

Digital Communication Skills: Migrants and Cultural Identity

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SUMMARY

The digital age has transformed how people communicate, access information, and build personal and professional networks. For many communities, particularly migrant workers and individuals in underserved areas, there remains a gap in digital literacy that hinders their ability to fully leverage the benefits of digital communication and intercultural communication competence. Despite widespread access to smartphones and the internet, many community members face challenges in effectively using digital tools for meaningful engagement, personal growth, and professional development. This community service program aims to equip participants with essential digital communication skills, enabling them to access valuable online information, maintain social connections, and develop personal branding strategies. The community service conducted towards Indonesia Migrant Workers in Penang, Malaysia. Participation of all attendees were very enthusiastic regarding the topic and gave feedbacks as necessary. This activity could cater the cognitive level of audiences by providing understanding regarding intercultural communication competence developed in using digital devices which beneficial for migrant workers. After the activity, audience could enhance digital literacy for accessing and evaluating online information, strengthen social connections through responsible digital communication, and improve intercultural communication competence.

Keywords: Digital communication, intercultural communication, competence, migrant

INTRODUCTION

Digital communication has become an indispensable tool for staying connected, accessing information, and navigating diverse cultural landscapes. Migrant workers, in particular, face unique challenges in the host country as they adapt to new environments, often requiring effective communication skills to maintain social connection, access critical information, and integrate into local communities. Research suggests that for these individuals, digital platforms function as a transnational umbilical cord, allowing them to maintain simultaneous presence in both their home and host societies (Diminescu, 2020). However, effective integration often requires sophisticated communication skills to manage social connections and access critical information. Despite their pivotal role in regional economies, migrant workers frequently encounter difficulties in using digital platforms due to a lack of technical skills and limited awareness of cultural nuances in online communication.

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has transformed how people interact, share experiences, and engage with cultural content. These platforms offer immense potential for promoting intercultural understanding, yet they also present challenges for those unfamiliar with digital communication norms. Migrant workers must navigate language barriers, varying communication styles, and cultural sensitivities to foster meaningful connections in both digital and physical spaces. This process involves intercultural literacy, where individuals learn to decode and recode messages across different cultural systems to foster meaningful connections (Polizzi, 2021).

Research underscores the importance of digital literacy in enhancing intercultural competence. Digital literacy goes beyond technical know-how; it involves the ability to interpret and communicate effectively across cultural contexts. Studies suggest that individuals who develop these skills are better equipped to manage cultural differences, reduce misunderstandings, and build inclusive networks. Furthermore, social media serves as a space for digital placemaking, where migrants reconstruct a sense of belonging through digital interactions (Pang et al., 2022).

Moreover, fostering intercultural communication competence through digital tools can empower migrant workers to share their unique cultural narratives, contributing to a more inclusive and culturally diverse digital ecosystem. Storytelling, in particular, serves as a powerful medium for expressing personal experiences and fostering empathy. By engaging in digital storytelling, migrants can challenge dominant stereotypes and reclaim their agency in the digital ecosystem (Gualda & Fragoso, 2020).

This community service initiative aims to address these challenges by equipping migrant workers with essential digital communication skills. Participants learned how to access valuable online information, build and maintain social connections, and develop intercultural communication competence through responsible and respectful digital engagement. For Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI), smartphones and social media are vital for reducing social isolation (Siriwardane & Winanti, 2022). However, the use of these platforms also contributes to the construction of perceptions and stereotypes. Thus, media literacy, the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create content that is crucial. By enhancing media literacy, migrant workers can make informed decisions, advocate for their rights, and represent their identities properly. As individuals act not just as users but as content creators, they participate in identity negotiation, constructing their roles as TKI or Indonesian citizens (Witteborn, 2022). This program provided practical tools for effective communication, emphasizing responsible behavior and cultural awareness as essential components of digital well-being (Sun et al., 2023).

Through a series of interactive workshops and collaborative projects, this program provided participants with practical tools and strategies for effective digital communication. It emphasized responsible online behavior, cultural awareness, and personal storytelling as essential components of digital literacy. By investing in these skills, the program aims to empower migrant workers to thrive in a digitally interconnected world, fostering personal and professional growth while promoting cross-cultural understanding.

Migrant workers generally will face numerous challenges in adapting to a new environment, including the fact that they are apart from their family, limited access to reliable information as well as communication channels. New Media is commonly used by individuals for various purposes such as seeking and sharing information, seeking for new friends or community as well as engaging with family. As for Indonesian Migrant Workers (Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, TKI in short), the using of new media,

especially social media, is common among them to interact and communicate with locals, TKI peers, and family in the home country.

Besides, most of the migrant workers are the active users of social media for various purposes such as them to interact and communicate with locals, TKI peers, and family in the home country. For example, in a transnational migration setting, Facebook has been used as a tool to maintain individual relationships with their families and friends back home (Mintarsih, 2019). Besides, the using of smartphone, as well as social media, could reduce social isolation when TKIs are abroad. TKIs keep their communication with their home family and friends through social media which at the same time keeps them in their own enclave culture virtually (Wahyudi et al., 2020). The use of social media has contributed to the construction of perception, stereotype, and even prejudice of them (Ridaryanthi, 2019, 2021). With the numerous types of social media platform, it is crucial for migrant workers to develop media literacy skills to navigate and critically assess the information they encounter.

Media literacy could be defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content effectively. The fact that individuals using social media not only as users but also as content creators could take part in constructing their cultural identity through their content; both in narrative or photos. The contents created could construct the idea of their identity as TKIs or as Indonesian citizens. Enhancing media literacy among migrant workers can empower them to make informed decisions, advocate for their rights, address social issues, as well as construct identity representations properly.

Media literacy basically entails the ability to comprehend and critically analyze various forms of media, including print, digital, and social media. The concept regarding social media grounded in the cultivation of critical thinking, active involvement and knowledge of how media play a role in society. Limited studies regarding media literacy among migrant workers actually could be addressed as the foundation of the implementation this community service activity to further comprehend the TKIs literacy in using social media.

The media literacy initiative in Penang, focusing on culturally sensitive approaches, could foster critical awareness among TKIs, enabling them to be not just passive users, but responsible digital citizens who understand the power and risk of online identity construction. This community service program aims to equip participants with essential digital communication skills, enabling them to access valuable online information, maintain social connections, navigate intercultural communication challenges, and develop individual cultural identity.

1. To improve participants' ability to search, evaluate, and utilize valuable online information through digital media;
2. To foster responsible and impactful use of digital media for maintaining social connections;
3. To provide practical knowledge on digital etiquette and communication best practices;

This community service activity involves students during the implementation; this means that students are engaged with the program and community as part of the learning process. The activity that conducted within the community can be the alternative learning process that could accommodate and support classroom activity. Society as living lab could incorporate the practical program that could embed the theoretical.

Digital communication and intercultural communication competence programs is one of the solutions of the issue stated. The implementation of digital literacy and intercultural communication competence program can be conducted by collaborating with local community centres, in this case such as NGOs, or government agencies to organize workshops or seminars or training sessions. The program could be tailored to the specific needs and languages of the migrant population. Due to that, international collaboration for community service program is one of the important activities to be conducted facilitated by the local NGO which engage with the migrant workers. Therefore, collaboration with PERMAI could accommodate the problem-solving process to seek for solution on this situation.

This international collaboration community service proposed is in line with several goals in the Sustainable Development Goals; as in number 17 regarding partnership for goals that lead to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, number 11 regarding sustainable cities and communities that aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and number 4 regarding quality education that aims to ensure the inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The University's Key Performance Indicators (IKU)

This research supports the study program, as well as the faculty and the university, in achieving IKU 3 whereby lecturers conduct activities outside the home campus and IKU 2 whereby students exposed to activity outside to the home campus. In this event, the international collaboration community service was taken place in Pulau Pinang as collaboration work between FIKOM UMB and PERMAI.

METHOD

The community service was conducted in three stages of activities as follows:

1. Social Media Literacy Seminar
2. Educational video presentation
3. Interactive discussion
4. Evaluation

During the seminar, the community service team conveyed materials regarding social media literacy that could enhance audiences/participants understanding on the subject matter. Meanwhile the educational video presentation will be provided for them to have individual learning and re-learning individually during and after the seminar. Interactive discussion after the seminar gives opportunity for individuals to understand better any topics that important for them. Lastly, evaluation was conducted by distributing questionnaires to obtain constructive feedback that could contribute to a better community service implementation in the future. After the activities, the following are benefits gained by the audience:

1. Enhance digital literacy for accessing and evaluating online information;
2. Strengthen social connections through responsible digital communication;
3. Improve intercultural communication competence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the contemporary digital era, social media has become not only a platform for entertainment and connection but also a significant space for identity negotiation and representation, especially for transnational communities such as Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) in Malaysia. With a considerable number of IMWs spread across Peninsular Malaysia, including in urban areas like Penang, as well as in Sabah, Sarawak, and Labuan, their access to digital technology and social platforms presents both opportunities and challenges. Many TKIs, particularly in Penang, use platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram to communicate with families, share their daily experiences, and form online communities. However, limited digital media literacy can make them vulnerable to online misinformation, scams, cyberbullying, and exploitation (Rahadi, 2022). Moreover, social media becomes a site where migrant workers often struggle between representing their "home" identity and adapting to host country norms, potentially leading to identity dissonance or confusion (Lim, 2020).

Without adequate digital media literacy training, these workers may unintentionally share personal content that puts them at risk or reinforces negative stereotypes. Furthermore, their ability to leverage digital platforms for economic empowerment (e.g., online entrepreneurship, digital advocacy, skill promotion) remains largely untapped due to the digital divide caused not just by access but by insufficient training and critical understanding of media content. Hence, a targeted social media literacy program is crucial to:

1. Equip TKI in Penang with the knowledge to use social media safely and responsibly.
2. Help them construct and negotiate their identities in a digital space without losing their cultural roots.
3. Prevent the misuse of media and protect them from disinformation or manipulation.
4. Encourage them to engage positively in transnational online communities that support mental health and cultural belonging.

Given the linguistic and cultural proximity between Indonesia and Malaysia, many TKIs feel a false sense of familiarity online, leading to overlooked dangers. Moreover, Malaysia's migrant

management system often limits social and educational outreach to workers, so community-based or academic collaborations are vital to provide continuous learning platforms (IOM, 2021).

The primary target of this community service program is Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKIs) and/or their family members residing in Pulau Penang, Malaysia. The community service was conducted at Yayasan An-Nadhoh, Penang Island, on Sunday, 4 May 2025. The activity was held within a day with a set of activities; seminars, workshop, interactive Q&A, and evaluation. This group was selected due to their significant presence in the region and their increasing reliance on digital platforms as a means to maintain communication, build social support systems, and express their personal and collective identities. Given their position as transnational citizens, TKIs often face cultural, social, and digital barriers that may hinder their ability to utilize social media effectively, safely, and meaningfully. Targeting this community allows for strategic intervention in improving their digital media practices and strengthening their cultural identity representation online.

In order to address the problem of limited digital literacy and the challenges in constructing and communicating collective cultural identity, the program offers two core solutions:

1. Enhancement of Digital Literacy among TKIs. This includes workshops and training modules that focus on:

- a) Understanding how social media works
- b) Identifying misinformation and harmful content
- c) Protecting privacy and digital identity
- d) Practicing responsible content consumption and sharing

The aim is to empower TKIs with critical thinking and technical skills to navigate digital environments more safely and productively.

2. Improvement of Digital Content Creation Skills. This component equips participants with:

- a) Practical skills in creating digital content such as videos, posters, and narratives
- b) Strategies for expressing cultural values, traditions, and identities
- c) Awareness of intercultural communication in online settings
- d) Guidelines on copyright and digital ethics

Through this event, TKIs can become active content creators who responsibly contribute to the digital space, while also maintaining their cultural roots and fostering solidarity within migrant communities.

The outputs of this community service are as follows:

1. Mass media publication: Publications of this activity are published in online media in Malaysia and Indonesia in order to raise awareness about the importance of digital literacy for migrant workers and to highlight the community engagement activities.
 - a) Okezone: https://edukasi.okezone.com/read/2025/05/16/65/3139558/universitas-mercu-buana-gelar-pelatihan-literasi-media-untuk-pekerja-migran-di-malaysia?utm_medium=sosmed&utm_source=whatsapp
 - b) RTM: <https://berita.rtm.gov.my/nasional/senarai-berita-nasional/senarai-artikel/program-khidmat-komuniti-bersama-antarabangsa-beri-impak-positif>
2. Educational poster for intellectual rights property (HKI): A visual educational resource was designed and disseminated to inform participants about the importance of intellectual property rights in digital content creation. This encourages the ethical use of media and protect creators' rights with Copyright Registered Number: EC002025089592 dated July, 15th 2025
3. Article for Journal publication: A scholarly article based on the community service process, findings, and outcomes was submitted to a relevant academic journal. This publication aims to contribute to the academic discourse on digital literacy, migrant identity, and community empowerment.
4. Video documentation is broadcasted through PPM UMB YouTube channel that can be viewed through the following link: <https://youtu.be/m4-jMuUEIAU?si=w2TmCtNZ7cunxNzx>

CONCLUSION

This community service program successfully addressed the digital literacy gap among Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) in Penang, Malaysia. By providing essential digital communication skills, the initiative empowered participants to access valuable online information, maintain social connections, and develop personal branding strategies while mitigating risks such as misinformation and scams. The program is particularly beneficial for TKIs in Penang as it equips them with the critical thinking and technical skills necessary to navigate digital environments safely and productively, helping them construct their identities in a digital space without losing their cultural roots. Furthermore, the program extends its benefits to a wider audience through an educational video documented and broadcasted on the PPM UMB YouTube channel. This channel accommodates the ongoing need for knowledge by serving as a platform for individual learning and re-learning even after the seminar's conclusion. The impact of this digital outreach is evident as the video has been seen frequently, 54 views as per present report, indicating a strong interest and positive reception from the public. Overall, this collaboration between academic institutions and local organizations like PERMAI demonstrates a vital model for continuous learning and community empowerment.

ATTACHMENTS:



Figure 1. Community Service Documentation



Figure 2. Community Service Documentation



Figure 3. Community Service Documentation



Figure 4. Community Service Documentation



**Daftar Hadir Peserta Kegiatan PkM
Skema Kerjasama Luar Negeri
Minggu, 4 Mei 2025**

Lokasi: 4

Tema : Media literacy and Personal branding training for Indonesia migrant workers in Penang Island, Malaysia

No	Bidang Ilmu	Nama Ketua Pelaksana	Paraf
1	Ilmu Komunikasi	ELLY YULIAWATI	<i>[Signature]</i>
2	Ilmu Komunikasi	ENJANG PERA IRAWAN	<i>[Signature]</i>
3	Ilmu Komunikasi	MELLY RIDARYANTHI	<i>[Signature]</i>
4	Ilmu Komunikasi	A RAHMAN H I	<i>[Signature]</i>
5	Ilmu Komunikasi	AFDAL MAKKURAGA PUTRA	<i>[Signature]</i>
6	Ilmu Komunikasi	DIAN AGUSTINE NURIMAN	<i>[Signature]</i>
7	Ilmu Komunikasi	NURHAYANI SARAGIH	<i>[Signature]</i>
8	Ilmu Komunikasi	RIZKI BRIANDANA	<i>[Signature]</i>
9	Ilmu Komunikasi	HENNI GUSFA	<i>[Signature]</i>
10	Ilmu Komunikasi	ACHMAD JAMIL	<i>[Signature]</i>
11	Ilmu Komunikasi	AHMAD MULYANA	<i>[Signature]</i>
12	Ilmu Komunikasi	HERI BUDIANTO	<i>[Signature]</i>
13	Ilmu Komunikasi	LEILA MONA	<i>[Signature]</i>
14	Ilmu Komunikasi	NUR KHOLISOH	<i>[Signature]</i>

Document 1. Attendance List 1



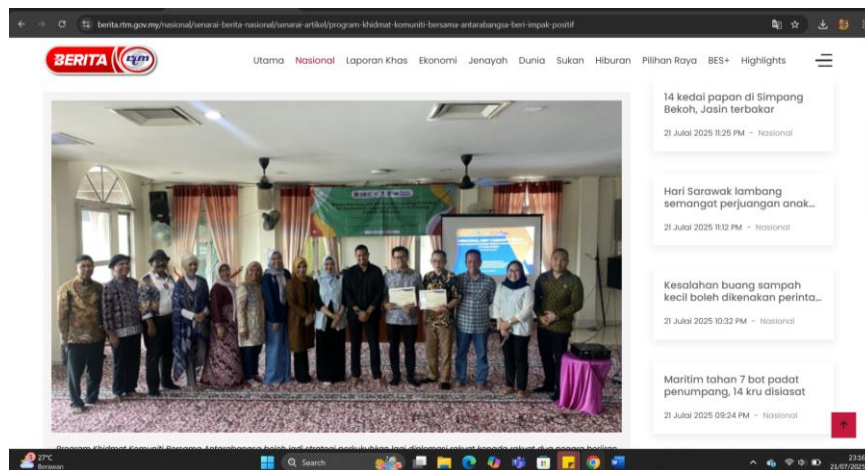
**Daftar Hadir Peserta Kegiatan PkM
Skema Kerjasama Luar Negeri
Minggu, 4 Mei 2025**

No.	Nama	Unit	Tanda Tangan
1	YANI	A	
2	Asriyeh	A	
3	Acustina	A	
4	ANI	A	
5	Mama Anggun	A	
6	Rina	A	
7	balqish	A	
8	aisyaa	A	
9	zulaikha	A	
10	siti	A	
11	HARRA2	A	
12	alexia	A	
13	Hana	A	H- 011-20707077
14	Dian	A	
15	shella	A	
16	Wiji	A	
17	Daniel	A	
18	M. Danish wafiq	A	
19	Kari	A	
20	M. QHALIS	A	

Document 2. Attendance List 2



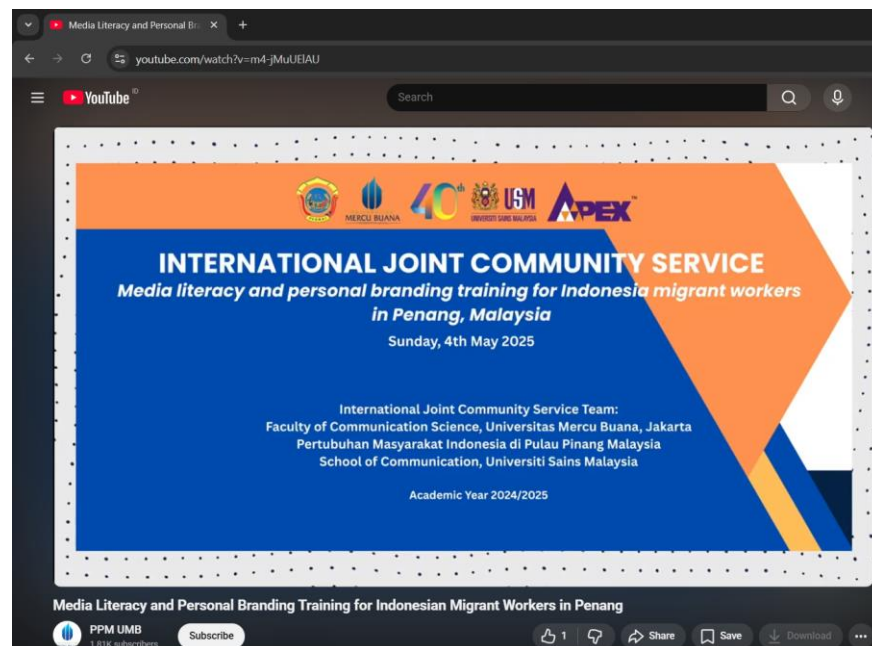
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<https://berita.rtm.gov.my/nasional/senarai-berita-nasional/senarai-artikel/program-khidmat-komuniti-bersama-antarabangsa-beri-impak-positif>

		
DIGITAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR ENHANCING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AMONG MIGRANTS		
Background: - DIGITAL COMMUNICATION is the process of exchanging information using digital technologies and platforms. It encompasses a wide range of methods, including email, instant messaging, social media, video conferencing, and more, all involving the transmission and reception of data through electronic devices. - INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE (IC) is the ability to recognise, value and work/interact within culturally diverse society/group, play a key role in academic, career and social-emotional development in a globalised world. - Enhancing digital communication skills through developing intercultural competence becomes crucial in today's global interaction. - This topic is related to SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 10. Furthermore, the community service has contributed to the opportunity of lecturers give back to community and play their roles outside the university.	Implementation: Community Service with topic of Media literacy and personal branding is a comprehensive set of training provided by lecturers from Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Mercu Buana, Jakarta, for Indonesia Migrant Workers in Penang, Malaysia. The Community Service activity is an international joint scheme of Universitas Mercu Buana, Permai and Universiti Sains Malaysia. The activity was taken place in Penang, 4th May 2025.	
Discussion: Intercultural communication competence is crucial both in face-to-face communication and mediated by digital technology. It's important to: - to develop intercultural awareness both online and offline - to enhance the cross-cultural understanding - to build individual capacity through cross-cultural competencies	Documentation: 	
Conclusion: Individuals should understand the importance of intercultural communication competence, moreover when they are actively interact through digital media. Digital communication skills is one of the prominent competences required for a better communication and relations in social interaction. Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4-jMuUEIAU	Team members: - Melly Ridaryanthi, Ph.D - Prof. Dr. Nur Kholisoh, M.Si - Anindita, M.I.Kom - Kurniawan Prasetyo, M.I.Kom Contact: Fakultas Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Mercu Buana Jalan Meruya Selatan No. 1, Kembangan, Jakarta Barat 11650 email: melly@mercubuana.ac.id	Acknowledgements: - Universitas Mercu Buana - LPPM - Universitas Mercu Buana - Fakultas Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Mercu Buana - Pertubuhan Malaysia Indonesia, Penang - Universiti Sains Malaysia <i>thank you</i>

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Video streamed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/m4-jMuUEIAU?si=w2TmCtNZ7cunxNzx>
Media Literacy and Personal Branding Training for Indonesian Migrant Workers in Penang

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