

Language and Cultural Literacy Issues among Indonesian Prospective Migrant Workers to Japan Kenshuusei (研修生) Visa

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Abstract

This study investigates the language and cultural literacy issues faced by Indonesian prospective migrant workers preparing for deployment to Japan under the Kenshuusei (研修生) visa program. As Japan continues to rely on foreign trainees to address labor shortages, Indonesian candidates are required to demonstrate adequate Japanese language proficiency and cultural readiness to ensure effective workplace integration. However, preliminary observations indicate persistent challenges in basic linguistic competencies—such as hiragana and katakana literacy, particle usage, sentence structure comprehension, and pronunciation accuracy—which hinder communication in professional contexts. Likewise, cultural literacy barriers emerge in understanding Japanese daily norms, workplace discipline, communication styles, and hierarchical relationships, often leading to adaptation difficulties and misinterpretations. Employing a mixed-method approach, this research analyzes assessment results, classroom observations, and focus group interviews conducted within selected LPK (Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja) training centers. The findings reveal that limited exposure to authentic language use, reliance on memorization-based learning, and insufficient cultural immersion activities contribute to trainees' low readiness. The study concludes that comprehensive training programs integrating contextual language learning and structured cultural orientation are essential for enhancing trainees' communicative competence and cultural adaptability. Strengthening these aspects will support the success of Indonesian migrant workers in meeting Japanese workplace expectations and improving their overall well-being during their stay in Japan.

Keywords: Language Literacy; Cultural Literacy; Literacy Issues, Kenshuusei, LPK

Introduction

Japan's demographic challenges—characterized by a rapidly aging population, declining birth rates, and a shrinking domestic workforce—have compelled the country to rely increasingly on foreign labor. One of the major pathways for this labor migration is the Kenshuusei (研修生), or technical intern training visa, which aims to transfer skills while addressing manpower shortages in key sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, caregiving, and services. Indonesia has become one of Japan's primary sending countries, with thousands of workers departing annually. While this migration corridor offers economic benefits and international experience, it also brings forth a complex set of challenges, particularly concerning language and cultural adaptation.

The ability to communicate effectively in Japanese is a fundamental requirement for technical interns. Japanese workplaces emphasize precision, efficiency, and hierarchy, requiring workers to understand not only basic grammar but also keigo, workplace-specific terminology, honorific expressions, and implicit communication patterns. Despite attending pre-departure language training programs in Indonesia, many prospective migrant workers still struggle to attain functional proficiency. This gap in language mastery often results in miscommunication, difficulty understanding instructions, and limited confidence when interacting with supervisors or co-workers.

Alongside linguistic competence, cultural literacy plays a critical role in the success of migrant adaptation. Japanese society is built upon values such as wa (和) or group harmony, senpai-kohai hierarchy, punctuality, discipline, and indirect communication. For many Indonesian trainees—who may come from culturally diverse but more flexible and expressive social environments—these norms can be unfamiliar and challenging. The contrast between Indonesian and Japanese cultural expectations can create misunderstandings, stress, and adjustment difficulties during the early stages of work placement.

Pre-departure training institutions in Indonesia, commonly referred to as *Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja (LPK)*, are responsible for preparing prospective trainees for their placement in Japan. However, the quality and consistency of these programs vary widely. While some institutions provide comprehensive training that integrates language learning, cultural education, and workplace simulations, others offer only basic modules that do not fully reflect the realities of Japanese industrial environments. This disparity in training quality significantly affects trainee readiness and the overall effectiveness of the *Kenshuusei* program.

The lack of standardized and robust cultural literacy training often leaves trainees unprepared for the implicit rules governing social interactions in Japanese workplaces. Issues such as misunderstanding hierarchical instructions, failure to comply with expected work discipline, and unfamiliarity with Japanese interpersonal etiquette frequently emerge. These challenges not only affect individual interns but also influence employer perceptions, productivity levels, and the reputation of Indonesian workers in the broader Japanese labor context.

Furthermore, studies have shown that language and cultural literacy challenges are among the major factors contributing to early contract termination, workplace disputes, and psychological stress among trainees. Without adequate preparation, trainees may experience difficulty adapting to structured routines, coping with communication pressure, or meeting performance standards. These challenges highlight the need for a deeper investigation into how Indonesian trainees perceive their preparedness and what specific literacy gaps they encounter before departure.

Despite the growing body of literature examining the *Kenshuusei* program, most studies focus on legal frameworks, recruitment issues, or cases of labor exploitation. Limited research specifically addresses the micro-level experiences of Indonesian prospective trainees related to their linguistic competence and cultural understanding. This creates an important research gap: understanding how preparedness—or the lack thereof—shapes the expectations, confidence, and potential adaptation outcomes of workers even before they arrive in Japan.

Given these conditions, examining the language and cultural literacy issues of Indonesian prospective migrant workers is essential for improving migration outcomes and strengthening training frameworks. By analyzing their competencies, challenges, and expectations, this study aims to provide insights that can guide LPKs, policymakers, and receiving organizations in designing more effective pre-departure programs. Ultimately, improving these aspects will support smoother intercultural integration, enhance workplace harmony, and ensure that the *Kenshuusei* program benefits both Indonesian workers and Japanese industries.

Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine the language and cultural literacy issues faced by Indonesian prospective migrant workers preparing for the *Kenshuusei* (研修生) program. The mixed-methods design integrates quantitative surveys to measure levels of linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding, and qualitative interviews to explore experiences, perceptions, and challenges in greater depth. This approach enables triangulation of data, allowing the researcher to capture both measurable patterns and nuanced insights regarding trainee preparedness.

The research was conducted across several *Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja (LPK)* in Indonesia that specialize in sending trainees to Japan. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on prospective workers who had completed at least three months of pre-departure training. A structured questionnaire was distributed to collect quantitative data on Japanese language competency (basic grammar, keigo, workplace vocabulary, listening comprehension) and cultural literacy (hierarchy, work ethics, communication norms, punctuality). Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of respondents, instructors, and program coordinators to explore training gaps, difficulties in learning, perceptions of Japanese workplace culture, and expectations before departure.

Data analysis was carried out in two stages. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends, proficiency levels, and areas of difficulty in language and cultural understanding. Qualitative interview data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to code recurring themes such as communication anxiety, cultural shock anticipation, training inconsistencies, and adaptation strategies. The integration of both datasets provides a comprehensive understanding of the literacy issues encountered by Indonesian migrant workers and highlights the training improvements needed to support their readiness for employment in Japan.

Result and Discussion

Language Literacy Issues

Language literacy is one of the most critical challenges faced by Indonesian prospective migrant workers preparing for the Kenshuusei (研修生) program. Although trainees undergo Japanese language training before departure, many struggle to achieve functional proficiency that meets workplace demands. Difficulties commonly arise in mastering basic grammar structures, expanding workplace-relevant vocabulary, and developing listening comprehension needed for fast-paced instructions. These limitations often lead to anxiety, reduced confidence, and misinterpretation of tasks, which can negatively affect communication with supervisors and co-workers.

Another significant issue is the limited ability to use keigo, the system of honorific and polite expressions essential in Japanese professional environments. Keigo requires not only memorizing vocabulary but also understanding hierarchical relationships and situational appropriateness, which can be challenging for learners unfamiliar with rigid sociolinguistic structures. In addition, Japanese communication relies heavily on implicit cues, indirect expressions, and nonverbal signals such as tone, silence, and body language. Trainees who rely on direct communication styles often struggle to interpret these subtleties, leading to misunderstandings even when basic language elements seem correct.

These language literacy issues are further compounded by the uneven quality of training provided by LPKs in Indonesia. While some institutions offer structured, immersive language programs, others provide minimal exposure, limited practice opportunities, or outdated teaching materials. As a result, many trainees depart for Japan without adequate real-life communication experience, creating a gap between classroom learning and actual workplace expectations. Without strong language literacy, trainees may face early adaptation difficulties, lower productivity, and increased workplace stress, underscoring the need for standardized, comprehensive, and practice-oriented language training before departure.

Understanding of Writing and Reading Hiragana and Katakana

Understanding the writing and reading of *hiragana* and *katakana* plays a foundational role in the acquisition of Japanese language literacy, especially for beginner learners such as Indonesian prospective migrant workers. Hiragana, which represents native Japanese sounds, serves as the primary script used in textbooks, basic instructions, and daily communication. Katakana, meanwhile, is essential for reading loanwords, company names, product labels, and technical terms commonly encountered in workplaces. Despite their importance, many learners struggle to differentiate the shapes, strokes, and functions of these two phonetic scripts, resulting in frequent errors during reading and writing tasks.

One of the common challenges is visual similarity between certain characters—such as さ (sa) and ち (chi) in hiragana or ソ (so) and ノ (n) in katakana—which often leads to misreading. These similarities require learners to undergo repeated drilling and consistent exposure to distinguish subtle differences. Additionally, learners often experience difficulty mastering the correct stroke order, which is crucial for achieving legible writing. Incorrect stroke sequence not only affects handwriting clarity but also impacts memorization and recognition, as Japanese script learning relies heavily on pattern reinforcement.

Another issue emerges in the phonemic awareness of learners. As Japanese syllables follow a consistent consonant–vowel pattern, learners who are used to Indonesian phonology sometimes misinterpret sounds such as *shi*, *tsu*, *fu*, or long vowels. This phonological mismatch affects reading fluency when learners encounter vocabulary terms written solely in hiragana or katakana. In workplace contexts, such misunderstandings may hinder accurate reading of machine labels, safety instructions, product categories, or workers' schedules, posing potential risks in technical environments.

The limited exposure and inconsistent quality of instruction in training institutions (LPKs) also contribute to gaps in hiragana and katakana mastery. Some institutions primarily emphasize conversational practice while reducing emphasis on script literacy, resulting in learners who can speak basic phrases but struggle to decode written materials. Without systematic practice through reading drills, dictation tasks, and digital learning tools, many trainees fail to develop automaticity in script recognition. This gap highlights the need for more structured, repetitive, and multimodal

learning strategies to help Indonesian learners fully internalize the two Japanese syllabaries and achieve essential literacy before departing for Japan.

Understanding of Using Particle

Understanding the use of Japanese particles presents a significant linguistic challenge for learners, particularly those whose first language does not utilize similar grammatical markers. Japanese particles—such as は (wa), が (ga), に (ni), で (de), を (wo), and へ (e)—function as essential indicators of grammatical relationships within a sentence. Rather than relying on word order, Japanese uses particles to signal topics, subjects, locations, and objects. This structural difference often leads to confusion, as learners must internalize grammatical cues that are not inherently intuitive from the perspective of Indo-European or Austronesian language systems.

Japanese particles (*joshi*) function as essential grammatical markers that indicate the relationship between words in a sentence. For trainees in LPK (Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja), understanding particles is fundamental because workplace Japanese relies heavily on clear sentence structure, especially in instructions, reporting, and basic communication. Without mastery of particles, trainees may understand vocabulary but still struggle to form meaningful and accurate sentences. This leads to confusion in daily tasks, reduced communication efficiency, and potential misunderstanding in professional settings where clarity is crucial.

Indonesian learners often find particles challenging because Indonesian does not use grammatical markers in the same way Japanese does. Trainees tend to confuse the functions of は (wa) and が (ga), misuse spatial particles like に (ni) and で (de), or omit particles entirely when translating directly from Indonesian. For example, trainees may incorrectly say 会社行く instead of 会社に行く when stating “go to the company.” These mistakes show that learners frequently prioritize vocabulary over grammatical function, resulting in incomplete or inaccurate sentences that hinder communication clarity.

Incorrect use of particles can drastically change the meaning of a sentence, which becomes problematic in workplace settings. For instance, mixing up を (wo) and が (ga) may cause confusion about who is performing an action and what object is being acted upon. In a manufacturing or caregiving environment, this ambiguity may affect task execution, safety procedures, or reporting accuracy. Trainees who misunderstand the difference between で (de) as a location of action and に (ni) as a destination or point in time often produce statements that are grammatically confusing. These misinterpretations highlight the critical need for systematic training.

Several factors contribute to the difficulty LPK trainees experience in mastering particles. Limited exposure to natural Japanese input restricts their opportunity to observe how particles function in real discourse. Teaching methods that focus heavily on memorization rather than usage further weaken grammatical understanding. Additionally, trainees’ anxiety about speaking may cause them to avoid forming complete sentences, resulting in habitual omission of particles. The complexity increases when they encounter polite or workplace-specific Japanese, where particle usage may shift based on formality or pragmatic nuances.

To improve particle comprehension, LPKs should adopt communicative and context-based teaching approaches. Task-based learning—such as practicing workplace dialogues, reporting tasks, or role-playing supervisor–trainee interactions—helps trainees internalize particle usage in authentic contexts. Visual aids like sentence mapping, color-coded particles, and contrastive examples between correct and incorrect sentences are also effective. Continued practice through listening drills, shadowing, and structured speaking exercises can reinforce recognition and production of particles. With consistent exposure, corrective feedback, and scaffolded learning, trainees can develop a more accurate understanding of Japanese particles, ultimately enhancing their readiness for the Japanese work environment.

Understanding of Hatsuoan

For trainees in LPK (Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja), understanding *hatsuon*—the system of Japanese pronunciation—is a crucial foundation for effective communication in the workplace. Japanese companies expect foreign trainees to follow correct verbal instructions, participate in daily briefings, and interact professionally with supervisors. Mispronunciation can lead to misunderstandings that affect safety, workflow accuracy, and interpersonal relations. Therefore, *hatsuon* is not merely a linguistic aspect but a practical competency that supports trainees’ performance and adaptation in Japanese working environments.

Trainees often face difficulties because the phonological system of Japanese differs significantly from Indonesian. While Indonesian is generally syllable-timed with consonant–vowel patterns, Japanese includes distinguishing features such as *double consonants* (促音 *sokuon*), *long vowels* (長音 *chōon*), and *pitch accent*. These distinctions affect meaning; for example, *kita* (north) versus *kitta* (cut), or *obasan* (aunt) versus *obaasan* (grandmother). Trainees who are unfamiliar with these contrasts tend to overlook subtle differences, causing them to produce similar-sounding but incorrect words. This gap highlights the need for focused training on phonological awareness.

Several recurring pronunciation issues appear among LPK trainees. The *sokuon* (っ) is frequently skipped or reduced, making speech sound unnatural and sometimes altering meaning. Long vowels are shortened, reducing clarity in words like おねえさん or ゆうびんきょく. Additionally, the Japanese *r* sound, which is a flap between *r* and *l*, is challenging for trainees accustomed to Indonesian or English sound systems. Intonation and pitch accent further complicate pronunciation, especially in workplace commands or announcements where emphasis plays a role. These difficulties collectively impact trainees' listening comprehension and verbal accuracy.

To address these challenges, LPKs must incorporate structured, repetitive, and context-based hatuon training. Effective strategies include minimal-pair drills, shadowing exercises using workplace dialogues, and consistent correction supported by audio-visual examples. Integrating pronunciation practice into task-based learning—such as simulated morning meetings or safety instructions—helps trainees connect hatuon with real-world workplace needs. Through sustained practice and targeted feedback, trainees can gradually develop accurate pronunciation skills that improve their confidence, communication ability, and readiness for professional settings in Japan.

Understanding of Basic Japanese Sentences Structure

Understanding basic Japanese sentence structure is a foundational competency for trainees in LPK (Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja) who prepare to work in Japan under the Kenshūsei (研修生) program. Japanese companies expect trainees to follow verbal and written instructions correctly, report progress, and communicate respectfully in daily interactions. The Japanese sentence structure—commonly following the SOV (Subject–Object–Verb) pattern—differs significantly from Indonesian, which uses SVO. Without grasping this structural shift, trainees may misinterpret instructions or produce grammatically incorrect sentences, impacting both communication efficiency and workplace safety.

For many trainees, the major difficulty lies in reordering thoughts into the Japanese pattern. In Japanese, the verb always appears at the end, which is unfamiliar for Indonesian speakers. For example, a simple statement such as “*Saya makan nasi*” becomes “私はご飯を食べます。” The placement of particles and modifiers before the verb requires trainees to adjust their natural speech patterns. Learners often form hybrid structures influenced by Indonesian grammar, resulting in sentences that lack clarity or correctness. This challenge is compounded when more complex elements, such as time expressions and locations, are added to the sentence.

Frequent errors include incorrect ordering of sentence elements, omission or misuse of particles, and failure to place the verb at the end. Trainees may produce sentences like “会社で働きます私” due to hesitation or lack of confidence in forming the correct order. Such errors may cause misunderstandings, especially in contexts where accuracy is essential, such as reporting tasks, safety procedures, or responding to supervisors' instructions. Misplacement of modifiers (e.g., time or location) also leads to confusion, as Japanese follows specific ordering principles—such as placing time expressions before the action and location before the verb phrase.

Trainees' struggles are also influenced by linguistic interference from Indonesian, which is structurally simpler and more flexible. Japanese, however, relies on precise arrangement and grammar markers to express relationships between words. Limited exposure to natural Japanese input—especially spoken Japanese used in workplaces—further restricts trainees' opportunities to internalize correct structures. Classroom learning often focuses more on vocabulary and less on meaningful sentence construction practice, causing trainees to memorize words without fully understanding how to organize them into functional sentences.

To improve mastery of basic Japanese sentence structure, LPKs should integrate structured grammar drills with meaningful, task-based communication activities. Sentence-building exercises, guided speaking patterns, and color-coded structure templates can help trainees visualize the logical order of Japanese sentences. Practice with real workplace scenarios—such as reporting, requesting help, or explaining tasks—reinforces sentence structure in authentic contexts. Regular corrective

feedback, repetition through shadowing, and group dialogue activities can significantly enhance trainees' confidence and accuracy. With consistent training and contextual application, trainees can develop solid grammatical competence necessary for effective communication in Japanese workplaces.

Cultural Literacy Issues

Cultural literacy issues among trainees in LPK (Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja) often stem from limited understanding of Japanese workplace norms, values, and expectations. Many trainees approach work culture in Japan using Indonesian perspectives, which emphasize flexibility and interpersonal warmth. In contrast, Japanese workplaces prioritize punctuality, precision, hierarchy, and respect expressed through nonverbal behaviors such as bowing, silence, and modesty. Without prior exposure to these norms, trainees often experience cultural shock during their early months in Japan, affecting their confidence, adaptability, and performance.

A significant issue arises from differences in communication styles between Indonesia and Japan. Japanese workers often use indirect language, minimal gestures, and implicit cues, which can be confusing for trainees accustomed to more direct or expressive communication. For example, a Japanese supervisor's subtle hint may be misunderstood as a casual suggestion rather than an instruction. Additionally, practices like maintaining harmony (*wa*), avoiding confrontation, and following hierarchical protocols are often unfamiliar. These misunderstandings may lead to unintended mistakes, strained relationships, or perceptions of disrespect despite the trainee's good intentions.

These challenges highlight the need for more comprehensive and structured cultural literacy training in LPK programs. Trainees require guidance not only in language but also in social etiquette, workplace behavior, communication norms, and expectations of Japanese companies. Simulations, role-play, case studies, and exposure to authentic workplace scenarios can help trainees develop the cultural sensitivity needed to function effectively in Japan. When cultural literacy is integrated into the training curriculum, trainees are better prepared to adapt, collaborate, and succeed within the Japanese working environment.

Understanding Japanese Daily Culture

Understanding Japanese daily culture is essential for trainees in LPK (Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja) who will live and work in Japan for extended periods. Daily cultural practices—ranging from social etiquette, hygiene habits, food culture, and neighborhood interactions—shape how trainees integrate into their surrounding community. Without adequate cultural knowledge, trainees may experience confusion or unintentionally violate social norms, leading to discomfort, stress, or misunderstandings with local residents. Therefore, cultural understanding becomes a key component of successful social adaptation beyond the professional workplace.

Japanese daily life is characterized by routines that emphasize discipline, orderliness, and consideration for others. For example, queuing in public spaces, maintaining silence on public transportation, and strict waste separation rules are standard expectations. These norms differ greatly from many Indonesian everyday practices, leading to potential adjustment challenges. Trainees unfamiliar with these habits may feel overwhelmed by the structured and rule-oriented environment, particularly in urban settings like Tokyo or Osaka where punctuality, cleanliness, and efficiency are highly valued.

Daily interpersonal interactions also reflect cultural expectations unique to Japan. Casual greetings, bowing, exchanging items with both hands, and the avoidance of excessive eye contact are part of polite behavior. Japanese people often communicate indirectly, using subtle cues, silence, or soft intonation—contrasting with the more expressive and open communication style common in Indonesia. Trainees often struggle to interpret such nonverbal messages, leading to miscommunication. Additionally, practices like removing shoes before entering homes, observing bathing etiquette in *sentō* or *onsen*, and respecting neighborhood quiet hours require trainees to adjust their habits.

When trainees lack awareness of Japanese daily culture, their integration into local communities may be hindered. Mistakes such as improper trash disposal, speaking loudly in shared spaces, or misunderstanding unwritten social rules can create tensions with neighbors or coworkers. This may cause trainees to feel isolated or judged, even if the behavior was unintentional. Cultural gaps can also affect trainees' emotional well-being, as frustration and confusion accumulate over

time. Therefore, building cultural competence is vital not only for social harmony but also for maintaining mental resilience during their stay in Japan.

To help trainees adapt successfully, LPKs should provide structured and practical training on Japanese daily culture. This can include simulations of everyday scenarios, video-based learning about Japanese neighborhoods, and discussions on etiquette, hygiene routines, food customs, and public behavior. Role-playing activities—such as navigating a supermarket, using public transportation, or interacting with neighbors—can build confidence and cultural sensitivity. By equipping trainees with realistic knowledge of daily life in Japan, LPKs enable them to adjust more smoothly, avoid cultural conflicts, and develop a sense of belonging in their new environment.

Understanding Japanese Work Culture

Understanding Japanese work culture is a critical component of trainee preparation in LPK (Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja). Japanese workplaces are structured around values such as discipline, harmony (*wa*), responsibility (*sekinin*), and continuous improvement (*kaizen*). These values shape daily interactions, expectations, and performance standards in companies that receive foreign trainees. Without a clear understanding of these cultural norms, trainees may struggle to meet workplace expectations, potentially affecting their job performance, relationships with coworkers, and adjustment to the professional environment.

Japanese work culture is known for its emphasis on punctuality, teamwork, respect for hierarchy, and strong work ethic. Supervisors expect trainees to arrive earlier than the scheduled time, follow procedures precisely, and maintain a humble and cooperative attitude. Communication tends to be indirect and polite, with the expectation that workers observe subtle cues, anticipate needs, and avoid confrontation. Additionally, the *senpai-kohai* (senior-junior) system influences workplace relationships, requiring juniors to show respect while seniors provide guidance. These cultural expectations can be significantly different from Indonesian workplace norms.

Many LPK trainees struggle with the strictness and formality of Japanese workplaces. The expectation to follow detailed rules, maintain consistency in work quality, and handle pressure during busy periods can be overwhelming. Trainees also face difficulties adapting to the indirect communication style, where feedback is often delivered subtly rather than directly. Misunderstanding workplace etiquette—such as failure to greet properly, improper use of polite language (*keigo*), or ignorance of hierarchy—may lead to miscommunication or perceived disrespect. These challenges reflect the cultural gaps that trainees must address to function effectively in the workplace.

Failure to understand Japanese work culture can create misunderstandings, reduce productivity, and strain relationships between trainees and their Japanese colleagues. For example, not following procedures precisely may be seen as carelessness, while reluctance to communicate proactively may be interpreted as a lack of motivation. These misalignments can lead to stress, decreased morale, and potential conflicts in the workplace. Moreover, misunderstanding expectations regarding teamwork and responsibility may hinder trainees from integrating fully into the work environment. Thus, cultural misalignment can have both practical and emotional consequences for trainees abroad.

To address these challenges, LPKs must provide comprehensive and realistic training on Japanese work culture. This includes embedding cultural norms into daily learning activities, conducting simulations of workplace routines, teaching workplace etiquette, and providing examples of typical Japanese communication patterns. Role-playing scenarios—such as receiving feedback, reporting problems, or interacting with supervisors—help trainees internalize cultural expectations. Video-based learning from real Japanese workplaces and guidance from experienced returnees also strengthen trainees' readiness. With proper preparation, trainees can develop confidence, cultural sensitivity, and professional competence that align with Japanese workplace standards.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Indonesian prospective migrant workers preparing to enter Japan under the *Kenshuusei* (研修生) visa program face significant challenges in both language and cultural literacy. Linguistic issues—such as limited mastery of hiragana and katakana, weak understanding of particles, difficulties with basic sentence structure, and inaccurate pronunciation—hinder effective communication in daily and workplace settings. At the same time, cultural literacy remains limited, particularly in understanding Japanese daily etiquette, workplace hierarchy, indirect

communication styles, and social expectations rooted in discipline and harmony. These gaps collectively reduce trainees' readiness to adapt to Japanese society and workplaces.

The findings reveal that these challenges are largely influenced by the lack of exposure to authentic Japanese language use and insufficient integration of cultural components within LPK training programs. Traditional memorization-based teaching methods, limited practical immersion, and failure to contextualize language learning contribute to low communicative competence among trainees. As a result, many trainees arrive in Japan with incomplete understanding of the linguistic and cultural norms needed to function effectively, which can lead to miscommunication, workplace conflict, and emotional stress during adaptation.

To enhance the preparedness of Indonesian migrant workers, LPK training centers must adopt more holistic, context-rich, and experiential approaches to language and cultural education. Integrating simulations, role-play, workplace-based scenarios, and exposure to real Japanese communication patterns can significantly strengthen both linguistic accuracy and cultural sensitivity. Strengthened training frameworks—supported by continuous assessment, authentic materials, and instructors with direct Japan experience—will improve trainees' overall readiness, adaptation capacity, and long-term success in Japan. Ultimately, addressing these literacy issues is essential for ensuring both worker protection and optimal integration within the Japanese labor environment.

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