

Professional Communication Education: Culture, Digital Ethics, and AI for Indonesia Migrant Workers in Japan

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted 22-Juni-2026

Received 26-Juni-2026

Published 27-Juni-2026

Keywords:

Professional Communication;
Cross-Cultural communication;
Digital Ethic;
Artificial Intelligence;

ABSTRACT

Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Japan often face professional communication barriers due to cultural differences, language barriers, and digital literacy requirements. This community service program aims to equip members of PERMA UTLLN Japan and Indonesian migrant workers with professional communication skills, cross-cultural communication skills, digital ethics, and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) through a mixed-method approach consisting of interactive webinars, case studies, and simulations via Zoom. Data from observations and discussions were evaluated using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques through thematic categorization. The program results demonstrated an increase in understanding of assertive communication in the workplace, a reduction in the risk of culture shock through the philosophy of omotenashi, and the acceleration of ethics-based digital literacy in utilizing AI as a communication assistant. In conclusion, the integration of communication training and applied technology literacy significantly enhances the adaptive capacity, career performance, and work-study balance of student-workers abroad. The novelty of this program lies in the reconstruction of an interdisciplinary training curriculum that simultaneously combines cross-cultural intelligence with practical AI skills—a new blend of competencies that has never been implemented in conventional migrant worker support programs.

Kata Kunci:

*Komunikasi Profesional;
Komunikasi Lintas Budaya;
Etika Digital;
Kecerdasan Buatan;*

ABSTRAK

Pekerja Migran Indonesia (PMI) di Jepang kerap menghadapi hambatan komunikasi profesional akibat perbedaan budaya, kendala bahasa, dan tuntutan literasi digital. Program pengabdian ini bertujuan membekali anggota PERMA UTLN Jepang dan pekerja migran Indonesia dengan keterampilan komunikasi profesional, komunikasi lintas budaya, etika digital, dan pemanfaatan Artificial Intelligence (AI) melalui pendekatan campuran (*mixed-method*) berupa webinar interaktif, studi kasus, dan simulasi via Zoom. Data dari observasi dan diskusi dievaluasi menggunakan teknik analisis deskriptif kualitatif melalui kategorisasi tematik. Hasil program menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman komunikasi asertif di tempat kerja, penurunan risiko kejutan budaya (*culture shock*) lewat filosofi *omotenashi*, serta akselerasi literasi digital berbasis etika dalam memanfaatkan AI sebagai asisten komunikasi. Kesimpulannya, integrasi pelatihan komunikasi dan literasi teknologi terapan secara signifikan meningkatkan kapasitas adaptasi, performa karier, serta keseimbangan peran ganda (*work-study balance*) mahasiswa-pekerja di luar negeri. Kebaruan program ini terletak pada rekonstruksi kurikulum pelatihan interdisipliner yang secara simultan mengawinkan kecerdasan lintas budaya dengan keterampilan praktis AI, sebuah bauran kompetensi baru yang belum pernah diimplementasikan pada program pendampingan PMI konvensional.

INTRODUCTION

The flow of Indonesian labor migration to developed countries in East Asia, especially Japan, has seen significant escalation in this era of globalization and contemporary mediatization. This phenomenon of transnational mobilization cannot be separated from macroeconomic conditions and global demographic shifts. Japan is currently grappling with an acute demographic crisis in the form of declining birth rates and massive population aging (*super-aging society*). This situation has created a substantial labor shortage across various domestic sectors and strategic industries, ranging from manufacturing and construction to the medical care sector (*careworker*) (Nurpauziah, 2025). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), international labor migration has become an important mechanism for addressing labor market imbalances between countries, particularly when destination countries experience demographic pressures and shortages of productive-age workers (International Labour Organization) (ILO, 2021).

To address this crisis, the Japanese government has reformed its immigration regulations by opening up employment opportunities to skilled international workers. According to recent labor trends, the implementation of new visa schemes such as Specified Skilled Workers (SSW), in addition to existing technical internship schemes, has triggered a

massive surge in the number of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) coming to Japan (BP2MI, 2025). Indonesia now occupies a strategic position as one of the primary suppliers of skilled labor regarded as having a competitive edge in the Japanese job market. However, international labor migration involves not only economic mobility but also complex processes of social and cultural adaptation. Migrant workers must negotiate new cultural systems, communication patterns, and workplace expectations in destination countries (Kim, 2001).

However, the physical transition from the homeland to the new workplace in the destination country does not proceed linearly without obstacles. Upon arrival in Japan, Indonesian Migrant Workers are confronted with the reality of highly complex and multiperspective professional communication challenges. Industries and corporations in Japan are known for their rigid work ethic standards, strict discipline, and organizational cultures entrenched with unwritten codes. Previous studies confirm that fundamental differences in work ethic, the complexity of business language levels, and Japanese sociocultural politeness norms often act as psychological and technical barriers, triggering operational obstacles and interpersonal misunderstandings in industrial settings (Athallah & Dharma, 2024). Previous research on Indonesian migrant workers in Japan indicates that intercultural communication competence plays an essential role in reducing culture shock, facilitating adaptation processes, and improving migrants' ability to establish effective interactions within Japanese social and professional environments (Shasrini, 2023).

Professional communication competence is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor in migrant workers' adaptation because communication functions not only as a tool for information exchange but also as a mechanism for building trust, professional identity, and workplace belonging. According to Byram (1997), intercultural communication competence consists of interconnected dimensions involving knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral skills that enable individuals to interact effectively across cultural boundaries. Therefore, migrant workers require not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness and adaptive communication strategies.

Professional Japanese language is highly hierarchical, divided into Sonkeigo (honorific speech for superiors/clients), Kenjougo (humble speech), and Teineigo (standard polite speech). PMI's inability to navigate this linguistic structure in formal workspaces is often misinterpreted by local supervisors (shounin) as a lack of respect or professionalism. As a result, daily communication friction arises, reducing work efficiency and creating emotional mental burdens for domestic workers. This challenge reflects the importance of understanding high-context communication cultures, where meaning is frequently embedded in social relationships, situational contexts, and implicit norms rather than explicit verbal expressions (Hall, 1976).

This dilemma is even more acutely felt by the target migrant community groups in this community service activity, namely, the Overseas Open University Student Association (PERMA UTLLN) Japan and migrant workers in Japan. The partner members form a unique

community with distinctive sociological characteristics, as they take on dual roles as full-time migrant workers and as students independently pursuing higher education through distance learning systems. On one hand, they are bound by industrial work contracts demanding full physical energy and mental focus for 8 to 10 hours per day. On the other, they bear academic responsibilities to complete coursework, read scientific literature, and prepare for exams. Migration sociology studies show that working-class students abroad possess higher vulnerability to mental stress due to time management conflicts and dual adaptation demands (Farnaz et al., 2026). Migration sociology studies indicate that migrant workers who simultaneously pursue education experience multiple adaptation demands, requiring effective self-management, resilience, and social support systems (Berry, 2005). They reside in a liminal space demanding extreme division of focus, where failure to manage either role can have fatal consequences on their employment status or the continuation of their academic studies while abroad.

They reside in a liminal space demanding extreme division of focus, where failure to manage either role can have fatal consequences on their employment status or the continuation of their academic studies while abroad. Based on the results of initial situational analysis and in-depth observation conducted by the service team on the PERMA UTLN Japan partners, four main problems were identified. First, there is a lack of mastery in effective and tactical communication techniques in foreign work environments. Many PMI tend to be passive (avoidant) when facing unclear work instructions out of fear of making language mistakes, even though Japanese industry strongly emphasizes the principle of Horenso (reporting, confirming, and consulting). Second, there is vulnerability to psychosocial conflict or culture shock due to limited cross-cultural understanding. Unawareness of Japanese work philosophies, such as omotenashi (sincere hospitality) and the concept of monozukuri (excellence in craftsmanship), often leaves workers feeling alienated and pressured by the operational standards imposed.

Third, there is limited understanding of social media etiquette and digital correspondence (netiquette) within professional domains. In the modern digital ecosystem, formal interactions between students and campus institutions and between workers and company management often shift to cyberspace via official email or instant messaging applications. While the utilization of digital platforms in rural community contexts operates as strategic instrument for expanding information reach and community promotion (Amalina et al., 2025), its application within a transnational professional framework scales up into a vital necessity for establishing cross-border corporate branding and personal career alignment. Digital communication requires new forms of literacy because online interaction involves issues of professionalism, privacy, identity management, and ethical responsibility (Livingstone, 2014).

Fourth, there is a lack of practical skills to explore Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based tools to save time completing work or academic tasks. Amidst limited time due to overtime work,

student PMIs actually have a pressing need for smart assistant technologies such as Generative AI to help summarize lecture material, translate work documents, or draft reports. However, due to limited literacy in smart instruction utilization (prompt engineering), the potential of this technology has yet to be ethically and productively optimized. Recent studies highlight that AI literacy is becoming an essential digital competence because users must understand not only technological functions but also ethical considerations, limitations, and responsible usage practices (Ng et al., 2021).

Justification for prioritizing four issues above in this service program emphasizes the importance of mastering a blend of professional communication competence and digital technology literacy simultaneously. Equipping these aspects becomes an urgent priority so that PMIs are not only able to survive economically while abroad but can thrive and enhance their productivity and career performance in an accelerated manner on the global stage. The strategic deployment of digital technology and social media platforms within community empowerment frameworks has previously demonstrated a strong capacity to stimulate localized innovation, bridge structural knowledge gaps, and optimize community engagement (Amalina, 2025). Replicating and scaling up this adaptive pedagogical approach within a transnational training model is therefore critical to addressing the more multi-layered digital challenges faced by international migrant workers. The theoretical framework of this program is based on the theory of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) developed by Byram (1997) and combined with Kim's (2001) Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory. According to these theoretical perspectives, effective adaptation and functional success of an individual in transnational environments rely heavily on the alignment of three main dimensions: cognitive (structural linguistic and sociocultural knowledge), affective (ability to manage stress and cultural empathy), and communicative behavioral aspects in both public and private spaces. Training that integrates cultural understanding with mastery of applied digital technology is believed to stimulate intellectual independence among participants. Therefore, the main objective of this service program is to provide a comprehensive integrated training in the form of a webinar series involving multidisciplinary faculty to help address these communication barriers, with long-term benefits including enhanced professional capability, strengthened cyber competitiveness, and independent intellectual capacity for PMIs in Japan. This community service program offers a more robust framework than similar international initiatives, such as those by Marmoah et al. (2025), which focused on financial literacy for Indonesian migrant workers, and Adika et al. (2026), which aimed to improve copywriting skills and digital literacy. While previous frameworks relied on generalized descriptions, this article proposes a more actionable, solution-oriented approach, serving as a comprehensive reference for future community service projects.



Figure 1. Solution framework

METHOD

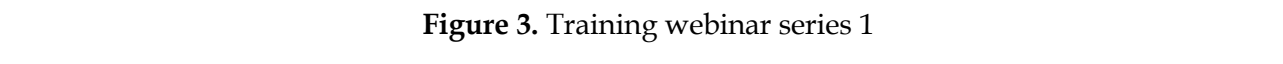
The solution offered to address the issues faced by the PERMA UTLLN Japan partner is the implementation of an intensive education program through “Training Webinar Series 1” with the main theme “Breaking the Barrier: Professional Communication for Indonesian Migrant Workers.” The applied approach prioritizes an interactive andragogical method that combines theoretical lectures, analysis of real case studies from Japanese industries, as well as live demonstrations of technology applications (real-time simulation).



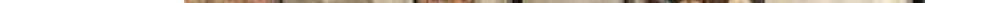
Figure 2. Method program implementation

Activity The workflow for resolving partner issues is systematically designed through three main stages:

1. Preparation Stage: Coordinating online with the PERMA UTLLN Japan management for material needs synchronization, creating publicity media in the form of digital posters, distributing online registration forms based on QR codes, and preparing the virtual meeting room.
2. Implementation Stage: Delivery of core material with the theme “Breaking the Barrier: Professional Communication for Indonesian Migrant Workers,” divided into four main sub-competencies by an expert lecturer team from Vocational School, Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS):
 - a. Material 1
Effective communication techniques in the workplace and while living abroad by Husna Nur Amalina, M.A.
 - b. Material 2
Cross-cultural understanding by Dr. Marimin, M.Si.
 - c. Material 3
Digital communication ethics for work and study purposes by Kennia Wikanditha, M.Li.
 - d. Material 4



This community service program was held on Sunday, 17 May 2026 at the Zoom Meeting virtual room, scheduled precisely from 07:55 to 10:00 Japan Standard Time (JST)



Data Analysis Technique

To systematically measure the program's impact and capture the participants' communicative needs, the qualitative data gathered during the webinar—consisting of field observations, recorded audio transcripts from the Q&A sessions, and textual logs from the Zoom chat room—were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive analysis method. The analytical framework adapted an interactive approach involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The verbal inquiries and textual interactions from the migrant worker participants were synthesized using thematic categorization based on the three core pillars of the intervention: (1) cross-cultural communication adjustments, (2) digital professional ethics (netiquette), and (3) applied AI tool efficiency. This qualitative mapping was utilized to comprehensively describe the cognitive shift, emotional responses, and contextual communication barriers faced by the student-workers within their respective Japanese industrial and academic environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Community service with the theme “Breaking the Barrier: Professional Communication for Indonesian Migrant Workers” was held online through a webinar as a form of the university’s contribution in enhancing the professional communication capacity of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. This activity focused on three main aspects that present challenges for migrant workers in the international work environment, namely understanding cross-cultural communication, digital communication ethics, and the utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support professional communication. The event featured speakers from the fields of communication, public relations, and digital technology who provided practical insights about strategies for building effective communication in multicultural workplaces. The first session discussed the importance of cross-cultural communication competence for migrant workers in facing differences in values, norms, and communication habits between Indonesia and Japan. Participants gained an understanding that successful communication in an international context is determined not only by language skills, but also by the ability to understand cultural contexts that influence communication behavior.



Figure 5. Presentation on effective communication techniques in the world of work and overseas by Husna Nur Amalina, M.A.



Figure 6. presentation on cross-cultural understanding by Dr. Marimin, M.Si.

Cross-cultural communication competence is a crucial aspect because migrant workers often face challenges such as differences in communication patterns, professional expectations, and social rules in the destination country. Samovar et al. (2017) explain that intercultural communication requires the ability to understand the value systems, beliefs, and behavioral patterns of other cultures so that the process of exchanging messages can take place effectively. Therefore, providing orientation on Japanese work culture is a strategic step to help migrant workers build more harmonious professional relationships. The second session discussed digital communication ethics in the workplace. Participants were provided with an understanding of the changing patterns of professional communication due to digital technology developments. Currently, communication between migrant workers and companies, coworkers, and communities occurs not only face-to-face but also through various digital platforms such as instant messaging applications, email, and social media. In this context, the ability to understand digital ethics is essential to ensure communication remains professional, effective, and responsible. The discussion on digital ethics emphasized several aspects, namely the use of appropriate language in online communication, awareness of information security, managing digital identity, and understanding the permanent impact of the digital footprint.



Figure 7. Presentation on digital communication ethics by Kennia Wikanditha, M.Li.

Dennis and Clancy (2022) explain that advances in digital technology have created new demands for digital ethics literacy, as users are expected not only to be able to use technology but also to understand the social and ethical consequences of digital communication activities. The third session discussed the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a supporting technology for professional communication. Participants were introduced to the use of AI to assist in various communication needs, such as language translation, composing formal messages, information retrieval, and helping to understand the context of cross-language communication. The use of AI has become relevant for migrant workers because this technology can help reduce communication barriers arising from language limitations. Nevertheless, participants were also made aware that AI use must always be critical and responsible. AI cannot fully replace human capabilities in understanding cultural context, emotions, and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, human communication skills remain the main aspect that needs to be developed. Dai et al., (2025) state that the use of AI in professional communication needs to be accompanied by digital literacy competence and cultural sensitivity in order for technology to provide optimal benefit. During the event, participants demonstrated active participation through discussion and Q&A sessions. Various questions raised showed a real need for an understanding of professional communication, especially in addressing the challenges of cultural adaptation, communication with coworkers, and interactions with fellow migrant workers in Japan.

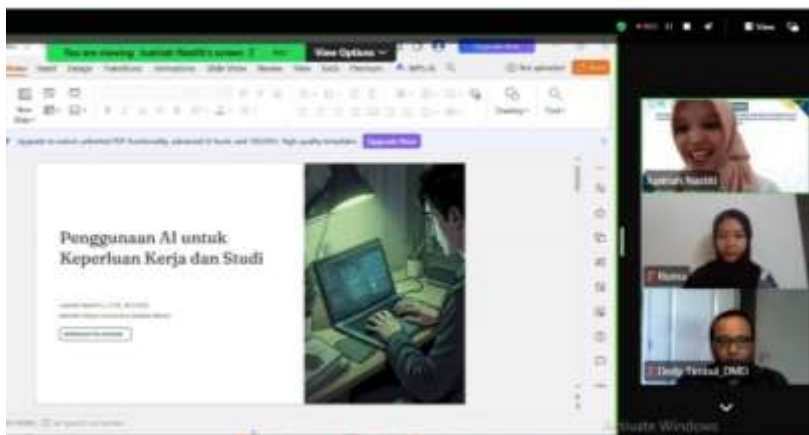


Figure 8. Presentation on the use of ai for work and study purposes by Juairiah Nastiti Sandyaningrum, M.TCSOL.

Discussion

The high level of participant engagement indicates that the topic of professional communication is directly relevant to the experiences of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. Discussions regarding professional communication training for Indonesian migrant workers in Japan reveal that communication skills are a key competency in supporting the successful adaptation of workers in an international environment. Labor migration is not only about the geographical movement of individuals but also involves processes of social and cultural adaptation. In this context, communication serves as the primary tool for migrant workers to build professional relationships, understand social norms, and develop a professional identity in the host country. In doing so, Marmoah et al., (2025) agreed that effective communication is really needed. Moreover, the cross-cultural communication training provided in this program aligns with the perspective of Samovar et al., (2017), who argue that intercultural communication requires awareness of differences in value systems and interaction patterns. Indonesian migrant workers in Japan need to understand that Japanese work culture has distinct communication characteristics, such as respect for hierarchy, the importance of group harmony, discipline, and a tendency toward indirect communication. Understanding these cultural traits can help reduce the potential for conflicts arising from communication misunderstandings.



Figure 9. Discussion and Q&A session with participants and speakers

In addition to cultural aspects, the development of digital technology has also brought significant changes to the communication patterns of migrant workers. Digital media facilitates

interaction but simultaneously creates new challenges regarding the professionalism of communication. Dennis and Clancy (2022) explained that digital communication requires ethical awareness because the digital space has a different character than face-to-face communication. Messages sent via digital media can have broader social and professional implications, so users need to understand the boundaries between personal and professional communication. Darmawati et al., (2025) said that digital communication often lacks emotional and nonverbal elements, increasing the risk of misinterpretation. In the context of migrant workers, the ability to manage digital communication is part of professional competence. Mistakes in language use, message delivery, or the management of personal information can affect work relationships. Therefore, education on digital ethics in this initiative serves as a preventive measure to enhance migrant workers' readiness to navigate an increasingly digitized work environment.

The use of AI in professional communication is also a key aspect of this initiative. The availability of AI technology offers migrant workers opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of their communication, particularly when facing language barriers. AI can serve as a tool to translate messages, understand professional terminology, and assist in drafting formal communications. However, the use of AI still requires critical evaluation skills, as the technology has limitations in understanding social and cultural contexts. Dai et al., (2025) emphasize that AI in professional communication should be understood as a supporting technology (communication assistant) rather than a replacement for human communication skills. Users still need critical thinking skills, cultural understanding, and ethical considerations to ensure that the results provided by the technology align with the communication context at hand.

From a community service perspective, this initiative demonstrates that enhancing professional communication skills can serve as a form of empowerment for migrant workers in addressing the challenges of labor market globalization. Through the integration of cross-cultural communication, digital ethics, and the use of AI, migrant workers are better equipped to build professional relationships, boost their self-confidence, and adapt to international work environments. Overall, the "Breaking the Barrier: Professional Communication for Indonesian Migrant Workers" program not only provides theoretical knowledge but also practical skills relevant to the needs of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. This initiative demonstrates that communication literacy is a crucial component in enhancing human resource quality in the digital age and global society.

CONCLUSION

Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Japan often face professional communication barriers stemming from differences in work culture, language barriers, and the demands of modern digital literacy. This community service program aims to equip PMI with effective

communication skills, cross-cultural understanding, digital communication ethics, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to support work efficiency and studies abroad. The program's target partners are the Association of Overseas Open University Students (PERMA UTLN) and migrant workers in Japan. Activities will be conducted through a blended approach using interactive lectures, case studies, and technology simulations via the Zoom Meeting platform on May 17, 2026. The activity procedures included a preparation phase, presentation of materials by four expert speakers, interactive discussions, and an evaluation of the activity's impact. The results of the community service program showed an increase in participants' understanding and practical skills regarding effective communication strategies in the Japanese workplace, a reduction in the risk of culture shock through an understanding of local sociocultural contexts, and an improvement in ethically grounded AI-based digital literacy. Interactive education for migrant workers in Japan fosters the development of communication skills and understanding while living abroad.

Based on the results of the “Breaking the Barrier: Professional Communication for Indonesian Migrant Workers” program, it is recommended that future community service initiatives be developed on an ongoing basis through more practical training, such as communication simulations in a Japanese work environment, exercises in drafting professional messages, strengthening workplace language skills, and case studies on cross-cultural communication. Additionally, materials on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) should be expanded to include training on relevant AI technologies to support migrant workers' professional activities, while maintaining a focus on ethical considerations, data security, and critical thinking skills. Program development could also involve the Indonesian migrant worker community, vocational training institutions, and educational partners in Japan to create more comprehensive support. Through the sustainability of this program, professional communication education is expected to enhance the readiness of Indonesian migrant workers to adapt to a multicultural and increasingly digitized global work environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

writing team would like to express its gratitude to Sebelas Maret University through the Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat (LPPM) UNS Surakarta for providing funding support to the 2026 MANDATORY INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE (PIM-UNS) under contract number 461/UN27.22/PT.01.03/2026.

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