

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY OF
MYANMAR MIGRANT WORKERS IN BANGKOK



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ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความสามารถทางภาษาและการเคลื่อนย้ายทางเศรษฐกิจของแรงงาน ชาวพม่า
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งานวิจัยหลายงานเห็นว่า โอกาสที่จะได้ทำงานของแรงงานต่างชาติส่วนใหญ่ขึ้นอยู่กับระดับการศึกษาและ
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interviews) กับแรงงานต่างชาติชาวพม่าที่ทำงานในพื้นที่เมืองในหลากหลายภาคส่วน และตัวแทนของโรงเรียนสอนภาษา
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Ph.D.

Thailand has been the recipient of foreign migrant workers from neighboring countries for decades. Among them, the majority are from Myanmar. Myanmar migrant workers have been significant parts of the agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors. In Thailand, they usually earn decent wages comparing to wages in their home countries. However, their incomes and working conditions in Thailand largely depend on several factors. Thus, this research aims to study the relationship between Thai language proficiency and the income of Myanmar migrants in Bangkok.

Several studies claim that the employment opportunities of migrants depend primarily on their levels of education and technical skills as well as their ability to communicate with other people in the host country. Language proficiency is one of the fundamental parts of human capital, especially for immigrants. Several studies have been conducted and proved that the host language proficiency is an important determiner of income levels or chances of being employed of migrants. This research is one of the first studies on the relationship of Thai language proficiency and economic mobility of migrants in Thailand, focusing on the context of Myanmar urban migrants in Bangkok. In this study, open-ended questions were used to conduct semi-structured interviews with Myanmar urban migrant workers from different work sectors and a representative from a language academy in Bangkok.

This study proves that Thai language proficiency does affect the incomes and career opportunities of Myanmar migrants. The study also suggests an urban strategy for including the Thai language training for urban migrants by the Thai government or any organizations such as the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education and Bangkok Metropolitan Authority in implementation.

Field of Study: Urban Strategies

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY OF MYANMAR URBAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN BANGKOK

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1. Economic Development of Thailand

Migration in Thailand is associated with the development of the economy. With rapid industrialization, Thailand's economy was booming in the mid-1980s and 1990s. Due to mass industrialization in large cities, people from the countryside had moved to the cities and triggered the internal migration of Thailand. Large cities especially Bangkok experienced the highest rates of population growth (Pangsapa, 2015). Especially, many young women were employed as maids in wealthy households in these cities.

Table 1 Average monthly household income in baht

Region	North	Northeast	South	Central	Greater BKK
Avg Monthly Household Income in Baht	19,046	20,271	26,913	27,042	41,897

Source – National Statistical Office (2017b) as cited in IOM (2019a)

The economic boom during the mid-1980s and early 1990s led rural migrants including women to enter the factories and other occupations with higher wages (IOM,2019a). The key motivation for internal migration in Thailand is the wage differences between rural and urban areas. The table above indicates the average monthly household income in different regions of Thailand. It shows that income

inequality in Thailand triggered the migration from the Northern regions to Central and Greater Bangkok Areas.

On the other hand, the economic boom in the Middle East and East Asia during the 1980s triggered Thai workers to migrate and work in those regions (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012). According to Huguet and Punpuing (2005), there were approximately 40,000-60,000 Thai nationals per year moved to Japan for employment between 1988 and 1995. More than 100,00 workers were deployed to other countries in 2017 alone (IOM,2019a). The outward migration is one of the reasons for the labor shortage in Thailand (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012).

1.2. Cross-border Migration to Thailand and Myanmar Migrants

Thailand has been the recipient of migrant workers from neighboring countries for decades. Foreign migrants in Thailand are the driving workforce of the Thai economy, working diversely from agricultural sectors such as farms, rubber plantation, livestock farms to different sizes of manufacturing, small, medium to large industries, and even in-service sectors such as hospitality, local restaurants, shop houses, street food stalls, and vendors selling different things. Migrant workers are very common especially in big cities like Bangkok that at least a migrant from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam can be expected in any store or any local restaurant.

Chantavanich and Vungsiriphisal (2012) states that outward migration and the expansion of compulsory Thai education led to a serious labor shortage in the 1990s. Since then, Thailand desperately needs migrant laborers to fill the low-skill labor force as Thai people have become more and more skilled and educated. By 1994, nearly 400,000 people from three neighboring countries came to Thailand to work in construction, fishing, rubber plantation, small-scale factories, domestic services, tourism-related industries, and the sex trade (Pangsapa, 2015).

Even the Thai government deported nearly 250,000 migrants in response to the massive lay-offs of Thai workers during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the replacement for workers in 3D (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning) jobs was unable as Thais are not willing to take these jobs (Pangsapa, 2015). In-depth interviews with employers from the agricultural sector show that they were keen to employ Thais but Thais were not interested in this kind of work (Pearson et al., 2006).

Cross-border Migration to Thailand

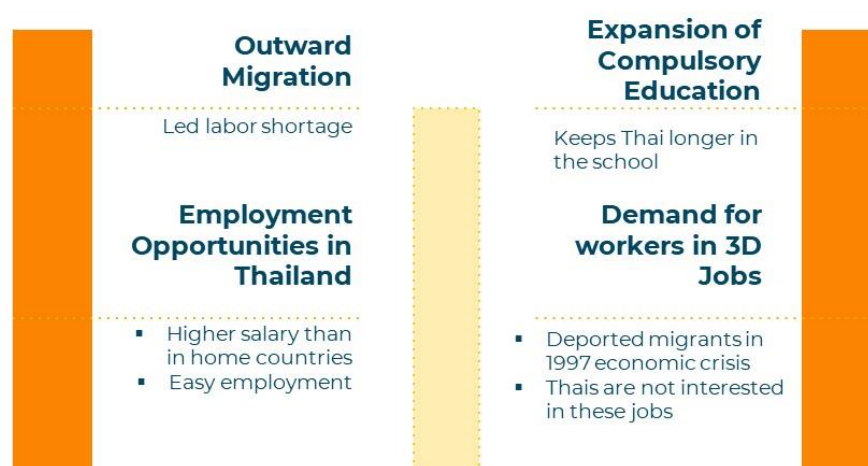


Figure 1 Cross-border migration to Thailand

According to the IOM (2019a), the main trigger for migration nowadays is solely due to finding employment in Thailand, constituting eighty to ninety percent of each round. Other reasons include employment for a spouse (9%), food and water insecurity (7%). Migrants from Myanmar chose Thailand to migrant due to the reasons for 'easiest to access', 'access to jobs being easier', 'income being higher', 'working conditions are better', and 'having friends or relatives in Thailand' (IOM,2019a).

REGION	WOMEN				MEN				TOTAL			
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
Bangkok	33,388	59,870	90,344	135,841	87,248	138,563	165,888	205,070	120,636	198,433	256,232	340,911
Greater Bangkok	151,967	189,464	224,572	317,507	214,717	268,147	306,945	420,707	366,684	457,611	531,517	738,214
Central Region	130,280	111,674	109,711	158,296	197,767	165,312	156,079	223,963	328,047	276,986	265,790	382,259
Northern Region	88,177	88,226	64,933	89,643	88,981	94,102	70,104	97,306	177,158	182,328	135,037	186,949
North-East	10,409	12,157	11,150	20,013	12,684	14,241	11,437	20,060	23,093	26,398	22,857	40,073
Southern Region	129,950	120,660	105,974	144,689	194,266	181,058	159,704	229,712	324,216	301,718	265,678	374,401
Total	544,171	582,051	606,684	865,989	795,663	861,423	870,157	1,196,818	1,339,834	1,443,474	1,476,841	2,062,807

Source: Department of Employment (2018)

Figure 2 Migrants holding a work permit

Source - (Department of Employment, 2018 as cited in IOM,2019a)

According to the 2019 UN Migration Reports, there are 3.9 million migrant workers in Thailand from Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. Among them, 2.3 million workers are from Myanmar, making it the largest proportion of the migrant population in Thailand. Myanmar migrants have crossed the border to work in Thailand for decades mostly in border areas (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012).

The information from the IOM (2019b) states that Kayin, Mon, and Bago East region are the main migrant-sending states in Myanmar. Bamar, Karen, and Mon were three major ethnicities migrating to Thailand. The popular destinations in Thailand for migrant workers are Bangkok, followed by Tak, Samut Sakhon, and Chon Buri. Mae Sot is a strategic transit point for Myanmar migrants who are coming to work in Thailand (p.3-9, 13).

Bangkok and Greater Bangkok Area are the most attractive destinations for the migrants with 52 percent of work permits that were issued in this area. Moreover, the data survey by International Organization for Migration (IOM,2019b) indicates that Bangkok is the most popular destination for migrant workers from Myanmar, having

35.5% of incoming migrants and 37.5% of returning migrants intended to go to Bangkok.

The Flow of Burmese Migrants to Thailand



Figure 3 The flow of Burmese migrants to Thailand

The first wave of migration began in the mid-to-late 1980s due to the economic and political unrest in Myanmar (Ma, 2017). Meanwhile, the Thai government has been keen to import foreign labor to boost economic activities in the service sectors, primarily in Bangkok and key manufacturing hubs such as Mae Sot (Ma, 2017). Migration to Thailand was triggered by different reasons. In the case of Myanmar migrants, political repression, ethnic persecution under military junta as well as the availability of low-end jobs in Thailand initiated the migration of Myanmar workers to Thailand (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012; Pangsap, 2015).

Migrating to Thailand gives these economic migrants opportunities to secure a job, thus a living which is hard to find back in their home countries. Moreover, the base salary in Thailand is usually higher than that of the neighboring countries. Such income not only supports their livelihood in Thailand but also a sole income for their family as a remittance in their hometown. Almost 70 percent of incoming migrants were planning to send remittances back and about 60 percent of returning

migrants had sent remittances in a survey conducted by IOM in Tak province (IOM,2019b).

Nonetheless, not all migrants have decent earning and living in Thailand. Exploitation, labor abuses, poor wages, retention of identification, payment delays, detention, deduction, etc. are frequent with jobs where migrants are concentrated (Pearson et al., 2006). This depends on several facts including job sectors, legal status, and Thai language ability. Migrants working in agriculture and domestic works are likely to have no documentation and are subject to fall victim to abuses and exploitation (IOM, 2019b).

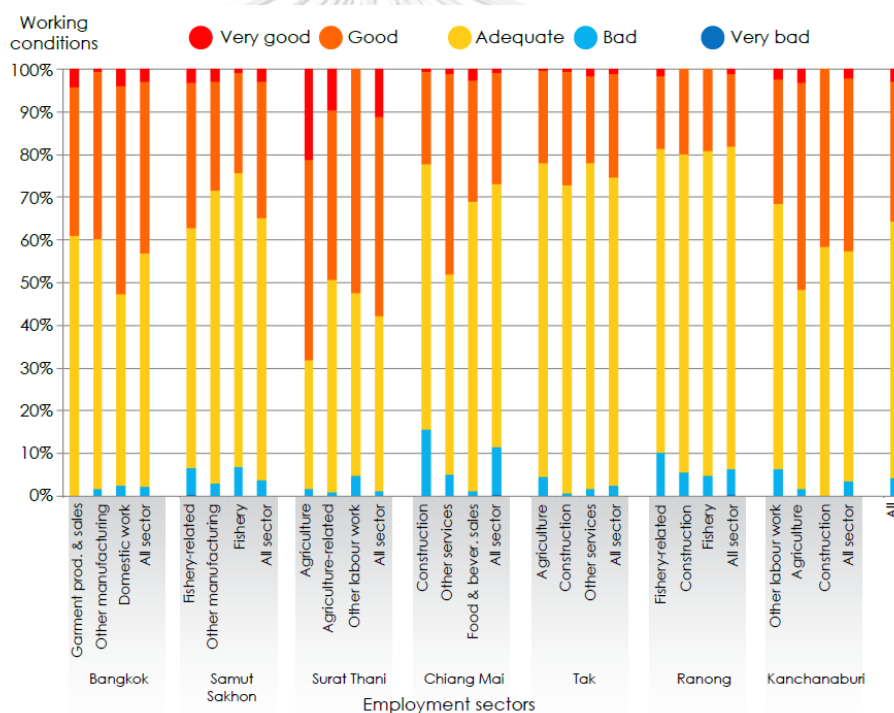


Figure 4 Working conditions of migrants in different sectors and provinces

Source - Vungsiriphisal et al (2013)

By looking into the working conditions survey by Vungsiriphisal et al (2013), it was reported that working conditions in Bangkok are relatively better than in those other provinces. In terms of particular job sectors, the fishing industry was reported

to have inadequate working conditions in almost all provinces mentioned. Poor working conditions in the construction sector differ from province to province. Migrants in construction from Chiang Mai reported worse working conditions than others Vungsiriphisal et al (2013). Other manual labor jobs and agriculture sectors were reported to be poor in working conditions as well.

1.3. Thai Language Fluency and Migrant Workers

The ability to communicate in the Thai language is likely to be one of the most important factors in migrant workers' livelihood in Thailand. Due to the language differences, migrants from Cambodia and Myanmar residing in Thailand need legal and language assistance (Pangsapa, 2015). It also mentions that migrants from Laos do not have a language barrier, allowing them to enjoy more freedom and more mobility than Burmese and Cambodian and can probably be able to protect themselves from abusive employers better.

In addition to that, by knowing the Thai language, it could be easier for migrants to seek help and aid in having job mobility. Pangsapa (2015) also mentions that seeking medical services or helps from authorities is quite difficult if they do not speak Thai. Speaking Thai may also help Myanmar workers to hold superior positions in workspaces. Burmese line leaders, many of whom are ethnic Chinese Burmese who can speak Thai and Chinese, serve as translators (Pangsapa, 2015).

As a sequence, language fluency is crucial for migrants, especially for urban migrants, because many jobs in the urban area require specific vocabularies and language skills to work. For instance, customer service skills and language ability are compulsory in service sector jobs. Therefore, acquiring Thai language skills is likely to be crucial in getting Myanmar migrants into jobs or moving into higher-paying jobs.

There are several stories that indicate the crucial role of Thai language proficiency in Myanmar workers. The Interview video with a few participants in the Thai language training by IOM was streamed on YouTube. Saw Thein Naing, a participant of the PROMISE program, answered about difficulties to understand his employer as he did not speak Thai in an interview. For him, knowing Thai brings more convenience in buying things and going places (IOM Thailand, 2020).



Figure 5 Saw Thein Naing, a PROMISE participant

Source – IOM Thailand (2020)



Figure 6 Htwe Thet Naing

Source – IOM Thailand (2020)

Htwe Thet Aung, one of the 70 participants of the Thai language training program by the International Organization for Migration, talked about

miscommunication with his employer and his embarrassment in his previous jobs

due to the lack of knowledge in the Thai language. As he can speak Thai, it is easier to communicate with people.



Figure 7 Than Wai Aung

Source – BBC News (2014)

all the equipment he needs for his business despite more land plots to grow his business. Now he speaks perfect Thai and the interview in this news by BBC was conducted in the Thai language (BBC News, 2014).

Another story from Karen News Media is about the owner of Only Thai Foods restaurants, Nan Sandar Tin. She is from Hpa An, the capital of Kayin State. She left her hometown in 1996 for employment opportunities in Thailand. She did not speak Thai when she left. Therefore, she had to work as a dishwasher in a restaurant. Later then, she was able to speak some communicable level of Thai and worked as a waitress. As she can communicate in Thai with more people, she worked in the kitchen and learned new cooking skills and recipes. All these skills have helped her

Than Wai Aung, a mushroom entrepreneur, has been residing in Thailand for more than 20 years now. He started his life in Thailand by working in construction in harsh conditions. His goal is always to become self-employed. He always thinks that he could never be rich working as an employee. Initially, when he just migrated, he did not have any job, or place to sleep in Thailand. Moreover, he did not speak any Thai at all. He has run this business for a few years now. He has

to start her restaurant since 2009. Now she has one restaurant in Kayin State and two restaurants in Mon State (Karen News, 2017).



Figure 8 Nan Sandar Tin, the restaurant owner

Source – Karen News (2017)

BBC Burmese channel interviewed a few people in one of the busiest night markets in Bangkok about Myanmar migrant workers who



are working as vendors to know

Figure 9 Chan Aye Moe

Source – BBC Burmese

about their stories (Htun & Aye, 2018). Chan Moe Aye from Taunggyi, Shan States has been working in one of the Bangkok night markets. She had to work as a maid for years as she could not speak Thai. Now she can communicate in Thai and works as a

vendor selling fashion bags and wallets. She has a goal of buying a house back in Myanmar.



Figure 10 Thet Naing Oo

Source – BBC Burmese

Naing Thet Oo, from Yangon, has been working in Thailand for 12 years. At first, he worked in a factory because he did not speak the Thai language. As his Thai language skill is getting better, he sells clothes in a market. The main source of income for his family is the remittance sent by him. He wants to make money in Thailand and go back to Myanmar.

All these stories from different media outlets indicate that the Thai language proficiency of migrant workers has a significant role in their social mobility and employment. All of them came to Thailand without any fluency in the Thai language and worked in very labor-intensive jobs with harsh conditions. Their abilities to communicate with people in the Thai language presumably help them learn new skills and earn social capital.

Not only do the migrants think the Thai language is beneficial to them, but also some Thai employers believe migrant workers being able to speak the Thai

language has a positive impact on their businesses. Natchapakan Chotsiri, president of Pat Charoen Inter, described that the Thai language can develop workers' skills in the long run. Migrants can understand their work better and become more integrated in Thailand which brings more satisfaction about working and living conditions leading to enhance work efficiency (IOM Thailand, 2020).

At the same time, she continued the expenses for training workers are tax-deductible according to the Department of Skill Development's scheme. Therefore, sending workers to take part in language training like the PROMISE program organized by IOM is beneficial not only to the productivity of the laborers but also to the employers in the long run (IOM Thailand, 2020).

1.4. Studies about Migrant Workers in Thailand

Albeit there is no empirical study about the relationship between language proficiency and economic mobility of the migrant workers in Thailand, various studies have been conducted on the migrants in Thailand primarily by intergovernmental organizations such as IOM and ILO. Information about migrants such as pre-migration preparations, migration processes (contracts, channels, costs, problems during migration, source of funding for migration), migrant working conditions (legal status, labor abuses, freedom of movement, wages), and remittances, etc. was well documented in reports such as IOM (2019a), Pearson et al. (2006), Harkins et al. (2017).

Thai language skills of Myanmar migrants are reported as one of the indicators for migrant vulnerabilities in IOM (2019b). This information about language fluency was collected in Tak province which is a major migrant transit point from Myanmar. The data was collected from both incoming and returning migrants. However, IOM (2019b) does not establish any relationship between migrants' language skills to their income or working conditions.

Chantavanich and Vungsiriphisal (2012) presents that workers believe if they speak Thai, they will have more chances to work in various sectors. It also mentions that spoken Thai ability will help them looking for a job in Myanmar, especially Thai companies (p.229). The economic mobility and career improvement of these people mean a lot to the livelihood of them and their families back home. Many studies, including Turnell et al. (2008), confirm that remittance is an essential source of income for families in developing countries.

The surveys that had done by International Organization for Migration in 2019 (IOM,2019b) show that more than 60% of the returning migrants had sent money back while working in Thailand, and around 69% of the incoming migrants intended to send remittances back. On the other hand, according to the interviews by different media outlets, the job mobility of migrant workers relies mostly on their fluency in Thai.

Even though the relationship between host-language ability and migrants' income is proved in the context of European and North American countries, such a study does not exist in the Thailand context, especially Myanmar migrants who are the largest group of migrants in Thailand. Hence, this research could be claimed as one of the first studies on this particular relation.

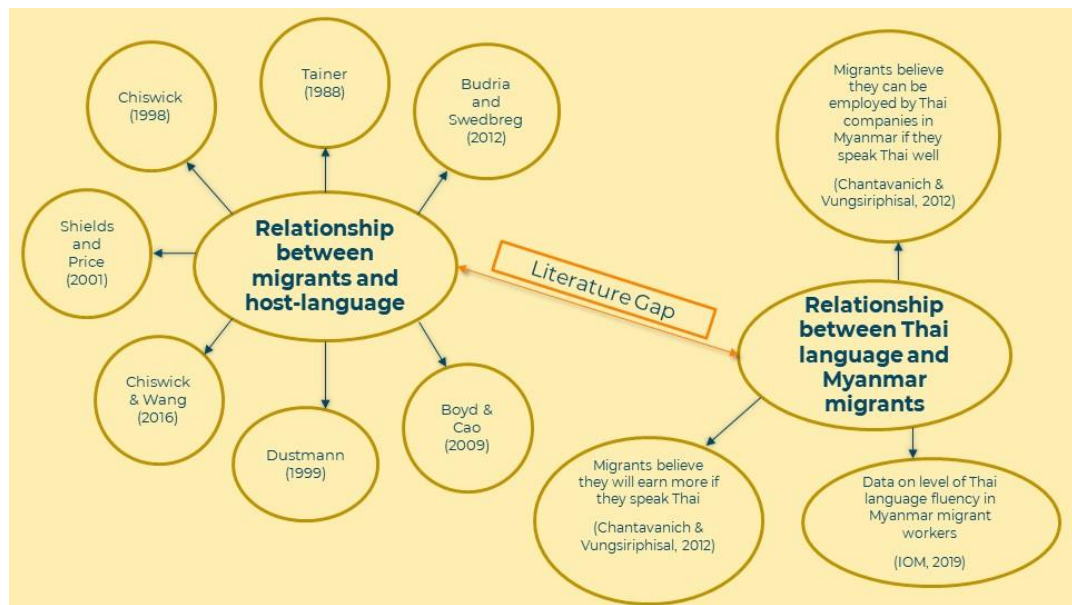


Figure 11 Literature-Map on host language and migrants

1.5. Research Question and Hypothesis

1.5.1. Research Question

Does the proficiency of the Thai language improve the "economic mobility" of Myanmar migrants and competitiveness in the job market in Bangkok?

1.5.2. Hypotheses

(1). It is assumed that language fluency helps migrants to shift from labor-intensive to non-labor-intensive jobs such as moving from labor-intensive agricultural jobs to less labor-intensive service sectors.

(2). Another hypothesis is that migrant workers with fluent Thai may have more chances to earn more advanced job skills.

This research brings not only the literature gap in the field of study about migrants in Thailand but also the knowledge of how the Thai language is directly affecting the livelihood of the urban migrants in Bangkok. As this research could potentially affect and contribute to the millions of Myanmar migrants in Thailand, it

is required to know the relationships between Thai language proficiency and the economic mobility of Myanmar migrant workers. The objectives of this research are to understand the relationship between language proficiency and the “economic mobility” of Myanmar migrants in the Thailand context and to suggest corresponding strategies to improve the livelihood of the urban Myanmar migrant workers.

The improvement of the language skill of the migrants can eventually increase the productivity of the Myanmar urban migrants, thus bringing efficiency to the Thai labor market, benefiting both employers and the workers. Therefore, the livelihoods of Myanmar migrants are important to the economies of both Myanmar and Thailand by the remittance to the former and the driving labor force to the latter.

1.6. Economic Contribution of Migrant Workers to Thailand

Most of the migrants in Thailand are of working age and have low skills and low education (Pholphirul & Rukumnuaykit, 2010). According to the Ministry of Labor, the most irregular migrants in Thailand are of working age between 15 to 60 years. Despite the fact the migrants have low education and low skills, they are in demand by Thai employers in some sectors such as agricultural and domestic work sectors as stated in Pholphirul and Rukumnuaykit (2010). It mentions that migrants might have benefited from Thailand in terms of cheap labor costs.

The Thai labor market is made up of a large number of non-wage employees and workers in the informal sector. According to Pholphirul and Rukumnuaykit (2010), the majority of unpaid family workers in Thailand are in the agricultural sector. It concludes that as there were more migrants who can substitute for Thai workers at a lower cost, those unpaid workers moved to small and medium enterprises.

On the other hand, Products with cheap inputs have a relatively lower price, which in turn makes them more competitive with the same good using higher inputs

(Pholphirul & Rukumnuaykit, 2010). Usually, labor is usually the largest component of production costs, it continues. Since the cost of tradable things such as raw materials and capital is approximately equalized internationally. The most important non-tradable is labor, thus making it the most significant indicator of the cost of competitiveness (Pholphirul & Rukumnuaykit, 2010).

It also examines the migrant labor concentrated jobs such as shrimp-peeling jobs. Thailand is one of the leading shrimp exporters globally, having a market share of 16%, more than any other country in the region as it states. Kura *et al* (2004) as cited in Pholphirul and Rukumnuaykit (2010) hence claimed that the competitiveness of the shrimp industry in Thailand came from the fact that shrimp producers hire migrant workers who were paid low wages.



CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1. Migration and Migrants

UN Secretary-General in United Nations in 2018 said that “migration is a positive global phenomenon that powers the global economy and reduces inequalities”. Migration is the result of the decision of an individual to move from one place to another for various reasons, especially in search of a better life (Vungsiriphisal et al, 2013). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) claims in its webpage that an international migrant agreed by the experts is someone who changes his or her country of residence, regardless of the reason for migration or legal status.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there is no universally accepted definition of “migrant”. It defines “a migrant” as “a person who moves away from his or her usual residence, whether within a country or across the international border, either temporarily or permanently, for various reasons. Migrants defined by IOM include both legally defined migrant workers and international students who are not specifically defined under international laws.

Similar definitions of migrants can also be found. The Migration Observatory at The Oxford University website defines “migrants” as “foreign birth, by foreign citizenship, or their movement into a new country to stay temporarily or to settle for long-term.” Dictionary definitions distinguish between ‘immigrants’ and ‘migrants,’ in which the former refers to the people who intend to live permanently in the new country while the latter refers to the people who are temporary residents seeking better employment or living conditions. Nevertheless, the terms; immigrant, migrant as well as foreigner are being used interchangeably even in some formal occasions and academia.

Urban Migration and Urban Migrants

The most ubiquitous form of migration in the 21st century can be said urban migration which is the migration from rural to urban areas. According to the data from the official World Bank website, the worldwide urban population increased from 34% in 1960 to 56% in 2019. Urban migration, like other kinds of migration, takes place either domestically and internationally.

The reasons behind urban migration are vastly diverse too. The majority of them are solely for searching for better jobs either formal and informal. Other urban migrants include single women migrating to support families, women joining husbands working in urban areas, asylum seekers, and students, etc. In some other cases, environmental disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and nuclear disasters lead to urban migration as well.

Although the term ‘migrant’ may traditionally be defined as “a person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions” by Oxford dictionary, the Myanmar migrant workers in this specific research refer to the low socio-economic status migrants whose medium of language at the workplace is in Thai rather than English-speaking white-collar expats. Such migrants have to work in labor-intensive jobs as in the fishing industry, agriculture, construction, and even in some service sectors such as sales staff in small businesses and waiters or waitress in restaurants.

2.2. Literature Review on the Livelihood of the Migrants and Host-language Proficiency

2.2.1. What does the existing literature talk about the host language and the migrants?

The relationships between the host-language abilities and immigrants are well-observed around the globe especially in Europe, Israel, and North American

countries. Positive effects of ability in host-language on the economic mobility of immigrants are well-acknowledged in English-speaking countries (Carliner, 1981; Chiswick & Miller, 1996, 2002; Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Dustmann & Soest, 2001; McManus et al., 1983), in Germany (Dustmann & Soest, 2001), Spain (Budria & Swedberg, 2012), and Israel (Chiswick, 1998).

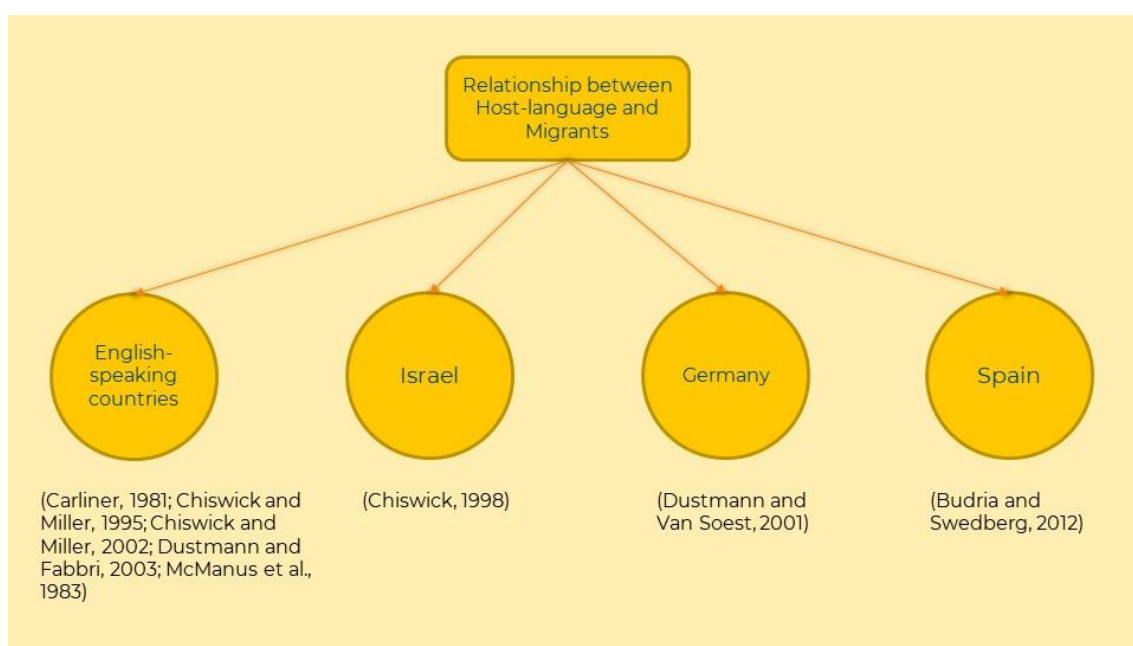


Figure 12 Researches in other countries

Current literature indicates a mixture of results. Some found that English language proficiency is not highly significant such as Reimers (1982) as cited in Tainer (1988). While others find it is a very important determinant of earning. Although language proficiency favors migrants' earnings, papers like Dustmann (1994) suggest that writing is a more significant determinant than the spoken skill. On the other hand, Hayfron (2001) argues that the language ability of the migrants could be a factor determining employment. However, it does not affect the earning of them

after

being

employed.

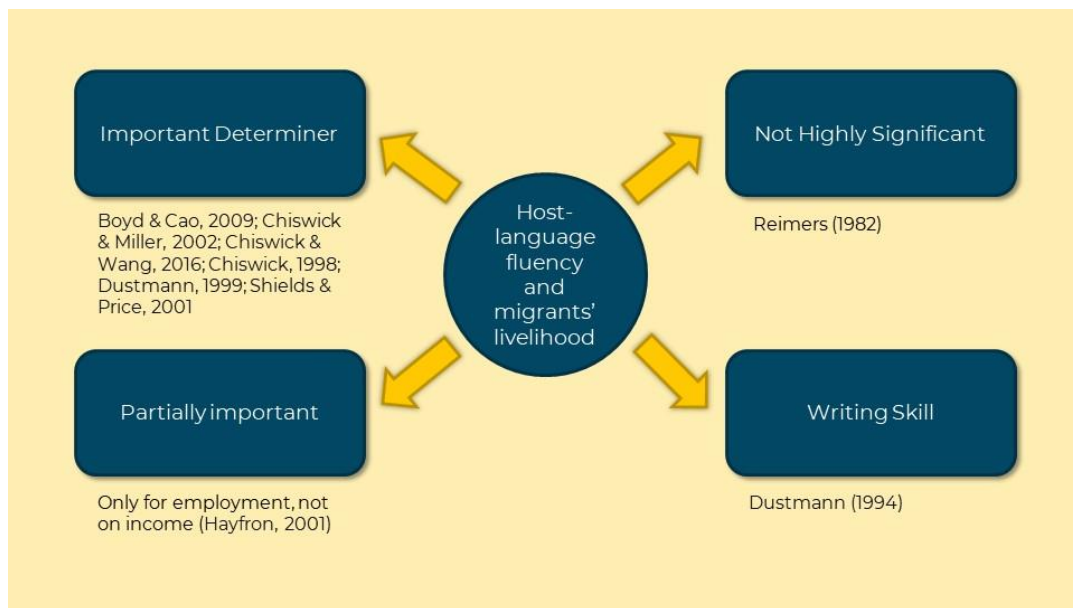


Figure 13 Literatures about host language and migrants' livelihood

Language fluency is a determinant of earnings for foreign-born workers (Tainer, 1988). Several studies (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Chiswick, 1998; Chiswick & Miller, 2002; Chiswick & Wang, 2016; Shields & Wheatley Price, 2001) have been conducted and proved that language proficiency of the immigrants and migrant workers has a significant relation to their employment opportunities and income.

Language is the ability to communicate with locals which affects the earnings of the migrant workers (Dustmann, 1993). (Chiswick, 1998) says that “greater proficiency of the dominant language of the host country allows immigrants to communicate with a wider range of merchants, reading advertisements, articles about products that are locally available, and read labels and direction more efficiently.”

A language is a form of economic capital, in which language increases the productivity of immigrants, hence their wages (Boyd & Cao, 2009). According to Tainer (1988), in the human capital framework, language proficiency is an important

communication factor and communication is the vital aspect of any job. Knowledge in language provides a broader spectrum of job opportunities, access to benefits entitled to them (Dustmann, 1993). It also has an indirect impact on migrant's economic position in the foreign labor market, as it puts important human capital specific to the market (Dustmann, 1993).

According to Boyd and Cao (2009), the language skill of the host country increases the earning of migrants in their destination in three ways. Firstly, language is the main component in human interaction, and spoken and written communication with customers, co-workers, and superiors increases productivity. Secondly, language is correlating with other host country-specific human capitals such as education. Finally, knowing the language of the destination country enables migrants to have career opportunities.

Migrants with low language capabilities are concentrated in certain job sectors where language does not matter Boyd and Cao (2009). Employers in the destination country may use the host language to interview. Fluent in destination language can help them to describe their qualifications to potential employers (Dustmann, 1993). Therefore, despite being over-qualified for the job due to the rest of their human capital such as educational qualification, they may be left no choice but to work in sectors where language fluency does not matter (Boyd & Cao, 2009).

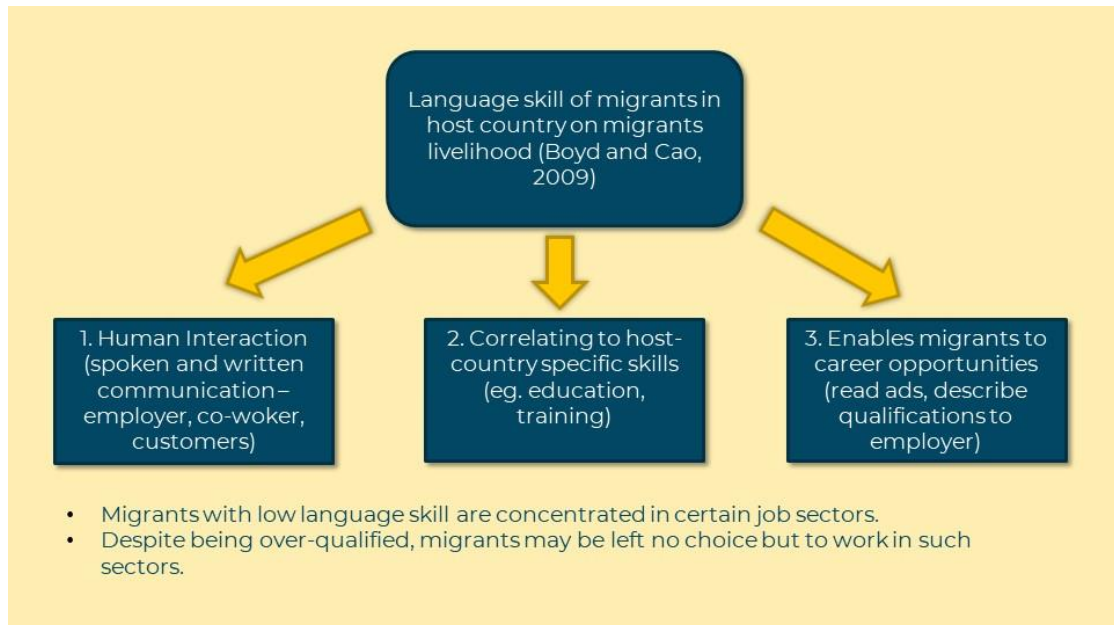


Figure 14 Effects of language skill on migrants in a foreign country

Immigrants with fluent host language skills are likely to be more productive in the labor market, allowing them to take jobs with higher skills and higher wages (Chiswick, 1998). Such fluency can also be more effective in job searching and obtaining jobs where their skills are more highly rewarded (Chiswick, 1998).

Similarly, being unable to communicate in a destination language brings difficulties to speak to co-workers, customers, or even to deal with machinery (Tainer, 1988). Therefore, deficiency in language ability could prevent someone from getting a job, or even if one could get one, it could be lower than his skill level (Tainer, 1988).

Several factors are governing the language fluency of the immigrants. Chiswick (1998) discusses two main factors, economic incentives, and language exposure, for immigrants in language capital acquisition. Economic incentives are defined by Chiswick (1998) as “the increment in the market wage and the decrease in the cost of consumption (including search cost) associated with the higher level of fluency”.

Economic incentives for language acquisition are relating to the migrant's intention to return or expected duration at the host country.

Exposure, according to Chiswick (1998), refers to learning-by-doing and formally learning through classes. It includes both in-person and through the media. Exposure can further be divided into three components, by Chiswick (1998), exposure prior to immigration, time units of exposure in the destination, the intensity of exposure per unit of time in the destination. Pre-migration exposure of the language is the exposure of destination language, the

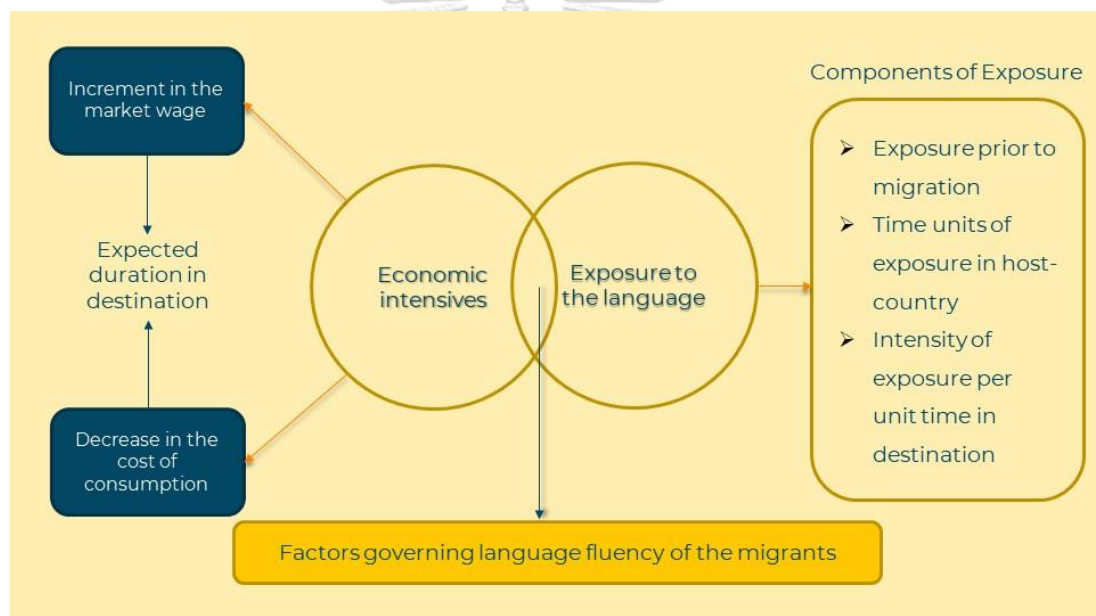


Figure 15 Factors governing the language fluency of the migrants

Source - Chiswick (1998)

Hebrew in Israel for example, in the home country such as for religious purposes or part of the secular education Chiswick (1998).

The intensity of exposure in the destination is smaller for immigrants living in a society that speaks the same language. Family context has an influence on language proficiency as well. Children studying in schools of the host country,

nationality, the language of the spouse plays a significant role in attaining language skills of the host country (Dustmann, 1993). (Chiswick, 1998) mentions “the most important language environment is in the home.”

2.2.2. Variables used by the existing literature

Generally, variables used in various researches can generally be divided into two categories. The first being the pre-migration variables and the second being the post-migration variables. Some of the variables can be overlapping in both pre-migration and post-migration conditions such as work experience and education. Other forms of variables such as family, qualifications, and race may play an important role in migrants’ ability to learn and speak a new language.

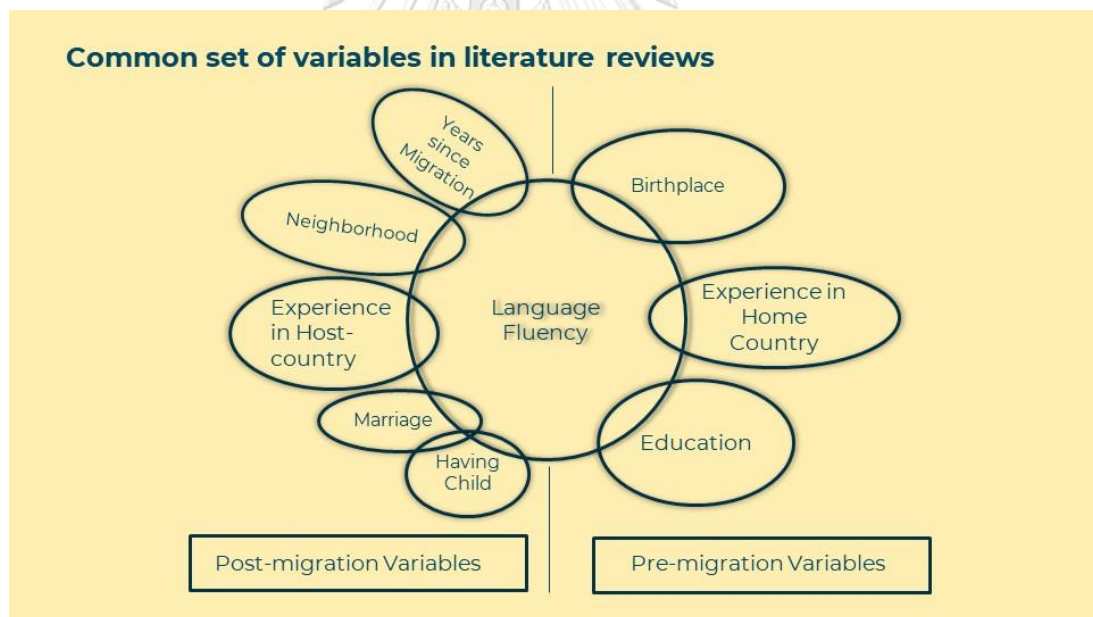


Figure 16 Common set of variables used in existing literature

Marriage with a spouse speaking the same language as a family variable will reduce the fluency in comparison to those who married a native speaker (Chiswick, 1998). Marriage as a variable has been used in Chiswick and Miller (2002); Chiswick and Wang (2016); Dustmann (1994, 1999); Guven and Islam (2015); Shields and Wheatley Price (2001). Having children in the family can also improve the host

language depending on the age of the children on language acquisition and enrollment in school (Chiswick, 1998; Shields & Wheatley Price, 2001). To some extent, migrant parents' language proficiency is improved by having children.

The main dependent variable used in researches is the earning (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Chiswick & Miller, 2002; Chiswick & Wang, 2016; Dustmann, 1994; Guven & Islam, 2015; Shields & Wheatley Price, 2001). Earning is regarded as the sum of wages (weekly, monthly or yearly), salaries, farm income, and self-employment income (Tainer, 1988). Language proficiency was also measured in order to know how language affects the earnings of migrants in a new country (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Chiswick & Miller, 2002; Chiswick & Wang, 2016; Dustmann, 1994, 1999; Guven & Islam, 2015).

The duration of the destination is measured by the number of years since migration. Dustmann (1999) proves that the duration in the host country is affecting the migrants' acquiring of the human capital of the destination country. Schooling has a large impact on life chances, social mobility, and labor market opportunities (Budria & Swedberg, 2012). Educational attainment completed abroad reduces both exposure and efficiency (Shields & Wheatley Price, 2001).

Other common explanatory variables used as the determinants of language fluency in host countries are years of experience or years in the labor market. Years of education either in the home or destination country or even both is used to know the literacy of the migrants, which is a significant determinant in acquiring a new language (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Chiswick & Miller, 2002; Chiswick & Wang, 2016; Dustmann, 1994, 1999; Dustmann & Soest, 2001; Guven & Islam, 2015).

Birthplace or country of origin is used to categorize the migrant. Place of birth is also an indicator of childhood language and social environment (Grenier, 1984).

Similarly, the mother tongue, which also means the linguistic distance, as used in Chiswick and Wang (2016), between origin and host countries matters in acquiring a new language. Some researchers use “race” interchangeably as a determinant to observe the mother language.

Age at arrival determines the migrants’ ability to learn a new language (Chiswick & Wang, 2016; Dustmann, 1994; Guven & Islam, 2015; Isphording, 2014). The younger when they immigrated, the easier they learn a new language. Location in the host country is another factor undermining the fluency of language for immigrants (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Budria & Swedberg, 2012; Chiswick & Miller, 2002; Chiswick & Wang, 2016; Shields & Wheatley Price, 2001). It is likely that migrants who live in the same neighborhood speaking the same language may decrease the fluency of the host language.

2.2.3. The data, methodologies, and outcomes of various researches around the globe

In the US, Tainer (1988) uses the standard set of variables – schooling, experience in the country of origin, country of origin, duration in the host country. Human capital characteristics are positively correlated (Mincer, 1974 as cited in Tainer,1998). For example, schooling, years in the U.S., and language proficiency are positively correlated. The results of Tainer (1988) show that English language proficiency is a statistically significant variable in the earning function in the United States.

This research was conducted using regression with the data used from 1976 the Survey of Income and Education (SIE) which consisted of 4,297 foreign-born men aged between 25 to 64. English language fluency is measured five degrees as very well, well, not very well- more than a few words, not very well- just a few words, not at all. Interviewees have to assess his or her own ability.

However, the cost of lacking proficiency is not the same for different ethnic groups. In this research, mainly Hispanic and Asians face larger earnings loss in the US (Tainer, 1988). Earnings and the determinants of earnings vary in the different groups of migrants. In 1975, Natives earn almost \$1200 more than foreign-born men on average.

As the education effects on earnings have been long established, unsurprisingly, foreign-born men with a high level of education also have a high income. Foreign-born men who earned between \$5000 and \$10000 reported that they usually speak a language other than English. About 69% of those who earned more than \$20000 claimed that they use English as a primary language.

The results of (Tainer, 1988) are that inability to speak English hurts the earnings of foreign-born Asian ethnicity, followed by Hispanics. The partial effect of language proficiency earnings is positive and statistically significant in looking at foreign-born men or comparing different ethnic groups. Asians and Hispanics have larger effects of language disability than Europeans, but language proficiency improves the earnings of all foreign-born men.

Grenier (1984) uses descriptive statistics and regressions for the analysis. The result table shows that the average hourly wage of Hispanics was 24% lower than the average wage of non-Hispanic white. Hispanics who spoke Spanish as a child have a 15 percent lower wage than those who spoke English (Grenier, 1984). The results from Grenier (1984) indicate that language plays an important role in the determination of wages, affecting a third of wage differences between Hispanic male and non-Hispanic white male workers. Suggestions from Grenier (1984) include policies regarding the language that may be useful to help people with language disadvantages in the labor market such as the integration of Hispanics into an English-speaking environment.

In the case of Israel, Chiswick (1998) uses the 1983 Census of Israel, a sample of over 88000 Jewish men aged between 25 and 64 years in Israel. Participants were asked “what language(s) do you speak daily? Do not report a language you know if you do not speak it daily.” This research was done by doing a statistical analysis of Hebrew usage including regression and ordinary least squares (OLS).

Results from Chiswick (1998) show that Israelis who speak Hebrew on a daily basis as only or primary language have statistically significant 11% higher earnings. Immigrants from Arabic-speaking countries are more likely to use Hebrew and concluded that a host language is an important form of human capital.

In the research in the Spanish context, Budría and Swedberg (2012) uses the data from the Spanish National Immigrant Survey released by the Spanish National Statistics Institute. Language fluency was collected, based on the self-assessed question of “thinking of what you need for communicating at work, at the bank, with the public authorities/ administration, how well do you speak Spanish”. It uses 4 scales of language fluency from 1 to 4, 1 being “very well” and 4 being “need to improve”. Budría and Swedberg (2012) uses the statistical analysis method of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) as well.

The results from Budría and Swedberg (2012) say that being proficient in Spanish raises immigrant earnings by about 27%. Proficient immigrants earn 22.7% higher hourly wages than non-proficient immigrants. Importantly, they also have higher education qualifications. Another factor includes professional experiences that resulted in higher income. Based on the region of origin, immigrants from Central-Western Europe have significantly higher earning than workers from Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, America, and Asia.

The study about the Netherlands in Chiswick and Wang (2016) uses variables such as destination education, nationality (having Dutch nationality or not), and migration motives in addition to the standard set of variables. Data were from Dutch survey 'Social Position and Use of Public Facilities by Immigrants' (SPVA), a large-scale, cross-sectional survey for the four largest non-western immigrant groups in the Netherlands, conducted in the year 1991, 1994, 1998, and 2002 with 1981, 1762, 3228, and 1949 households, respectively. Then, it uses statistical analysis of regression analysis and OLS as well.

Economic migrants by Chiswick (1999) as cited in Chiswick and Wang (2016) are those who move primarily because of their economic opportunities and are mostly seen as ambitious and hard-working. Chiswick and Wang (2016) divided the job sectors into three sectors (primary, secondary, and tertiary) based on the nature of the job. The primary sector includes agriculture, horticulture, and forestry which is basically the extraction of raw materials. The secondary sector includes manufacturing activities such as food processing and construction. The tertiary sector includes services, for instance, telecommunication and accountants.

By looking at the results from Chiswick (1998), Dutch language proficiency's impact on the likelihood of employment and earning is greater for low-skill-transferability immigrants than for high-skill-transferability immigrants in the Netherlands. According to Chiswick and Wang (2016), blue-collar jobs include agricultural workers and machine operators who require technical skills while white-collar jobs such as clerks and service workers, the work performance is related to how they communicate with people.

For those who studied in the Netherlands, the Dutch language is not a significant factor. Nevertheless, immigrants who completed their education in their home country benefit more from social contacts and Dutch language ability. The

benefits of acquiring a host language have different effects on earnings in different ethnic groups in the Netherlands (Chiswick & Wang, 2016). The Mediterranean group benefits much more from social contacts and Dutch language proficiency than the Caribbean group. This is due to the latter groups being closer to the Dutch language and culture and pre-migration contacts with Dutch were rather frequent (Chiswick, 1998).

Age at migration has more effect on the economic performances of older people than the younger ones. The youngest generation has acquired more host-country-specific skills and mostly speaks fluent Dutch. To conclude, Dutch language proficiency is found to increase the likelihood of employment and earnings of non-western immigrants in the Netherlands

In Britain, Shields and Wheatley Price (2001) uses data from the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities. The sample consists of 21-64 years old ethnic minority males and females. For measuring language fluency, 4 points scale – none, slight, fair, fluent was used. A determinant of long-term health condition is used in this paper in addition to the normal set. Long-term health condition limits the type of work they can do and reduces the economic incentives and efficiency.

Shields and Wheatley Price (2001) claims that "The English language is clearly an important determinant of employment for both male and female in Britain". Being able to speak English fairly increases the chances of employability by 9.15% for males and 18.36% for females. Ethnic minorities who speak English to a fluent level may further increase their chances of employability by 11.04% for males and 6.28% for females. Moreover, non-UK qualification reduces language fluency. Country of origin affects too.

In the case of temporary migration, the year of intended stay in host-country affects the courage to invest in host-country-specific human capital in that country (Dustmann, 1999). The data from a German study, Dustmann (1999), comes from the first wave of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP). However, the analyzed sample is restricted to males, older than 17 years old at entry. Language fluency is measured in self-reported 1 to 5 scales. The results conclude that the total duration is significant and positively related to language fluency. Immigrants who can write well in their native language have higher chances of speaking the host language as well.

In Canada, Boyd and Cao (2009) looks at the effects of language ability of migrants in Canada on their earnings as well as the costs of not knowing the lingua franca of Canada. It uses the 2001 Census Public Use Microdata File (PUMF) on Individuals, foreign-born PR of Canada aged 25 to 54. Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants (LSIC), which includes approximately 12,000 permanent residents, used self-reported proficiency in spoken English. Then, it uses OLS to process the data. The survey uses 5 level scales, where 1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest. Language is the main element of migrant policy in Canada.

Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants (LSIC) indicates that one of the reasons which over 70% of Canadian permanent residents reported finding jobs is the language barrier. Immigrants who reported their English is good or very good were likely to have high-skill jobs and therefore had higher wages compare to those who cannot speak English well. Female permanent residents of Canada in the category of highest language fluency earned about 1.6 times higher than that in the category of lowest language fluency. It was 1.8 times in the case of a male permanent resident of Canada.

The earning gap between the fluent English/French female user and the lower level of such skill female user was \$257 per week. Similarly, the earning gap between fluent English/French male immigrant and those lack such skill was \$579 per week. The differences were also influenced by the factors such as age, location, education, work experiences, and occupational characteristics.

2.3. Reviews of Policies Impacting Migrants Directly or Indirectly in Different Countries

Policies that could impact the migrants directly or indirectly can be divided into two parts. Firstly, there are policies by the migrant-sending countries or home countries. These policies usually cover the management of labor emigration and facilitate the migration process by establishing governmental bodies. Secondly, the policy reactions by the migrant-receiving countries or host countries to integrate the new immigrants to the new society and labor market.

2.3.1. Philippines – Exporting Labor as a Government Strategy

The Philippines is one of the top ten emigrating countries in the world (Cai, 2011). It has unique features that do not share with other nations. Among them, the distinctive one as Cai (2011) mentions is the proliferation of non-permanent job-oriented migrants or “overseas contract workers” as used in Hugo’s (2004). Moreover, its economy depends on remittances. Migration in the Philippines is highly regulated.

The Philippines uses labor export as a government strategy to deal with the high unemployment rate which is an employment-driven strategy in which migration via regulated channels should be promoted, for temporary working (Cai, 2011). Migrants are valued as “Bagong Bayani” or modern-day heroes (Cai, 2011). The government makes effort to promote high-quality “Filipino workers” brand globally and protect workers’ rights (O’Neil, 2004). It also says that migration should be a smooth process with the government playing a supportive and regulatory role.

There are several governmental institutions supporting labor export activities according to Cai (2011);

(1). Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) - takes part in industry regulation, employment facilitation, worker's protection, and general administration and support services.

(2). Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) - develops and Implements responsive programs and services to ensuring fund viability towards the protection of the interest and promotion of the welfares of its member-OFWs.

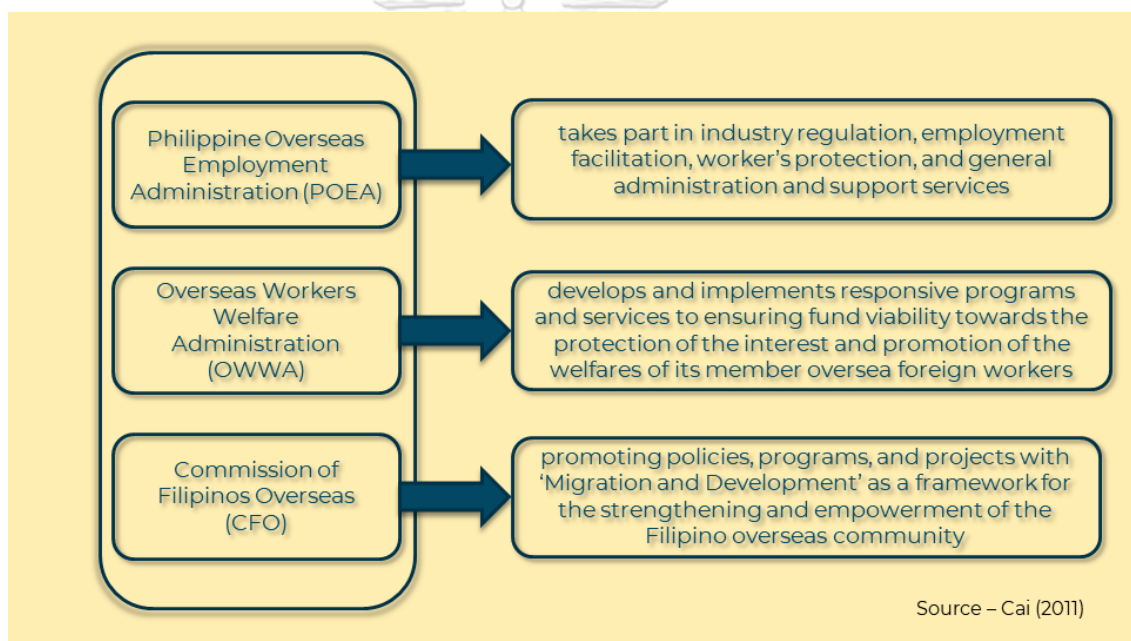


Figure 17 Migrants handling institutions and their functions of Philippine

Source – Cai (2011)

O'Neil (2004) explains the role of OWWA in helping migrants to send money home. For instance, OWWA issues a Visa card which can be served as an ID card for all workers that can be linked to the dollar or peso accounts and cost only \$3 or less per transaction. Later, the government made it a more reasonable market-based exchange rate, to make sending remittances with private banks cheaper and easier. It

continues that overseas foreign workers are even offered tax-free investment programs to reinvest in the country (O'Neil, 2004).

O'Neil (2004) also discussed subsidized benefits received by migrants from the Philippine government such as pre-migration training on social and work conditions abroad, life insurance and pension plans, medical insurance, tuition assistance for the migrants, and his or her family, loans for pre-departure and emergency. It continues to present that these compulsory services cost less than \$200 per year depending on the country of destination.

(3). Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO) - promoting policies, programs, and projects with 'Migration and Development' as a framework for the strengthening and empowerment of the Filipino overseas community (Cai, 2011). Filipino government attempts to hold entire countries responsible for the protection of its workers. For instance, new deployments of domestic workers to Hongkong were suspended after repeated cases of abuse (O'Neil, 2004).

2.3.2. Thai Government Policies on Labor Export

Thailand's labor export has started as early as the 1970s to the middle east countries, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012). It mentions that the government of Thailand has signed labor cooperation bilateral agreements with Israel, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, and Taiwan for mutual benefits. Although the remittance of Thai overseas workers was 0.7% of Thailand's GDP in 2009 according to the Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Program as cited in (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012), it is still a significant source of income for many households.

Ministry of Labor has established a one-stop service office called Thailand Overseas Employment Administration (TOEA) to serve workers who wish to work

overseas (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012). It continues with the intentions of the TOEA which are to help overseas employment matters not only in employment and financial issues but also to assist overseas Thai workers. Government agencies that play a part in labor issues including overseas Thai workers are the Department of Employment, Department of Skill Development, Department of Labor Protection and Welfare, and Office of Social Security (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012).



Figure 18 Thai government agencies to deal with emigration

(Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012) also mentions the national legislation affecting emigration in Thailand. The first being the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2550, which states that “everyone has equal rights and freedom”, applying to the job application processes. Another one being the Job Placement and Job Seeker Protection Act B.E. 2544 which concerns overseas employment and its management mentioned in chapter 3 and chapter 4 of the act. The paper says the latter also includes the procedures of sending Thai workers abroad.

The act prevents the employees from being cheated by employers as the employers are not allowed to recruit employees directly (Paitoonpong &

Chalamwong, 2012). They have to contact either recruitment agents or government agencies. The safest and cheapest way is mentioned in (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012). to apply for a job in foreign countries is to apply from the Department of Employment. It also says that although it is a time-consuming process, there is no fee for that despite the employees have to pay for expenses such as airplane tickets, visa fees, physical checks, etc. The training is also provided by the Department of Employment before leaving Thailand too (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012).

The paper then reviews the functions and responsibilities of the government agencies. The Department of Employment assigned Thailand Overseas Employment Administration (TOEA) as a representative for foreign employers, which will be responsible for recruiting workers and processing the departure (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012). Travel documents are also provided by TOEA for free of charge.

Department of Employment even oversees the process of employer sending employees abroad for training purposes. The allowances and benefits must be provided according to the rate set by the Department of Employment such as no less than 20,000 baht per month for Europe, North America, and Australia, and no less than 12,500 baht per month for Japan, Taiwan, Israel, Hong Kong, etc.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Labor has established the fund under the Job Replacement and Job Seeker Protection Act (B.E. 2528) to assist Thai overseas workers. Members have to pay the member fee according to their destination countries, ranging from 500 baht to 300 baht (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012). This, hence, provides members with benefits such as travel expenses in case of being neglected by the employers, accommodation, food, and other costs during difficult times overseas, deportation due to serious illness, lawyer fees, death, etc.

Protection of overseas workers by Acts such as the Labor Protection Act B.E. 2551, Skills Development Promotion Act B. E 2545, and MOUs. Overseas TOEA offices have the main responsibility to protect workers' rights, provide basic knowledge about countries such as labor law, tax filing, cultures, etc. It also analyzes the labor market situation and trend of a certain region, mediation between employers and employees looks for labor expanding opportunities.

2.3.2. Myanmar Policies Reforms that Have Impact on Migration

The key drivers of both domestic and international migration in Myanmar are rural poverty, unemployment, lack of economic opportunities, and fragile livelihood according to the research from Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and an NGO based in Yangon (Ma, 2017). International migration has been increased with Thailand being the largest recipient of Myanmar migrants, enabled by the 1,300-mile shared border.

Ma (2017) compares the government efforts on policy changes between two recent governments, i.e., two different political parties. During Their Sein's government, Myanmar was more cooperating with labor-importing countries (Ma, 2017). As the NLD government lacked a clear migration policy, the recruitment and placement of workers overseas were all controlled by the private sector, from recruiting by using the networks of village-level recruiters to the delivery of workers to the destination (Ma, 2017).

According to Ma (2017), there are three policies that have important implications for overseas Myanmar workers either directly or indirectly.

(1). Foreign Exchange Liberalization – Myanmar Kyat (MMK) had been fixed at 1MMK to US\$8.5 without any adjustment since 1977 (Ma, 2017). Nevertheless, USD fluctuated between 850 and 1400 MMK in the informal exchange market between

2007 and 2012 as it continues to mention. In April 2012, the Myanmar government liberalized the MMK. Besides, a mode of informal remittance was dominated called *hundi* agents, largely based on social ties and cliental trust. The liberalization of MMK is an important step to achieve remittances formalization.

(2). Banking and remittance reform – Permission for four commercial banks was granted with the democratic political reforms. At the same time, Euro, Singaporean Dollar including USD are now accepted for deposits in Myanmar banks. Furthermore, the world's largest money-transfer services such as Western Union and MoneyGram were introduced. Moreover, Rapid proliferation of bank branches and ATMs as well as mobile banking. It is not easy for migrants to access banking services due to their irregular status of migrants, documentation requirements, and unfamiliarity with services even with banking reforms.

(3). Microfinance – Myanmar government passed the Microfinance Law in November 2011. NGOs previously operated quasi-legally as microfinance institutions (MFIs) outside the regulatory framework. Formal registration allows for expanding the reach and range of financial services. Migration in Myanmar is highly correlated with the household wealth and access to the loan, according to a LIFT study. Microfinance loans may aid migration by enabling access to the capital required for migration.

Nevertheless, banking reforms still do not replace the *hundi* agents with formal banking for remittances (Ma, 2017). It mentions several reasons hindering formalizing remittances. Such as familiarity with the existing services, cheaper transaction fees with *hundis*, more favorable exchange rates, and greater convenience for recipients outside greater urban areas. Apart from policies to formalize and reduce the cost of remittances, the Myanmar government has made very few efforts to reduce or regulate the cost of migration.

In contrast, the policies relating to handling labor exporting by Myanmar authorities are still far from handling major issues with its population overseas, but merely integrating them into the legal framework by providing legal documents. It also lacks specific government agencies to provide a one-stop service to emigrant workers with sole authority such as TOWA by the Ministry of Labor in Thailand and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO) in the Philippines.

For the Thailand-Myanmar corridor, the informal channels of transferring money such as the *hundi* or broker system still play an important role in migrants' remittances. Despite the formalization of banking systems and foreign currency liberalization, 80 percent of migrants from Thailand use the informal system to transfer their remittances (UNCDF, 2017 as cited in IOM, 2019a).

The qualitative feedback from the migrants also confirmed in IOM (2019a) that they still prefer informal channels for their trust, ease of use, flexibility, and accessibilities instead of the formal ways in which access to the banks is lower in rural areas, deal with malfunctioning ATMs, a large amount of paperwork and identification requirements, etc. Some responded that the banks lack decent customer service, in some cases, were rude and condescending.

2.4. Language Training Programs in European and North American Countries

Countries with a significant number of migrants start to realize the importance of social inclusion and the livelihood of immigrants in the new society. As such, language proficiency becomes the basis for the social integration of migrants. As a result, various civic organizations and even government agencies react to the language ability of migrants in the host countries. State-funded language training initiatives are developed in European and North American countries. Scandinavian

countries are successful in the integration of new immigrants into the society and job market with their state-funded language training.

As mentioned in Rodin et al. (2017), Swedish language training for migrants called "Korta Vagen" is a relatively successful program and popular among new migrants to Sweden. The training runs from 24 to 40 weeks. The curriculum includes written and spoken Swedish, emphasizing language for professional usage, familiarity with Swedish society and workspace relationships, computer proficiency, and coaching. The program tends to be flexible and tailored to the needs of the participants. Besides, students are also encouraged to complete a short internship.

According to Rodin et al. (2017), professional language training is a vital part of "Korta Vagen," where participants seek an opportunity to take part in an internship, which is the very first step to access the labor market. It also says that approximately 70% of the jobs in Sweden are acquired through networks and contacts; language fluency is a baseline crucial aspect for migrants to get access to enterprises and communities.

On the other hand, cultural differences are often seen as one of the severe obstacles for migrants at work by employers. As "Korta Vagen" introduces Swedish society and workspace cultures, it is recognized as one of the tools for overcoming such obstacles. Last but not least, it helps the participants to understand the well-being and social and economic integration. The whole program is free of charge, and a monthly financial stipend is offered.

Boyd and Cao (2009) points out that one of the two strategies Canadian approaches for improving the welfare of immigrants is English/French language training for the migrants already settled in Canada. As the paper was written, federal language training has been offered as a settlement strategy with less focus on the labor force, according to that paper. The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) provides immigrants to learn the *lingua franca* of Canada. It is

provided mainly through non-governmental organizations. Training is given in a variety of ways; full-time, part-time, home study, distance learning, training at/near the worksite, small communities. Provincial governments also fund language training programs.

Nevertheless, Boyd and Cao (2009) argues that LINC programs will have little impact on improving the language skill of immigrants who are in the labor force due to its focus on general settlement rather than the labor force. Profession-specific courses as in its Swedish counterpart "Korta Vagen" lack LINC programs, which will have a significant impact on the livelihood of immigrants, primarily urban migrants who usually require more language communication in daily life and workspace.

Significant constraints of LINC described in Boyd and Cao (2009) are; first, language training initiatives are not explicitly targeted at the labor force but general language programs. Second, the catchments are small. Only 20% of newcomers participated in LINC according to an evaluation in 2004. Third, training is targeted to newcomers who arrived within the past three to five years. Immigrants who arrived before this timeframe are left out. Yet, it suggests that such English/French language training in Canada is positively impacting for migrants to become out of poverty two years after. Significantly improved language skills help them finding higher-paying jobs. In other words, the length of the training taken is the influential factor for the effectiveness of this training.

As stated on the website of the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, a wide range of German language training classes are provided for migrants. Language-specific programs such as Integration courses and German for professional-purposes courses are offered as part of the National Integration Plan under the guidance of the Federal Chancellor, allowing new migrants to fit into German society and the labor market. The cost of the program varies depending on individual courses.

The Program for the Improvement of Job-related Language Skills for Persons with Migration Background has remarkably high attendees (Sprietsma & Pfeil, 2015). It has not only up to 730 hours of teaching but also the duration of six months for full-time and one year for part-time. Furthermore, internships are provided for all participants, which helps them to gain some experience before going into the labor market.

Case studies from different countries can be concluded that language training programs for migrants have significant impacts on improving their language skills, subsequently attractiveness in the job market. Most states use language training programs as a tool to integrate migrants into a new society. Because of that, cultural shocks and racial segregation can probably be eliminated not only in society but also at work. Furthermore, migrants use language training initiatives as the first medium to seek employment. As a rule, they can look for better jobs or more paying jobs by speaking the host-country language fluently or even moderately.

2.5. Thai Language Training in Bangkok

Successful policies or programs around the globe might not necessarily work in every country or region. Plans and projects are typically context-specific and vary significantly from one area to another. Likewise, migration in Thailand is substantially different from that of European and North American countries. Unlike western countries, migration patterns of foreign migrants are two ways; incoming migrants and returning migrants (IOM,2019a). Such non-permanent migration might reflect different policy approaches by authorities in Thailand.

Undoubtedly, the main reason for migration to Thailand is primarily for employment, unlike seeking permanent residency as in western countries. As a sequence, governments will be hard to adopt state-funded training. Currently, there are no policies and language-training projects dedicated to foreign migrants in the

labor market either by the Myanmar government or the Thai Government. However, a few individuals, organizations, and civic societies are training migrants with education including language and other essential skills in Bangkok.

One of the schools operated by an individual is Pa Jai Dee School, which is an informal school in Huay Khwang. Another school operated by a Burmese activist Myint Wai is Dear Burma School opened near Asia Hotel in Ratchathewi, Bangkok. It offers a variety of classes consist of Thai language training, English language training, and computer classes, etc. Intergovernmental organizations such as IOM provides Thai language training for Myanmar migrants as well.

2.5.1. Pa Jai Dee School

On September 26, 2014, Bangkok Post published an article about an informal school that trains migrants who are not able to attend formal classes. Pa Jai Dee School is an informal school opened in Huay Khwang District offering education to migrants from neighboring countries. It offers Thai language classes as well as other subjects free for the migrants regardless of their legal status. However, students without any identification will not be able to receive the certificate.

Patsarin Pinthong, the main educator of the Pa Jai Dee School said in the interview with Bangkok Post that her students came not only from neighboring countries but also from the hill tribes of northern Thailand. She continued that most of her students have very limited education and are working in low-income jobs and hard labor jobs in Bangkok. Students like Phannita Saeyang claimed that not being able to communicate in Thai is more like being blind in Bangkok. Students in this school were aiming for a better career path with their new qualifications.

This informal school has been opened for 5 years at the time of the interview and got support from the community, organizations, and students. The place that is the classroom now was dusty ground with minimum shade and stinky. Students

raised funds to improve their classroom and CIMB Thai also offered monetary support to turn into a proper classroom. Although the majority of the students did not continue their education, some of them could get into Ramkhamhaeng University and other institutions.

2.5.2. Thai Language Training Under PROMISE program by IOM

IOM Thailand has been offering Thai language classes to the Myanmar migrant workers under the program called PROMISE (Poverty Reduction Through Safe Migration, Skills Development, and Enhanced Job Placement). The training is provided by IOM with the collaboration of the Employer's Confederation of Nation and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. This program focuses on workspaces with over 100 employees. The curriculum of this program is standard 30 hours of Thai language training for Myanmar migrants.

As of 2020, this communicative Thai program has trained more than 160 Myanmar workers in Thailand. The medium of the teaching is in Burmese by a native Thai speaker from Royal Army ASEAN Languages Center, Sergeant Major 1st class Preecha Phuphankaew. The program intends to help in improving migrants' quality of life while working in Thailand. The structure of the program consists of the conversation in the workspace and daily life. Employers are asked to send three Myanmar-Thai interpreters to take part in the program who will then later train more students in the future.

The instructor of this training claimed that language is obviously an obstacle for Myanmar migrants to communicate. Soe Min Oo, the interpreter at the program stated the Thai language gives Myanmar migrants more knowledge about work and he believes learning Thai will give them a better life. He also mentioned that as migrants come to Thailand without language fluency, a lot of workers are keen to

study Thai but no one teaches them. Recently, a series of online training videos were also uploaded on YouTube by IOM Thailand too for online learning.

2.5.3. DEAR Burma Academy

DEAR (Development of Education and Awareness for Refugees from Burma) Burma Academy established by a Burmese activist Myint Wai, is another non-profit vocational school located in the heart of Bangkok, near the Asia Hotel in Ratchathewi. It has been offering various classes including the Thai language, English, Burmese, and other classes such as computer classes to Myanmar migrants since September 2002.

The English classes may open opportunities for migrants to work in tourism and various sectors. Being able to speak in Thai can prevent them from exploitation, abusive employers, and being sent back to Myanmar. As Myanmar is a multi-ethnic union, many minorities do not speak Burmese as their first language. Training Burmese to these students will allow them to build relationships with other Myanmar migrants in Bangkok as well as access to the job market in returning to Myanmar.

The school was initially opened in front of Ramkhamhaeng University's student club building. Later then, it was moved to Christian Students Centre before finally settling in the current location. According to the DEAR Burma Academy Facebook page, more than 10,000 migrant workers were graduated from this school since it is opened. DEAR Burma aims to improve the livelihood of Myanmar migrant workers with confidence, strength, education as their Thai counterparts, and integrate them into the communities and jobs.

Apart from the schools training migrant workers, there are a few non-governmental organizations that teach the Thai language to migrants' children. The

resolution passed by the Thai cabinet in 2005 allows migrant children free to study in public schools regardless of their parents' legal status in Thailand (Arphattananon, 2012). It suggests that this policy is a significant change for migrants as education is the key to social and economic mobility. The paper, also mentions that only a few numbers of migrant children have enrolled in public schools (ILO, 2008, as cited in (Arphattananon, 2012).

This policy directly benefits the children of migrant workers in the future. On the other hand, it could indirectly support the parents of these children as well. Papers like Chiswick (1998) and Shields and Wheatley Price (2001) suggest that having children studying in the formal school of the destination country helps the parents in acquiring host-language skills. Thus, having children studying in formal Thai schools may improve the Thai language skills of migrant parents in Thailand as well.

Several civic society organizations and non-governmental organizations work are currently working on the issues of the children of the migrant workers, for instance, Labor Protection Network (LPN), JRS Bangkok, and Creative Life Foundation. The LPN educates the families of migrant children with the information and importance of registering for school. Besides, it helps to prepare migrant children equipped with the necessary skills required to engage in Thai public schools. Other organizations provide similar services as well.

2.6. Summary of the literature reviews

From the literature reviews above, it has been proved that language proficiency can improve the income of the immigrants (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Budria & Swedberg, 2012; Chiswick, 1998; Grenier, 1984; Shields & Wheatley Price, 2001). Others such as Chiswick and Wang (2016) claim that speaking the host language improves the likelihood of employment and earning. Depending on the context, the

improvement of income can be affected by different variables in different countries, for example, gender, or language spoken since born.

With the higher proficiency in the language, migrants generally improve their income accordingly. Although the relationships between host language and immigrants are observed and proved in Europe, Israel, and North American countries, similar research cannot be identified in the Thailand context especially with Myanmar migrant workers after reviewing all the literature.

Most of the researches for the relationship between the host language and the immigrant such as Boyd and Cao (2009), Budria and Swedberg (2012) Chiswick (1998), Chiswick and Wang (2016), Dustmann (1999), Shields and Wheatley Price (2001) and Tainer (1988) use census data. Statistical analysis such as regression and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) was used to know the relationship between the host language and the immigrants by looking at the correlations between various variables of social, economic, and human capital factors.

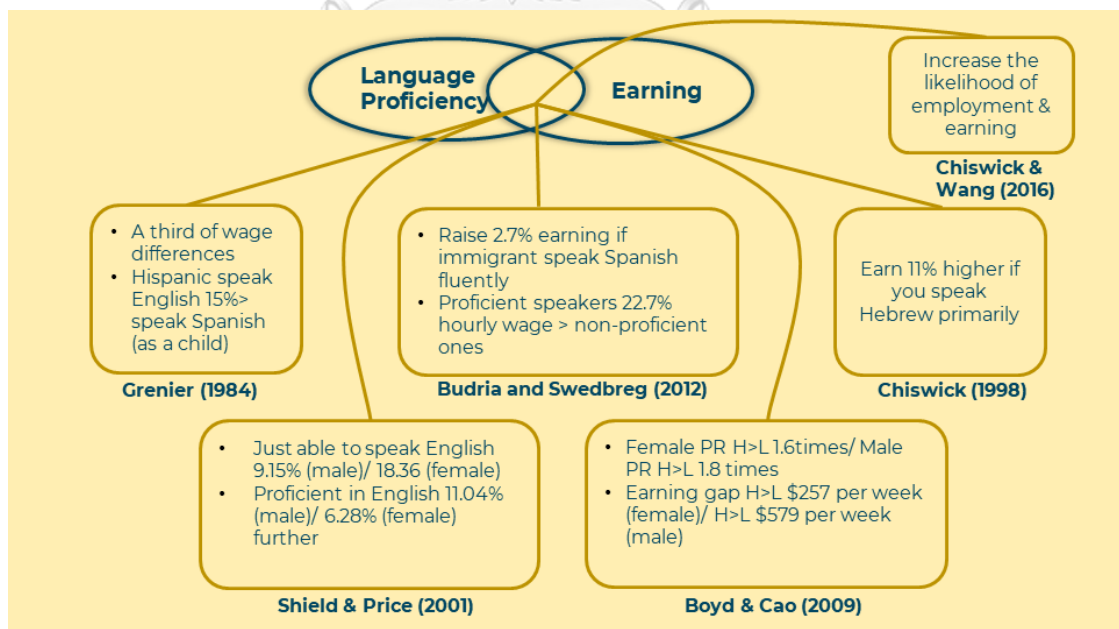


Figure 19 Summary of the literature reviews

Unfortunately, such data on migrants do not exist in the case of Thailand and Myanmar migrants. Collecting similar data as used in the researches above is restricted by the financial and time constraint for such a large sample size. Therefore, qualitative research of semi-structured interviews with migrant workers will be used in this particular research.

In-depth interviews with migrants may include open-ended questions about the information about the pre-migration conditions and procedures, migration process, their history in Thailand, acquirement of the Thai language fluency, and other aspects of their views on the impact of Thai language proficiency on their economic mobility and job mobility.

Each interview will be recorded and the audio will be transcribed and translated by the interviewer (the researcher). As such, transcribed data will be, in turn, analyzed by using thematic analysis. Similar methods were used in Loganathan et al. (2019), Due et al. (2015), and Pot et al. (2020). All papers (Due et al., 2015; Loganathan et al., 2019; Pot et al., 2020) adopted Braun and Clarke (2006) approach to thematic analysis to find the repeated patterns of meaning.

CHAPTER 3 : METHODOLOGIES

3.1. Data analysis methodology

The qualitative data collected from the data collection with migrant workers and the representative from the language academy were analyzed by qualitative method thematic analysis to understand the patterns or themes in the data. Thematic analysis is claimed to be a foundational method for qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, this research used the thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) for its data analysis.

3.1.1. Thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006)

In this research, a similar way of analysis will be used to understand the relationship between Thai language proficiency and the economic mobility of Myanmar urban migrants in Bangkok. The thematic analysis used in this research is one of the most common and most cited methods used in qualitative researches. Thematic analysis organizes and describes the data set in rich detail and is good for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes in the data by searching repeated patterns of meaning across a data-set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A theme is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as “something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set”. It continues to say that a theme should be focused on if it captures something important to the research question rather than the quantifiable measures. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), themes within the data can be identified in two ways; inductive and theoretical thematic analysis.

The prior is a ‘bottom-up’ way in which themes are strongly linked to the data themselves or to quote the author, “a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions”.

Thus, inductive thematic analysis is data-driven. Unlike inductive thematic analysis, the deductive approach is driven by the theoretical or analytic interest in a particular area, i.e., analyst-driven which is focused more on a detailed analysis of some aspect of data instead of the rich description of the whole data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This

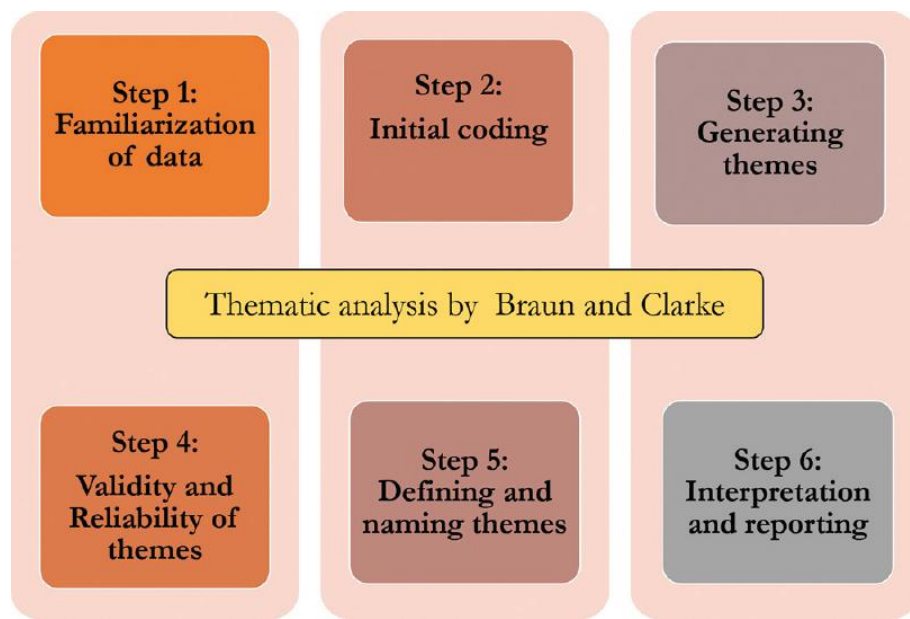


Figure 20 Steps in thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006)

approach is also called theoretical thematic analysis.

Source – Indian Journal of Pharmacology

The six steps of Braun and Clarke (2006) way of doing thematic analysis is as follows.

- (1). Familiarizing yourself with your data

One of the first steps to thematic analysis is repeated reading of the data in an active way. In other words, looking for means, patterns, etc. while reading the data. Transcription of verbal data is also a good way to start thematic analysis and refers as a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology' (Bird, 2005: 227 as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006)

(2). Generating Initial Codes

This phase includes the formation of ideas from the repeated read data. Organizing the data into meaningful groups is required in this stage. Coding the data will be varied depending on data-driven themes or theory-driven themes. In a theory-driven theme, coding should be around the research question. It is important to code as much as possible in this stage.

(3). Searching for themes

In stage 3, the analysis should be at themes instead of codes, as such, sorting different themes into potential themes. Visualization such as early-stage ‘thematic map’ may be used to look for the relationship between different themes.

(4). Reviewing themes

Refinement of the candidate themes has to be done in this phase. In this stage, removing themes that do not have enough data to support, merging themes, and breaking down themes that need to be different are carried out. Another level of this stage is to check the validity of the themes in accordance with the data set. The relations between the themes and the overall story which the themes indicating should be observed well by this stage.

(5). Defining and naming themes

As soon as a satisfactory thematic map is formed, defining and refining the themes are required to identify the essence of the meaning of each theme for analysis. A detailed analysis of each theme has to be written, focusing on the stories each theme tells. It is important to consider how the themes can fit into the overall research question.

(6). Producing the report

In the final stage, final analysis and writing up the report of fully worked-out themes. The analytic narrative should be concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive supported by sufficient themes within the data. In this particular research, the theoretical thematic analysis will be used, meaning coding will be focused on this specific research question.



3.2. Data collection

3.2.1. Interviewees

The interviewees consist mainly of Myanmar urban migrants in Bangkok. A total number of 9 people are volunteered to take part in this research. Even though this research initially targets to interview people from the 'service sector' to understand their employment history, choices, and their history of migration. However, the researcher recruited Myanmar migrants from other sectors such as manufacturing, maid, and construction to see why they choose to do so. Moreover, one of the well-known language training academies in Bangkok was asked to give their opinions about the research question.

3.2.2. Data Collection Method and Instrument

This research is qualitative. The data were being collected via face-to-face interviews with participants using open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview form. Verbal data were collected with an audio recorder with the consent of the interviewees. There are two sets of interview forms, one dedicated to the migrant workers and the other dedicated to the language academy. Both the interview forms are in Burmese and the interviews were conducted in Burmese. Additional questions were asked depending on the job type of the interviewees to observe the reasons why they are working in the specific sector.

The interview questions for the migrants are designed to understand the pre-migration preparations, migration process, and post-migration situations including the constraints that they faced in each stage. Apart from these, their employment histories were asked with detailed information about types of jobs, salary range, duration of employment, Thai proficiency at the time of employment, and job locations inspired from the literature reviews. Apart from that basic information about the standard variables that can be seen in most literature was asked.

For the interviews with the migrants, a guideline was given for migrants to specify the answer easier. For pre-migration preparations, the interviewees were asked about how they had secured a job, funded their trips, and the difficulties that they faced before migration. Questions about the migration process include how they had come to Thailand, which route did they use, and what are the difficulties during the process. For the situations, while living in Thailand, they were asked about the difficulties that they faced in Thailand and their choices on particular jobs or locations.

The questions for the interview with the representative from the language academy were different from the one for migrants. This interview form includes four parts namely general questions about the academy, the structure of the organization, the outcomes, and miscellaneous questions on conducting language training, etc. The interview with the language academy intends to serve two purposes; to understand how a language academy operates and to know how the Thai language is affecting migrant workers.

Self-assessed language skill was used to measure the Spoken proficiency of Myanmar migrant workers. The language skill was measured on a 5 scale, in which 0 being the lowest and 4 being the highest. The problem with self-assessed language skills is interviewees may have difficulties in deciding about the self-fluency, for instance, differences between speaking a language good or very good (Dustmann, 1993).

On the other hand, test-based assessments of language abilities are very costly. Similar problems are reported in Tainer (1988) about how respondents compare their language ability to that of their friends or relatives, or will they take into account how much they have improved over the years? Spanish National Immigrant Survey released by the Spanish National Statistics Institute was also based

on the self-assessed question due to the high cost of test-based assessment of language ability (Budria & Swedberg, 2012). Since there is no standardized Thai language fluency test, self-assessed language proficiency is the only option in this case.

3.2.3. Sampling and Recruiting Methods

Being qualitative research with limited time and budget, a mixed method of convenience sampling and purposive sampling is used to select samples from different job sectors. For ease of research, cost-effectiveness, and expedited data collection, convenience sampling is used for recruiting participants. In total, five Myanmar migrants from the service sector, one Myanmar migrant from the manufacturing sector, a migrant working as a maid a migrant working in the construction sector, and a representative from a Thai language program were recruited in this research.

Firstly, since the possible candidates were identified, a brief explanation about what is going to be asked in the interview. Afterward, the participants were asked whether they are willing to participate in this research. Participants who were accepted to be interviewed were then assured that their data will be kept confidential. Additionally, the assurance of handling the data that it will not be shared with anyone or any authorities and usage of data only for educational purposes was given.

3.2.4. Limitations

Albeit the initial research plan targeted to include more participants, the series of waves of the Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand limits the interviewing of a large number of participants. Due to the risks of possible exposure to Covid-19, the number of participants had to be limited to eight Myanmar migrant workers and a representative from a language academy.

Moreover, collecting large data with a big sample size as IOM did is not possible with limited resources, such as financial and human resources in this research. With large data, the relationships between Thai language proficiency and Myanmar urban migrants could be proved statistically. Therefore, with the limited data, statistical analysis as used in other literature would not establish strong results on the research questions.



CHAPTER 4 : DATA

4.1. Data

4.1.1. Person_1

Gender = Male

Age = 29 years

Location = Pathumwan, Bangkok

Personal information

He is an ethnic Bamar who was born in the state of Mon and raised in Kayin State in Myanmar. By the time of migration, he was only 17 years old. He had studied up to high school back in Myanmar. Apart from Burmese, the official language of Myanmar, he can speak Thai and English relatively well. He is currently working as a waiter in a restaurant near Chulalongkorn University. He lives with a Myanmar roommate in the Phetchaburi area in Bangkok. He walks to his workplace which is about 25 minutes from where he lives.

Brief Migration History

His migration to Bangkok was not primarily for employment. His foster mother was already in Bangkok and willing to move in with her. As a Mawlamyine native who used to grow up in Myawaddy (bordering city with Mae Sot), visiting Mae Sot is frequent for shopping. Undoubtedly, he migrated to Bangkok via Mae Sot. Being his face familiar with the Thai law enforcement forces, he did not have any difficulties in passing the border. All of his migration expenses were covered by his foster mother.

Employment history

He used to work at a factory in Mae Sot during school, which he can easily pass the border and work. “The arrests were not very common in Mae Sot”, he

stated. After moving to Bangkok, he was studying in an informal school while he was helping his mom with her work in Pratunam. As his first job in Bangkok, he worked in a factory.

Although he worked at a factory, his work tasks were lighter compare to other Myanmar workers in the factory. He primarily worked on some documentation and interpreted what his superiors said to fellow Myanmar as he speaks some Thai. Afterward, he worked at a food court restaurant where he worked for 3 years in various positions. His main task was to take orders as he can write Thai better than spoken. His Thai language is getting better and his income was shifted from category 2 to category 5 gradually working in this job.

With the closure of the food court, he moved to a phone accessories shop where he served as a salesperson for a year. He was earning category 5 until the first Covid outbreak in Bangkok and he lost his job due to the pandemic. His current job salary is in category 4 but he accepted this job due to the limited job vacancies by the Covid hard time.

Thai Language Acquirement

As he was not intended to seek employment as soon as he moved to Bangkok. He was lucky enough to take a part-time school that is offered to migrant workers and refugees. Later, he joined Dear Burma School where he learned Thai, English, and computer skills. He believed that the language schools are beneficial to him in terms of career opportunities.

His efforts to learn to read, write, speak and listen to Thai rewards him in his career path. During his employment history, his ability in the Thai language has enabled him to work lighter job tasks compare to his colleagues. Besides, being able

to write Thai, his salary got better positions and better benefits in his previous jobs.
Thai language proficiency also gives him a better chance to be recruited.



4.1.2. Person_2

Gender = Male

Age = 27 years

Location = Pathumwan, Bangkok

Personal Information

He is a Burmese Gurkha from Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay. He studied until secondary school in Myanmar. At the age of arrival, he was only 18 years old. He speaks Burmese, Nepalese, Thai, and English. Currently, he is working at a BBQ restaurant in one of the liveliest streets in Pathumwan district, Bangkok. His siblings are studying in Thai public schools despite he had no exposure to the Thai language at the time of his migration. To date, it is almost a decade he has been living in Thailand. He shares his apartment in the Petchaburi Road area with his relatives.

Brief Migration History

He moved to Thailand with the help of his mother who was already in Thailand and financed him and arranged everything for him. Nevertheless, his history of migration was not simple. He was arrested once while crossing the border and locked up for a night. Since he was released, he had to walk through the forest trail. He headed directly to Pattaya where his job was secured.

Employment History

His first job in Thailand is at a bar and restaurant in Pattaya where he worked for 4 years. Since he does not speak Thai, he mainly did prepare Shisha such as putting Hookah squeeze and coal, etc. Even though he cannot speak Thai, his co-workers who were mostly from Myanmar and helped him with the language barrier.

He moved to Rayong for some construction work as well. However, there were constant verbal abuses by the employer. Thus, he had decided to quit after a week.

He moved again to Pattaya and then to Bangkok to work at the retail shop in Platinum. By the time he was in Bangkok, he believed that he can speak Thai to a certain extent. He had to communicate in Thai for Thai customers and English to English customers (referring to English-speaking customers). He worked in many other jobs in various places too. He can speak relatively well now as he mentions he can understand “60% out 100%” in Thai.

Thai Language Acquirement

He speaks no Thai at all by the time of migration. He has not taken any Thai language classes as well. His acquirement of the Thai language is by learning from work and co-workers. Within a timeframe of 9 to 10 years, he can now communicate at least with co-workers and customers in Thai with any formal language training.

4.1.3. Person_3

Gender = Female

Age = 23 years

Location = Pathumwan, Bangkok

Personal Information

She is native to a village near Mottama, Mon State. She was educated up to secondary school in Myanmar. Apart from Burmese, she cannot speak any other foreign languages except the Thai language. Due to the lack of employment in her hometown, she has migrated to Thailand for employment purposes. She is supporting her family with her remittance as well. By the time of the interview, she is working in a bakery in the Pathumwan district of Bangkok. She lives on the first floor of the same place where she works with her Myanmar co-worker.

Brief Migration History

Unlike any other interviewees in this research, she has come to Bangkok legally with proper documentation and a work permit. She secured a job in Thailand through the social connections of her sister working in a pineapple factory in Chonburi. For her, the migration process was quite easy. Being a legal migrant, she is free from legal threats and fraud. She only had to prepare normal documentation and migration process such as passports, health checks, etc.

Her total expense for migration which was around 20,000 baht was deducted from the salary monthly. She passed the border of Myawaddy-Mae Sot to Thailand with land transportation. Even though checkpoints were there, she was fine with a passport. She paid cash only for the bus ticket to Myawaddy and the rest were covered by her employer which in turn she indirectly paid.

Employment History

Her first job in Thailand is at a large pineapple factory in Chonburi. Her primary tasks were to measure the weight of the pineapples, removing the seeds, and packing. Despite her lack of Thai language fluency at the time of migration, most of the co-workers in the factory were in Myanmar. Since they communicate in Burmese, she was able to speak only very basic words in Thai. Later, she moved to a timber mill where she worked a few months.

Afterward, she moved to Bangkok and worked as a janitor. Since she found the job does not suit her, she has moved to her current job at a bakery in the Pathumwan district of Bangkok. She particularly loves this job as she can learn bakery which she believes, may effective if she returns to Myanmar and runs a business. Moreover, she can communicate with customers which will help to improve her Thai language skill. As of now, she can speak fairly enough to operate the business in Thai.

She earned around 10,000 baht in the jobs in Chonburi. Her salary improved by 2,000 baht in her current job. However, the salary in her first job combines all the overtime and other benefits. As her job today is in the city center, she believes she is more open-minded and her chances to improve her Thai are better.

Thai Language Acquirement

She had no formal training in the Thai language. Her tight working schedule prevents her from taking any Thai language classes. With some pre-migration exposure to Thai with her friends, she learned Thai online such as free online videos on the Thai language. Besides, she watches Thai movies. Currently, her boss also helps her to speak properly and correctly. Speaking Thai enables her to communicate with her employer more efficiently. She had to wait for someone else to translate for her before she cannot speak Thai.

4.1.4. Person_4

Gender = Male

Age = 29 years

Location = Nongkham, Bangkok

Personal Information

He is an ethnic Shan from Shan State, Myanmar. He studied until secondary school in Myanmar. He speaks a mix of Burmese and Shan. However, Thai is his preferred language as of now. He speaks more confidently in Thai rather than Burmese and Shan. Currently, he is working at a plastic factory in Nong Kham district, Bangkok. He has been in Thailand for around 6 years. He shares his apartment with a Myanmar friend in the Nong Kham district, where he drives to work for 10 minutes.

Brief Migration History

He moved to Thailand with the invitation of his friends in Thailand. He crossed the border from Mae Sai in northern Thailand and headed to Chiang Mai. He used brokers to get into Thailand and paid around 400.000 MMK (9000 THB as of 2021) at the time of migration. In Myanmar, he did not speak Thai. It was difficult for him to be in Thailand at first as he understands not more than very basic words.

Employment History

He firstly painted the building by working in the construction sector in Chiang Mai. He worked there for few months and earned around 200 baht per day. Afterward, he moved to Lat Krabang, Bangkok. Later, he moved to his current job at a plastic factory in Nong Kham with the help of his friend working in the factory. He initially earned around 350 baht per day. Currently, he earns around 400 baht per day.

Thai Language Acquirement

He speaks very basic Thai at the time of migration. Because of it, he had difficulties understanding others. He got his fluency by working. He has not taken any Thai language classes. Now Thai is his primary language and he prefers to speak Thai over Burmese and Shan.



4.1.5. Person_5

Gender = Male

Age = 28 years

Location = Thaphra, Bangkok

Personal Information

He is an ethnic Pa-O from Shan State, Myanmar. He was once arrested while working in the factory. He had his primary education in Myanmar and worked in his village before migrating to Thailand. He moved to Thailand in search of a better life inspiring his friends working in Thailand. He can speak Thai relatively well and found Thailand to be a better place for him. He is married to a woman of his ethnicity and residing in Bangkok together. They have a child who lives away from them in a village in Myanmar.

Brief Migration History

He first came into Thailand via the Myawaddy-Mae Sot border using the brokers which cost him around 10,000 baht. He headed to Kabinburi where he already secured a job in a factory. He was arrested while working in that factory for more than 8 months and jailed for about 45 days. He was deported afterward. After returning home for 2 to 3 years, he came again to Thailand to work in Chonburi, subsequently in Bangkok.

Employment History

He lacks his fluency in Thai while he first moved to Thailand. He had worked in a factory that produces rubber end products in Kabinburi, Prachinburi. He was earning just over 100 baht at that time. After being detained and deported, he moved again to work in a factory that produces toilets in Chonburi for less than 300

baht. Later, he moved to Phetchaburi to work in a phone manufacturing factory. He started to earn over 300 baht there and he picked up some Thai fluency by that time.

In his first job in Bangkok, he delivered ice for five months. He earned just around 6000 baht per month with accommodation provided by the employer. He worked various jobs in a car spa and restaurant. As of now, he has been working as a delivery who delivers soda and beer to the restaurant around the Thaphra area for 7 years now. In recent months, he is working as a waiter and also a kitchen helper at a local shophouse at the same time. Additionally, he washes dishes in another restaurant after the closing time of the first restaurant.

Thai Language Acquirement

By the time he came to Thailand for the first time, he cannot speak Thai at all. He has not taken any Thai language training which explains why he cannot write Thai until now. He had learned little by little over time in the workspace. His rapid improvement in the Thai language has started since he is delivering ice and soda. As he can speak with many customers, he can learn and improve his Thai language proficiency much faster. Fluency in Thai enables him to have a better chance of getting employed as he can understand all his boss's demands.

4.1.6. Person_6

Gender = Female

Age = 24 years

Location = Latphrao, Bangkok

Personal Information

She is a Kayin ethnic, born and raised in Kayin State. Her primary languages are Karenic languages alongside standard Burmese. She was only 15 when she first came to Thailand. She had her primary education in Myanmar. She migrated to Thailand by following her elder sister who was already working as a maid in Bangkok. Her current marital status is separated. She is a mother of a child who currently lives in Myanmar.

Brief Migration History

Similar to the majority of the interviewees, she migrated via Myawaddy-Mae Sot border point using broker services to get into Thailand. She paid 14,000 baht for the service which was paid by her sister in Bangkok. Lacking legal status, she faced difficulties en route. Not having a passport is also a major constraint in the migration process. It took 10 days for her to get to Bangkok due to the difficult terrain and the avoidance of law enforcement officers.

Legal issues were one of the most difficult even after migration. Retention of identification documents is the biggest constraint in moving one job to another. Another issue in her story is Thai language proficiency. She and her sister once ran away from the employer as their employer hold their salary.

Employment History

The employment history of her started as a maid in a house in Bangkok with her sister earning 7,500 baht with food and accommodation provided. She worked there for over a year until her sister resigned to go back to her hometown. Benefiting from having relatives in Thailand, she usually takes shelter at one of her relatives' places in between jobs.

She moved to a factory that processes watermelon seeds in the Om Noi district, Samut Sakhon. In this job, she earned 250 baht per day and get a day off every week. In the factory, accommodation was provided. Even though the income was low in the factory, she enjoyed more mobility and freedom compare to being a maid.

Then, she moved again to a house to work as child care as well as a maid with the suggestion of her relatives. It was an exhausting job which she could barely sleep 4 hours a night. After 6 months, she resigned and moved to her current job at a condominium as a cleaner. She currently earns around 400 baht a day but has to pay for rent for herself.

Thai Language Acquirement

Her Thai language skill was absolutely not at all while she migrated to Thailand. The nature of her job did not allow her to take any language school. Her current job requires her to work on weekends as well, thus restraining her to take part in any Thai classes. The language barrier was one of the biggest in communicating with employers. He used to call her sister or brother to translate for her. Her way of learning Thai is to communicate with employers. Besides, she watched Thai drama and TV shows which help them in improving her Thai language skill.

She noted down the words in the drama and asked the relatives to translate for her. Gradually, she could speak to a level where she can effectively communicate with others. On the other hand, her lack of reading and written Thai skill has been barring her from working service sector jobs. Although her friends claim working in the service sector pays better, she did not work in the service industry. Another reason for her refraining from service sector jobs is unfamiliar with the nature of those jobs.



4.1.7. Person_7

Gender = Male

Age = 30 years

Location = Rachathewi, Bangkok

Personal Information

He is a Gurkha ethnic from Mogok, Mandalay. He speaks Burmese, Thai, Hindi, Nepali, and limited English. He lives nearby his workspace.

Brief Migration History

Interestingly, his migration was different from others. He came here on a flight on a tourist visa. After visiting Thailand for two months, he had decided not to return to Myanmar. Then he decided to live with his friends who were already in Bangkok and looked for a job.

Employment History

He started working in a phone accessories shop where phone cases and screen protectors are sold. As he cannot speak Thai, he worked together with a Myanmar colleague who had been working there for a decade. He also taught him the Thai language. He earned around 12,000 baht per month at this job. Later, he resigned and returned to his hometown.

After his first job, he gained some fluency in the Thai language such as basic communication. He has come back to Bangkok to work as a vendor in the Pratunam area. He has been working in the current job for around 6 years now. As of the interview, he is the only person in the shop and he claimed he can speak Thai well without difficulties in selling things. He used to earn around 15,000 baht per month before the global pandemic.

Thai Language Acquirement

He learned Thai from a Myanmar co-worker who can speak Thai at his first work.



4.1.8. Person_8

Gender = Male

Age = 23 years

Location = Ratchathewi, Bangkok

Personal Information

A Kayin ethnic from Hpa An, Kayin State was 15 years old at his first migration. He dropped from school and migrated to Thailand due to the economic situation of his family. He is currently working as a construction worker in the Ratchathewi district, Bangkok. He is provided accommodation with free electricity and water charges near the construction site. A shuttle bus is provided daily and it takes about 3-4 minutes to commute.

Brief Migration History

He has migrated to Thailand 3 times now. For the first time, He used broker services to migrate illegally to Thailand which he had to pay around 10,000 baht. The rest were legal migrations through MOU between Myanmar and Thailand governments.

Employment History

In his first job, he lived with his employer who owns a car spa. He earned around 5,000 baht per month by washing cars with accommodation and food provided. He did not speak Thai at all and he was the only employee from Myanmar at this job. After working for around a year, he went back to Myanmar.

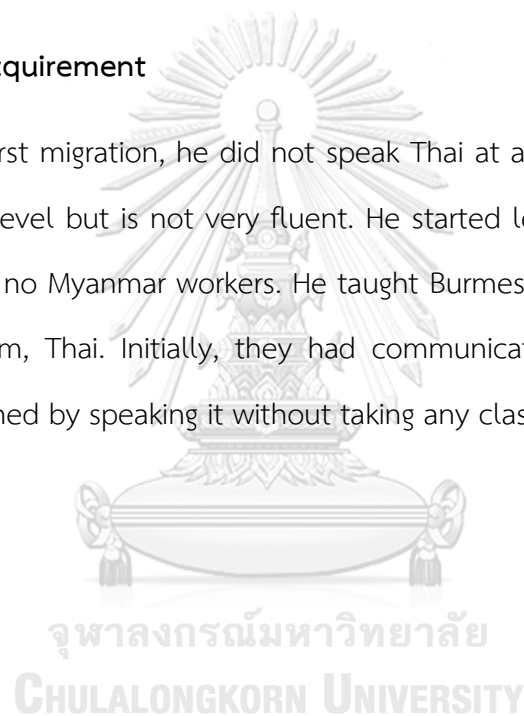
His second job was on a chicken farm where he worked for 6 months. He returned to his hometown due to his mother's health condition. Later then, he has migrated again legally and working in his current construction work. As of now, he has

been working in this construction for around 4 years. Currently, he can speak Thai to a certain extent and has to speak with his Thai supervisors on daily basis.

Even though construction works are exhausting and labor-intensive. He enjoys more freedom as well as income in his construction job. There were limitations on what you can do, wear, etc. in a manufacturing job. As there is a conflict between shareholders of the construction site, his income is significantly reduced. Thus, he is eyeing moving to another job.

Thai Language Acquirement

As of his first migration, he did not speak Thai at all. Currently, he can speak Thai to a certain level but is not very fluent. He started learning Thai at his first job where there were no Myanmar workers. He taught Burmese to his boss and his boss, in turn, taught him, Thai. Initially, they had communicated in body language. To conclude, he learned by speaking it without taking any classes.



4.1.9. Person_9 Thai Language Academy

General Information of the Academy

This language academy has been operating since September 2002 in Bangkok, Thailand. It offers mainly English and Thai language classes. Moreover, it now conducts computer courses and vocational training such as Thai cuisine and makeup skills for Myanmar migrants. Thai language classes take about 3 months for each level and cost 800 baht for English and Thai classes combined. Besides, students have to buy the printed textbook which costs 50 baht.

The Thai language is divided from Level 1 to Level 5 in this language academy. Level 1 is conducted by a Burmese teacher who can speak Thai. Apart from that, all levels are conducted by native Thai volunteers. The school normally runs every Sunday from 8 am-4:30 pm in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok. The class time may sometimes extend to 6:30 pm depending on the number of students.

Students from Ayutthaya, Kanchanaburi, Samut Prakan, Mahachai, Nonthaburi, and more have studied in this academy since its founding. Some students had spent more than two hours commuting to Bangkok. Usually, students commute from 15 minutes to 1 and a half hours to come and study in this school. Until now, around 20000 students have been trained by this language academy.

Structure of the organization

The language academy is run by a non-profit Thai foundation made up of Thais and Myanmar. The academy, itself, is non-profit and non-denominal and the classes are supported by volunteer teachers, including both Thais and Myanmar. Thai university students and students from faculties of education help to teach Thai to the students. Others include Myanmar expatriates who are either working or studying

in Thailand teach classes such as English, computer skills, and Thai cuisine. Besides, alumni from the academy contribute by teaching entry-level classes.

In the past, the academy has been funded by various non-profit organizations and international organizations. Currently, it has been funded by a small grant and tuition fees from the students. Since the donation from the organizations declined after Myanmar's democratization in 2010, tuition fee has been collected from the students, starting from 150 baht. The fund from the small grant has been using for the rent and administration-related costs. On the other hand, travel allowances for the volunteers have been paid from the tuition fee collected.

Technical resources were aided by the teachers from the international school for teacher training purposes. The curriculums were developed with the support of a retired teacher from France. Nevertheless, the curriculums are not updated in recent years. As the academy is run by a foundation, supports from other foundations are common, for instance, conducting worker development, labor leader training, trafficking, domestic violence, etc. with the help of ILO and other labor unions. They had trained not only Myanmar but also Vietnamese, Chinese, Laos, and Cambodian students.

The outcome of the classes

Albeit there was no specific data collection on the students' income and conditions, informal conversation with the students and the academy reveals that their income increased as they can speak Thai. Students mentioned that they earn more than 10,000 baht after graduating from school (wages were usually under 10,000 baht at that time).

The principal of the academy shared his recent story of a former student of the academy who has been working at the Myanmar embassy as a clerk. He was

employed in a factory to do data input and related things on excel after graduated from the academy. Since then, he has never done manual labor jobs again.

Alternatively, some students have gone more than learning Thai or English. They joined the informal education by the Office of Informal and Non-formal Education known as Kor Sor Nor education and studied further. As of now, about three students have joined such programs. One of them studied both at the academy and the Kor Sor Nor. One of them was graduated from a Thai university and returned to Myanmar.

The principal's views on the Thai language and income of Myanmar migrants

The effect of Thai language proficiency on Myanmar migrants was discussed with the principal of the language academy in an interview. He stated that the Thai language is crucial for Myanmar migrants. At the same time, English and computer skill are also crucial for some jobs. Computer skills are getting more important in other jobs.

By having Thai language skills, the principal believes that the safety of the migrants in the workspace is improved as they can understand the rule. He gave the example case of a Myanmar worker in a construction site who sustain a serious injury after failing to understand the safety rules. Moreover, they can share their feelings in any place. Another point is that migrants can participate in job training.

He also claimed that knowing Thai combined with other skills such as English and computer can help migrants to work white-collar jobs. He gave the example of migrants who can speak Thai and English who were hired by international organizations with proper documentation like passports and work permits. Myanmar migrants have been employed in hospitals to act as interpreters to Myanmar patients

in hospitals like Bangkok Hospital and Siriraj Hospital. In the future, Thai investment in Myanmar will enable experienced migrant workers to get a job in Myanmar.

Potential challenges in conducting Thai language classes

Major challenges to set up a language class are budget and suitable teachers. At the academy, students were not understood by a substitute teacher who is native Thai. Other challenges include the communication problem with non-Burmese speakers who may be Laos, Cambodian, or ethnic minorities from Myanmar. Besides, literacy is also an issue as some students did not know how to write or hold a pen properly.

He shared his idea about conducting a similar language training may better be off by using the premises of Thai public school in holiday. Teacher training can be done in a similar way as currently by using volunteers to take part in teaching the migrants. Additionally, existing teachers in Thai public schools are also a potential source for training the volunteers and develop a system. As such, a language school system will be evolved under government supervision.

However, it does have constraints too. Royal Institute of Thailand had discussed with the Academy on doing such a program. Yet, it was not implemented due to financial reasons. From the side of the migrants, some people had paid a large sum of a fee to migrate to Thailand. In order to pay off these debts, over-time fees are crucial for them instead of studying. As for the Myanmar government, the labor attaché was appointed by the NLD government and visited the academy and discussed it. Nonetheless, no actions were seen on aiding such issues.

Interview locations

The following maps indicate the locations of all interviews in Bangkok. In order to protect the identity of the interviewees, the locations are described in sub-

district level except for Interviewee 6 who was interviewed on phone, thus the district he is working in is shown instead. All the maps are extracted from Google Map.



Figure 21 Interview location of Interviewee 1, 2, and 3

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

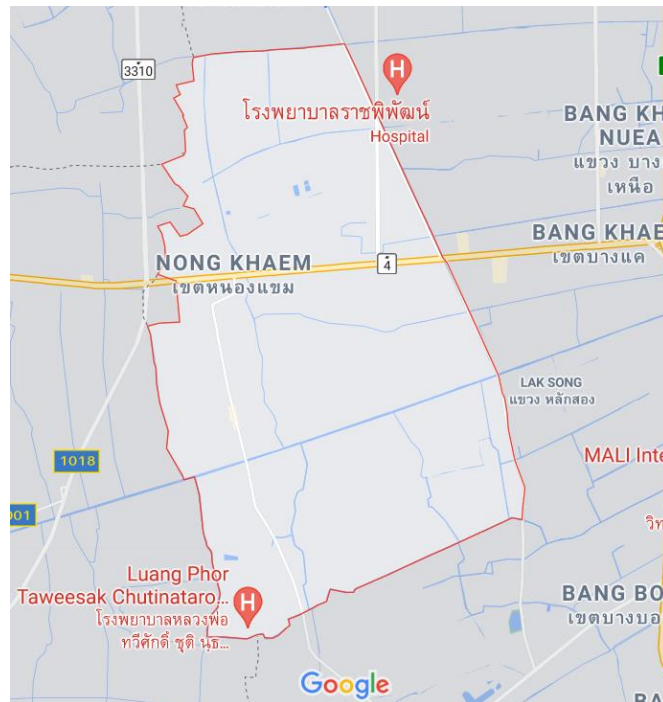


Figure 22 Interview location of Interviewee 4

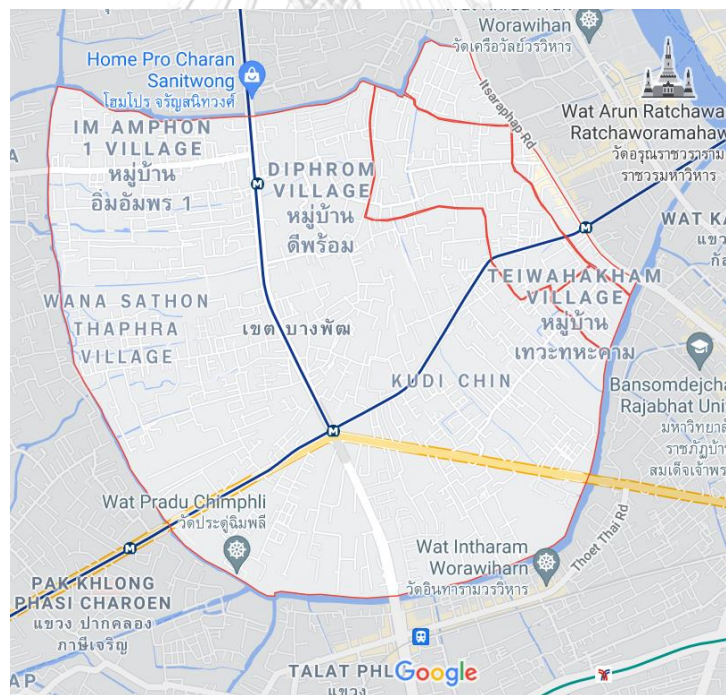


Figure 23 Interview location of Interviewee 5

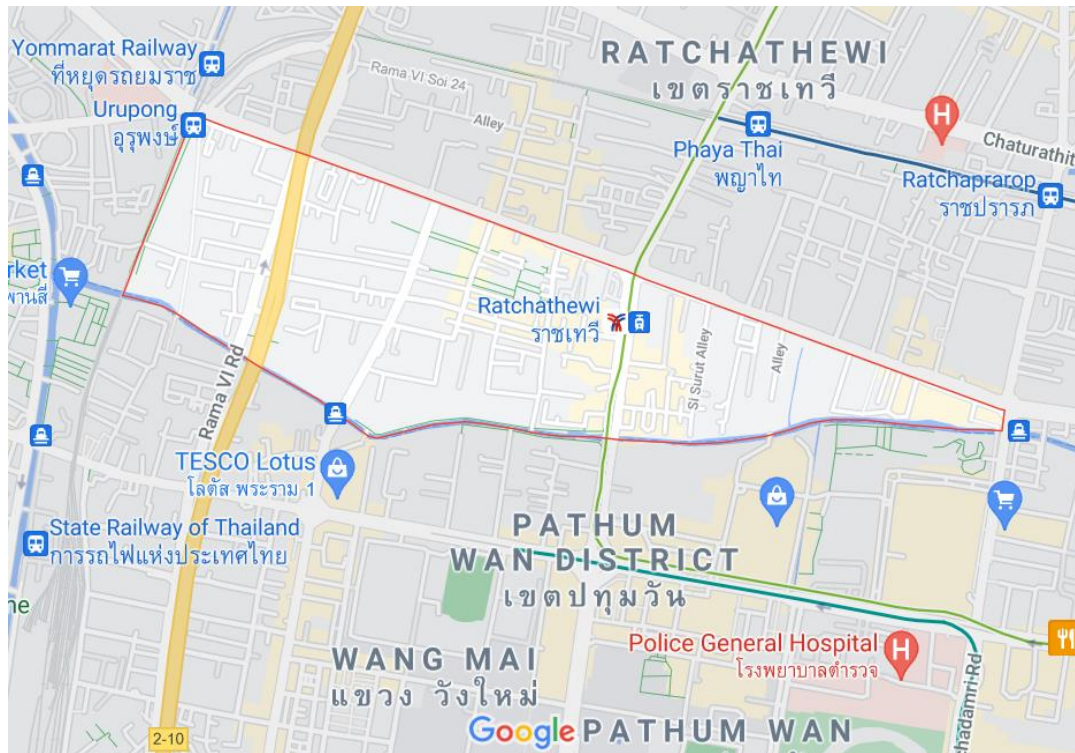


Figure 24 Interview location of Interviewee 7 and 8

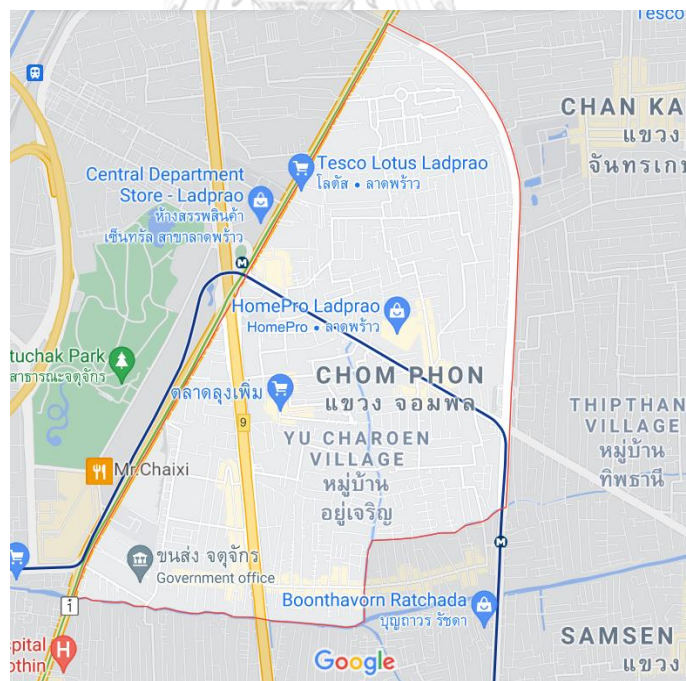


Figure 25 Interview location of Interviewee 6

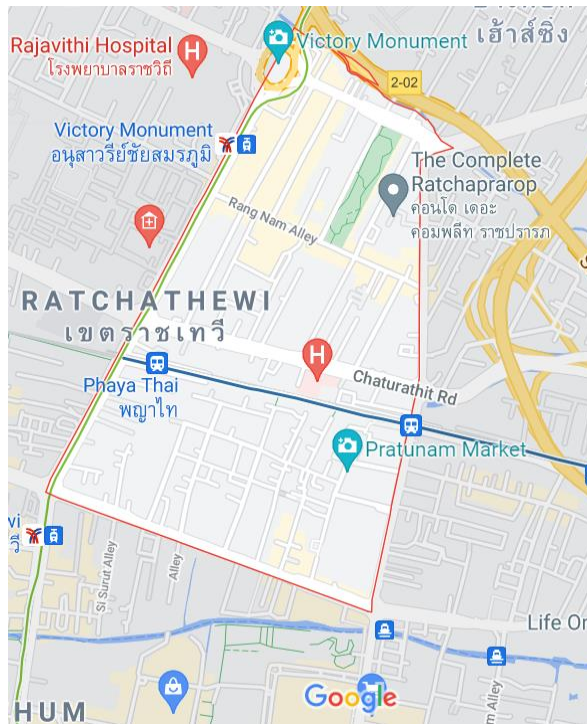


Figure 26 Interview location of the language academy



Table 2 Income, job sector, job location, language fluency relationship table

		Language fluency	Salary	Job Sector	Job Location
Interviewee 1	First Job	Level 1	Category 1	Manufacturing	Tak
	Current Job	Level 3	Category 4	Service	Bangkok
Interviewee 2	First Job	Level 0	Not mentioned	Service	Chonburi
	Current Job	60% out of 100%	Category 4	Service	Bangkok
Interviewee 3	First Job	Level 1	Category 4	Manufacturing	Chonburi
	Current Job	50% out of 100%	Category 4+	Service	Bangkok
Interviewee 4	First Job	Level 1	Category 2	Construction	Chaing Mai
	Current Job	Level 4	Category 4	Manufacturing	Bangkok
Interviewee 5	First Job	Level 0	Category 2	Manufacturing	Prachinburi
	Current Job	Level 3	Category 5	Service	Bangkok
Interviewee 6	First Job	Level 0	Category 3+	Domestic work	Bangkok
	Current Job	Level 2	Category 4	Domestic work	Bangkok
Interviewee 7	First Job	Level 0	Category 4	Service	Bangkok
	Current Job	Level 3	Category 3	Service	Bangkok
Interviewee 8	First Job	Level 0	Category 2+	Service	Not specified
	Current Job	Level 2	Not mentioned	Construction	Bangkok

(+) behind the salary category indicates the accommodation provided by the employer

Salary Categories

- (1). Less than 3,000 Baht
- (2). 3,000 Baht to 7,000 Baht
- (3). 7,000 Baht to 10,000 Baht
- (4). 10,000 Baht to 15,000 Baht
- (5). More than 15,000 Baht

Thai Language Fluency Level

0. Not at all
1. Very limited (knows very basic words)
2. Fair (able to communicate with employer and co-workers to a certain extent)
3. Good (able to perform daily job-related conversation such as taking orders, sell products)
4. Fluent (no difficulties in speaking Thai in length like a native speaker)

CHAPTER 5 : RESULTS

5.1. (Theme 1) Knowing the Thai language is beneficial to Myanmar urban migrant workers

Better chances of getting employed

Generally, knowing the Thai language brings convenience to Myanmar migrants in their daily life. Migrants reported that they had difficulties in understanding others without Thai language knowledge. Easier communication with Thai people is beneficial to their career in both employments seeking and in-job situations. Having the skill to understand the employer allows them to get employed more easily as they can understand what employers demand.

“If you can speak Thai, the chances of getting hired are more since you can understand what they are asking to do.” (Interviewee 5)

Easier to communicate with others

Even after being employed, understanding the Thai language can help the migrant workers to communicate with their employers or supervisors directly without waiting for someone to interpret for them. Thus, they can be more confident and less dependent on others in work.

“That’s really great! I can talk with my boss. If not, I have to wait for others to translate for me.”
(Interviewee 3)

Less labor-intensive job tasks

Moreover, Myanmar migrants with Thai language proficiency were given lighter job tasks compared to those who do not speak Thai in the same job sector. They

may serve as the interpreter between Thai supervisors or employers and Myanmar colleagues. This result is the same with (Pangsapa, 2015) about Myanmar line leaders serving as a translator on section 1.3, page number 9.

“Basically, I had to translate what my superiors asked my fellow Myanmar colleague. In Burmese, you could say ‘all-rounder’. My work tasks were lighter in comparison to those who don’t speak Thai.” (Interviewee 1)

Reading and writing Thai skills are crucial

In addition to that, the reading and writing Thai skills are important for some jobs and better job opportunities. Even in the same job place, migrants with those skills have better salaries and benefits. Jobs in service sectors, waiter and waitress, for example, require reading and writing of Thai due to their job nature. Such jobs are less labor-intensive than jobs in manufacturing or construction jobs as well as located in neighborhoods with large population density.

“I applied for a job at a food court. I can write fairly, but my spoken skills were not that fluent. ‘...’ Only two of us among all can write Thai. ‘...’ They test the writing skills by asking them to fill a form. ‘...’ I passed the writing test and I was hired. The salary and benefits were different between who can write and who can’t write Thai.” (Interviewee 2)

5.2. (Theme 2) Solving language barrier in the early years in Thailand *Myanmar colleagues as interpreters*

All the respondents in the semi-structured interviews came to Thailand without any fluency in the Thai language. They had worked in different sectors in different provinces. Depending on their nature of jobs and co-workers, ways of Thai language acquisition are also different. Generally, most of the respondents benefited from having Myanmar colleagues in their workspace. This is the case, predominantly in industries of the manufacturing sector where a large number of Myanmar migrants are employed. Myanmar workers in such industries do not have to communicate much in Thai as instructions are given by an interpreter.

“I don’t speak much while I started working in Chonburi. They were all Myanmar. I can speak some basics.”
(Interviewee 3)

Some Myanmar from service industry such as in restaurants and mobile phone accessories shops have a similar way of solving their language barrier at first jobs. Even though in the service industry, they had to work in positions that do not require them to speak in Thai. One interviewee was tasked to prepare the fire and related things for Shisha.

“There were many Myanmar co-workers. Only one or two of all were Thais. So, I can ask them (Myanmar colleagues).” (Interviewee 2)

Seeking help from friends and relatives

Other ways of overcoming the language barrier include help from relatives by calling relatives in Thailand to explain something or ask them to teach how to say something. An interviewee who has been working as a maid reported, “when I wanted to talk about something, I have to call my sister or brother to ask

how to say several things.” Body language was used in the case of no Myanmar co-workers in the workspace.

5.3. (Theme 3) Thai language acquirement of Myanmar workers

Learning by speaking Thai

The incoming Myanmar migrants usually have no or little Thai language proficiency at their migration. Almost all of the interviewees reported that they have no fluency before migration. Likewise, the reports by IOM in IOM (2019b) indicate that 79% and 14% of the Myanmar migrants, first-time working in Thailand have the lowest level (Level 1) and Level 2 of Thai fluency respectively in 5 level scale measuring.

On the other hand, the reports show that such percentages are reduced to 15% (Level 1) and 25% (Level 2) respectively in migrants who worked in Thailand before while the rest of the participants were having higher language proficiencies. This particular report mentions the sample size is 8,023 Myanmar migrants. The migrants in this research also stated that their language proficiency has been improved over time.

Learning from social circle

Even though there are migrants who formally took Thai language training classes, their language acquirement is greatly dependent on the types of job that they have been doing as well as the daily exposure to the Thai language. The majority of them learned Thai by speaking Thai in the workspace without specific effort to learn it. Some of them learned from their social circle, that is, their boss, co-workers, or friends and relatives.

For example, migrants learn basic words and vocabulary relating to jobs from Myanmar co-workers.

“I had conversations with him and gradually learned from him.” (Interviewee 7)

Thai employers are usually supportive in helping their employees to gain language ability. In a workspace without any Myanmar workers, a boss may help to teach his or her employee the Thai language. Sometimes, employers help to improve the Thai language by correcting and suggesting the usage of words, phrases, and sentences of the migrant workers.

“I taught Burmese to my boss and he taught me Shan (Thai) to me.” (Interviewee 8)*

“Now I live with boss and she teaches me how to speak properly.” (Interviewee 3)

*(Myanmar migrant workers usually refer to standard Thai as Shan language which is Tai Yai language, native to the Shan state of Myanmar and similar to spoken Thai.)

Learning from entertainment

Migrants had reported in their interviews that they have learned their Thai language from entertainment channels. Myanmar workers who have access to television watch Thai movies and dramas, thus learning from the film. Social media plays a part in this too. Thai language lessons have been uploaded on Facebook social media and some migrants have learned from it.

“I watched dramas and movies. If there is something I don’t know, I would call my relatives and note those words down in my book.” (Interviewee 6)

“I watch movies and learn from mobile phone (social media) as well.” (Interviewee 3)

Practicing with Thai speakers

Communicating with Thai-speaking people is a way to improve Thai language skills for Myanmar migrants too. Therefore, the nature of the job is related to the chances of speaking with many people as well. This is the reason behind some migrants prefer to work in service sectors in Bangkok where they can have more opportunities not only to improve language ability but also job skills.

“I gained my language skills when I started delivering ice.

I got to speak with a lot of customers and they helped me to correct my mistakes” (Interviewee 5)

“I can speak with customers and improve my Thai. Every day is productive.” (Interviewee 3)

5.4. (Theme 4) Better working conditions at current jobs

Almost all of the participants expressed their satisfaction with their current job in comparison to their previous job despite being in different job sectors. Most Myanmar migrants have worked in labor-intensive jobs where language proficiency is not significant in their early stage of migration in Thailand. This includes large factories, construction jobs, and other labor-intensive jobs such as car washing.

The choice of jobs at the time of migration was depended on their social connections as well as their language fluency. The majority of participants stated that their employment was secured before migration via social connections such as relatives and friends who were already in Thailand. Sometimes, labor-intensive jobs come together with verbal abuses. On the other hand, some jobs are not supportive of their career.

It is found that migrants’ income is better in their current jobs. Respondents from the manufacturing sector and construction sector which are presumably labor-intensive stated their choice of current job for being better in salary.

“Current situation is much better. The boss is good. Payment is 2 times a month, around 300-400, right?”

(Interviewee 4)

“Salary is much higher here (in construction).”

(Interviewee 8)

Migrants also reported that they enjoy freedom in their current jobs. It is also one of the factors to consider for migrants in choosing jobs.

“Construction work is exhausting but freer. Factory jobs do not have many freedoms. You can’t eat things, do certain things. They don’t even allow you to wear Thanakhar (traditional Burmese cosmetics). I enjoy more freedoms here.” (Interviewee 8)

“Current job is okay. We can rest after we’ve done our jobs.” (Interviewee 6)

Another point is that migrants feel their current jobs are supportive of their careers. These jobs not only equip them with job skills but also help them to improve their Thai language proficiency.

“Here, I can learn how to do the bakery. Additionally, I can speak with customers and improve my Thai. Every day is productive.” (Interviewee 3)

5.5. (Theme 5) Bangkok is an attractive place to work for migrants

Having social connections

As mentioned above, social connections play an important part in looking for employment in Thailand. Questions were asked about why they chose to come to

Bangkok instead of other provinces. Most responded that they have a lot of social connections in Bangkok which makes them easier to get employed. This is related to another fact that employment is easier in Bangkok.

“A Myanmar friend called if I want a job. Then I applied for the job.” (Interviewee 4)

Easier to get employed

Employment is easier to get in Bangkok. Thus, shifting from one job to another is relatively easy in Bangkok. Migrants can call friends or relatives to find a job for themselves.

“Easy to find employment here. It is far to get from one job to another in provinces. I don’t have contacts. Here, if I don’t want to work anymore, I can ask my friends to find one.”

Better opportunities

As working in a large city like Bangkok, many opportunities could be popped up. Such cities have developed a large portion of the service sector in which migrants can work and learn skills. Learning skills is beneficial for migrants in long run for their careers as well as entrepreneurship opportunities when back home. Moreover, living in Bangkok can enable them to encounter diverse people and ideas.

“I can live in the city center which opens up my mind. Previous jobs were work, work, work. No improvement. It was hard to think about what I’m going to do if I go back to Myanmar. This job gives me the opportunity to learn

bakery. So, I can think of setting up a similar business in Myanmar.” (Interviewee 3)

This proves the Hypothesis (2) of this research that migrant workers with fluent Thai may have more chances to earn more advanced job skills. Being able to speak Thai and working in large cities like Bangkok allows the migrants to learn job skills that are advantageous to their career and future.

5.6. Discussion

Discussion on the analysis of the data

From the deep, open-ended interviews with Myanmar migrants from various job sectors, it is found that Thai language proficiency is affecting the economic mobility of the Myanmar urban migrant workers in various ways. Their income can be seen significantly improved over time as well as their Thai language proficiency. At the time of migration, all interviewees had very limited or no Thai language ability.

By looking at table 2, Myanmar migrants are earning Category 4 and Category 5 which are more than 10,000 baht per month. Most of them see a huge improvement in their salary from the time of migration to the current time. Anyhow, some migrants might not see such a jump in salary especially since their duration in Thailand is still relatively short. For instance, interviewee 3 who has been in Thailand only for 3 years, improves in salary by 2,000 baht only. However, her language ability and working conditions are quickly improved in such a short time.

Initially, Myanmar migrants worked in more labor-intensive jobs. Those whose first jobs were in the service sector did jobs that did not require communication with other people. Over time, they have moved to the workspace and job sectors where they think “favorable”. In the case of choosing a job location, social connections

play an important role as they secured jobs via their networks in Thailand. Gradually, they have moved to Bangkok as it offers better job conditions and easier to find jobs.

With Thai language proficiency, various choices are now available for them. Migrants with computer skills and Thai language proficiency who can read and write Thai can even shift to white-collar jobs. The stories by the principal of the language academy indicate that the number of Myanmar migrants are able to shift to white-collar jobs after having proficiency in the Thai language, and computer skills. Since the MOU between Myanmar and Thailand has been signed, the recruitment agencies hire bilingual Myanmar workers who can speak both Burmese and Thai to handle things.

To conclude, Myanmar migrants believe that Thai language proficiency enables them to access a wide range of job opportunities, more chances to get employed, better working conditions, and easy communication in their daily and work life. Even in the construction sector which we presume unfavorable workspace comparing to the jobs in service sectors, workers reported that they have more freedom in their job.

The results from the analysis and the data of the interviews affirm Hypothesis (1) that language fluency helps migrants to shift from labor-intensive to non-labor-intensive jobs such as moving from labor-intensive agricultural jobs to less labor-intensive service sectors. However, it is important to note that the choice of the job by the individuals is highly subjective. No matter how fluent in Thai, migrants may choose their jobs according to their personal preferences, salary, freedom, familiarities, working conditions, etc.

Different aspects of Thai language proficiency and its relation to different job sectors

The assessment of Thai language proficiency in this research mainly focuses on the speaking and listening abilities of the participants. Questions were asked about how fluent they can speak Thai in their jobs from the time of migration to the day of the interviews. However, there are other aspects of Thai language proficiency such as writing and reading skills that can affect the income, working conditions, or the choice of job. Even though the reading and writing Thai skills are not the primary focus of this research, the responses from the interviewee reveal such skills are critical for the job mobility of the migrant workers in Bangkok.

For all job categories, listening and speaking skills are the basic requirement to be independent, that is, not requiring a translator to communicate or work. The inefficiency of waiting for a translator can be eliminated by directly communicating with supervisors or employers. Understanding Thai is crucial to workspace safety in manufacturing and construction jobs. Failure to understand Thai may result in serious injuries or even death.

In consequence, it is important to notice the different magnitude of impact by listening, speaking skills versus reading and writing skills of Thai language to a different job. Listening and speaking skills basically are the bottom-line communication for migrants. Such skills not only enable migrants to easily communicate with employers, colleagues, and customers but also play an essential part in looking for employment as employers will likely hire migrants with listening capability.

Listening and speaking Thai skills have a different impact on different jobs. As mentioned above, for the jobs in the service sectors, migrants can have immediate advantages of speaking Thai. Being able to listen means being able to understand the job tasks asked by the employer. In other words, labor productivity is better with Thai fluency since various job tasks can be given or taught. For instance, the job of a

migrant worker in a restaurant will not be limited to labor-intensive cleaning or washing dishes that language proficiency is not required.

For manufacturing jobs, despite language proficiency is not required generally as migrants have to do the same job task repeatedly, those who have language fluency work in higher positions or production line leaders who will also serve as the translators between superior and fellow migrants. Migrants who can listen or speak Thai well can take part in skill improvement training as well. Nevertheless, manufacturing jobs are greatly diverse from specific sector to sector. Therefore, the increased productivity of the Thai language proficiency of migrants can be varied too.

Reading and writing Thai are important to the jobs in the service sector especially in urban areas. These skills are also essential for migrants to shift to non-labor-intensive white-collar jobs or office jobs. According to the interview with the language academy, migrants with reading and writing proficiency can work in offices, jobs requiring Burmese-Thai bilingual, and in hospitals for medical tourism for Myanmar customers. Hospitals select bilingual workers and give training on specific job skills.

Similar stories can be seen from the interviews by the IOM PROMISE program mentioned in Chapter 1 about miscommunication, thus inefficiency due to the lack of Thai language. In the same interview, the Thai employer expressed her opinion about how Thai language proficiency in migrant workers can improve efficiency at work and benefit Thai businesses in the long run. On the other hand, Thai businesses can benefit from the tax deduction for the expenses of sending migrants to language training according to the Department of Skill Development's scheme.

Service sector jobs and Thai writing skill

Service sector jobs are diverse too. For example, in table 2, Interviewee and Interviewee started their journey in Thailand by working in the service sector. However, the nature of their jobs was labor-intensive and did not require Thai language proficiency. Interviewee 2 worked in a restaurant by preparing the fire and stuff related to Shisha and Interviewee 8 worked in a car spa by washing cars. Interviewee 7 as well did not have to communicate with customers or employers with the help of Burmese co-workers.

Even in the same job, for example, a waiter in a restaurant, migrants with reading and writing abilities can work in a restaurant whereas those who lack such abilities have to choose to work in restaurants opened in shophouses. Although the necessity of reading and writing Thai proficiency seems not significant in jobs such as agriculture, maid, construction, or even in manufacturing, it is a necessity in urban jobs as in some service sectors and office jobs.

Thai writing skill and language training

As reported by the participants for the interviews, speaking and listening skills can be obtained by residing in Thailand for a period of time. Most of the respondents acquired their Thai language fluency by speaking Thai with employers, colleagues, and Thai-speaking people around them. An only reported respondent with writing and reading fluency, Interviewee 1, had proper training in the Thai language and took schools and classes.

In order to improve the livelihood of the migrants in Bangkok, in other words, integrate them into the Thai formal labor market, proper training of migrants with the Thai language is crucial. As the Thai language is basic to all skill development, equipping migrant workers with the Thai language can improve labor productivity and

efficiency. This is the case especially in urban areas where service sector jobs are concentrated comparing to the sub-urban where manufacturing jobs are usually located.

The interview with Interviewee 1 and the stories from the language academy reveal that language training classes are beneficial to Myanmar migrants in their career and workspace. Although Thai speaking skills can be acquired by practicing with Thai through the workspace, reading and writing Thai requires specific training and effort to achieve. Such skills are essential for certain jobs as mentioned above, especially to shift to white-collar jobs. Therefore, easy and affordable language classes can improve economic and possible social mobility.

Constraints of the migrants in accessing language training

Migrants spend hours of time commuting to the language class on their holiday. As mentioned by the principal, Myanmar migrants traveled up to 2 hours to take the class at the DEAR Burma Academy. Since migrants spend much of their time commuting, classes opened between 10 AM and 2 PM have been packed with students as they have to commute from a long distance, sometimes requiring changing two or three buses. Thus, early morning classes and late evening classes are usually lacking students.

Similarly, the interviewed migrant workers expressed their tight schedule to take part in any language training. Therefore, by opening classes at the district level or regions where migrants can easily be accessible within a few minutes, it can encourage more migrants to take part in these classes and improve their Thai language proficiency. So far, migrant workers acknowledge that improving Thai language proficiency can bring more convenient and job opportunities for them. The strategy in the following chapter is the result of the analysis of current provisions for

migrant language training and the discussion with the representative of DEAR Burma academy.



CHAPTER 6 : STRATEGY SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Strategy suggestions for improving the Myanmar urban migrants in Bangkok

6.1.1. Strategy: Providing classes for the Thai language for Myanmar urban migrants

A suggestion from this research for a strategy to enhance the livelihood of Myanmar urban migrant workers by improving their Thai language proficiency through language training. As we have known that the Thai language plays a crucial part in the livelihood of the migrants, the Thai language training program should be carried out by either state or non-state actors. Such training will improve the Thai proficiency of Myanmar workers and thus improving their income, working conditions, choices, and productivity.

From the discussion with the language academy and the case studies from the various countries, it is proved that Thai language training is effective in improving migrant's language fluency and serves as a medium for employment, integration, and control. Such language training requires a lot of resources such as financial resources and human resources. With the discussion with the experienced manager of the language academy and extended research on the existing government agenda, a mechanism is proposed as mentioned in Figure 21.

The training intends not limited only to the improvement of the Thai language of the Myanmar urban migrants, it also gives the migrants to possibly integrate them into the formal education system. With the mechanism, language training can be provided throughout Bangkok and beyond in cooperation with governmental departments. Not only that, the Thai government can be part of or whole of the language improvement system for Myanmar migrants in Thailand. The detailed discussion on how the mechanism can work for serving this strategy and the potential role of the Thai informal education office in this strategy.

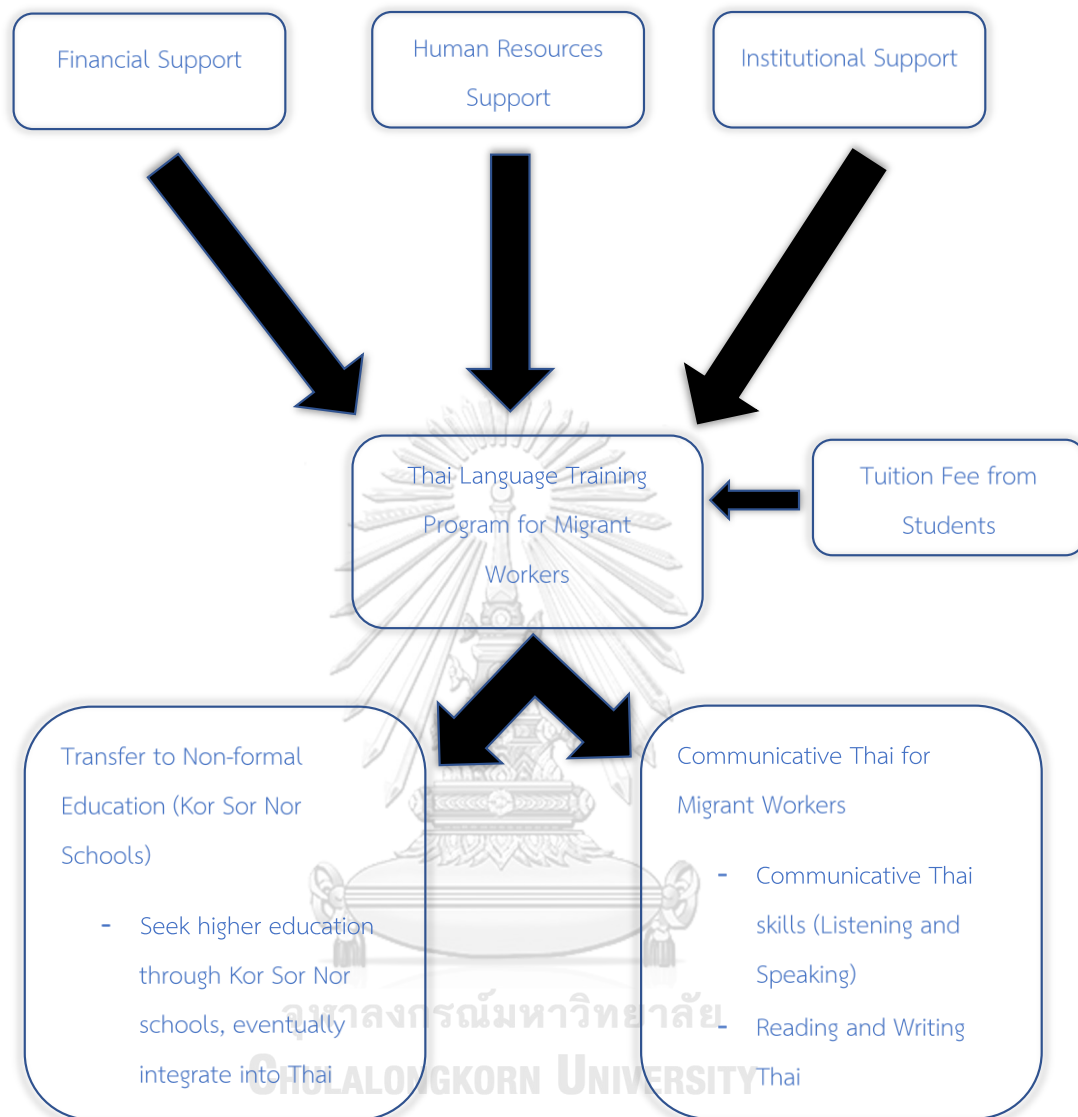


Figure 27 Mechanism for providing Thai language training

6.1.2. Thai Language Training Program for Migrant Workers

Thai language training programs for urban migrant workers can be provided language training classes throughout Bangkok. Such training will be taken place on weekends in the existing public schools under the Office of Basic Education Commission or schools operated by the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority. The program will aim to achieve the goal of improving the migrant workers to work in different employment sectors in Bangkok.

The training provided by the program will include communicative Thai skills such as listening and speaking Thai which will have an immediate effect on their daily life. Moreover, reading and writing Thai skills will be taught for better job opportunities. The students who graduated from the program should be proficient enough to communicate in Thai in daily life without any difficulties.

With the better proficiency of the Thai language, urban Myanmar migrants in Bangkok may have access to a wide variety of jobs in Bangkok where either the salary or working conditions or both are preferable. As such, language training can improve the livelihood of Myanmar urban migrant workers. By doing so, migrant workers will be more integrated into the Thai labor market and can serve as the major workforce to tackle the labor shortage in Thailand.

On the other hand, those who pursue higher education can transfer to non-formal education (Kor Sor Nor) once they are equipped with the necessary Thai fluency to do so. Afterward, they can be integrated into the Thai formal education system including the universities, hence, allowing them to work in white-collar jobs. Even though there are some cases of Myanmar migrants pursuing higher education and graduated from Thai universities, a lot of migrant workers are unable to seek higher education due to the financial constraints and the opportunity cost of studying.

6.1.3. Integration of Myanmar urban migrants into Thai formal education via non-formal education (Kor Sor Nor Education)

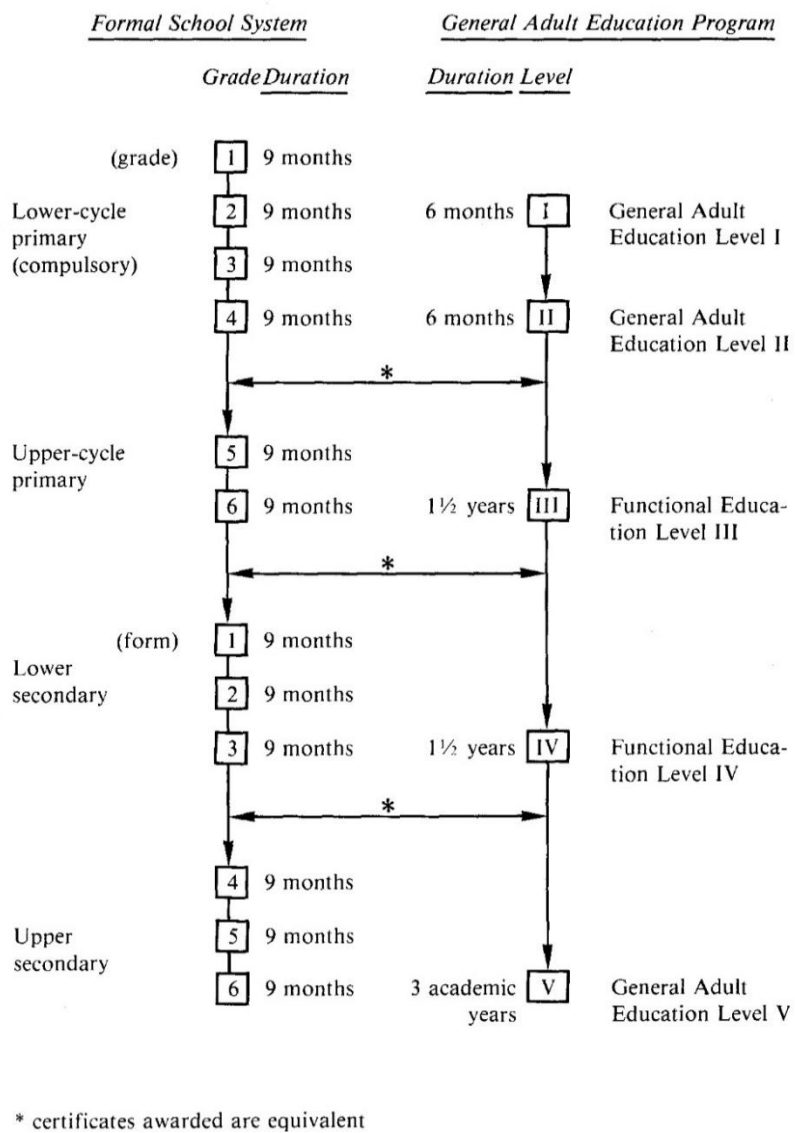


Figure 28 Comparison of grades and duration between Thai Formal School System and General Adult Education Program of Kor Sor Nor Education

Source - (Sungsri & Mellor, 1984)

Students with Thai language proficiency can study at the Kor Sor Nor education. Office of Non-formal and Informal Education of the Ministry of Education of Thailand is responsible for the Kor Sor Nor schools. The curriculums of Kor Sor Nor schools are similar to those of formal schools but the details and depth of the content may vary (Sungsri & Mellor, 1984). These classes are provided in the facilities of a normal day school after hours.

According to figure 22, students can study for a shorter period for the same grade in General Adult Education Program. However, the duration of General Adult Education Level 5 will be the same as well as the curriculum. The certificate awarded is equivalent to the “form 6” of the formal education system (Sungsri and Mellor, 1984). It also mentions that students not only will receive a certificate at each level but also can transfer to the equivalent formal system.

Financial Support

The major constraint of running a language training in finance. This includes rent, administration costs to paying travel allowances to the volunteers. The fundraising could be done by collecting admission fees, getting a budget from the governmental organization, and donating from non-profit organizations. Sometimes, it may require sourcing the funding from various ways to cover all the operating costs even collecting admission fees from the student and getting free rent.

Admission Fee or Tuition Fee

Students may pay admission fees for the classes which should be affordable for the migrants (less than 1,000 Baht) for a level. As these classes are not intended to operate for profit, admission fees or tuition fees cannot be collected to cover all the expenses. This fee can be used to reimburse the commuting fees for the instructors who will volunteer to teach the migrant workers in the schools.

Institutional Support

Institutional support can be divided into two categories. First, government institutions such as the Office of Basic Education Commission or Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (City Hall) who operate schools in Bangkok can support by opening up to use their premises for migrant training purposes on Sunday. As reported by Interviewee 9, acquiring a place is one of the major constraints in setting up an academy or a place to train migrant workers. This could reduce the financial burden of renting a place to operate such a training program.

Secondly, UN-affiliated international organizations and NGOs including IOM and ILO which are resourceful and engaging can support the comprehensive Thai language training intended for migrant workers by various means. These organizations can work closely together with governments of both countries and local organizations to achieve successful language classes throughout Bangkok and furthermore.

Human Resources

Instructors to train the migrants are one of the important issues to consider in developing this kind of training. With the interviews from the language school, effective training requires good human resources suited to migrant workers. Thus, sourcing such human resources could be a difficult process. Firstly, teachers and instructors from the existing Thai schools can be part of the program by giving allowance or subsidies for the off-day work.

Secondly, students from the faculty of education of universities in Bangkok can volunteer to teach the migrants and develop their skills. Thirdly, other individuals who would like to support this sort of initiative can be part of the training. Finally, Thai-speaking Myanmar can play a role in teaching very basic classes where

Thai to Thai teaching is not possible. The language academy that the researcher interviewed encourages their students who finished higher level or alumni of the academy to contribute to the academy by teaching in entry-level classes.

Analysis on current provisions of Thai language training to migrant workers

As of now, the organizations that are offering Thai classes to migrants work independently. These organizations are different in motives, financing options or partners, cooperating agencies, and varied resources. Some require to pay a fee while others are free of charge for taking classes. Despite offering various subjects to learn by these training centers, most of them offer Thai language and English for the participants. The major difference between them is in financing the language training.

The following analysis about the three identified language training gives a clue about how these schools or academies are operating in daily life, thus giving a picture of current provisions of language classes. Firstly, and most importantly, the language classes were funded by a variety of sources. The financial supports usually come from private donors, non-governmental organizations, and even students. The interview with DEAR Burma academy also discussed its history of financing the academy since its establishment.

The early funding for the academy came directly from the international grants primarily from the NGOs of European and Scandinavian countries. After the democratic transition of Myanmar in 2011, such funding has gone directly to Myanmar. The academy relies on a small grant which around 200,000 Baht and the 800 Baht fee collected from the students to reimburse the travel allowance and general expenses. The human resources primarily came from the volunteers who helped to be part of the training in Thai, English, and computer literacy for migrant workers.

Pa Jai Dee school was established with the help of a private donor who offered her land and initial construction cost. Apart from that, contributions have been received from the community members, working groups, organizations, and students. CIMB Thai supports monetarily as well. The human resources were trained with partnering universities with the help of the bank. For the PROMISE program, IOM Thailand states that their fund for this program comes from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

In terms of usage of physical infrastructure, language classes may rent a site that may or may not be owned by the cooperating partners and use the site donated by a private individual. Resourceful intergovernmental organizations like IOM can manage to rent a space to conduct while others that depend on small grants and tuition fees struggle to pay rent, especially during this pandemic when physical classes are not allowed.

Apart from the conventional classrooms, IOM Thailand developing online video content regarding the Thai language training for Myanmar under the same program name, PROMISE which has been uploaded on its YouTube channel. IOM Thailand also offers e-books in the Burmese language and language training videos on its website and other channels for easy access to the migrant workers. During the Covid-19 pandemic where classes cannot be operated on-site, online learning and MOOC are critical in reaching out to the migrant workers.



Figure 29 Thai textbook for Myanmar migrant workers by IOM Thailand

Source – IOM Thailand webpage

6.1.3. The potential role of the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE) and Bangkok Metropolitan Administration in implementing the policy

The Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE)

The office of non-formal and informal education (ONIE) is a central government agency that has the authority and resources both financial and human resources to promote, support, and manage informal education in Thailand. It has the potential to implement the Thai language training initiatives in Bangkok. Bangkok ONIE has the power and duties to carry out the informal training in Bangkok and the provincial ONIEs have their own respective power and duties as well given by section 14 of Promotion of Non-formal and Informal Education ACT B.E 1551.

Being the government agency with billions of Baht in budget and thousands of human resources including teachers/facilitators, ONIE has the institutional infrastructure to play a regulator as well as the player for Thai language training for migrant workers. ONIE operates Sub-district Non-formal and Informal Education Centers or Community Learning Centers (Kor Sor Nor Tambon). These learning centers serve as the units organizing and promoting learning activities and process for the community.

Community Learning Centers (CLC) utilizes the full use of community capital such as buildings, locations, technical resources, local wisdom, and culture. Therefore, CLC throughout Bangkok can be the urban migrant training centers, using the existing infrastructure. At the same time, ONIE has been cooperating with ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) in providing education to non-Thai children including migrant children in Thailand which is a critical step for migrants' education.

The CLC can be the new classroom for migrant workers in Bangkok. According to the European Commission webpage, those who lack basic Swedish fluency may

study for free at the Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) program at the Municipality's Adults Education (Kommunens Vuxenutbildning). These community-level Swedish language classes are operated by the local authority and funded publicly. The SFI program intends to provide language skills for immigrants to daily communication, social life, work-life, and further education.

ONIE can possibly extend its operation to the adult migrant workers as in Sweden and thus helping to improve their livelihood and integration into Thai society by speaking Thai. Besides, it is also the interest of ONIE as its major target is the workforce between 15 and 59, who are deprived of the education and opportunities to education. By then, it serves the objective of ensuring public access to quality long-life learning. Moreover, it is the agency that is responsible to coordinate with other public, private, and civil organizations in the provision of education.

To conclude, ONIE can be served as the regulator of all informal education offered to the migrant workers and create a system in which everyone can take part. It can cooperate with other organizations for giving migrants equal opportunities to study and have a decent livelihood in Thailand. The community centers are potential a great start to implement the policy of giving Thai language classes to Myanmar migrants and others. As such, a similar model can be extended to other cities and towns to offer Thai language training to migrant workers beyond Bangkok.

Bangkok Metropolitan Authority and its non-formal education department

In Bangkok, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration is a local authority that operates informal education in Bangkok under its Division of Adult Education, Department of General Education under its direct supervision. BMA office is the administrative body for promoting non-formal and informal education in Bangkok having 50 locations by dividing Bangkok into six zones, according to the website of

Bangkok NFE. It also makes cooperation in skill development with the Office of Vocational Education Commission for training the labor in general.

Nevertheless, the current official agenda of BMA does not include the training of language proficiency for migrants or skill upgrade programs offered by the city government. As in Sweden, BMA can be the main authority to train migrant workers under the non-formal education and school infrastructure under its jurisdiction. The community learning centers or KOR SOR NOR Tambon across Bangkok can be the new sites for the “Thai for migrant” program.

Using the school infrastructure of BMA can eliminate the financial burden of current players in renting or maintaining a site for the classroom because doing so can maximize the usage of public infrastructure. By operating the classes in city-level authority, BMA can bring in volunteers to assist in language instruction such as volunteers for teaching entry-level classes or interpreters for native instructors in basic-level classes.

Since the city government both conducts skill development for labor in general and operates the informal schools in Bangkok, it should extend its scope of skill development to migrant workers by training them with the Thai language as a major strategy in integrating the crucial workforce of Thailand into the Thai labor market. In such a way, migrants in Bangkok can participate in any further training intended for Thais. Upgrading the labor skill of migrant workers are vital in transforming the Thai economy into Thailand 4.0.

However, in Sweden, “Swedish for immigrants” or SFI is entitled by law to the immigrants unlike in the United States which lacks the policy to encourage it. According to an article by The Atlantic, lacking affordable and accessible English

classes limit them to learn English, hence, preventing them from accessing them to better jobs, integrating into society, or even taking U.S naturalization interviews.

The lacking national-level policy could potentially result in budget allocation for such language classes, for example, by central government or provincial government. If Thailand were to approach Swedish-model language training, such as using Kor Sor Nor schools or Tambon Kor Sor Nor, national-level policy on Thai language proficiency training will have to play a role especially extended the classes beyond Bangkok.



The accessibility of informal schools for the migrant construction worker camps

The following Figure 30 and Figure 31 are examples of the accessibility of informal schools or Kor Sor Nor schools for the migrant construction workers. From Figure 30, the construction camps are concentrated in the city center. Hence, construction workers can easily access Thai language training if Kor Sor Nor schools become language training centers for migrant workers.

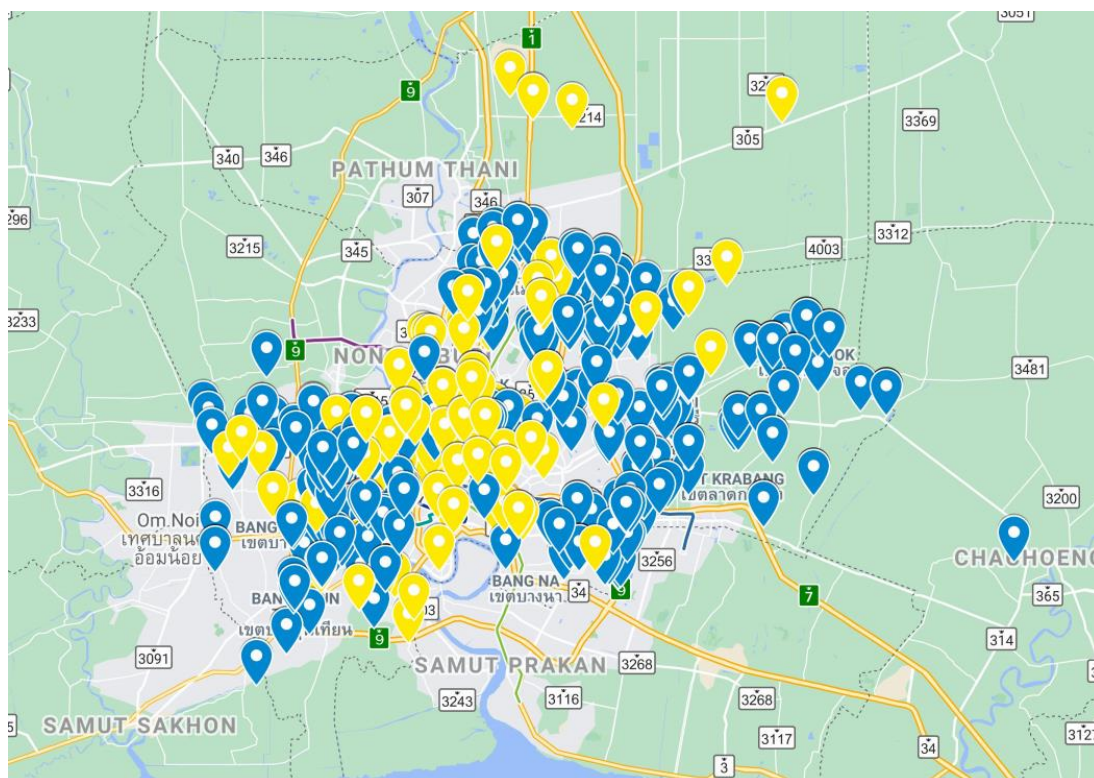
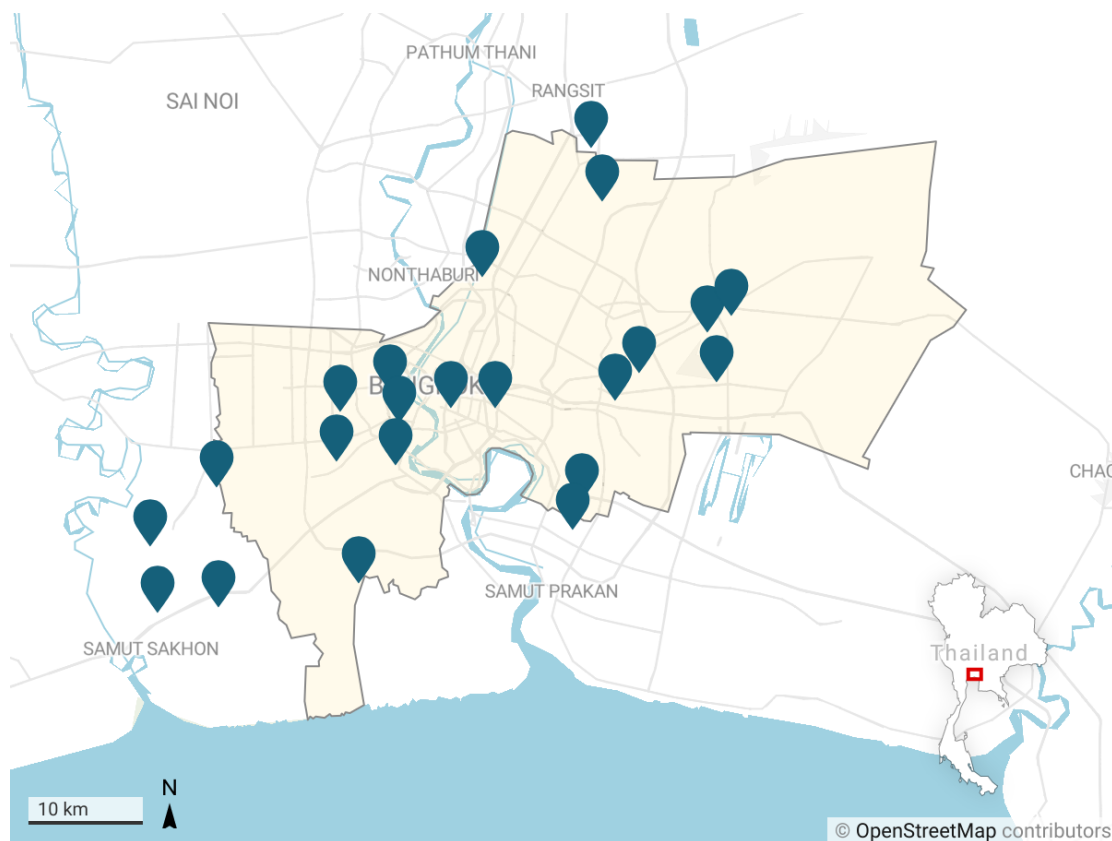


Figure 30 Locations of construction worker camps in Bangkok

Source – Opensource Data from Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?hl=en&mid=1O6tCWxUoN3JwKTGRtyDaiqF8KmBMOjU&ll=13.831866570584822%2C100.68393534610868&z=10>



Created with Datawrapper

Figure 31 Examples of the location of Kor Sor Nor schools in Bangkok

Source - Author



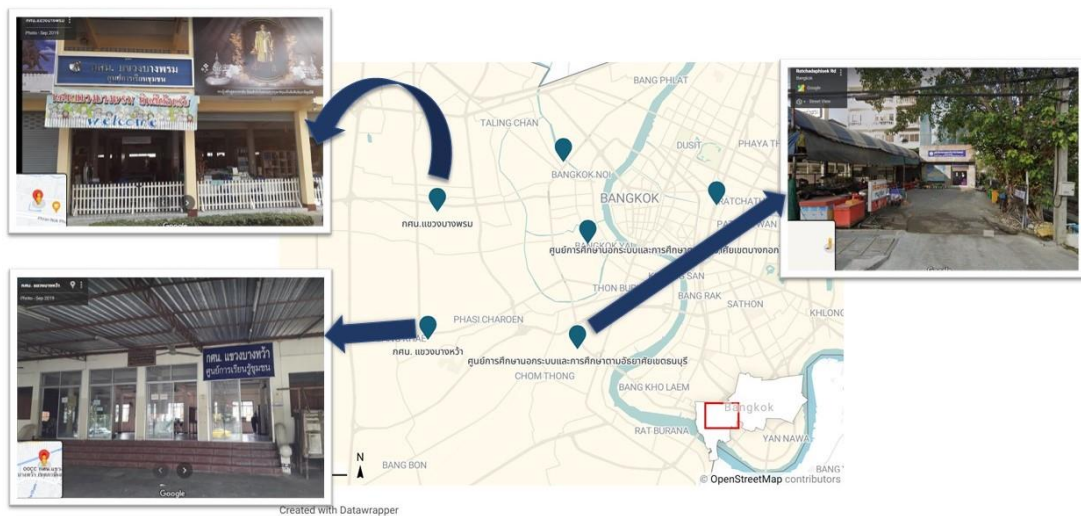


Figure 32 Examples of informal schools in inner Bangkok

Source – Google Map Street View

6.2. Discussions and conclusions

To conclude, the livelihood of Myanmar urban migrant workers can be improved by training them in Thai language proficiency. In this way, they can not only seek better job opportunities with better pay and favorable working conditions. Besides, some of them can seek higher education in Thailand with their fluent Thai to integrate into them although there are opportunity costs related to it.

The city government of Bangkok can also consider using its existing institutions, infrastructure, and human resources to extend its policy on migrant workers as suggested above. Even though the strategy is dedicated to Myanmar urban migrants, the boundaries can be extended to other migrants such as Cambodians and Laos. The geographical boundary can be extended to other provinces as well.

From the case studies in European and North American countries, training the host language to migrants is known to have positive results on the migrants in their livelihood and employment. The interview with alumni from the language academy

and the representative from the academy indicate that providing Thai language training is beneficial for migrants' careers and beyond. Some of the students can move to white-collar jobs or even continue study in Thai higher educational institutions.

As mentioned in the case studies of the language program of different countries, language training should focus to be more inclusive for the high catchment population. In the Thailand context, it should be aware that a large population of migrants are undocumented, and allowing them to enroll in the language classes are critical. In order to achieve that, document requirements and immigration enforcement should be relaxed in student registration. Later, students can be educated and encouraged to seek legal status through classes.

Furthermore, language classes and their curriculum should be explicitly dedicated to those in the labor force to maximize the efficiency in equipping migrant workers with Thai language skills to improve their livelihood, resilience, and productivity in Thailand. Last but not least, Thai language learning centers can become the center points for migrants' skills improvement and creating social capital, and strengthening networks for sharing all sorts of information such as government announcements, regulations, and job opportunities.

The analysis of the interviews data hints at the current picture of how important is the Thai language and the situation of Thai language acquirement in migrant laborers. On the other hand, the exploration of the existing soft and hard infrastructure for migrants to access Thai language class leads to the suggested strategy. The strategy can fill the gap between the current needs of workers and the provisions of existing infrastructure on language training. Therefore, it can improve not only the livelihood of Myanmar migrants in Bangkok but also their labor skills potentially.

An increase in labor productivity is crucial for the economy. For example, the rapid economic growth of Korea was driven by productivity growth with the emphasis on ‘growth with equity or ‘shared growth’ (Cheon, 2014). Korea’s high economic growth is sustained by the investment in skill improvement. Cheon (2014) claims that such growth will not be possible with the expansion of education and training opportunities. The government-led the prominent role in labor productivity by education and training policies enhanced by the private sector.

The education and training policies of Korea closely related to the nation’s development plans. According to Nübler in Cheon (2014), the transformation of knowledge in the labor forces determines the options and space of diversification of the industries in the economy. Therefore, the Korean government set up series of policies that would transform the knowledge base of the labor force to respond and match up with the diversification of industries in the future (Cheon, 2014).

As mentioned in literature reviews, Myanmar migrant workers contribute to the economic growth of Thailand. Although the case of Korea is about improving the skills of the local labor force, economies with large foreign labor such as Thailand should invest in upgrading the skill of migrant workers can be beneficial for both the migrant laborers and the local employers. Thus, the overall labor productivity and efficiency can be improved, hence, fueling the Thai economy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview Form for Migrant Workers

1. Pre-migration

- ထိုင်းနိုင်ငံကိုပြောင်းလာဖို့ဘယ်လိုစဉ်းစားခဲ့သလဲ
- မပြောင်းခင်ဘာတွေပြင်ဆင်ရလဲ
- အလုပ်ကြိုရှာထားသလား။ အလုပ်ဘယ်လိုရလဲ။
- တခြားဘာတွေပြင်ဆင်ရသေးလဲ။
- မပြောင်းခင်ကြိုရတဲ့အခက်အခဲတွေ

2. Migration Process

- ဘယ်လမ်းကလာလဲ။ မြဝတီ-မဲဆောက် ?
- ပြောင်းရွှေ့စရိတ်ဘယ်လောက်ကုန်လဲ၊ဘယ်သူပေးလဲ။
- ဘာအခက်အခဲတွေရှိခဲ့လဲ

3. Acquirement of Thai Language

- ထိုင်းစကားအရင်ကဘယ်လောက်ပြောတတ်လဲ။ အခုကဘယ်လောက်ပြောနိုင်လဲ။
- ဘယ်လိုသင်ခဲ့လဲ
- ထိုင်းစကားပြောတတ်လာတော့ အလုပ်အပေါ်ဘယ်လိုအကျိုးပြုလဲ (ဥပမာ။ လစာ၊ အလုပ်လျှောက်ရတာ၊ အလုပ်ရွေးချယ်စရာ)

4. Language Training (တက်ခွဲဖူးရင်)

- တက်ခွဲတဲ့သင်တန်းအကြောင်းလေး။ ကြာချိန်၊ကုန်ကျစရိတ်၊ဘယ်သူတွေသင်တယ်
- အဲ့သင်တန်းတွေကထိရောက်တယ်လို့မြင်လား။ အလုပ်အတွက်ဘယ်လိုအကျိုးပြုလဲ

5. Post-migration

- ထိုင်းမှာနေရတဲ့အခက်အခဲ (စလားထဲကကော၊အခုလက်ရှိကော)
- အခုဘာလို့ တခြားမြို့တွေမှာမလုပ်ဖြစ်ဘဲ၊ဘန်ကောက်မှာလာလုပ်ဖြစ်တာလဲ။
- လုပ်ခွဲတဲ့အလုပ်အကိုင်များ

Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Language Academy

Part 1: General questions

- ၁။ ဒီကျောင်းကို စဖွင့်တာဆိုဘယ်လောက်ကြာခဲ့ပြီလဲခင်ဗျ။
- ၂။ ကျောင်းအနေနဲ့အဓိကဘာတွေသင်ကြားပို့ချပေးနေလဲ။
- ၃။ သင်တန်းချိန်တွေကဘယ်ချိန်တွေလဲ။
- ၄။ တစ်တန်းကိုဘယ်လောက်ပေးရလဲ။
- ၅။ အတန်း Level တွေကိုကောဘယ်လိုခွဲလဲ။
- ၆။ ကျောင်းကမြို့ထဲမှာရှိတာဆိုတော့ဘယ်လောက်ဝေးဝေးကနေထိလာတက်ကြလဲ။
- ၇။ ဒီနေ့ထိဆိုစုစုပေါင်းကျောင်းသားဘယ်နှယောက်လောက် train ပေးခဲ့ပြီးပြီလဲဗျ။

Part 2: Structure of the Organization

- ၈။ ဒီကျောင်းရဲ့အဓိက stakeholders တွေကဘယ်သူတွေလဲခင်ဗျ။
- ၉။ Non-profit ကျောင်းလို့သိရတယ်ပေါ့နော်၊ အဓိက funding ကဘယ်ရလဲ။ ဘယ်လို funding လုပ်လဲခင်ဗျ။
- ၁၀။ Technical resources တွေ ဥပမာ သင်ရိုးညွှန်းတမ်းတွေ၊ Teacher development assistance တွေကို ဘယ်ထိုင်းအစိုးရဌာန၊ အဖွဲ့အစည်း ဒါမှမဟုတ် NGO တွေကကူညီပေးလဲ။
- ၁၁။ Operation မှာကောကူညီပေးတဲ့ အစိုးရအဖွဲ့အစည်းတွေ၊ NGO တွေရှိလားခင်ဗျ။
- ၁၂။ ဘယ်သူ၊ဘယ်အဖွဲ့အစည်းတွေတွေကဒီကျောင်းကိုပါဝင်ကူညီပေးနေလဲ။
- ၁၃။ ထိုင်းအစိုးရရဲ့ Policy Intervention တွေကော ကျောင်းအပေါ်သက်ရောက်တာမျိုးရှိလားခင်ဗျ။
- ၁၄။ အခုကျောင်းဖွင့်ထားတဲ့ချိန်ကြိုရဲ့ အခက်အခဲတွေ၊ limitation လေးတွေများရှိရင်လဲပြောပြပေးပါဦးခင်ဗျ။

Part 3: Outcomes

၁၅။ ဒီသင်တန်းကရွှေ့ပြောင်းမြန်မာလုပ်သားတွေအပေါ်ဘယ်လောက်ထိအကျိုးပြုနိုင်လဲ။

၁၆။

ထိုင်းစာ၊ထိုင်းစကားတတ်ခြင်းကထိုင်းရောက်မြန်မာအလုပ်သမားတွေအပေါ်ဘယ်လိုအကျိုးပြုတယ်မြင်ပါသလဲ အထူးသဖြင့်သူတို့လစာ၊ working condition၊ ပြီးတော့ sector တခုကနေတခု change တာမျိုးပေါ့။

၁၇။ ထိုင်းစာနဲ့ပတ်သက်ပြီးကျောင်းသားတွေကနေပေးထားတဲ့ feedback တွေ အမြင်တွေရှိရင်လဲ share ပေးပါဦး။

Part 4: Miscellaneous

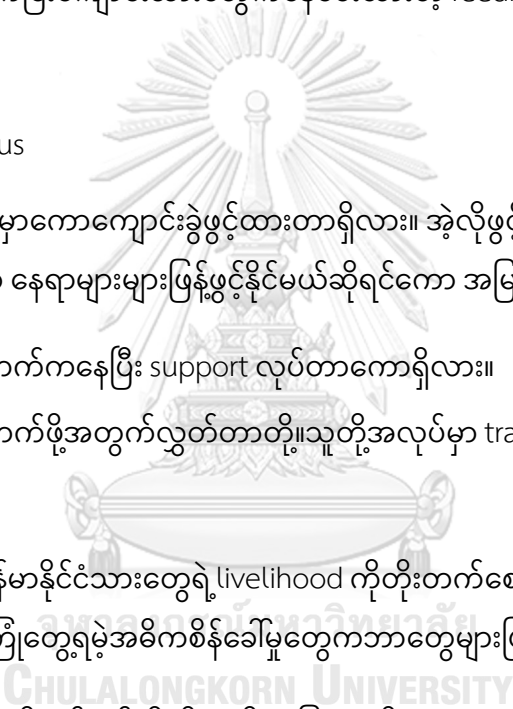
၁၈။ တခြားနေရာတွေမှာကောကျောင်းခွဲဖွင့်ထားတာရှိလား။ အဲ့လိုဖွင့်ဖို့ကောစိတ်ကူးရှိလား။ မြန်မာလုပ်သားများတဲ့ နေရာများများဖြန့်ဖွင့်နိုင်မယ်ဆိုရင်ကော အမြင်လေးပြောပြပေးပါလား။

၁၉။ လုပ်ငန်းရှင်တွေဘက်ကနေပြီး support လုပ်တာကောရှိလား။

အလုပ်သမားတွေကိုတက်ဖို့အတွက်လွှတ်တာတို့၊သူတို့အလုပ်မှာ training ပေးဖို့ cooperate လုပ်တာမျိုးပေါ့။

၂၀။ ထိုင်းစကားက မြန်မာနိုင်ငံသားတွေရဲ့ livelihood ကိုတိုးတက်စေတယ်လို့ဆိုမယ်ဆိုရင် ဒီလိုသင်တန်းမျိုးဖွင့်ကြုံတွေ့ရမှအဓိကစိန်ခေါ်မှုတွေကဘာတွေများဖြစ်မလဲ။

၂၁။ မြန်မာတွေကို အခုလိုသင်တန်းမျိုးရှိသလို တခြားလူမျိုးတွေ အထူးသဖြင့် Cambodia တွေကိုပေါ့ သူတို့ကော ဒီလိုသင်တန်းတွေရှိတာမျိုးကြားမိလား။



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