements were interpreted in relation to workplace hierarchy, classed access to language, migration status, family dependence, employer authority, and institutional protection. This prevented the analysis from attributing outcomes only to personal motivation or personality.

Codes were then grouped into broader thematic relations. In the white-collar example, linguistic insecurity, observational learning, informal language investment, workplace participation, trust, and identity repositioning were connected through the theme of language-mediated professional recognition.

In the blue-collar example, embodied labour, restricted privacy, family responsibility, selective disclosure, religious practice, peer support, and tactical timing were connected through the theme of agency under constraint.

The theoretical concepts were not imposed simply to rename participants' experiences in academic language. They were used to examine relationships that might otherwise remain less visible. Linguistic capital clarified why certain forms of communication acquired workplace value. Investment helped explain why the participant devoted effort to language learning. Ethical agency illuminated the role of prayer and patience. Social capital clarified how migrant peers created access to practical knowledge. Power analysis revealed why speech, silence, and timing carried different consequences for differently positioned workers.

At the same time, the narratives complicated the theoretical categories. Silence, for instance, could not be classified simply as either agency or submission. It could be protective, imposed,

tactical, fearful, or observational, depending on the context. Patience could express moral commitment while also reflecting restricted alternatives. Recognition could increase without eliminating vulnerability.

For this reason, the analysis treated codes and theories as interpretive tools rather than final explanations. The participants' accounts remained central, and contradictory meanings were retained where they were important to the complexity of the experience.

Reflexive Note on Translation, Anonymisation, and Representation

The preparation of narrative excerpts for publication required decisions that inevitably shaped how participants' voices appeared on the page. These decisions concerned translation, shortening, grammatical presentation, anonymisation, and the balance between readability and fidelity.

Translation and Multilingual Meaning

Participants' original accounts included Indonesian, English, local expressions, workplace terminology, and occasional references to the host-country language. Translation therefore involved more than replacing one word with another. It required attention to emotional tone, cultural meaning, indirectness, and the social relationships implied by particular expressions.

The translated excerpts were written in accessible English, but they were not intentionally transformed into highly polished academic speech. Excessive polishing could create the false impression that participants narrated their experiences in the language of the researcher. Conversely, reproducing every hesitation, repetition, or grammatical irregularity could position multilingual speakers unfairly as deficient.

The guiding principle was to preserve meaning and dignity. Grammatical adjustments were made where necessary for readability, but they were not used to erase uncertainty, emotional tension, or culturally significant modes of expression. Where a direct translation would have distorted the participant's intended

meaning, the wording was rendered interpretively while remaining close to the narrative context.

The English excerpts should therefore be understood as carefully prepared representations of multilingual speech rather than exact linguistic reproductions. Their function is to convey the participants' experiences and narrative positioning while recognising that no translation is completely neutral.

Shortening and Adaptation

The excerpts were shortened to make the analytic focus visible. Interview narratives often contain repetition, chronological movement, clarification, side stories, pauses, and responses to follow-up questions. These features are meaningful in the full interview context, but reproducing them all would make a short illustrative appendix difficult to read.

Shortening involved removing material that was not directly relevant to the interpretive example. However, sentences were not combined in ways that intentionally changed the participant's position or created a more coherent success or suffering narrative than the broader interview supported.

The excerpts are therefore labelled as adapted rather than verbatim. This distinction is important because readers should not interpret every sentence as an uninterrupted quotation produced in precisely that form during one moment of the interview.

Anonymisation

Anonymisation extended beyond replacing personal names. Exact job titles, unusual workplace incidents, employer characteristics, locations, migration routes, and family details may also make participants recognisable, particularly within relatively small migrant communities.

Some details were consequently removed or generalised. Nevertheless, anonymisation was undertaken carefully because excessive generalisation can erase analytically important differences. Referring to domestic employment simply as a "workplace," for example, may conceal the way residence, privacy, working time, and employer authority overlap in household labour.

The aim was to protect participants without removing the classed, occupational, gendered, and institutional conditions necessary to interpret their experiences. Where precise occupational details could not be retained safely, the relevant power relationship was described in broader terms.

Researcher Interpretation and Positionality

Narrative interpretation is shaped by the researcher's academic background, linguistic resources, social position, and emotional response. Experiences of sympathy, admiration, discomfort, or anger may influence which narratives appear especially important.

One risk is to present migrants only as vulnerable victims. Another is to transform every act of endurance into evidence of inspirational resilience. Both representations can simplify participants' lives. Migrant workers may express strength and exhaustion, gratitude and criticism, patience and anger, religious commitment and a desire for change within the same narrative.

The analysis therefore sought to retain contradiction. The participant who remained patient could still recognise injustice. The participant who developed professional confidence could remain institutionally vulnerable. The participant who concealed hardship from family could be both emotionally burdened and actively protective.

A further concern involved assumptions about what counts as knowledge and competence. Academic and professional fields often give greater recognition to formal qualifications, standardised language, certificates, and institutionally approved communication. Such assumptions may undervalue practical, embodied, relational, and emotional forms of expertise.

The interpretation therefore treated observation, household management, care, emotional regulation, technical familiarity, informal translation, cultural mediation, and peer support as meaningful forms of knowledge. Language proficiency was analysed as an important resource, but it was not treated as the sole measure of intelligence or personal worth.

Ethical Representation

The participants' stories were not included merely as raw material for confirming theoretical concepts. Theory was used to illuminate relationships among language, class, identity, power, and agency, but participants' narratives were also allowed to complicate those concepts.

The ethical task of narrative representation is therefore not only to conceal identifying information. It is also to avoid reducing a person to a single category such as victim, resilient worker, religious migrant, successful professional, or blue-collar labourer. Each narrative belongs to a life that exceeds the analytic themes presented in this book.

The two examples in this appendix should consequently be read as partial interpretations of complex and continuing lives. They demonstrate how narrative analysis can move from words and events towards broader social meaning while remaining attentive to uncertainty, contradiction, and the limits of the researcher's interpretation.

Concluding Note

These illustrative examples demonstrate that migrant narratives may reveal both visible and less visible forms of action. In the white-collar pathway, language learning supports workplace participation, recognition, and professional repositioning. In the blue-collar pathway, agency appears through family commitment, emotional regulation, prayer, peer consultation, tactical silence, and carefully timed negotiation.

The examples also show that migrant agency is shaped by unequal access to linguistic, economic, social, and institutional resources. Agency is present, but it does not eliminate structural inequality. Recognition may expand while vulnerability remains, and endurance may be meaningful while also being personally costly.

By making selected stages of interpretation visible, this appendix clarifies how the book moved from individual narratives towards cross-cutting arguments about social class, language, power, identity, and migrant agency. Its purpose is illustrative

rather than exhaustive: to offer readers a transparent view of the interpretive process without reproducing the full methodological apparatus or participant-by-participant analysis of the original doctoral study.

Appendix B – Glossary of Key Concepts

This glossary provides short and accessible explanations of the main concepts used throughout the book. The entries are written for readers who may not be specialists in applied linguistics, migration studies, or social theory. The definitions are intentionally brief, but each concept is connected to the book's central concern: how Indonesian migrant workers negotiate social class, language, identity, power, and agency across transnational labour pathways.

Affect

Affect refers to feelings, moods, and emotional intensities that shape how people experience the world before they can always explain those feelings clearly. In migration, affect appears in fear before departure, pride after sending remittances, shame when returning without savings, loneliness abroad, or hope when imagining a better future. Affect matters because migration decisions are never purely economic. They are also emotional, relational, and embodied.

Agency

Agency refers to people's capacity to act, decide, respond, adapt, refuse, endure, negotiate, or imagine alternatives within the conditions they face. In this book, agency is not understood only as open resistance or individual freedom. Indonesian migrant workers may show agency through speaking up, changing jobs, learning language, saving money, supporting family, praying, waiting for the right moment, remaining silent strategically, or protecting dignity under pressure.

Agency under constraint

Agency under constraint describes action that takes place within unequal, limited, or risky conditions. Migrant workers may not always be free to choose openly because their decisions are

shaped by debt, contracts, family obligation, language barriers, employer dependency, legal status, and fear of losing income. However, constraint does not mean the absence of agency. It means that agency often appears in careful, quiet, and practical forms.

Blue-collar pathway

A blue-collar pathway refers to migration routes connected to domestic work, care work, cleaning, driving, technical labour, maintenance, manual work, and other low-wage or low-visibility sectors. The term does not mean that the work is unskilled. On the contrary, this book argues that blue-collar migrant work often involves practical intelligence, emotional labour, informal language learning, physical endurance, and hidden expertise.

Capital

Capital refers to resources that can create advantage in a particular social field. Bourdieu identifies several forms of capital, including economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. In migration, capital may include money, education, English proficiency, work experience, certificates, social networks, religious community, technical skill, or the reputation of being a successful overseas worker.

Care work

Care work refers to labour that involves looking after children, elderly people, sick people, households, or emotional needs. It may be paid or unpaid. Migrant care work is often undervalued because it is associated with women's natural duty rather than recognised as skilled labour. In this book, care work is treated as a form of expertise involving attention, patience, emotional judgement, bodily discipline, and responsibility.

Chronotope

Chronotope refers to the way time and space are connected in stories. In migrant narratives, important chronotopes include the hometown before departure, the recruitment journey, the first workplace abroad, the employer's house, the dormitory, the airport, the phone call home, and the moment of return. Each time-space

frame shapes how migrants understand who they were, who they became, and who they hope to be.

Classed mobility

Classed mobility refers to movement across social positions that is shaped by class background and access to resources. Migration may allow a worker to earn more, support family, or gain status at home, but it may also place the worker in a low-status position abroad. This means mobility can be upward and downward at the same time. A migrant may gain income while losing autonomy or gain recognition at home while experiencing disrespect at work.

Covert agency

Covert agency refers to forms of action that are not easily visible from the outside. It may appear as strategic silence, emotional self-control, careful timing, indirect refusal, private saving, asking trusted friends for advice, or waiting until conditions are safer. Covert agency is important in migrant labour because direct confrontation may be risky, especially for workers with limited language, legal security, or bargaining power.

Cultural capital

Cultural capital refers to knowledge, education, language ability, credentials, manners, professional skills, and familiarity with institutional expectations. For migrants, cultural capital may include English proficiency, certificate ownership, computer literacy, workplace etiquette, or the ability to read contracts. Cultural capital becomes powerful only when it is recognised as valuable in a particular workplace or institution.

Decolonial language education

Decolonial language education questions the idea that only elite, standard, or Western forms of language count as legitimate knowledge. In relation to migrant workers, it means valuing survival multilingualism, Indonesian, local languages, mixed language practices, gestures, and practical communication. It challenges the view that migrants are linguistically deficient simply

because their English or host-country language does not match standard norms.

Dignity

Dignity refers to the recognition of migrant workers as full human beings whose worth is not limited to income, obedience, remittances, or labour output. Dignity means that domestic workers, cleaners, technicians, drivers, care workers, service workers, and office workers deserve respect, safety, fair treatment, privacy, rest, voice, and recognition. Dignity is one of the moral centres of this book.

Discipline

Discipline refers to the ways people are trained, monitored, corrected, and made to regulate themselves. In migrant workplaces, discipline may appear through schedules, uniforms, household routines, employer instructions, attendance systems, surveillance, rules about phone use, or expectations of politeness. Discipline does not always involve physical force; it often works through repeated correction and self-monitoring.

Economic capital

Economic capital refers to money, savings, land, property, assets, salary, business investment, or the ability to pay migration costs. Economic capital affects how migrants leave, how much debt they carry, how much risk they can tolerate, and whether they can return or change jobs. A worker with savings usually has more room to manoeuvre than a worker who migrates through debt.

Emotional labour

Emotional labour refers to the work of managing feelings as part of one's job. Migrant workers may need to smile when tired, remain calm when criticised, comfort children while missing their own families, hide anger, speak gently, or present themselves as patient and grateful. Emotional labour is often invisible, yet it is central to domestic work, care work, service work, and migrant survival more generally.

Embodied agency

Embodied agency refers to action that is carried through the body rather than only through speech. It may include endurance, careful movement, controlled facial expression, bodily discipline, managing tiredness, maintaining respectful posture, or continuing to work while emotionally strained. Migrant workers often act through their bodies because their opportunities for direct speech may be limited.

Field

Field refers to a structured social space where people act, compete, negotiate, and seek recognition according to certain rules. Examples include the hometown, recruitment agency, training centre, employer's household, hotel, office, embassy, religious community, migrant network, and Indonesian return context. Each field values different forms of capital. A skill valued in one field may be ignored in another.

Global care chain

Global care chain refers to the international transfer of care labour, often from poorer countries to wealthier households or economies. For example, an Indonesian woman may care for children or elderly people abroad while her own children are cared for by relatives at home. This shows how care, gender, money, and migration are connected across borders.

Habitus

Habitus refers to the deeply learned dispositions, habits, expectations, and ways of acting that people develop through family, schooling, religion, class background, community life, and work. Habitus shapes what feels normal, possible, respectable, risky, or shameful. In migration, habitus travels with workers but may also change as they encounter new languages, workplaces, and forms of recognition abroad.

Hidden expertise

Hidden expertise refers to skills and knowledge that are real but not formally recognised. Domestic workers, care workers, cleaners, drivers, and technicians often develop practical,

emotional, linguistic, and cultural expertise, but these skills may not appear on certificates or job titles. This book argues that hidden expertise must be recognised as part of migrant workers' dignity and contribution.

Host-country language

Host-country language refers to the dominant local language used in the destination country. In this book, the specific country is anonymised, so the language is also referred to generally. For migrant workers, the host-country language may be essential for instructions, markets, clinics, transport, public offices, employers, religious life, and everyday survival.

Imagined community

Imagined community refers to a group of people who feel connected even though they may not know each other personally. Indonesian migrants may imagine themselves as part of the Indonesian nation, a regional community, a religious community, a community of overseas workers, or a group of family providers. These imagined communities shape identity, belonging, and responsibility.

Imagined self

Imagined self refers to the person a migrant hopes to become in the future. This may include becoming a successful returnee, a respected parent, a professional worker, a business owner, a fluent speaker of English, or someone who can support the family with dignity. Imagined selves motivate present sacrifice, language learning, saving, endurance, and future planning.

Informal learning

Informal learning refers to learning that takes place outside formal classrooms. Migrant workers often learn language, workplace routines, cultural expectations, transport systems, safety strategies, and survival knowledge through observation, repetition, mistakes, friends, employers, children, religious communities, and digital media. Informal learning is central to migrant adaptation.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the way different forms of inequality overlap and shape one another. A migrant's experience may be shaped not only by class, but also by gender, nationality, language ability, religion, education, job type, legal status, and family responsibility. Intersectionality helps explain why migrant workers do not all experience migration in the same way.

Language investment

Language investment refers to the effort people put into learning or using a language because they hope it will give access to better identities, resources, relationships, or futures. Migrants may invest in English or the host-country language to gain work, confidence, protection, promotion, or recognition. Language learning is therefore not only technical; it is tied to identity and aspiration.

Linguistic capital

Linguistic capital is the value attached to language ability in a particular social field. English may have high linguistic capital in offices, hotels, or international workplaces. The host-country language may have high value in markets, clinics, households, and public offices. Indonesian may carry emotional and moral value within family and migrant communities. The value of language depends on where it is used and who recognises it.

Linguistic gatekeeping

Linguistic gatekeeping refers to the way language controls access to opportunities, rights, jobs, protection, or recognition. Workers who can speak valued languages may be trusted with better roles or heard more easily by institutions. Workers with limited recognised language may be ignored, misunderstood, or treated as less competent. Gatekeeping occurs when language becomes a barrier to mobility or justice.

Misrecognition

Misrecognition occurs when a person's value, skill, identity, or experience is misunderstood or denied. Migrant workers may be misrecognised when their work is called unskilled, their language is

mocked, their silence is read as ignorance, or their remittances are valued more than their suffering and learning. Misrecognition can harm dignity and limit future opportunities.

Moral agency

Moral agency refers to action shaped by ethical responsibility, faith, duty, care, and ideas of what is right. Indonesian migrants often act not only for themselves but for parents, children, spouses, siblings, and God. Their decisions may be guided by sacrifice, patience, gratitude, prayer, family responsibility, and hope. Moral agency helps explain why endurance can be meaningful without romanticising hardship.

Moral economy of migration

The moral economy of migration refers to the emotional and ethical expectations surrounding migrant labour. It includes family duty, remittances, sacrifice, shame, pride, gratitude, obligation, and the expectation that working abroad should benefit the household. Migration is therefore not just an economic transaction; it is also a moral relationship between the migrant and those who depend on them.

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a research approach that studies stories as meaningful forms of knowledge. It asks how people tell their experiences, how they make sense of events, and how they position themselves and others through storytelling. In this book, narrative inquiry is used to understand how Indonesian migrant workers interpret class, language, identity, power, and agency across migration.

Narrative positioning

Narrative positioning refers to how speakers locate themselves and others in a story. A migrant may position herself as a responsible daughter, patient worker, skilled employee, misunderstood person, faithful believer, successful returnee, or still-struggling parent. Positioning helps reveal identity, power relations, moral values, and agency in storytelling.

Recognition

Recognition refers to being seen, heard, valued, and treated as legitimate. Migrants may seek recognition as skilled workers, responsible family members, professionals, language learners, believers, or knowledge-holders. Lack of recognition can be painful because it reduces workers to stereotypes such as “helper”, “labourer”, “foreigner”, or “remittance sender”.

Relational agency

Relational agency refers to action that is shaped through relationships rather than individual choice alone. Migrants act in relation to parents, children, employers, friends, religious communities, fellow migrants, agencies, and institutions. A decision to stay, leave, speak, remain silent, or send money is often made with others in mind.

Remittance

Remittance refers to money or goods sent by migrants to family or community members in the home country. Remittances are economically important, but they also carry emotional and moral meaning. They can express love, responsibility, sacrifice, success, and belonging. At the same time, pressure to remit can create stress and reduce migrants’ freedom.

Return migration

Return migration refers to the process of coming back to the home country after working abroad. Return is not always a simple ending. Migrants may return with savings, skills, trauma, pride, disappointment, new aspirations, or changed identities. They may be recognised as successful or judged as failing, depending on what they bring home and how the community interprets their journey.

Re-entry

Re-entry refers to the process of readjusting to life in Indonesia after migration. It may involve family reunion, emotional repair, job searching, business attempts, social judgement, or difficulty fitting back into local expectations. Re-entry can be challenging because the migrant has changed while home has also changed.

Social capital

Social capital refers to networks and relationships that provide support, information, opportunity, or protection. For migrants, social capital may include friends, family, brokers, religious groups, fellow workers, community leaders, employers, or returnee networks. Social capital can help workers find jobs, interpret documents, learn language, seek help, or avoid unsafe situations.

Social class

Social class refers to more than economic rank. In this book, it includes income, education, occupation, family background, social networks, language ability, recognition, lifestyle, dignity, and access to opportunity. Social class shapes why migrants leave, how they migrate, what work they enter, how they are treated, and how their success is judged.

Sponsorship-based labour

Sponsorship-based labour refers to employment arrangements in which a migrant worker's legal residence or work status is connected to an employer, sponsor, or sponsoring institution. Such arrangements can create dependency because changing jobs, leaving an employer, or seeking help may be difficult without the sponsor's involvement. The term is used generally in this book to avoid naming the specific host country.

Strategic silence

Strategic silence refers to choosing not to speak because silence is safer, wiser, or more effective in a particular moment. Migrants may remain silent to avoid conflict, protect employment, prevent employer anger, reduce family worry, or wait for a better time to negotiate. Strategic silence should not automatically be read as ignorance or passivity.

Symbolic capital

Symbolic capital refers to recognised honour, prestige, respect, or legitimacy. For migrants, symbolic capital may come from working abroad, speaking English, holding a professional role, sending remittances, building a house, supporting family, or being

trusted by employers. Symbolic capital depends on recognition by others.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging refers to the flexible use of a person's full linguistic repertoire rather than treating languages as fully separate systems. Migrant workers may combine Indonesian, English, local languages, host-country phrases, gestures, translation apps, and contextual cues to make meaning. Translanguaging helps show migrants as resourceful communicators, not deficient speakers.

Transnational identity

Transnational identity refers to a sense of self formed across more than one country. Indonesian migrants may live abroad but remain emotionally, financially, spiritually, and socially connected to Indonesia. Their identity is shaped by the host country and the home country at the same time, through work, remittances, family communication, religion, language, and imagined return.

Transnational labour pathway

Transnational labour pathway refers to the full migration journey across borders, including pre-departure, recruitment, work abroad, family communication, remittances, workplace adaptation, return, and reintegration. The term pathway is used to emphasise movement, process, and lived experience rather than a rigid system.

White-collar pathway

A white-collar pathway refers to migration routes connected to office-based work, hospitality, business support, administration, customer service, professional service, or other more publicly recognised forms of employment. White-collar migrants may have stronger access to education, English, documents, workplace recognition, and institutional networks, although they may still face inequality and dependency.

Workplace power

Workplace power refers to the ways employers, supervisors, institutions, rules, documents, schedules, language expectations, and workplace cultures shape what workers can do. Power may

appear through direct command, but also through routines, surveillance, evaluation, silence, emotional pressure, and the need to appear obedient or professional.

Working abroad

Working abroad is used in this book not only as a phrase for overseas employment, but as a social and moral experience. It includes leaving home, entering unfamiliar labour fields, learning languages, sending remittances, negotiating power, maintaining family ties, managing emotions, and imagining return. It is both an economic strategy and a life-transforming process.

Appendix C – Selected Resources for Migrant Support and Further Study

Purpose and Scope

This appendix provides a concise guide to selected institutions, support networks, practical preparation resources, and academic readings related to Indonesian labour migration. It is intended for migrant workers and their families, students, researchers, educators, practitioners, and policymakers who wish to locate further information or continue studying the themes discussed in this book.

The resources listed here are selective rather than exhaustive. Institutional names, responsibilities, contact details, complaint mechanisms, legal procedures, and digital platforms may change. Readers should therefore consult the most recent official government or organisational channels before relying on any information for migration, legal, employment, or emergency decisions.

Because the host-country setting discussed in this book has been anonymised, this appendix does not provide country-specific organisations or contact details. Migrant workers requiring support abroad should locate the Indonesian embassy or consulate responsible for the country or territory in which they are working.

C.1 Indonesian Government and Official Support Channels

National migrant-worker protection authority

Indonesia's national migrant-worker protection authority provides information concerning legal placement procedures, worker protection, recruitment, complaint services, migration data, pre-departure preparation, repatriation, and reintegration. Its official channels should be consulted by prospective migrant workers, current workers, returnees, and families seeking reliable information.

Readers should obtain current contact details directly from the institution's official website or verified government platforms. Contact information reproduced in printed publications may become outdated and should not be treated as permanently valid.

Migrant-worker complaint and crisis services

Official complaint and crisis services may assist with problems involving recruitment, contracts, unpaid salaries, workplace abuse, document retention, disappearance, trafficking, repatriation, and other protection concerns.

Information about complaint procedures should be introduced during pre-departure preparation rather than only after a worker experiences a crisis. Migrant workers and family members should know:

1. which institution receives complaints;
2. what evidence or documentation may be required;
3. how to contact the relevant Indonesian overseas mission;
4. how to identify an urgent protection situation; and
5. how to store complaint records safely.

Legal and regulatory information

The official legal-documentation network of the national migrant-worker protection authority provides access to laws, regulations, policy documents, bilateral agreements, and other legal instruments concerning migrant-worker placement and protection. This resource is particularly useful for researchers, legal practitioners, advocates, students, and policymakers who need to examine the formal basis of Indonesian migrant-worker governance. Readers should also consult the current version of

Indonesian legislation concerning the protection of migrant workers.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Indonesian overseas missions

Indonesian embassies and consulates provide consular services for Indonesian citizens abroad. Depending on the circumstances and the authority of the relevant mission, assistance may include:

1. emergency communication;
2. travel-document support;
3. coordination in repatriation cases;
4. referral to legal or local protection services;
5. communication with local authorities;
6. support in cases of detention, illness, violence, or death; and
7. assistance in contacting family members.

Migrant workers should identify the relevant Indonesian embassy or consulate before departure and store its verified contact information in both physical and digital form.

Provincial and district-level services

Provincial and district governments may operate migrant-worker service units that provide information, document assistance, pre-departure guidance, complaint referral, family support, or reintegration services.

Prospective workers should consult official local government services before relying on brokers, informal recruiters, social media advertisements, or unverified employment offers. Families should also know which local institution can be contacted when communication with a worker abroad is interrupted.

C.2 International and Regional Organisations

International Organization for Migration

The International Organization for Migration produces research and practical resources on safe migration, ethical recruitment, trafficking prevention, migrant protection, reintegration, migration governance, and community-based migrant empowerment.

Its Indonesian and regional publications are useful for understanding recruitment processes, migration risks, protection systems, and the roles of governments, communities, employers, and civil society.

International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization is a central source of information on labour standards, decent work, fair recruitment, forced labour, employment contracts, workplace rights, wage protection, social protection, and migrant-worker governance.

Its regional programmes provide research, training resources, and policy guidance concerning labour migration in Southeast Asia and major destination regions. These materials are particularly valuable for examining the structural conditions that shape migrant employment.

ASEAN labour-migration mechanisms

ASEAN institutions and programmes provide regional frameworks for discussing the protection and promotion of migrant-worker rights. Their publications help readers understand regional cooperation, labour-migration governance, migrant-worker resource centres, and policy dialogue among sending and receiving states.

ASEAN documents should be read alongside national legislation because regional declarations and principles may be implemented differently across member states.

UN Women

UN Women's publications are relevant to the study of gendered migration, care work, domestic work, workplace violence, women's labour rights, and global care chains. These resources are especially useful for understanding how migration policies and employment systems may affect women and men differently.

C.3 Civil-Society and Community Support

Formal institutions are important, but migrant workers frequently depend upon community-based networks for immediate information, translation, emotional support, and practical guidance.

These networks should be recognised as valuable sources of situated knowledge, although safety-related information should still be verified through reliable official channels.

Migrant-worker associations

Migrant-worker organisations and Indonesian community groups may offer:

1. peer advice;
2. translation and interpretation;
3. emergency information;
4. referrals to formal services;
5. warnings about recruitment or employment risks;
6. temporary accommodation referrals;
7. community activities; and
8. emotional support.

The quality, legal status, and capacity of such groups may vary. Workers should avoid sharing sensitive documents or personal information with unverified individuals.

Faith-based communities

Mosque groups, church communities, prayer groups, and other faith-based networks may provide spiritual support, social belonging, practical advice, and relief from isolation.

As the narratives in this book demonstrate, religious communities may function not only as places of worship but also as informal spaces in which migrants exchange information, develop trust, and rebuild emotional stability. However, faith-based support should complement rather than replace professional legal, medical, or protection services when these are required.

Returned migrant-worker networks

Returned migrants possess valuable experiential knowledge concerning recruitment, workplace expectations, language needs, family separation, remittance management, return, and reintegration.

Their knowledge can strengthen:

1. pre-departure programmes;
2. community education;

3. language and workplace preparation;
4. recruitment-risk awareness;
5. family financial planning;
6. return and reintegration services; and
7. evaluation of migration policies.

Returned workers should be treated not only as recipients of reintegration assistance but also as partners and knowledge producers.

Legal-aid and labour-rights organisations

Legal-aid organisations, university legal clinics, labour-rights groups, and trusted civil-society organisations may assist in cases involving recruitment fraud, contract violations, unpaid wages, abuse, trafficking, detention, or repatriation.

Because organisational capacity and jurisdiction vary, workers and families should confirm that an organisation is legitimate, appropriately qualified, and able to operate in the relevant location.

C.4 Practical Preparation Checklist

The following checklist is not a substitute for official migration procedures, legal advice, or country-specific preparation. It identifies basic matters that prospective migrant workers and their families should discuss before departure.

Documents and records

Workers should prepare and safely store:

1. passport and visa documents;
2. signed employment contracts;
3. placement and recruitment documents;
4. insurance information;
5. identity and family records;
6. employer and workplace information;
7. verified recruitment-agency information;
8. receipts for recruitment-related payments; and
9. copies of qualifications or training certificates where relevant.

Important documents should be stored in more than one form. A worker may keep physical copies, password-protected digital copies, and copies with a trusted family member.

Workers should not surrender original identity documents permanently to an unauthorised person. Where an employer or agency requires access to documents, the worker should understand the legal basis, purpose, and duration of that access.

Emergency contacts

Before departure, workers and families should record verified contact details for:

1. the relevant Indonesian embassy or consulate;
2. Indonesia's official migrant-worker protection authority;
3. local emergency services in the destination country;
4. the recruitment or placement institution;
5. a trusted migrant-community contact;
6. a family emergency contact; and
7. an appropriate legal-aid or protection organisation where available.

Contact details should be checked periodically because telephone numbers, digital services, and institutional responsibilities may change.

Employment and contract awareness

Workers should understand:

1. their official job title and responsibilities;
2. salary and payment schedule;
3. permitted deductions;
4. accommodation and food arrangements;
5. working hours and rest periods;
6. leave arrangements;
7. insurance coverage;
8. contract duration;
9. procedures for changing or terminating employment; and
10. complaint and dispute-resolution procedures.

A contract should be understood before it is signed. Translation or independent explanation should be requested when contractual language is unclear.

Language preparation

Language preparation should focus on real communicative situations rather than general vocabulary alone. Workers may benefit from learning:

1. workplace instructions;
2. occupational terminology;
3. numbers, dates, times, and locations;
4. language for reporting illness or injury;
5. salary and contract vocabulary;
6. emergency and help-seeking expressions;
7. polite refusal and clarification strategies;
8. ways of requesting repetition;
9. basic digital communication; and
10. key expressions in the principal language of the destination country.

Workers should also be prepared to communicate through multilingual and multimodal resources, including gesture, translation applications, photographs, maps, written notes, and trusted interpreters.

Financial preparation

Workers and families should discuss:

1. recruitment-related costs and debt;
2. expected net salary after deductions;
3. remittance arrangements;
4. household expenditure;
5. emergency savings;
6. insurance;
7. education expenses;
8. debt repayment;
9. personal savings;
10. return costs; and
11. post-migration plans.

Family expectations should be realistic. A worker's income should not automatically be treated as unlimited family income. Workers also require resources for health, rest, communication, emergencies, and future reintegration.

Family communication

A family communication plan should include:

1. the expected frequency of communication;
2. alternative contacts if the worker cannot be reached;
3. procedures for emergencies;
4. realistic expectations concerning remittances;
5. agreement about major financial decisions;
6. emotional support for both workers and family members; and
7. recognition that workers may not always be able to describe difficulties immediately.

Families should avoid interpreting reduced communication automatically as rejection or neglect. Workplace restrictions, time differences, limited privacy, internet access, illness, or fear may affect communication.

C.5 Selected Reading Pathways

The readings below offer starting points rather than a complete bibliography. Full publication details should be provided in the References section of this book.

Indonesian labour migration

Readers seeking an introduction to Indonesian labour migration may begin with:

1. International Organization for Migration, *Labour Migration from Indonesia*;
2. World Bank, *Indonesia's Global Workers*;
3. Rachel Silvey's studies of Indonesian migrant women and transnational family life; and
4. Johan Lindquist's work on recruitment, migration intermediaries, and the Indonesian migration industry.

These works introduce major issues involving destination regions, recruitment, gender, remittances, family relationships, migration governance, and worker vulnerability.

Transnationalism and family life

For understanding how migrants remain socially connected to more than one country, useful starting points include:

1. Levitt and Glick Schiller on transnational social fields;
2. Vertovec on transnationalism;
3. Silvey on transnational family relations; and
4. studies of remittances, care, communication, and return migration.

These works help explain why migration is not simply a one-way movement from one nation to another. Migrants often sustain family obligations, emotional relationships, religious practices, financial responsibilities, and imagined futures across borders.

Language, identity, and social justice

For readers interested in language as a resource and a site of inequality, key works include:

1. Bourdieu on language and symbolic power;
2. Norton on identity and investment;
3. Darwin and Norton on ideology, capital, and investment;
4. Piller on linguistic diversity and social justice;
5. Canagarajah on translingual practice; and
6. García and Li Wei on translanguaging.

These readings support the book's argument that language proficiency cannot be understood only as an individual skill. Its value depends on social institutions, labour markets, language ideologies, and unequal access to recognition.

Social class, power, and agency

Readers interested in the theoretical framework of this book may consult:

1. Bourdieu on habitus, fields, and forms of capital;
2. Foucault on discipline, surveillance, and relational power;

3. Mahmood on ethical self-formation and agency beyond overt resistance;
4. Fraser and Honneth on redistribution and recognition; and
5. Applied-linguistic scholarship on social class, mobility, and inequality.

These works help explain why migrant agency should not be reduced either to unrestricted individual choice or to visible resistance. Agency may also take relational, ethical, adaptive, linguistic, and less visible forms.

Narrative inquiry and multilingual qualitative research

For researchers using migrant stories and multilingual interview data, recommended starting points include:

1. Clandinin and Connelly on narrative inquiry;
2. Riessman on narrative methods;
3. Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik on narrative inquiry in language research;
4. De Fina and Georgakopoulou on discourse and narrative;
5. Pavlenko on autobiographical narratives in applied linguistics;
6. Temple and Young on translation in qualitative research; and
7. Saunders and colleagues on anonymising interview data.

These readings emphasise that narratives are not transparent containers of facts. They are situated accounts shaped by memory, language, interaction, audience, identity, and the circumstances in which stories are told.

Policy and labour-protection documents

Readers interested in migrant-worker policy should consult:

1. current Indonesian legislation concerning migrant-worker protection;
2. current regulations and legal documents issued by relevant government institutions;
3. International Labour Organization materials on fair recruitment and decent work;
4. International Organization for Migration resources on safe migration and reintegration;
5. ASEAN documents concerning migrant-worker protection; and

6. current reports on recruitment, labour mobility, and worker protection in major destination regions.

Policy documents should always be checked for amendments, replacements, or changes in implementation.

C.6 Using Resources Responsibly

Official information, academic research, and organisational publications can improve understanding of labour migration, but they cannot replace professional assistance in an emergency. Migrant workers facing immediate danger, violence, detention, severe illness, trafficking, or other urgent situations should contact appropriate local emergency services and verified Indonesian consular or migrant-protection authorities.

Readers should also recognise the limits of general migration advice. Employment law, visa regulation, sponsorship arrangements, labour rights, complaint systems, and emergency procedures differ across countries and may change over time.

Most importantly, institutional resources should not replace listening to migrant workers themselves. Migrants and returnees possess detailed knowledge about recruitment, communication, workplace relationships, family pressures, survival strategies, and the practical accessibility of protection systems.

Their participation is therefore essential in:

1. designing pre-departure programmes;
2. developing language curricula;
3. evaluating recruitment systems;
4. improving complaint mechanisms;
5. supporting migrant families;
6. planning return and reintegration programmes; and
7. conducting future research.

Migrant workers should be understood not only as beneficiaries of policy or sources of research data, but also as knowledge producers and partners in the development of more humane and equitable transnational labour pathways.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Helena Verusha Ali is a linguist, researcher, and academic who holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics (Dr. Li.). Her interdisciplinary scholarship examines the relationships among language, communication, culture, migration, identity, and social development. Her research is particularly concerned with how individuals and communities negotiate meaning, participation, belonging, and social recognition within multilingual, intercultural, and transnational environments.

Her academic work engages with contemporary debates in applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, intercultural communication, discourse studies, migration studies, and social inequality. She has disseminated her research through scholarly publications, academic conferences, and collaborative research projects. Across her research and teaching, she is committed to advancing inclusive approaches to communication and to understanding language as a social practice shaped by culture, identity, mobility, and power.

Her principal research interests include language and identity, multilingual practices, intercultural communication, discourse and social interaction, migrant experiences, social class, and communication in educational and professional settings. In this volume, she provides the primary empirical and conceptual foundation derived from her doctoral research on Indonesian migrant workers in a Middle Eastern labour context.

Yanuaris Yanu Dharmawan is a linguist, researcher, and lecturer in Indonesia who holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics (Dr. Li.). His academic expertise encompasses applied linguistics, English language teaching, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, and language assessment.

His research has addressed a wide range of topics, including code-switching, code-mixing, multilingual communication, classroom discourse, listening and speaking pedagogy, digital

learning environments, language assessment, and language use in educational and professional contexts. He has authored and co-authored scholarly publications contributing to the development of linguistic research and English language education in Indonesia.

As an educator and researcher, Dharmawan is committed to promoting innovative, context-sensitive approaches to language teaching and learning while supporting the development of future language professionals. His scholarship approaches language both as a structured linguistic system and as a social resource through which individuals negotiate knowledge, identity, relationships, and participation.

In this book, he contributed substantially to transforming the original doctoral research into a coherent book-length manuscript. His work involved developing the volume's overall architecture, reorganising the research into thematic chapters, strengthening connections across theoretical and empirical discussions, and adapting the material for a broader interdisciplinary readership.