



Crepuscule

A LONGING TO CAMARADERIE

"Sometimes you do not realize the value of a moment until it becomes a memory."

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FOREWORD

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FOREWORD

The participants of doctoral degree in the overseas universities are demanded to have English Language Competence that can bolster up the success of their studies. This is vital requirement for those who wish to study in English-speaking countries.

English language competence (oral and written) is essential for academic purposes and for daily communication with educator and administrative staff, fellow students, as well as with the local community. In academic life, English competence greatly supports higher study participants in studying academic resources both written or presented in English, attending lectures, discussing, questions and answer session, and assisting them in compiling scientific papers or final assignments that must be written or presented orally. in English. Unfortunately, there are still many Indonesian lecturers who do not have sufficient competence in English, therefore they have difficulty in producing English scientific papers and in fulfilling the requirements for entering doctoral programs at overseas universities.

Considering the things above, the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology through the Directorate of Resources presents an English Language Ability Improvement program for lecturers, in collaboration with several language institutions of state universities in Indonesia. Through this program, participants are expected not only to improve IELTS or TOEFL scores, but also soft skills through academic social orientation and independent study materials. Thus, not only their English skills will improve, but also their communication skills with prospective promoters and the ability to adapt in an academic environment when studying abroad.

Finally, we congratulate the participants of the English Language Improvement program who have successfully completed this program. Hopefully, this program can be a bridge to your dream of getting a doctorate degree from various well-known overseas universities.

Jakarta, March 2022

Signed

Mohammad Sofwan Effendi
Director of Human Resources
General Directorate of Higher Education, Research, and Technology
Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Technology

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PKBI: The Road to Ph.D. Life of the Dreamers

Dina Safitri

The year 2018. The fact that Queen stole the show at Live Aid, July 2, 1985, at Wembley Stadium made me happy as no one, and nothing could change the history. The Bohemian Rhapsody biopic that I watched with Chris at Ambarukmo Plaza XXI closed our time in exotic Yogyakarta, with beautiful people at PKBI Batch IV Kemenristek-Dikti.

Beautiful Surprise: It is Yogyakarta, Mates!

It was unplanned when someday at the end of July 2018, I opened the website of <http://sumberdaya.ristekdikti.go.id/> and found an announcement for the lecturers to join PKBI Program (*Peningkatan Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris/ English Training for Academic Purposes*). It has been a long time since I have known this program as one of the three non-degree programs from DIKTI that were designed for Indonesian lecturers that intended to pursue their doctoral degree overseas. I submitted my application as I had all the requirements in my computer folders, with the feeling of nothing to lose. Time flew.

Life went on. I even forgot that I applied to that program until a good friend of mine, Astria Hijriyani, texted me at the end of August 2018:

‘Congratulations. You will be playing around Yogyakarta.’

‘Are you kidding me?’ I replied to Astria unbelievably but was also excited at the same time. I checked my browser to see the final result announcement, and yes, I found my name as one of the awardees and was stationed in UNY

Yogyakarta with other 49 awardees. In Yogyakarta, I would be with two other awardees from ITERA; Iqbal and Ruhul. There were 150 awardees on the list, of which every 50 awardees were in a different placement. PKBI DIKTI Angkatan IV September - December 2018 were accommodated in three university language centers; Bandung Institute of Technology at Bandung, State University of Yogyakarta, and the Malang University of Muhammadiyah. I was so over the moon because two things in my mind came up: leaving my job and getting free English education for academic purposes.

I did not need a longer time to get a permission letter from the Head of Management and the Dean to go to Yogyakarta. The second list to do was finding a place to stay during my short training at Yogyakarta. Luckily, Tiara Nirmala, my fellow lecturer in the Economics and Development Department (she is doing her Ph.D. program), took a leave for one semester, and I would stay in her rented room. And one more good thing, Tiara's room was next to Zainnur's room. Zainnur and I were the same teaching staff at the Management Department. Zainnur was also on the way to her Ph.D. It would be so good to be with her as we can chat if we had time. My temporary residence was close to everywhere and reachable within walking distance. It was only 2 kilometers from LPPMP-UNY, 1 kilometer from Sunday Market, 5-minutes to Tempo Gelato and other restaurants. Lucky me as I can put the fancy street foods that are available nearby on my culinary list. That temporary residence was at Kost Putri Prima Wahyu II - Yogyakarta. All awardees were required to reach LPPMP Yogyakarta on the 11th of September 2018. I had to manage to arrange my classes in the Management Department as soon as possible. I asked my teaching fellows to give me the chance to do the first half of the teaching calendar (8x meetings). It means I can go freely to Yogyakarta without being burdensome. PKBI was only a 3-month program, however, packing can be so tricky as I had to sort out which stuff that I have to leave and which one that I had to bring. I did not intend to have any baggage for my flight, so I planned to send some of my belongings. Then, here I go.

On the day we had to be at the training location, we had to report to the administration staff. There were +/- 40 awardees that I roughly counted at that time. After filling the attendance list, the officers of LPPMP P2B redirected us to the big hall in LPPMP Building. Oh, Holy Cow! The tutors gave us instructions to sit in the available chairs that have been set in a tidy row with the distance between the chairs, as the staff provided us a replacement test. That was not even mentioned in the DIKTI Letter. Surprise, surprise, surprise! As I just

finished the IELTS test at Bandarlampung in August of the same year, that replacement test was quite familiar. The result was not to tell a lie. The total 50 awardees were separated into three classes; Class A at Room 302, Class B at Room 402, and Class C was at Room 403. The class officially started the next day, the 12th of September 2018, so we had plenty of time to go back home and take a rest.

The 'A' Team

When the result of the test was announced and class members were distributed, I got a placement at Class A with other 16 lecturers from all over Indonesia: Arini Nurul Hidayati 'Arin', Asmi Rusmanayanti 'Asmi', Benih Hartanti that *harshly* I called her 'Seed', Christian Albert Lewier (we called him Chris or sometimes Pak Dir AmCor), Finza Larasati 'Finz', Hijjatul 'Hijja' Qomariyah, Ibnu Daqiqil, Imam Baihaqi aka Pak Lurah, Mochamad Iqbal, Mona Elviyenti, Yusnaidy, Niken Trisnaningrum, Siti Muyassaroh 'Sarah', Willy Kriswardhana, Mohamad Dzikie Aulia Al Faraqi 'Okie', and Novia Mehra Efriza.

It seems I got a cool class. About the classmates, I guessed I would write about them a little bit. Most of them are very young and studious, religious as well. Hijja, Neidy, Iqbal, and Novia are frequently caught to have regular fasting Monday and Thursday and monthly Ayyamul Bidh (fasting for three consecutive days in a month). Iqbal even so frequently spent break time by reading Al Quran. I can see that the majority of us were well-traveled and held managerial positions too in our origin universities. Neidy was The Head of the Management Department, and Chris was the Secretary of the English Department.

One similarity that connected us: we were all good communicators that were not shy to speak up in class. We were only 17 students but, from our characters, I can divide my friends into several groups that will cross each other.

Serene group:

I chose Mona, Niken, Sarah, Finz, Hijja, and Asmi to be listed. They are quiet girls, calm, softly speaking, and are just like the wind breeze. The best thing about these girls is their consistency in being quiet. They talk like whisperers. They can do everything on their chair and desk. When they want to move, it is only their table and chair that will move closer to each other.

Native speaker group:

Finz, Arin, and Hijja. It is interesting how I dub these three girls as ‘Trio Was Wis Wus Wes Wos’. It is from our second-week mock-up test I find that each girl brings their original accent. Finz brings a Palembang accent. Hijja embeds her Aceh accent and Arin with her Sunda accent. Once they started speaking English, all of the accents were gone and they sounded like a native speaker. And ‘Trio Was Wis Wus Wes Wos’ was officially formed that day.

Dictionary group has only one member:

Chris. He effortlessly impresses us with his unusual words that we never thought about before. He is also dubbed as the cool guy. Chris is my cool enemy to the point of political view and presidential election. He is my idol and feels relatable with Chris. We are almost in the same age group. We are the oldies. Chris and I go watch a movie together and finish it with dinner or just take McDonald’s chocolate sundae and have a long chat some time. I know that Chris takes that time to change my political view and the reverse, but it seems we insist that we cannot influence each other. It is a mission impossible. We will vote for a different candidate for the presidential election.

The other group that has only one member is *the Sleeping group* with Yusnaidy (Bang Neidy). He is unique. He looks sleeping well in the class but he can listen to everything that the tutor or other students talk about in the class. That is what I call, ‘Amazing’.

Twinning group:

Oky and Iqbal are fit in the group as both are just like twins that stick together. They get along well. Iqbal has a unique habit. During the lunch break, he will be eating on his chair and desk and watching food videos on YouTube. He says, ‘I will get the sense of eating the food in the video’. It is cheeky. Or maybe a smart trick, if I may say. The food that we get during the break: we know what it looks like. Oky once asked me, ‘Bu Dina, in your high school time, were you a bully?’

‘Nope. I am a bully to the ones that bully other students.’ #winkmyeyes

The Studious group consists of Willy, Pak Lurah Imam, Ibnu as the top three, Novia, and the rest of the classmates except me (I guess).

Willy was my desk mate before his position was replaced by Hijja as my partner until the end of the program. One more, Willy has the best handwriting. His beautiful handwriting is not the only one I have ever seen, but of course, it is rare for a man to have nice handwriting. He is also a determined person. He spends huge amounts of effort to get what he sets as his goal.

Black coffee drinker group:

Benih, Imam, and I are on the list.

The class can be a coffee lab sometimes when someone brings the new black coffee to test. Benih is a coffee addict. If there is a trophy for the best coffee drinker, I will vote for her to win that trophy. The Tribe Commander, Mas Imam, is a moderate coffee drinker. I mean, if necessary, he will drink a jug of those black liquids all night long to help him conscious.

And finally, there is *an Easy-going group* with Arin and Benih as the members. These two girls seemed not to do anything but I believe they stored everything in their brain, and they did their tasks invisibly. About Benih, this girl is 'hazardous' with her cellular camera. She snapped everyone in the class when they were in their lowest time, darkest moment, or worst facial expression. The photos were released in WAG with the scariest caption, which, either made us laugh out loud or made the victim feel upset and wanted to throw something... *_^

Me? Oh, I am glad that I am not even in those groups. I am a typical student that loves escaping the class and that habit is still there inside me, hibernating, and comes whenever it is needed. I spent my time wisely regularly checking XXI mobile apps, and buying movie tickets. I love my role as Mamak for the class. I did the cleaning and tidy up the class so it would be a nice place to study for us. It made me happy and my big achievement.

The class was just like a big ship, so we needed to appoint our chief of the tribe. We voted for Imam as Tribe Commander and Chris as The Tribe Elder. There were two Mamaks to accompany Imam and Chris; me as the first Mamak that acts as the Financial Manager, and Asmi as the second Mamak that handled the class needed including a tutor snack box. Did we get along well? Definitely. We were noisy students and soon, we quickly made friends and the 'A' Team

became a close family that was pursuing the same dream and the same destination: a doctoral degree overseas. But now, we had to fight hard for our IELTS as the first ticket.

LPPMP P2B - UNY, Kalimalang - Yogyakarta

The part of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta that we used was the building of LPPMP (*Lembaga Pengembangan dan Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan*) with the *Unit Pusat Pengembangan Bahasa* (P2B) as the team that coached us for three months. The building is located in Jalan Kolombo 1, Kalimalang Yogyakarta. The front yard is so beautiful with the garden. There are many indoor plants as well that make the inside of the building so pretty. When you enter the building, the air is filled with aromatherapy and smells so good even before you reach the main lobby. The good thing about this building is its uniqueness. It is painted with tangerine color. Guess what? Even some of the internal decorations are also in tangerine. I wish I could bring home one of those orange tablecloths...

As part of UNY, LPPMP is one of the busiest units. The LPPMP building can accommodate such short training, seminars, and other programs related to education. The building is also equipped with complete media to support the program with audio, language centers, and multimedia equipment. It means, to prepare our program, LPPMP also pays a lot of effort by providing us with high-quality handbooks and training materials. It is quite frequent that we find LPPMP is full and crowded with people from diversified institutions that join some of the programs that are being held in LPPMP.

Our classroom is on the third floor at the East Wing. It is Room 302, a room with a very strategic position, as we can see the top view from our class window. The only thing that the room annoys us, the citizens of Class A, is the leakage AC that floods the floor and makes the wall wet. We call that wall 'The Crying Wall'. Every morning, before the class starts, we are so busy with the AC remote control, which is not available and we have to find an alternative way by using a mobile phone. It works... sometimes. After a couple of weeks, we request the management of LPPMP-P2B to allocate us to a proper classroom, and then we move to one level lower to Room 214 until the end of the program.

Class A citizens are also creative people. We turned the class into our second home at Yogyakarta. Let me tell you. The backside of our class was just like a kitchen or cafe. We had a water dispenser, a big table to accommodate class' mugs and spoons. We had some snack jars there to distribute to the class;

whether it is chips, biscuits, cakes, and peanuts. We had plenty of instant coffee in a sachet with various brands based on each individual's preference. There were sugar, tea, and coffee cans for the ones that did not like instant coffee. There was an electric stainless-steel kettle too, especially for the class member that wants their drink very hot. On the wall behind the class, we put a wide hard paper to write our new vocabulary.

Soon, our class changed to a colorful study room with shades of pink, green, yellow, orange, and blue. We stick the Post-It notes everywhere. Back at the LPPMP location that is surrounded by many small resto and food vendors, the winner is the juice stall in the corner of Jalan Kalimalang. Guava juice becomes Class A's favorite. We ordered the juice near lunchtime, which was perfect timing before lunch break.

The Tutors, The Class, and The Fighting Spirit

LPPMP, as a reliable institution, has arranged for us a tight schedule to follow with 560 working hours. The schedule fills our Monday to Friday from 07.30 am to 05.30 pm, and sometimes we stay longer as we need to practice independently. The mock-up test (IELTS-like test) takes place every Saturday. Several tutors are set to fill the section of Listening, Writing, Speaking, and Reading.

Here is the tutor's allocation:

Writing Task 1 is led by Mr. Suharso paired with Osi,

Vocabulary for IELTS is led by Ms. Siwi Karmadi,

Speaking is led by Ms. Devi Hermasari, Nunik Sugesti and Isdianti,

Listening by Mr. Yosa A Alzuhdy and Mr. Supardjo (that in the beginning also the Writing Task 1 tutor),

Reading by Ms. Suciati and Mr. Donald Juppy Nababan,

Writing Task 2 is led by Ms. Erna aired with Ms. Artin

Writing clinic by Ms. Nila Kurniasari and Ms. Tiara,

Academic Speaking is led by Ms. Yuniarti Diyanti

Cultural Understanding by Mr. Basikin,

Writing Task 2 by Ms. Sari Hidayati and Ms. Tiara,

Grammar by Mr. Suhaini M. Saleh,

Speaking Clinic with Ms. Devi Hermasari and Ms. Yuliana Istiyani (a.k.a. Ms. Jules), and last, we have **Academic Writing** by Mr. Agus Widyantoro.

Every tutor was excellent in their skill and field. I can tell that they were also rich in experiences that they can share with us. My classmates took notes seriously and focused on every task given. They made a long queueing in front of the class to ensure that the tutors checked their works. They observed every single word that the tutors wrote on the paper. They checked each other's answers. They discussed what just happened. Every single 'tips and tricks' were reviewed and shared. They shaped their skills by practicing non-stop. Each student asked the other to be their speaking partner. Every writing topic was evaluated by which best ideas represent the best answer. We shared the best writing test in the class that gets the highest remarks from tutors.

I even felt intimidated when someday I came to the class very early, Ibnu was already there, practicing his Listening skill. The way they look at the paper every time we finish the section was creepy. No. I mean, astonishing. In another word, let me say in the citizen of Class A forever-favorite-word: 'Mesmerizing.' (It is the class of Ms. Siwi Karmadi where we find that word, from Asmi when we play favorite words). It made sense that we were in high spirits to do our best because we would have two IELTS tests in October and the end of November. These tests were our golden tickets that we can use to apply for school admission, and scholarship as well. We cannot make a single mistake. We must do all-out. And that's what we do...

On the other hand, it was confusing me at the same time, and clearly, I struggled in every section. My writing was a mess. My ears cannot hear properly. My reading was rushed, and my speaking was not even better than the other three sections. So, let me find an excuse. As a result of my confusing head and the boredom that I cannot handle, skipping the class was one way of the cure. I usually read the news portal and drink my guava juice in the main lobby. Studious classmates can be a benefit too. At least, their habit of sticking to the book will envy you and force you to do the same thing.

Everyone in the class has their favorite tutor. For me, the winner is Mr. Supardjo or Pak Pardjo. It is a bit funny as at the beginning of the class I disliked the Writing section. Biopic Bohemian Rhapsody changes everything. I just found out that Pak Pardjo and I have a similarity. We are Queens fans. Back to Pak

Pardjo, it is not strange if he is Queen's big fan as he is the same age as my late father if he is still alive. I think he is not only my favorite but a whole class as well. One of his famous tips in Writing is 'Use your time efficiently so you can put your words as much as you can in your paper. Do not waste your time'. In other words, in Javanese, by writing his tips as an academic quotation and reference: 'Eman-eman (Soepardjo, 2018)'.

While we have favorite tutors, opposite from us, the tutors also have their favorite students in the class. It is Chris that always becomes the golden boy, mostly, for female tutors. I am curious whether Chris has ever been in LPPMP before? It is no doubt I assume that whenever there is a chance, the tutor will say, 'It is Mr. Chris that we believe can do this'. What the hell? It is clearly stated in my facial expression until Arin needs to tease me, 'Do you envy the tutors because they like Chris?' Well, I don't. I just believe that the pheromone is always there, in the air that fills Room 302/214. In fact, it is the first-day replacement test that brings Chris to fame. He gets the highest score.

Back to our routine, Saturday in LPPMP gives different vibes for 51 students. It is a weekly IELTS-mock up test. This weekly mock-up test is a standard to measure our progress. It is not only a big job for us, the students but also the tutors. Saturday is family time but they have to sacrifice it by giving the test, checking the answer sheets, and scoring. Probably, the hardest part is marking the Writing tests. It is not only the content of our writing but also the variety of handwriting that can be so challenging. Personally, reading handwriting can trigger a headache. Who knows? The result will be available on Monday, Wednesday is the latest. We can see our weekly progress from that result sheet, and give us guidance on which section of IELTS that we are weak on.

The First IELTS Test

The first IELTS test took place on the 3rd of October 2018. The LPPMP officers that did register on behalf of us as the test-takers. The testing place was at Sanata Dharma University Language Center. We were so thrilled. Finally, after six weeks of non-stop practicing, the real IELTS test was in front of our eyes. I felt so good about my result. The test takers were not only PKBI members, but also from the public that needed to take the IELTS test in Yogyakarta. I can see that everyone was so nervous. If the result of this test can be used for school admission, it is good. We had a second chance in early December 2018. I only

expected the best. The result was available within two weeks. IALF as the test institution provided the resulting test online. Suddenly, our heartbeat was beating so fast to find our hard work was there.

Chris, as he is in Vienna (or Ambon?), asks me a favor to check his. I laugh out loud. At least, comparing two of us coming from different backgrounds, it is an honor that I can beat Chris. In the Writing section, I record a higher score than him, which is, he comes from English Education. He should get a better Writing score than mine. I cannot stop teasing him about that. I think Chris regrets his decision to ask for my help. Well, Bang Chris, I am a little devil with two horns on my head. I bet you know that. LOL.

I guess Class A remains on top. Most of the test takers that record Overall band 7.0 come from Class A. Oky, Willy, Mona, Benih, Iqbal, Bang Neidy are our classmates that I know can save 7.0 into their pocket. Oh yeah, Babes. We know that we are always on top! Mostly, it is Iqbal that gets his paper the latest. His big grin and laugh indicate his ecstatic that the score he gets on his IELTS certificate is unexpected. We can see Iqbal himself cannot believe his eyes. I am happy enough to have all bands' 6.5 scores. The best thing about PKBI Class A is the sense of competitiveness.

It is good to know that we are competitive, but obviously that we are competitive with ourselves. Thank God! We have to beat laziness. We have to raise our fighting spirit high. We cannot be in continuous boredom. To be honest, I hate, I always hate from an early age (I know hate is a very, very strong word) to find if someone makes me as his or her competitor because I compete with no one. That suck. I walk on my path, I go in my direction, I am in my pool and playground.

And, then, the next Monday, the bomb falls in our class. The LPPMP-P2B team arranges a class member swap. Based on the IELTS test (or weekly test), three students from each class will be swapped. The high achievers from Class B and C will be moving to our class, and underperforming students from our class will be moving to Class B. We cannot allow that to happen. Besides Finz, one of the students that will leave is our Tribe Commander, Imam.

There is no other way than that the rest of Class A move forward to protect our tribe at all costs. This swap should have been told from the beginning, but we do not know this. We can understand that our future tribe members from Class B and Class C are quite disappointed to get a rejection from us but there is no point in switching the class. Once we stick forever, it will be forever.

Those Guilty Pleasures ...

Our program is not always filled with learning and studying. I can say that we are balanced. We can combine both study and pleasure in the same amount to keep our sanity. I can say that our time at LPPMP-P2B is not bad at all. It is even one of the best times in our lives.

LPPMP-P2B also serves us with excellent service. The low cost of food in Yogyakarta makes the institution able to provide us with a lunch box every day. It is impossible to happen in the other two language centers; ITB and UMM. 'Please, do not tell this to your friends at ITB and UMM as they do not have this (lunch box)'. We cannot guarantee. People compare and love to show off. It is not always a portion of good food, but it still should be something to thank. Once, (I guess the LPPMP staff does not check to the catering agent), the entire three classes get the same menu with egg for six consecutive days. It is the egg that cooks with diverse menus, but still, it will not change the taste. It is still egg, whether it is *telur balado*, *telur dadar*, *telur mata sapi*, *telur santan*, et cetera. It is hilarious to see the face of Bang Neidy to find an egg is there, whenever he opens the lunch box. I think, for a while, it has been so traumatic to eat eggs since that week.

LPPMP-P2B arranges two outing programs for free that our friends at ITB and UMM do not get. The first one is an outing to Prambanan Temple and watching Ramayana - Shinta Ballet Performance. We have a great and fancy dinner at Rama Shinta Garden Resto.

By the way, there is a funny moment when LPPMP-P2B provides us with a polo shirt. When we queue to get our polo shirt, the girls from Class C suddenly show up, without observing the classroom. There are people sitting in the room, waiting for their turn to get their name called, and they just cut the line. I am so upset and raise my voice volume without realizing it. I guess I frightened the boys from Class B and Class C. Since that day, I know that I get the stamp as the grumpiest girl, the title that, frankly speaking, I embrace happily.

The second outing is outbound to Dolan Deso Boro Village. It takes two hours by bus. Before we go there, we stop by Parangtritis, one of the famous beaches in the province. Dolan Deso Boro is a beautiful small village that is made as a tourism spot in Yogyakarta. The program is the full package. There is a short climb to Bukit Menoreh. For the first time in my life, I have not finished climbing because of my right ankle injury a couple of months ago. On the first night, we watch *English Vinglish*, an Indian movie that starred megastar Sridevi. On that night before bedtime, the girls from Class B and C are still talking and chatting

while we are already so tired and need sleep. Novia soon says, 'Please, stop chatting. We can continue tomorrow', which I add, 'If you want to keep talking, do it outside, please'. Undoubtedly, that confirms the girls from Class A as the true leaders, queens of the whole tribe. On the second day, we spent time with a teamwork program that included the river.

Only three girls dismissed the program and all are from Class A; Asmi, Benih, and me. Big no. No, thank you. I can see Benih starts playing with her phone camera. We can guarantee after the outing, everyone is happy and satisfied, ready for the new battle against the mock-up tests, classes, hard work, and less sleeping for the second round of the PKBI program.

September to December is always a good time for Hollywood to release new movies. As a moviegoer, I spend a lot of my free time going to the cinema. Sometimes with Chris (that based on his confession, cinema and movies are not his cups of tea), but mostly I go by myself. I go shopping too. I take a lot of pictures of Yogyakarta. I also spend time eating ice cream at Tempo Gelato or get some McDonald's chocolate sundaes or just eating alone. It is my habit to spoil myself. I never wait for people to make me happy. I make myself happy. Every Saturday afternoon after the mock-up test, we will go in a large group to a tourism spot. The girls of Class A will be going to have ice cream or a small walk to Malioboro Street. We visited Fort Vredeborg near Malioboro.

We go shopping like crazy (not me, of course, but other classmates that need to buy plenty of souvenirs to bring back home). Once, we rented a car with Oky as our driver and went to Pantai Kukup and Pine Forest Seribu Batu Songgo Langit where we can find the Hobbit House. We go to culinary destinations in a large group. I remember we had dinner at Waroeng Steak and Shake. Our favorite spot is Bale Bebakaran near LPPMP. Tempo Gelato is also one of the spots we visit together in a complete presence. We also arrange a time to go to Solo by train. It is Chris, Hijja, Mona, Novia, Finz, me, Oky, and his future wife Icha. It is one fine day to Tjolo Madu, an old plantation since the colonial era. We eat Selat Solo and go to Pasar Klewer for batik. It is another unforgettable moment as part of PKBI. Oh, by the way, that night, after reaching home from Solo, I submitted myself to get hospitalized at Rumah Sakit Panti Rapih, Yogyakarta. Something that I did not expect to happen. It was embarrassing to tell.

There is also a moment, because of Benih (now I know that my nickname for her, Seed, matches her. She is the seed of something in our class, LOL), we are suddenly going crazy for Harry Potter with Hogwarts. Benih spreads her

contagious interest in the witchcraft world. Entering www.wizardingworld.com is something memorable to find your real identity, whether you are a Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, or Slytherin. Let the Hogwarts Sorting Hat do it based on each person's strongest character. It is entertaining though, with 14 people in the class joining the game, and the Sorting Hat does its job properly. Those 14 people are sorted out precisely to the corresponding Hogwarts tower house and match with our personalities. I am so proud to be a Gryffindor, the profile that I still use in my Instagram profile. My wand is ebony wood with unicorn hair core, 12 ¼ inches, and has reasonably supple flexibility, given Tonkinese cat as my Patronus and so powerful with the spell and potion *Expecto Patronum*. Well, it sounds so fun, doesn't it?

Once, we make a huge ice cream party, very big, until it is enough to share with the tutors, and send Mona some by Gojek/GoCar. Or, it is also one of our greatest moments after the first IELTS test, we have a chance to visit an education exhibition at Ambarukmo Hotel.

We bring our documents because some of the education agents will present. It is a good chance for us so we can apply to our potential schools and do on-spot admission. We arrange our class with the tutors so we can go to that exhibition together. It is always nice whenever we are going as a large group, we cannot be calm even to arrange a Go Car. It was a really beautiful moment. After the exhibition, we arranged dinner at Bale Bebakaran as one big family. What a day...

The Counting Down

The second half of the program is a turning point for us. We know that the closer we are to the second IELTS test, it means only two things; the first is the last chance to improve our IELTS score, and the second is farewell. Both are so hard. The annoying-funny-adorable faces that have been together for almost three months. The tutors are getting nervous, as well as we are. Our performance will impact LPPMP-P2B to DIKTI evaluation. We push ourselves harder and harder. There is less laughter here in the class, there are more hours we spend challenging ourselves, and longer hours in Room 214. We cannot hide our tense faces and we are emotionally disturbed.

The second IELTS test is also in the same place as the first one. The disaster came for me unexpectedly. I got a terrible cough for a month. It is disturbing during the test. During the Reading and Listening section, I cannot do my test

properly as the AC is too strong and cold. I have to control my cough as other test-takers will get distracted and I do not want to do that. In the Writing section, the IELTS test officials move me to the non-AC room so I can do my test properly. The Speaking test section is the last worst to happen. The interviewer cuts my allocated time as I cannot stop coughing. I do not expect that my second IELTS test will be better than the first time.

Again, as one big family, we organize one big moment that will be lasting forever: taking a family photograph. There are only 17 of us; beautiful people with beautiful hearts and souls. Those family photographs inspire other classes to do the same thing, but we bring it to another level. We print our photographs into the souvenir mugs, which every class member has. We also give those mugs to our lovely tutors as a beautiful reminder of our existence in LPPMP-P2B. It is a small reminder that 17-noisy yet cheerful and fun-loving people have been there.

After the rain, we had a lovely dinner at Rumah Makan Duta Minang together. That would not be the last dinner as a complete package. The counting down is going to a smaller number day by day. We start packing and sending goods home by post or couriers. We start cleaning the class. We bring home the books that we put in our desk drawer. We take off the big paper on the wall behind the class, throw away those colorful Post-It notes paper that some stick on the textbooks. We started closing our small 'canteen and café' behind the class. Chris takes all the mugs home. I tell Chris, 'Please, do not remove the orange sticker of my name from the mug that I use'.

I can feel the sadness and the happiness. It is like a double-edged sword. The plane ticket for coming back home is already in our hands. The luggage is ready for another flight plan. But there is still tomorrow, our farewell ceremony. The night before the farewell ceremony with LPPMB-P2B, we, for the last time, gathered as one big family, have dinner at Waroeng Upnormal. I stare at my friends one by one. I paint their laugh and smile in my memory. I know I will miss them terribly. On that night, I know that our times at PKBI UNY September - December 2018 will be lasting forever. I will miss Chris terribly. There is no longer the enemy in the corner to debate from another side of Room 302/214.

(Not) The Last Day

The day the LPPMP-P2B will close the program is finally there, in the new building of LPPMP. The officers from DIKTI, including Prof. Dr. Ali Ghufron

and Ibu Juniarti Dwi Lestari, are there too. We send Iqbal to represent our feelings about the program and to accommodate our inspirations to DIKTI, also to ask about the uncertain future, the next step, destiny, future, scholarship, whatever, that will bring us to our dream; doctoral degree overseas. It goes well with good presentations from Prof. Ali Ghufroon and Ibu Juniarti. But, sending Iqbal that day to deliver some speech on behalf of 51 people, engraves his name for one phenomenal statement: 'Thank you for the program. The tutors are beautiful'.

I know how we feel on that day. We finished doing one of the important steps to go overseas for our doctoral degree. After today, we will walk to a different path, fighting for our dreams.

However, that day was a winning day for me after the closing ceremony. I beat Chris over the female tutors. It is a permanent stain for the Director of American Corner of the University of Pattimura. However, only 17 of us know that stain... and that sin. We have to protect Chris' image. He builds his fragrant name so hard from the first breath, so we will keep it just for us.

I cannot say enough thanks to Willy that documented the strong evidence. That is a great laugh and fun to remember forever.

We come back to the old building of LPPMP-P2B, back to our lovely class before we leave it forever. We spend some time freezing the moments into pictures and videos. It is hard to say goodbye. Even for me, that is the hardest goodbye ever. I do remember, I took a video on that last day in the class; a video that I named 'The Ganbatte Video', as Sarah says that word at the end of the video. That day, the sky was a clear blue sky. But deep down in my heart, it is gray and cloudy. We have to go home. We love our new family in Class A at Room 302/214, but we also have our family in our original city.

We go home, Buddies...

We continue walking, catching our dreams to the corner of the world together...

We keep fighting for our dream and support each other from a distance...

We will be there always, keeping our times and moments.

I know that we take millions of pictures and recordings, but one thing for sure, the lasting photographs are in our hearts and minds. I love you, Mates. That's it all.

I feel the world is quite gloomy, but I know, the beautiful memories about PKBI Class A will always remain. I cheer myself, to wipe away the sadness of farewell to 3-months of happiness, bitterness, laughter, low and high spirit,

because one thing for sure, this PKBI program is definitely not only an English course preparation for IELTS, not only a strong path for us, the lecturers to go get our dreams. It gives you friendships that last for long....

Author Profile



Dina Safitri is a free soul, a McD's chocolate sundae lover, social worker, volunteer, and a lecturer at FEB Universitas Lampung. She completed her Master's degree at University of South Australia, Adelaide by a scholarship from BPPLN Dikti 2011. She is now pursuing her Ph.D. in Business and Management at the University of Pécs, Hungary with the fund from the Government of Hungary through Stipendium Hungaricum 2020. Beside traveling, cell phone photography, eating, watching movies, walking, and hiking, Dina also loves writing. PKBI Anthology is her second anthology book. Currently, she is writing her own book, 'Two Decades of Europe Dream: My Story'. Visit her only social media IG @di.dossia, and you are welcome to ask about any things popped in your mind to her email: jodiesafitri@gmail.com.

Unforgettable and Precious Moments of PKBI UNY 2018:

The sky is the limit and be as sturdy as a diamond to reach it

Asmi Rusmanayanti

Hello friends, how are you doing? May all of you always be in excellent condition and happy.

Let me share my experiences after joining the PKBI 2018 Program. These notes mostly share ideas for those who might join the program and throwback sweet memories we had as Class A PKBI 2018 squads. This program has been held under Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi (DIKTI) Program and stored in three locations, and LPPMP UNY was one of these special places for the training. I was one of the luckiest participants to be there.

Steps to join the PKBI Program

Let me start with the steps to join the PKBI Program in general. First, of course, you should wait for when this program is held. It is an annual program for all lecturers in Indonesia. You need to submit some documents; TOEFL (ITP), Letter of Recommendation and permits from your university, formal photographs, etc. The process of getting your Recommendation Letter and Permit from the university might be different for each university. It might take days because of the long bureaucracy line process or just within a day or two. (Good luck with that 😊). Secondly, prepare for the mental or psychological process. At this program, you will study intensively, five days a week, and one more day for the

weekly test. Your program will start from 08.00 a.m – 05.00 p.m., from Monday to Friday, and Saturday from 08.00 until 01.00 p.m. or more for the IELTS test prediction. Yes, it is tough, but all to make sure that you do your best and gain as many benefits as possible from the programs to reach your IELTS Score goals. Third, prepare to be separated from your beloved family for about three months. The program starts from September/October until December. You need to find close accommodation to the training center and adjust to new friends, new schedules, and new foods. Luckily, when we were in this program, all the lunch meals prepared by the LPPMP UNY (thank you, Pak Joko, for this facilitation) saved the time of queuing for a meal outside the training center. The menus were excellent, big meal size, and of course delicious meals. Last, prepare for the surprises. Sometimes you might feel confused about why and how something could happen to you. You do not need to worry about dealing with it, and always remember that all will be a part of your sweet memories.

The process to reach the IELTS dream score

Well, firstly, it is not as easy as you thought 😊, not as a piece of cake, and of course, nothing is instant. All need the process, and following the proper steps, based on previous experiences and well-arranged materials, would help us understand the IELTS better. Secondly, nothing is accessible at the beginning. You might have some basic English grammar in your mind already and still, confused why you still have problems upgrading your IELTS score. It might happen because there were so many theories in your basic knowledge, and some still incorrect or not that simple. To change, it needs a process as well, which might differ from one to others. Thirdly, this program is guided by well-prepared and experienced tutors. You are on the right hand, in the right place, and at the right time. Therefore, be ready and open yourself to new experiences and new knowledge during the training. It will be worth it 😊. Last, but not least, study hard but keep your sanity and happiness as well. Yes, you are right, our main reason to join this program is to gain more knowledge of IELTS and hope by reaching the dream score, will bring us to the next journey of our dreams. However, your happiness is also an important thing. Try to stay calm and be happy no matter how hectic your situation might be. Stay happy and healthy because those are also the critical stages to help you cope with the challenges.

A friend in need is a friend indeed

I am just so grateful and happy to be one of the Class A PKBI 2018 Squads members. There were 17 participants in this class; 1). Mba Dina, 2). Mba Asmi, 3). Mba Novia, 4). Mba Hijja, 5). Mba Finza, 6). Mba Mona, 7). Mba Niken, 8). Mba Sarah, 9). Mba Benih, 10). Mba Arini, 11). Bang Christian, 12). Bang Naidi, 13). Mas Imam, 14). Mas Ibnu, 15). Mas Willy, 16). Mas Oky, 17). Mas Iqbal. At the end of the program, all members were just acquaintances but became close and best friends. We supported each other, even not the same class as well. We were also hard-worker students and added extra time to study much earlier before the first course schedules were stated. We searched for more materials to improve and explored more our capability in learning English and IELTS. All members supported each other in their ways. Some of the students prepared for food supplies, some for additional IELTS materials, for extra copies, some taught the tips and tricks on easy learning IELTS ways, some gave feedback or peer-feedback, some organized the Class A members, some made good time for jokes, and many more. All of us were together, hand-in-hand, to help each other. I did not see competition among us, but collaboration and a supportive environment. Thank you so much to everyone. The funny thing was, it seemed we had a motto similar to a famous movie title “eat-love-pray,” but our class motto seemed to be “eat-study-pray.” Good and well-supplied food brings the energy to think better, to study more, and of course, to keep the balance and harmony of ourselves, we need to upgrade the religious affair as well or prayers.

In conclusion, to reach my dreams at that moment was to get the IELTS minimum score of our dream university. It was not easy for everyone, but what I love most of the time. They had big dreams and put the sky's the limit. They were indeed bright students and humble in most actions. I have learned a lot from the people who were directly/indirectly involved with this program; DIKTI, LPPMP UNY, my friends, and of course, our families and friends. Without them, I probably could not reach my next dream, to pursue my Ph.D. abroad. Persistent and pray more because we do not know what the future will bring to us. Some of us just so lucky could pursue our doctorate programs out of Indonesia (Hungary, UK, Australia). Some are also very lucky to continue their doctorate study out of their hometown (to Java Island, for instance). Whatever and wherever we are now, truly from our deep hearts, we realize that we learned a lot from this program. Alhamdulillah and thank you so much for the opportunity given by DIKTI and to LPPMP UNY under Pa Joko supervision.

The sky's the limit, and be as sturdy as a diamond to reach the dreams and pray hard for that. No pain, no gain, but nothing is impossible if you believe because the word impossible means I'm possible. 😊

To end this essay, let me share this poem with all my friends and whoever is still fighting to reach their dreams.

Be persistent and never give up

By Asmi Rusmanayanti

My dear friends...
Be persistent and never give up, okay
No matters what happens to you,
and whatever the challenges that you have
It would be fine . . .
because the only matter is how you react to it.

My beloved friends,
Do not be afraid of failure or setback
Because it is not the end.
It is just the start of your comeback story.
Learn from your failure and make sure you will not fall again.
You should know that you are stronger to have the lessons.

Never lose hope and easily give up on my friends.
Because nothing will change until you change what you expect of yourself.
Learn the lessons and be sturdier than before.
Keep going and be sure that you will succeed.
Do not back down and give up.
Because you will make it and through that all.

Get up my undefeated friends,
Rise again and find your way out.
Keep pushing, fight back and fight hard
Find you outlast your challenges.

Find a new path that leads to your success.
Just believe that there is always a way.

Yes, I know it too, my gentle friends.
No one likes to fail or even think of it.
But let me tell you the difference between the winners and the losers.
The winners decide that the failure would not stop them.
They use it as a fuel to keep growing and developing their ways.
And because of the failures, we have millions of great people in this world.

Therefore, my unbeaten friends,
Every setback, failure, disappointment, or any terms that you can find,
It has only to shape part of your story.
So, do not let that make you stop to write your own story.
Challenges will come, and challenges will go.
Perseverance and just keep pushing forward.

Just remember my beloved friends,
Pain today but pride tomorrow.
You are stronger than you think you are.
As your Creator has created you in the greatest way.
You are good and can get through it by the help of your God.
Patience, perseverance, and praying harder.

Budapest, Dec 17th, 2020

From Asmi to all my beloved friends wherever you are

Biodata:

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Note: eat-study-pray. It is one example of “Eat” parts, haha. Ice cream time, nobody could deny it after a challenging exam on Saturday. Mba NIken, Mba Asmi, Mba Finza, Mba Dina, Mba Hijja, Mba Novia, Mba Mona... Okay, Mba Benih, you should be in the picture as well next time, haha.



Note: eat-study-pray. It is the ‘Study’ part. While others might think that study is tedious, not always for these Class A PKBI 2018 squads. 😊 We enjoyed the moment of the studying process, as you could see from these happy students' faces 😊. Contributed to Mr. Parjo, Mas Oky, Mba Arini/Mba Benih, Mba Asmi, Mba Sarah, Mba Niken, Mba Dina, Bang Christian.



Note: Tahsin members; eat-study-pray. It is one example of Pray parts as well. Complete members of ukhti gang Class A PKBI 2018. Mba novia, Mba Dina, Mba Benih, Mba Asmi, Mba Finza, Mba Arini, Mba Mona, Mba HIjja At Mba Sita's house.



Notes: In front of the Embassy of Hungary 2020 to have a Visa Interview.



Notes: In front of the Parliament, Budapest.



Taking one step closer through PKBI

Novia Mehra Erfiza

“What a waste...!”, “why did you waste the money?” Those were some comments I heard from my friends when I told them I paid about 4 million Rupiah for my first IELTS test with minimum preparation. Yes, it was my first official IELTS test and I did not take any IELTS preparation course before the test, except a short course 8 years ago. I did it because I need to evaluate myself, which part and how much score I need to improve. I got 5.5 for overall score, and I was really lacking in speaking and listening. Nevertheless, I was quite good at reading, so I just need to keep my routine in reading academic journals.

However, the 4 million rupiah for myself evaluation was worth it. When I got a news about IELTS training of Peningkatan Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris (PKBI) batch IV program which was held by the Ministry of Education, Technology and Higher Degree Education (KEMENRISTEK DIKTI) of Indonesia in 2018, and the minimum IELTS score for registration was 5.5, then I said that’s it! No effort is wasted. I registered for the training by submitting some documents and a copy of the IELTS certificate. Thanks to God, I was called by DIKTI to attend the Language Training Center (LPPMP P2B) of Universitas Negeri Yogya (UNY) for 3 months, from September to December 2018.

Traveling to Yogya

I love traveling and Yogya, fortunately I could come back here, not only for sightseeing but also for 3 months stay. I traveled to Yogya with a new friend, Hijja, an English lecturer in a private higher degree institution in Aceh. Later I learned a lot from her, especially for speaking because she has great pronunciation and is very fluent in English. I was really grateful to have her as a traveling buddy in Yogya.

Coming back to Yogya was not also a chance for me to study English and to visit my dear friends who I met during my Master course in Kobe, Japan, but this was also a challenge to stay away from my dear family, particularly my little daughter, to stay focus in IELTS and ignore my busy work in Aceh. If I study the IELTS in my hometown, I could never focus because I could never close my eyes to my student, busy schedule in university, and other neighborhood activities. Therefore, this training was both a great challenge and a chance for me.

I chose to stay in a clean rent room with a private toilet. The rented house also had a kitchen because cooking sometimes can release my stress, and was only for Moslem women. I found a rented room at Jalan Gambir Karangasem Baru, Catur Tunggal, about 1 KM from the training location in UNY, thus I sometimes could take a walk to the location. It was also close to café, food shops and Masjid Nurul 'Ashri. I always think that I should have self-respect to gain more achievement, not stingy but also not extravagant. I have to give myself a comfortable environment for living, studying and praying.

IELTS course with colleagues from all over Indonesia

In my opinion, IELTS is more difficult than TOEFL because I lack pronunciation and listening word by word. However, to pursue my study in Australia I had to gain a high IELTS score with a minimum overall score of 6.5 and no band lower than 6.0. Attending PKBI was a great way to improve my skill in the IELTS test, and DIKTI offers twice the IELTS test for all attendees. This training was attended by many lecturers from private and state universities all over Indonesia, then it offered a wonderful chance to broaden my friendship and further collaboration.

After registration and opening ceremony, all of the participants had to take an IELTS prediction test to classify us into three classrooms (A, B and C) which

were based on our score. I got Class A with 17 members, including Arini, Asmi, Benih, Chris, Dina, Finza, Hijja, Ibnu, Imam, Iqbal, Mona, Niken, Siti, Oki, Willy, and Yusnaidy. The Class A participant with the highest results of pre-test. Firstly, I underestimated myself and I thought I would be in the B class as a moderate level skill participant, but later I was so surprised that I could be in the same class with those who are English subject lecturers. I had to think positively and took advantage of this to pace myself since I had smart friends in this class. I am grateful, all of the Class A members are smart and friendly, even until now we still motivate each other in pursuing our dream to study abroad. Everyone had their own special memories of me and their roles to our class colored my days during study and living away from my family.

Friendship in our class was also praised by IELTS lecturers from the Language Training Center of UNY, and this was important to build a good atmosphere during our study in the class. We did not only spend our time in the class, but also sometimes we had lunch, chatted after class and sightseeing on weekends. If one person had a good e-book or material, then it would be shared to all Class A members. In the last month of our training, we gathered earlier one hour before the lecture started to practice our listening in the class. I was very thankful to Ibnu who always prepared the listening material and shared tips for us. We also had group study and discussion at a coffee shop and Arini's rented home.



After the opening ceremony.



Writing session with Mr. Suparjo, making a long queue for corrections.



Member of Class A.



Group study at a coffee shop.

In order to stay away from laziness in my bed, I registered as a temporary member in the library of Universitas Gajah Mada (UGM) for 3 months. Unpredictable, some of the Class A members followed me to the library. Studying in the lab really gave me benefits, because firstly I couldn't sleep here although I was bored with my study. Then I could take a few minutes walks to refresh myself inside or around the library, and also I could find a small cafeteria for lunch and snacks in this library, so I didn't need to worry about my belly. Lastly, I was motivated when I saw students around me staying in study.



One afternoon session in the library of Universitas Gajah Mada (UGM).

During the training, I have learned enormous things from the lecturers, tutors and friends. Every lecturer and tutor has their own capacity and is

excellent in their subject. The materials were great and I was really keen on the practice session and post-test every weekend. The lecturers and LPPM were also friendly and welcome to our suggestion and request in order to improve our skill in IELTS. I noted some points as follow:

1. To improve listening, we should correctly improve our pronunciation (Mr. Donald J. Nababan)
2. We cannot ask: why like that... but should say: Oh, I see that.... Because each language has its pronunciation and writing (Mr. Agus Widyantoro)
3. In motivation letter we should not talk around the bush, we should show our capacity and capability (Mr. Basikin)
4. In speaking, if I make a mistake in pronunciation, the score will be low although I have a good answer and idea (Ms. Isdi).



Speaking practice with a tutor.



Waiting for our turn in speaking post-test

Weekend had to be sightseeing day

That was my motto during the training for releasing stress, staying away from boredom and getting more ideas for IELTS writing and speaking. Therefore, almost every weekend and national holiday I went for sightseeing or had a trip with my friends. I am sure everyone knows how sightseeing can bring joy and fun. When I did it for two weeks, I realized that I could also get more stories, vocabularies and ideas for my writing and speaking because I experienced something which I would talk and write about. For example, during the weekend post-test I once had difficulty in writing task 2 about a museum because I lacked knowledge about it. After I visited the Soeharto museum and

Batik exhibition during the Yogya anniversary, the experience developed my knowledge and vocabulary about the history and culture in my country.

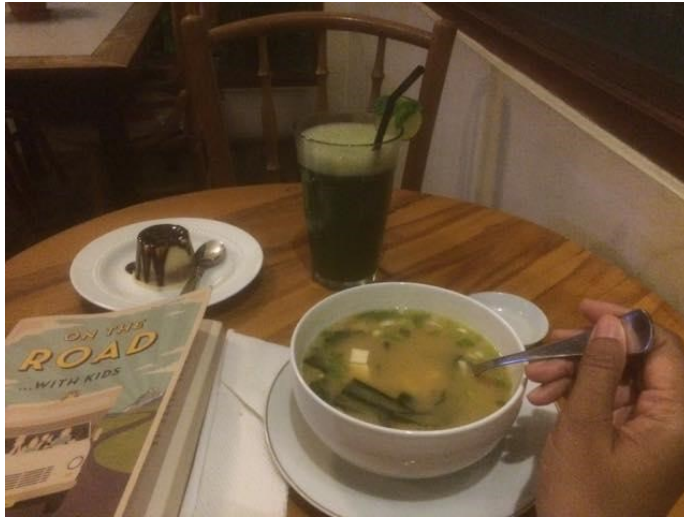


Visiting the Museum of H. M. Soeharto.

When the IELTS test day was coming

Post-test like the IELTS test had been placed every Saturday by LPPM and this greatly helped us to reduce our nervousness with the original test and both we and the LPPM could evaluate our skill weekly. What was great about the PKBI program was that we had two chances to take the IELTS test and those were funded by DIKTI. Before the first test which was held after 6 weeks of training, I kept in my mind that there is no second opportunity, so I have to make every effort in my first chance. When I received the result of my first IELTS test and it met the requirements of my proposed university, it was my golden ticket. From that moment I had regained my confidence to contact my potential supervisor in Australia because last time he did not reply any words after I told him my 5.5 IELTS score. Further it led me to achieve a scholarship from LPDP.

Staying healthy is very crucial during study. I caught cold and a cough around the second IELTS test day. Some of my friends were also under the weather when the second test was coming. This happened because our physic was tired and we were missing our family. Even though my overall score was as good as my first test, my speaking score declined to 5.5. I had less practice speaking because of coughing; thus, it impacted my test result. However, I was still happy that the result showed a very good improvement for listening.



Taking a break from IELTS and having healthy dinner at Kedai Organik Kolondjono, Yogya.

Shopping day before saying goodbye

This was not only for shopping souvenirs for family and friends in my hometown, but it was also a self-reward. We also bought many glass souvenirs and shared them with all lecturers, tutor and staff in the Language Center of UNY to appreciate them for their support and keeping us in a very comfortable room and atmosphere during our study.

It's always hard to say goodbye. After the closing ceremony held by LPPM P2B UNY in the morning, we also gathered and held our class farewell party. The idea just came up suddenly in the class, then I booked a room at Up Normal café for only two hours, but what a surprise was that the farewell party lasted up to 3 hours.



Souvenir and memory of Class A in a cup



Farewell party of Class A

I am very thankful to Allah that I have met Class A members, all friends, lecturers and tutors in PKBI Batch IV, and wish all the best for them. I am grateful for DIKTI, hopefully this program will be held every year for lecturers in Indonesia. This training can be a path to obtain a letter of acceptance (LoA) in a university and scholarship to study abroad.

Aceh Besar, 1 Agustus 2021

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The Spark of “Metanoia” through PKBI

Hijjatul Qamariah

The rolling stone gather no moss

Perhaps that's why this journey should be taken

The Announcement

The beginning of this journey was started from the good news that I got in the middle of August 2018. After long application rituals in which I should prepare some letters and the TOEFL score to be uploaded into the application system, I was nominated as one of PKBI awardees to take IELTS training for three months in Yogyakarta arranged by KEMENRISTEKDIKTI. The announcement was actually not really surprising me because my colleagues already got this similar training opportunity in 2017 in UPI Bandung. They said, I was so lucky to be selected to PKBI awardee in Yogyakarta because Many of PKBI alumni from Yogyakarta got their IELTS score higher than any other places appointed by KEMENRISTEKDIKTI. My colleagues were very excited to know that I got the chance to study in Yogyakarta and poured me with a lot of advice and some promising words that Yogya is the best place ever. “You won’t be bored staying in Yogya, everything is affordable and there are many tourist spots that can make you long for Yogya”. I took these words for granted as I got used to be in the place I don’t want to be for many occasions, but I nailed them, what I want

is I got the chance to study IELTS and it's a part of my step to the next future study plan and I will face it no matter how horrible the place is. Fortunately, there is no bad description about Yogya so far. So, this announcement was a new beginning that I have to be focused on and seriously do my best to the fullest.

Thinking about departing to Yogya within a two-week time, I need to know some companions from other Universities in Aceh who I can go with. I luckily found one named Novia Mehra Erfiza, one of the lecturers from the Agriculture Department, Syiah Kuala University who would be in Yogyakarta too. Syiah Kuala University and my current university, Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena (Former STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena) are near and in the same town, around 5 minutes ride. Then, our *traveler-ship* began. I tried to contact her via Facebook as I didn't know her phone number or email address. I texted her via Facebook message, and happily, *tit for tat* kak Novia replied to me heartily, I knew that ☺. We arranged to meet up at lunch time and finally met for the first time in one of the small restaurants in Darussalam, Band Aceh. She arrived earlier and that's a good acquaintance. She looks wise and friendly and older than me and seems to have a lot of knowledge and experience. That's my first impression of her. We finally met and naturally recognized each other from the doorstep of the restaurant and she was sitting in the chair looking at me. We ate and talked a lot about the journey and we also decided to go together to Yogya. She would reserve the air ticket for both of us and would talk again later about the suitable time to depart. She treated me that time; she paid for all the food we ate ☺, thanks sister. After that, the talks kept continuing as that of our friendship.

The Negotiation

After the announcement was released and I got the place, the first person to be informed in the house is my little sister, the one who knows me even better than me. I talked to her about the news and she looked so happy knowing that. Telling her about that, she asked me how I could tell *Mamak* and *Bapak* about this news and the journey. Sooner or later, I had to tell them. Mom was not in a good health condition but dad was very supportive yet a bit shocked. My mistake and I always did it. Every event or scholarship that I applied for, I never told my parents prior to the application process and my plan. I always did it when I passed or won it. My decision to tell them that way is reasonable since I know that the negotiation is always hard and dramatic between me and my mom. Then I decided to tell my parents while they were talking together. Yes,

as predicted, mom always confronted me and was disappointed with the news. I said it's only for three months and it's in Yogya not overseas. I recalled my journey to the USA in 2008 when I got the short course scholarship to University of Arkansas for three months. It seemed like *déjà vu*. I told my parents that I passed the scholarship to the USA for three months and I had to prepare my passport in a week. Mom cried a lot and was very sick that time, but again, dad was very supportive and congratulated me. Her reason was so simple and illogical. She just wanted me not to go far away from her, but I thought her sickness led her to be very sensitive. This sense of *déjà vu* was overwhelming. It happened again. I think all the journey that I went through so far was always like that. In short, after the dramatic negotiation, I finally approved even though I knew it was an irreversible decision driven by the forced agreement.

The Departure

The D-day for my departure was set for 11th September, as the training opening ceremony would be held on September 12th. Saying goodbye would always be heartbreaking for me and my parents. Still, mom did not show her smiley face even when I kissed her hand and said goodbye. It's always and would be a heart-breaking moment for me. Dad calmed me down and cheered the situation.

The itinerary departure time would be at 09.25 from Sultan Iskandar Muda International airport Banda Aceh to Medan, Kualanamu and at 12.00 from Medan, Kualanamu to Yogyakarta at 14.55.

Dad took me and my orange suitcase to the airport with his motorbike around 7.40 in the morning. Ten minutes passed and we arrived at the airport. The airport and my house are near as you can always listen to the aircraft starting its engine every time. I arrived earlier around an hour before departure time. My dad accompanied me while waiting for kak Novia. 20 minutes passed, I met kak Novia and said farewell to my dad

The Arrival

We arrived at Yogyakarta International Airport around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Kak Novia has a friend in Yogya that can welcome us when we arrive. She called her and asked for the address before our arrival. We book a taxi and kak via, the nickname I use to call her, called her friend. We showed the address to the taxi driver. It took us around 20 minutes until we finally arrived at Mba

Sita's house at Perum Harmony Pesona Graha, Karang Gayam, Catur tunggal, Yogyakarta. Mba Sita is a very nice and friendly woman. While we were searching for the rental house for the next three months, we stayed at her house.

The Placement Test Day

September 12th, was the opening ceremony day commenced by KEMENRISTEKDIKTI and LPPMP State University of Yogyakarta. After goggling the place of the ceremony that night, We decided to go to the LPPMP building on foot from Mba Sita's house. Yes, it's not too far; 2 KM far, yet It's



still quite exhausting ☺ for the unfamiliar place. On that day after the opening ceremony, we were directed to the IELTS placement test. From the result of the test we were placed in different classes, class A, B and C. The test was running well. I met many lecturers from different universities in Indonesia, but the acquaintance did not really go *with the flow* for me. I recognized some people were

very friendly, yet interpersonal skills are still a problem for me. The test lasted for several hours, starting with listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. It was a really tiring day.

The Classmates

The next day, after the result of the placement test was released, we went to the LPPMP office and saw where we were going to be placed, and yeah, Kak via and I got the same class, Class A. On that day we were also given some modules for the IELTS learning. Here we were, Class A. I thought we were a bit late, because almost all seats were full with 14 students. There would be 17 students in Class A. After both kak Via and I arrived at the class, one more student came

up, Benih Hartanti, our classmate. The class had already started; we introduced ourselves to the classmates and tutor.

Let me tell about my classmates, those who came from Aceh were three in the class A, Kak Via, Pak Naidi and I. Let start with the men, Pak Chris from Pattimura University, Mas Imam from ITS, Mas Willy from State University of Jember, Ibnu from Riau, Iqbal from ITERA Lampung, and Mas Oky from UKTM East Kalimantan. Those guys were really good at English even though most of them are not majoring in the English Department.

The women squad were amazing, Bu Dina Safitri from UNILA, Bu Asmi, from University of Lambung Mangkurat, South Kalimantan, Finza Larasati from Muhammadiyah University Palembang, Arini Nurul Hidayati from Siliwangi University, Siti Muyassarah from Banyuwangi, Mba Niken from Ponorogo, Mona from Padang.

My three months in Yogyakarta were amazing with those amazing people from around Indonesia. They knew when to be serious and when to be crazy ☺. We are bound with Class A Squads.



PKBI CLASS A

The Rental house

Searching for a rental house was another thing to do after classes ended. It's impossible to stay for a long time in Mba Sita's house although she never minds about it. After a few days, I finally got a rental house close by LPPM, only five minutes' walk away. It's a girl rental house. The building was not really massive but it was a two-floor building with several rooms in it. The room was basic, only a wardrobe and a table, a mattress and a pillow, but I thought it was enough

for three months and I did not spend too much time hunting for a rental house. I paid all the deposits for the whole month.

I was surprised to find that there was a man sleeping over in the other room next to my room. Come on, it's a girl rental house; it is supposed to be no man's sleepover. I told this matter to the lady lord but she took it for granted. I was also startled that the other people rented there did not care about it. It's only me, I guess. Then I calmed myself. "I'd be living here for three months. I didn't want to confront anybody", so just forget it.

My rental house was just a stopover for me, I would spend more time outside, so it's just for taking rest and sleeping, that's it.

The Days of IELTS learning



The rooftop of my rental house viewing LPPMP building

IELTS training ran smoothly as I expected. Learning is always an intriguing moment and meet new people. The tutors were very supportive and my classmates were awesome. Each skill in IELTS training is fun and interesting to learn yet it also worries me a bit. I always have a bit of fear if I cannot nail the writing and reading skills well. And yes, I felt that. My writing was not really

good and it was beyond the standard of being considered enough for applying to university overseas. I felt down and worried so much, what if I cannot increase my band of IELTS writing score. It seems like a tormenting moment and drains my energy every time I learn the IELTS writing; it made me exhausted after the class. I think I got the curse, that the student who has an English education background already reaches the plateau level, so it will be hard to improve the skill and the score. It even made me depressed. Until the

end of the training I still cannot reach my expected IELTS writing score, even though my overall IELTS score is more than enough to be used as the university application requirement.



IELTS CLass at LPPMP UNY, they are so studious

The Hang outs

After the class or every week after practice tests my classmates and I always planned to go out to relax. I think it is a great thing to do after a tiring day; we need a bit of excitement. We always had a good plan for each hang out moment. From watching the new released movie at the cinema, sipping coffee, or ice cream at Tempo Gelato or Ciao Gelato near the LPPM building, or wander in the city center at Malioboro Street, or visiting historical places in Yogya, we spent our quality time very well and I never felt lonely in that city for God’s sake yes, I never feel lonely. We also went to Filosofi Kopi, thanks to Mba Benih, for arranging the trip. Yogya is also about the beach and pine forest. We went there and had a lot of excitement. I thank my classmates that had made a great trip to Hutan pinus Mangunan, and also Hobbiton. That’s awesome, really. Our trip to Solo was also amazing and memorable. Mas Oky (Dziqi Aulia) made it even meaningful.



At Filosofi Kopi with wonderful mates

Besides, LPPM UNY also arranged the trips for all PKBI awardee, we visited Prambanan Temple and watched the Ramayana Show, we also visited Dolan Deso in Kulon Progo, all the trips were wonderful. It really made all of us bound together.



Trip to Prambanan Temple, Ladies are in very good poses

The Practice Day

Every Saturday is a practice day, where we always have a mock IELTS test. I think it's really cool so we can maintain and see our progress, yet it's also a nervous moment for all of us. We had listening, reading and writing in the morning and speaking test at noon until afternoon. Every weekend is always meaningful with a great test that needs a lot of energy. However, that weekend is always great and memorable. I love tests and yes it's always good to sit for a test, even though seeing the results is not always fine.

The Spiritual Engraving Moment

Living in Yogya for three months gave me a lot of experience. I found myself at a very good phase of time. I learned everything about IELTS and how to crack it to get the expected score. In the very solemn time, I also had a very good companion with me, Kak Novia, who initiated and invited me to join Tahsin (Alquran recitation practice) Class and we also invited other classmates to join us, and yes it ran really well. I kept it on track and fasted. I also got a commitment with my friend at university in Aceh to start Sunnah fasting and then I started with the commitment to do Monday and Thursday fasting each week and it lasts until today. I keep fasting regularly. I believe one thing, that



The lunchbox provided by LPPMP UNY fo PKBI Awardee, The menu can be various

great friends always remind you to do great and meaningful things because of Allah and for Allah. I got them and I thank Allah SWT for granting me such beautiful souls during my time in Yogya.

The Farewell

December 12th marked the closing of the PKBI program for three months in Yogya. The closing ceremony was held in the new building across from KOPMA UNY. The representative from KEMENRISTEKDIKTI; bu Juniarti, closed the PKBI program and also the representative from the PKBI awardee, Iqbal from Class A, our classmate,


represented us to give some closing remarks. The farewell was really sad and we took a ton of pictures that day. However, our class farewell was not yet organized. There would be more melancholy moments for all of us.

Warung Upnormal, we chose as our farewell party place. We started by telling what we felt for three months during the PKBI program and our togetherness in PKBI class A. Funny, inspiring, gloomy, and memorable stories were shared by all of us. I could not hold my tears actually at that time, to avoid that I only told and touched superficial moments I went through, if I kept talking for a bit longer, I would burst into tears. My melancholy side is really bad ☹. What I can say about the journey and friends like a family is I am so grateful for this delightful and precious trip and I thank God for crossing them all in my fate path.

This journey won't be splendid and precious without these beautiful souls: Kak Novia, Bu Dina, Mba Asmi, Arini, Finza, Mona, Mba Benih, Mba Sarah, Mba Niken, Mas Oky, Mas Iqbal, Mas Willy, Mas Imam, Ibnu, Pak Naidy, Pak Christ.



Class A PKBI UNY 2018 Family Picture



One step closer; I can feel a little bit of winter in Yogyakarta

Willy Kriswardhana

Have you ever smelt the snow even though you were in the Sahara?

No dreams are too high to achieve

Dreaming is always fun. Are you dreaming of studying abroad? It's way more "fun"! You have to prepare a myriad of things, challenging yet achievable. One of the requirements that should be prepared (and the most challenging) is English (!)

I landed in Yogyakarta on 11th of September 2021. As I expected, the holiday atmosphere was extreme in this city. (Un)fortunately, I went to this city to improve my weak English ability. I was allowed to escalate my English by DIKTI with the Peningkatan Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris (PKBI) in Yogyakarta State University. I considered this as my golden ticket to open the door to study abroad. I said to myself once I arrived in Yogyakarta, "Willy, this opportunity wouldn't be given to you twice; do it or leave now".

Sorted to the high achiever's class

The first thing I faced when I arrived at the LPPMP was the placement test. It was not surprising, but I did not prepare for it at all. Surprisingly, I was sorted

to Class A (it is the class where the high-scored students gathered). I look at my new friends, Oh My God, they are really fluent in English. After one-by-one introduction, I realized that many of them are English lecturers and overseas graduates. I mean, who doesn't feel inferior?

At first, I sat next to Miss Dina, a stubborn, honest, yet a very kind lady. She graduated from University of South Australia. Yep, no wonder her speaking is really good. The most famous person in the class belongs to Mr. Christian. You know what? Every teacher noticed him even before they met him. He was the highest-scored student with 6.5 on the placement test (speaking 8.5). He actually didn't need this class I guessed. The most annoying person went to Mr. Ibnu. At first, I considered him as a pretentious, wry, and ignorant person. I would never be close to this type of person (sorry bro).

During the class

It can be said that I've never been a good language learner. Basically, firstly, I am an engineer; secondly, I usually find it hard to memorize vocabulary, tenses, grammar, and others you name it. Moreover, in the IELTS test, we have to show off. I mean, we need to use unfamiliar words, a wide range of tenses, and other language show offs. The point is showing off! As an early-stage learner, I was only able to use simple structures of English. Complex sentences? What is that? A cake? The only thing I knew was the complex structure of the building.

Meanwhile, the elite students in my class already used the alien words. If you were there, you would find me dumbfounded looking at their writings and listening to their speaking. I am being serious. On the white board, Ms. Arini wrote the word "myriad". In his writing, Mr. Christian wrote so many magical words, like exacerbated. No way man, I didn't belong here.

Fortunately, there are some students who have the same level as me. We should be together guys. *Hahaha.*



Listening and reading might be my strongest parts since I have learned this kind of test. However, what happened was so far from my prediction. The listening speakers mostly used a British accent. As a Harry Potter fan, I am really familiar with this accent. Kidding! Man, how could they speak like that. They pronounce water with 'wota'. I was feeling like, "I must be fooled by this accent, I don't understand what they said, how come?" Thank God, I can make improvements by listening to the British people's conversation on YouTube.

Don't expect that the reading would be easy to understand. No. I'm an academic reading guy. a 1-hour reading class will drain your energy. You will not find simple sentences and words in academic reading. However, if you know one trick, you will be mastering IELTS reading. Actually, you don't need to understand and even read a whole reading text. As long as you know the key parts, you will be able to answer the questions, with a high validity level. I'm not joking, I mean, an Engineer achieves 8.5 in reading? Me.

Writing was my really sad story. I have ever scored 4.5 in writing. I'm gonna cry. Hahaha. The only thing that saved my writing was the clarity of my idea. And the rest? You will be crying if you find my sentences. I remember, when I got the result of the weekly test, my writing paper was full of the comments (even the comments were nearly dominating the paper). Sad? No. I laughed. Fortunately, things got better day after day. Supportive people around me really helped me improve my writing and finally I could use the sophisticated words (when only elite members could write it at first). Six point five was my score, and I think it should be more than enough.

And finally, the least favourite part of mine, speaking. Yep, speaking was the part in which my score never got better than 6.0 at that time. I approached

the “*was wes wos*” team (Mbak Hijja, Finza, Mbak Arin) so I can take some advantages from them. Well, we call the “*was wes wos*” team because they speak like a native (with the accent!). Me? You should never ask, I have my accent, “*medok*”. Even though my speaking hasn’t well-improved, at least, it’s better than no improvement, right?

On the real test, I achieved 7.0. Hmm, I already smell the winter.

I hate the farewell

I can say that PKBI is one of the most beautiful memories in my life. We are like a family, we bond very strongly, and we support each other. We were not trying to be the one best achiever, instead we were motivated to achieve high scores together. No competition.



Finally, the fairytale had come to an end. One thing’s for sure, I will always love you fellas.

Iqbal once said, “perpisahan sesungguhnya adalah ketika seseorang tidak saling ingat lagi”.

See you in winter!

With love. WK.

Willy Kriswardhana. No need to write about me. You know who I am.



Sayonara PKBI

"The real farewell is when we really never greet each other again."

Mochamad Iqbal

Yeah, it is my turn this time. They insist me to write the stories down for this experience. Actually, I'm not good at writing, but I'm trying my best to deliver what I had been through when I attended the English training in Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) for three months (September-December 2018). This may be boring for you. You can skip this chapter. I am not a great person, nor intelligent. If you have the same situation as me, you can read this, the story of the underdog or the underrated.

My biggest gratitude extends to the ministry of Research, technology, and higher education for giving me the scholarship and opportunity to improve my English skill. But unfortunately, the ministry only provided this program to lecturers to prepare them to proceed to the Ph.D. program. At this stage, I consider myself very lucky to have been chosen for this program because I am still a new lecturer, and many more senior lecturers were not chosen.

The first day I came to Yogyakarta, I stayed in an "Indekos" nearby, and we were scheduled to take a placement test. Before the test, I didn't know that we would be running an IELTS English training, so I didn't have any preparation; moreover, this is my first time taking IELTS. Shortly, the test was carried out with minimal abilities and effort. A few days later, the scores were announced, the classes were divided based on the previous IELTS scores. The course will be

divided into A, B, and C classes. I just gave up on the result because this wasn't what I expected; I thought I would be in the last class (Class C). But the result was surprisingly unexpected. I was put in the first class (Class A). I just didn't know what to say. The thing that surprised me more was when I first saw the announcement, and one of my friends in class A got a final score of 6.5. I was like, "Why is he here anymore with that score?"

This English training is very intensive. The training started from 8.30 am until 3.30 pm from Monday to Friday. Then, on Saturday, a kind of informal IELTS test or progress test was held to measure each participant's ability for the past week. This will be carried out over the next 3 months, with 2 real tests at the end of the program. The Class A itself consists of several people, namely: Mbak Niken, Mbak Mona, Mbak Finza, Bu Asmi, Mbak Saroh, Mbak Hijja, Bu Novia, Mas Ibnu, Mas Imam, Pak Kris, Me, Mas Naidi, Bu Dina, Mbak Arini, Mbak Benih, Oki, and Mas Willy. Our class is dominated by lecturers with a background in English education. Some of us come from the social sciences and only a few from engineering. Because of this background, I can see why my classmate has better English skills. However, I learned that our ability in English, particularly in the IELTS, is not only affected by our educational background but also our desire to learn regardless of our background.

Of course, each must have our own target for the destination campus before we depart. Broadly speaking, overseas campuses usually have a minimum requirement for English, namely an overall score of 6,5 with each band of at least 6 (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). I also targeted that score for the purpose of campus to New Zealand at that time. To get these scores, they study very hard. Yes, they! You've not read it wrong. I am not included. I just lived the day as casually as usual. Enjoy life in Yogyakarta, along with the beauty and culinary specialties there. Even at night, I spent my time in the gym for a workout. Because I feel that the lessons we learned during the day were already quite tiring for me, so I need refreshing. My friends dedicate their free time to study and study. Such a nerd.

As I mentioned earlier, our progress is monitored weekly with informal tests. Of course, my results fluctuated during the 3 months. The first real test was carried out after training for 1,5 months. Of course, in the progress test every week, my score was not very satisfactory, even far from my target of 6,5. This is a challenge and anxiety for me in the actual test later. When the real exam was nearly held, I studied independently, but certainly not as much and as long as my friends. My classmates gathered to carry out a group study. With the

minimum effort, I can only surrender and put my trust in Allah *Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala*. I definitely did not consider getting a high score in this class based on the weekly progress. But I have nothing to lose. I just pray and ask Allah to give me the best.

The day of the exam arrived. I took the exam like we usually have the progress test on Saturday. I try to stay calm so that I can do well on the exam. Short story, the exam was over. There was nothing so special about it. We are informed that the results will be announced after 13 days from the test date.

13 days passed as usual. I didn't realize that day was the day of the score announcement. I only hear news from my friends. As I recall, that day was on a Friday. After doing my Friday prayers near the class and entering the classroom, I saw my female friends busy to see their results. Then they also asked me to look at the result. Finally, I went to the classroom corner to see my score. To be honest, I was very nervous and hoped that I would get a score according to the target of 6,5. Sure enough, the results were there. And, BOOM! Overall score 7.0! Who could have thought that?! I was given more than what I asked for. I thank Allah SWT for the blessings given. I could only laugh at the class. My classmates were undoubtedly surprised and nosy about my score. They could only see me giggling. When they saw it, maybe they were also surprised? Who would have believed a clumsy man often skips class, rarely studies, but can get that score. As I mentioned earlier, therein lies the implication of the power of *du'a*.

Of course, these results cannot be separated from the tutor who taught me a lot of improving English language skills. During the three months of training, the improvisation of my English skills has dramatically enhanced. Starting from listening, reading, writing, especially speaking. The atmosphere and environment to interact using English are enjoyable, and this causes the embarrassment of speaking in English to be forfeited, especially when speaking. When interacting by using English every day, it will become a habit. I thank all tutors profusely; *Insha Allah*, this knowledge will be helpful.

To summarize, I would like to convey my feelings during this training in class A. In those three months, I not only got improvisation, but I also got a lovely family. Care and support each other. Family bonds are not only obtained from blood relations but also can be created from togetherness. I will never forget this moment.



Arini Chased a Train

"There will always be another train."

Arini Nurul Hidayati

As an eighty's generation, you might have heard your parents tell an old-school movie starring Widyawati and Rano Karno in 1987 entitled "*Arini Ketinggalan Kereta*" (red: Arini Missed the Train). Well, my story is actually not another version of that movie, it just has a similar main character's name. This is a story when I 'literally' became a weekly train chaser...

Leaving my cute 3-year-old son for the first time in a long time was no easy feat. It made me go back and forth from Jogja - Tasik once a week. Train was the only fastest transportation I could take to accomplish these tasks. A tiring yet challenging time. It was the moment when I attended a three-month IELTS preparation program in the State University of Yogyakarta (UNY). I was always excited to follow all activities in the training as well as catch the trains available at Traveloka every Saturday afternoon, anything from economy to executive class. Being by the side of those who did not take a shower and sitting across to Hanung Bramantyo, a well-known film director, were amongst the stories behind this struggle. Often skipping classes because the child still missed the mother was also another heartbreaking section. It was okay; because the balance to improve yourself and take care of the family was both very important.

Being 'big' requires blood, sweats, and tears



Have you dreamt to be 'big'?

Having dreams is normal, pursuing them is also common. Obstacles hindering the steps to the projected goal would always be the constant companions to every dream catcher, nothing special. Those happen to anyone. Then what makes it 'big'?

"It seems like...", the supposition offering millions of beauties to the castle-

builders, as if it would be a wondrous pride when it came true, is the only reason why pursuing dreams is a big matter. For instance, "It seems cool if I were a graduate of an overseas university, got a Ph.D. degree, gained prestige in any academic environment, and had opportunities to get to know the new cultures and people out there which would be a delightful experience." This sort of notion is present in a dreamer's mind like mine.

Yep, one of my dreams was to embark on my Ph.D. abroad (with a scholarship, indeed). Nevertheless, to be on this stage is not a piece of cake, more specifically for people like me. I would say that it was the heaviest journey I've experienced. Can you imagine, 3 kms walking through the roadway from my rental room to the training center of IELTS in the State University of Yogyakarta (UNY) carrying my 82 kgs weight? For me who rarely took a walk, this was taken as a daily basis torture at the first stepstone. "This lazy pig was in need to do sport, and this occasion was perfect timing", I told myself. Moreover, the morning sun in Jogja was always boiling hot which caused the sweats dripping between my eyelids, a total mess to catch the class. I felt like having a flashback to the old time when attending a scout hazing.

"Feels like being a student again, Rin," Hijja, a diligent petite girl from Aceh who consistently came to the class in time, greeted. "Yes, Kak, but with a different size and shape." We laughed together. The second-to-back left corner bench was always my favorite spot to sip a cup of lemon honey before starting the 'battle' of flavors for the next nine hours. Sitting next to *Pak* Naidi, a super talented sleeper, always became another fun to skip the boredom in the class.



Classroom seating arrangement

Mr. Jeffrey White? No, Mr. Geoffrey White. Whatever!

You got trapped! *Ngenes* is the feeling when you think you've spelled the name in the Listening Task correctly but turned out to be a lot wrong. Besides being full of concentration, being familiar with common Western names can also help solve problems like this. Watching more Hollywood movies might also grow this habit, but not in a short and instant time like our training period (3 months). In class, there were 2 participants whose Listening scores tended to be consistent, *Mas Iqbal* and *Mas Oki*, passionate and ambitious youngsters. Both, especially *Mas Oki*, always sincerely shared the strategies to improve the listening score to us. Still, I got stuck at 6.5 as the final result. Nothing wrong with the techniques, it was the person who was unable to implement them quite appropriately.

An (Un)Interesting Reading Class

Of all the tutors, the most impressive one to me was *Pak Nababan*. When joining his class, the reading session was enjoyable, it looked like I would answer the questions in this part correctly. Utilizing the discourse approach, getting the participants to recognize the relation between texts and contexts, still did not work on me. The highest scores I gained were among 6-6,5. Once I got 8.0, unconsciously, in a weekly test, a superb yet illogical achievement. I would say, English alone is not enough to elevate your IELTS, especially reading. You need to get yourself accustomed to extensive reading activities. I remembered attending an international conference in 2016 with Dr. Willy Renandya as the invited speaker. He persuaded us to do extensive reading in order to build the background knowledge which is essential to make us engaged with academic

texts, primarily for the sake of the IELTS test purpose. Fully aware, I believe this would work to some extent in upgrading the reading score. Even though *Mas Ibnu*, an intelligent friend who always gained excellent reading scores sharing some reading strategies, had noticed that IELTS reading was about conquering certain tricky strategies, I still believe that reading habits are more powerful than anything else.

Don't be overconfident!

"I think it's easy", "As a Speaking lecturer, I believe I can make it." Those were my self-talk at first. Since well-planned speeches seem to have become my daily meals, it seemed there would be no problems with this skill. No need to train too hard, I brag...

What actually happened was so far from predictions. There was one thing that I did not predict, namely speaking anxiety. This condition occurred because I felt pressured to be part of a test and be afraid of the negative evaluation. This led me to take all indicators of speaking measurement into consideration when talking (how to maintain accurate pronunciation, error-resistant grammar, varied vocabulary, and acceptable content) which resulted in the production of unspontaneous, irregular and rigid speeches. I became frustrated and overwhelmed because of it. Very luckily, I had a perfect companion to cope with this challenge. It was *Mbak Benih*, a skeptical yet rational woman, who taught me how to manage a natural speech by telling the original thoughts of our own when asked by the examiners without trying to impress them which would eventually help us manage our tensions. All in all, those sweats and tears were dedicated to gain the 'big' score of IELTS as everyone in this program always expected.

OIM; Always Fun!

To be honest, writing was always my cup of tea, the classes that I anticipated the most during the training. Not without reasons, I have loved writing letters with distant friends, writing diaries, short stories and poetry since I was in elementary school. Although this time the feel of the writing was a bit unique and very scientific, the activity was still expressing ideas on papers which I love...

With the OIM writing technique (Observing, Imitating and Modifying), I was always proud of my writing progress, the only thing that made me happy with this training. Regardless of who the tutor was, writing was always what I looked forward to the most. Mates that I always observed in writing classes were *Bang Christ* and *Mas Willy*. These buddies had extraordinary writing skills; vast and advanced dictions, and well-structured sentences. Most importantly, *Mas Willy*, he has a super neat handwriting as a male. Very adorable!

Miscellaneous Stories on Trips: Enjoying the Time

Watching Ramayana Ballet in the Prambanan Temple

Learning new cultures always intrigued my curiosity profoundly. In the PKBI program, we were given a chance to get to know the local culture of Yogyakarta. On a bad rainy evening, we stepped on our feet in a legendary old building, Prambanan Temple, to watch a very popular show, Ramayana Ballet. This was a show that combined dance and drama without dialogue, based on the Ramayana story performed since 1961. The stories were based on Hindu epics adapted to Javanese culture. The dance was unique and involved more than 50 professional dancers and gamelan musicians. Ramayana Ballet is also based on the bas-relief at Shiva Temple, Prambanan. The story was primarily about the journey of Rama in rescuing his wife, Sinta, who was kidnapped by the king of Alengka Kingdom, Rahwana.

Even though it was a cold night, the conversations with friends warmed the atmosphere. This became one moment when I could share togetherness with my classmates. I totally enjoyed the afternoon walking while talking so much with my roommate, *Kak Niken*. We rarely spent weekends together since I frequently went home on the weekends. Moreover, capturing tons of group photos was also another unforgettable moment. The talkative *Bu Dina* and *Kak Novia* were always the most energetic participants to do such activity

Dolan Desa Tour in Kulonprogo

An adventurous trip was another activity set by the PKBI committee. All participants were invited to experience a one-night stay in a cottage located in the typical landscape of Central Java, surrounded by mountains, rice fields and rivers. This area was a tourist and outbound place that had a traditional concept

that prioritized environmental conservation based on cultural values and local wisdom.

I clearly remember the night sleeping in that cottage, a scary yet lovely memory. This spooky building accommodated about 30 participants, and we slept in row with other friends from class B and C, just like in a girls' dormitory. What made it unforgettable was because I slept between Finza and *Kak Mona*, two single ladies from Palembang and Padang. These two ladies were super kind and protective. Besides, what comforted me the most was they also reminded me of *Pempek* and *Nasi Padang* (two of my favorite meals) which managed to get rid of my fear of being in that haunted aura. Foods are always successful distractors of any pressures.

In the following morning, a kind-hearted lady woke me up to conduct *Shubuh* prayer. It was *Bu Asmi* with her full smile. Then, we experienced an outbound, body rafting, and pool crossing. *Mas Imam*, a sporty man loving bicycling, was very active in joining these activities. Similarly, Sarah who was also an adventurous girl participated in the event enthusiastically. In short, we cherished the moment since it was so much fun.

Culinary Hunt

Yogyakarta is a city that offers millions of opportunities to explore delicious and affordable culinary spots. Without any doubts, all of us, who notably were from out of this city, did not take this chance for granted. We hunted for food anytime we had spare time. Right after my arrival in Yogya, I still had no one to go with. The only way to taste the foods was by ordering via Go-Food. After a few whiles later, I began to make friends and asked them about some most visited food stalls. The first food stall I visited was Bakso Betsheda 74 in Ambarukmo Plaza. A friend showed me the way to the place and we had its tender meatballs with yellow and white noodles topped by fried onions and sliced celery while having an afternoon chit-chat. Another must visit place was *Waroeng Ayam Geprek* and Milks located nearby my rental house which offered various spicy levels of fried chickens and fresh cow milks. The combination of self-service and open kitchen resto always attracted the visitors to repeat the orders. This 'Waroeng' became my favorite place to spend time with friends after having such a tiring day. As the time went by and I had more mates in the class, my culinary experience also expanded. I went to *Jejamuran* resto located quite far from the training center, spending about thirty minutes to get there. This restaurant provided diverse

menus with mushrooms as the basic ingredients, such as fried mushroom, steamed mushroom, mushroom *rendang*, mushroom *satay*, etc. The tastes were incredibly great, making me mouthwatering anytime I remembered the rich flavors of the spices. Three Ravenclaw members were enjoying the meals accompanied by one sneaking Slytherin girl who did not stop grinning.

The numbers of culinary hunters got bigger by time, as the bond got stronger. A group of students including me rented a car to have a one-day trip merely for perching from one spot to another. We began the trip by visiting a sub urban area in Yogyakarta to eat Javanese traditional foods in the edge of the rice fields. The atmosphere was totally similar to my hometown and reminded me of my childhood. After that, we continued the trip to taste the legendary steamed catfish in “Mangut Lele Mbah Marto” house. This was a super special destination since the foods cooked by a ninety-year-old woman were very extraordinary. The seller kept the authenticity of the products, from preparing to serving. Proceeded in a traditional fireplace, the steamed catfish was the mainstay menu that customers always looked for. We finally ended our journey by having an enjoyable afternoon in a coffee shop. Well, overall, foods often bring good friends in good moods.

===== THE END =====



Arini Nurul Hidayati is a mom of one who loves writing diaries and tells bedtime stories. She is also fond of traveling and hunting for food. She is currently teaching at Siliwangi University in Tasikmalaya, West Java.

The A Team “We never say goodbye, we only say see you next time”.

Finza Larasati



One fine morning, I got a message in a WhatsApp Application group sharing information about the IELTS training program. Being a lecturer of an English Education Study program requires me to be familiar with various kinds of English tests. I have taken TOEFL Prediction, TOEFL ITP, TOEP, and TOEIC but I was not familiar with IELTS. What I knew was this test was not only pricey but it is also a “golden ticket” for getting a scholarship ;D. I thought that was a precious opportunity to learn more about IELTS by the experts, moreover, this

program gave the participants a free official IELTS test for two times... What a rare opportunity I thought...

Months after applying, I read the announcement that I have been accepted to the program. I feel so excited to learn a new part of learning English, I think. After preparing all the needs including the rent house, I decided to continue my journey.

Placement test, as a Welcoming Treatment.

Once I arrived at the LPPMP building, *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta*. All the awardees were asked to have a placement test. I remember that day while waiting for the Speaking test, I was not feeling alone because I met some lovable people who came from different islands; Arin from Tasikmalaya, Bu Asmi from Kalimantan, Cening from Sulawesi and Bu Putri from Bali. We talked a lot about our cities and shared our feelings about that placement test.



After the announcement was released, I got class A with 16 other lecturers all around Indonesia. Entering Room 302, I saw everyone was ready with the seat. Fortunately, I saw an empty chair beside Bu Asmi, a calm and friendly person I met yesterday. She asked me to sit beside her and I felt happy with that. After deciding on a seat, we started to talk to each other. Arini Nurul Hidayati, Asmi Rusmanayanti, Benih Hartanti, Christian Albert Lewier, Dina Safitri, Finza Larasati, Hijjatul Qomariyah, Ibnu Daqiqil, Imam Baihaqi, Mochamad Iqbal, Mona Elviyenti, Yusnaidy, Niken Trisnaningrum, Siti Muyasaroh, Willy Kriswardhana, Mohamad Dzikie Aulia Al Faraqi, and Novia Mehra Efriza were in class A; The A Team.

First week of learning, I got insecure since I found out that I was surrounded by studious classmates. At the beginning, we were asked to introduce ourselves and talk about our PhD plan. What a shocking question???... What should I answer? The reason why I came here was because I wanted to learn and take the IELTS test, I did not have any plan about my PhD. What shocked me the most was when I heard their answers and some of them clarified that they had taken IELTS four times since they graduated from abroad. Especially, when I heard Pak Christ, Kak Hijjah and Arin's pronunciation, Bu Dina's speaking

elaboration, and other classmates' skills that amazed me so much. Knowing that fact, I tried to keep my mind-set. I tried to use this opportunity as best as I could.

It was a very lucky for me to have them as classmates. We supported each other very much. I remember the time when Arin and Mas Ibnu wrote me a formula to compose writing task easily, kak Hijjah who kindly checked my writing and reminded me to study especially when I was busy watching Korean drama :D, bu Asmi my speaking partner always checking my pronunciation, and my diligent young sister Saroh who was very busy with her sticky dictionary that helped me to remember new vocabulary every time, bu Dina was not only motivator at class she was also on fire girl creating a cheerful situation and ice cream party to cheer us, kak Niken and kak Mona were clam and quick learners, Mas Imam, Pak Naidi, Iqbal, Oky, Pak Chris, Willy and mba Benih were the ones who look relaxed in studying but very high receiver, and kak Via was the one who reminded us not only reaching the goal for the good of this world but also the food for hereafter. She arranged us the schedule for reciting the Koran. From her, we knew Mba Sita, our tutor in reciting Quran and sometimes telling us information about good life. We learnt so much from her life style. *Alhamdulillah.....* Not only supporting in learning in the classroom, we also created a learning atmosphere outside the classroom (Arin and Kak Niken's room was our favourite). We practiced listening and discussed the answer together.

Short escaping for fun

After having tight learning, we organized a fun time by visiting some places. *SunMor (Sunday Morning)*, a folk market near UGM is a must visit place for us every Sunday morning. We can buy snacks, clothes, books, or anything here, they are very affordable and complete. Bu Asmi was the one who felt fully charged after shopping here. I remember she bought almost all the things. *Solo Trip*, we decided to go for a short trip by train to Solo. In Solo, we visited Ketelan Station and tasted Selat. *Filosofi Café trip*, mba Benih organized a food culinary trip for us, we started from tasting the fried banana in the morning and drinking coffee in the evening.



Good friends never say “Goodbye”, we say “See you again!”

Finally, we came to an end of this program, Iqbal was chosen as the participant with the highest receiver of this program.

Therefore, he should present a speech in the closing ceremony. I remember he said “*sok sok an*” as class A learning style.

After the official closing ceremony of PKBI UNY 2018, all of us in class A prepared for our private farewell party. We booked a room in a restaurant and started to talk about each testimony during this program. We talked about how we felt as strangers the first time and felt like a family in the end. All of us expressed our happiness to have a chance to know each other. We committed to keeping in touch and never leaving our Whatsapp Application chat room. We never say goodbye, we only say see you next time.



Finza Larasati is a lecturer of English Education Study Program in *Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang*, South Sumatera. She pursued her master degree in *Universitas Sriwijaya*, Palembang. She is passionate about teaching and learning new things, especially the use of technology in English Language Teaching.



A Memory Prior to the PhD Departure

Imam Baihaqi

Glasgow, 26 Sept 2021

Every higher education institution needs academic staff or lecturers to get a doctorate or PhD degree. The aim is to achieve more knowledge and experience, especially when continuing the doctoral degree. In this case, every institution encourages their academic staff to apply to higher education, especially abroad, for the young lecturers. Higher education abroad needs two outstanding requirements. Having a Letter of Acceptance (LoA) from the targeted university and achieving language requirements, which mostly requires an IELTS or TOEFL certificate. Officially, the university will issue a formal acceptance letter if the applicant complies with the minimum English requirement and the funding or sponsor. In my progress to get the PhD degree, I have to get the minimum score of English (in this case, IELTS) to get the LoA from the university and the funding. This is the beginning of my official effort to get the IELTS score of 6.5 bands.

Before applying to the “*Program Peningkatan Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris (PKBI)*” ministry of research technology and higher education in 2018, I tried to improve my language proficiency by joining several English courses. I used to apply to SUN-Education semi-private course, UPT Bahasa, a mini group of lecturers funded by the department's English course, and many other English proficiency courses in Surabaya. What I want is to improve my English either in

listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. What I got was just the warming up to improve to another level; it was just the beginning to go to the “real” course at PKBI 2018.

What I remember when applying for PKBI 2018 is preparing documents and administration registration. To shorten their process, I directly asked my close friend, an alumnus of PKBI 2017. My friend told me everything about the registration and administration, the nuance in the training and the daily activity in the course and the improvement achieved. She is accommodating and generous in sharing this information with me. It helps me a lot to shorten the administration process for applying to the PKBI English course. I remember getting the NAPZA test at Dr Sutomo hospital, which cost about IDR 200-300K at that time. Getting the permission letter from my head of department, preparing the previous IELTS score or TOEFL, and uploading the requirements to the online system.

Finally, the PKBI admin announced the accepted candidates to join the course. I was surprised that no one was accepted from my institution; only I applied for this course and was accepted in the September batch in 2018. I should immediately inform my wife that I have to go to Yogyakarta to improve my IELTS to get 6.5 bands for 3 months. The condition was that we (My wife, my little boy and I) moved to our new home, which had just been refurbished and we lived there for one or two months. Suddenly, I moved to Yogyakarta city, living in a small rented house with a limited facility to drill and learn English. Moreover, I have to leave my wife at Surabaya with her 2 years old baby for 3 months. It was a shock therapy for me for a while before I concentrated on the English course drill.

One day before the course start date, I flew to Yogyakarta from Surabaya airport. It took about 30 minutes by flight. Bringing two pieces of luggage, the big and hand carry, I went to the rented house at Gang Wisnu 21, Caturtunggal, Sleman district Yogyakarta, shown in Figure 1. It is very close to the State University of Yogyakarta, where the PKBI course was conducted. It takes about 5 minutes to walk from the house to the course place. It was also very close to the street food, canteen, and food resources. It was a nice place to study in Yogyakarta, with fresher air than Surabaya City's.



Figure 1. The walkway to my rented house at Yogyakarta (captured from google)

One day before coming to the venue, I checked it out first while sightseeing the surrounding situation, including the supermarket, the mosque, and the road. But I had not found the place yet until the next day, which was the first day. I arrived earlier to check on the first day, going to the Language department of UNY (Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta) and asking the place conducting the PKBI course. I asked the lecturers there, but nobody knew the venue. Eventually, someone told me that the PKBI was run in the Institute of Quality Assurance and Educational Development, the State University of Yogyakarta, as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The venue of the PKBI English course

Figure 2 shows the venue of the PKBI English course; the first person I met was Mrs. Dina, wearing a fantastic jilbab and very attractive to talk to people. I had never imagined that I would be in the same class with her after the placement test. It seemed that she was very fluent in English and very clever when I first met her. What I guessed was right; she was one of the most eloquent in English. In addition, she had experience learning her master degree in Australia. I was impressed to meet her, who had so many experiences in learning English and culture abroad.

Actually, we had to move to the building room. We went together, went up by elevator and found out the place. Then, a sudden IELTS full test was conducted after a brief explanation, starting with writing, listening, reading, and speaking. Well, that's okay. I had not prepared anything for the placement test on that day due to my undelivered schedule. The placement test was conducted from morning to afternoon because we had to wait for the speaking test, which took longer. The next day, the placement test was announced, and actually, I joined the A-class.

It seemed that the A-class was the most serious group of people. I thought most of them were very clever; indeed, this is the A-class, the class with the high rank of the placement test result. I had never imagined also that I deserved to be in the A-class with clever, diligent and excellent English proficiency. But the show must go on, I had to gather and interact with them. When I wrote this story, I thought it was much more beneficial to have the same group with

excellent people in English to improve my English. Thus, I was lucky to learn with the A-class members enhancing my English proficiency. The full members of the A-class are shown in Figure 3. From left to right (men) are Mr Ibnu, Mr Lewier, Mr Willy, me, Mr Oki, Mr Iqbal, Mr Naidi, and the ladies are Mrs Novia, Mrs Arini, Mrs Dina, Ms Asmi, Ms Finza, Ms Muyasaroh, Ms Niken, Ms Mona, Ms Hijja and Ms Benih. This picture was captured in front of the building where we learnt together.



Figure 3. The A-class team members of the PKBI English course, UNY.

To be honest, I was the very silent person in the class, maybe. I was a little bit shy to interact with other members of the classroom. Suddenly, someone told us that we had to have an organizational structure, choosing the leader, the finance and secretary. And I was selected to be the class leader (to be honest, without any acceptance from me). Eventually, I was selected, and well, I agree as long as the members support me. Being the class leader had no significant role; if something happened, the other members would interact immediately and take the initiative. With this regard, I thought it was not hard to be the class leader with the supporting members.

Summary points of the IELTS training journey

- Regular activity course:
 - Starting to 7.30 up to 5 pm, Monday to Friday + Saturday test
 - Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking
 - Full test every Saturday, get a fluctuated score every week, sometimes get high score sometime weak score
 - Get the average worst score, planning to move to B class (sudden plan from UNY committee), it was me (LoL) as the leader A class

- Parangtritis, Visiting Balik Deso,

At Parangtritis Beach, having lunch together, we went to Bali Deso.

The first word "Gorgeous" I ever remember when seeing that movie (English Singlish)

Having very good games and outbound. Monkey games, rafting through the river.

- Prambanan Temple and Sendratari Ramayana

Going to Prambanan Temple, having a good dinner, watching Sendratari Ramayana Rama-Sinta and Rahwana.

- Having a great Picture of Class A and a special Mug.
- My Family picked me up to Yogyakarta and I had a nice holiday with my family. (Visiting Prambanan, Pasar Bringharjo, Malioboro)
- Back to Surabaya with IELTS 6.0 and continue drilling myself to achieve 6.5. and apply BPPLN and go to University of Strathclyde UK 1 Nov 2019.

Lessons learned in PKBI Yogyakarta:

1. How to learn English well especially IELTS
 - a. Listening: materials in YouTube and Mrs. Sari Hidayati inspired me very well
 - b. Reading- Writing □ linking
 - c. Listening-Speaking the link between

2. Partner in speaking and writing (practicing and reviewing/checking the result. Give suggestion)
3. Friends and important information to get scholarship (having the same goal to continue PhD)
4. Information from Dikti the latest one, especially scholarship information and further training for lecturer
5. Culinary in Yogyakarta
6. Test the discipline time to get tight work and clear target, drill strategy is the best way to achieve the goal

Getting A New Family Through PPKBI

Siti Muyasaroh

Visiting Yogyakarta in 2018 is one of my best journeys in life! Through the amazing intensive foreign language training program namely, PPKBI (*Pelatihan Peningkatan Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris*) held by the Indonesia Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, I got a new family from all around Indonesia! This journey started officially on September 14th, 2018 with the Opening Ceremony of PPKBI 2018 in Yogyakarta State University (UNY).



Photo: The opening ceremony of PPKBI 2018 at UNY with the General Directorate of Resources of the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, Secretary of LPPMP UNY, Head of L2P UNY, instructors and staff of L2P UNY, and all participants of PPKBI 2018 UNY.

This family is the one encouraging me to face the world more bravely. Beforehand, due to some stumbles in my academic career, I was quite hopeless and had low confidence. However, after meeting them and hearing many stories about their struggles in achieving goals, my spirit batteries were charged. One of my favorites is practicing our speaking skills by sharing life experiences with other participants (what a pity! I did not capture these moments even with a single photo). My lovely sparring partner was Mbak Novia, a lecturer from Aceh. She is a high spirit person with positive vibes radiant like a halo >.< Practicing speaking is just like a consultation session with her and I love it! I love hearing stories about her family, how she met her husband through master study in Japan, how she divides her tight schedule between family and professional matters, and also her motivational speech which looks like Mario Teguh! One thing after being her sparring partner: my optimistic level rising!

Another favorite moment is consulting our writing to the mentors. Here is a photo of when we took a queue to consult with Mr. Suparjo, a senior lecturer at UNY. Hopefully, he is always in a good condition and stays healthy. Bu Dina, one of my classmates, is his fan, the hardcore one maybe. It has been a long time since I last felt this thrilling moment when my writing was assessed, just like bringing back memories from when I was a senior high school student. Well, standing up and being in the queue itself is the challenge because it took a lot of time. Make sure you have sturdy legs to wait your turn.



Photo: Participants of PPKBI Class A took a queue to consult their writing with a mentor

Okay, enough with the serious topics! Did we only study during PPKBI? Big NO! It will be very stressful just to imagine. We need some time for refreshing. For your information, Yogyakarta is a famous city to spend our leisure time in. What I enjoyed here is the affordable cost of traveling. Food, souvenirs, entrance tickets to tourist attractions, and public transportation are cheaper than in other cities. Let me tell you about one of our strolls after PPKBI classes. It was my first time visiting Vredenburg Ford Museum, a girls' day out while reminding the Indonesian struggle for independence. It was not too crowded so we could take our time there. Not to mention, taking pictures is a must!



Photo: Girls' Day out at Vredenburg Fort Museum

I would love to share stories about our little cafeteria in the class, but unfortunately, there is no photo of it. It is our mood booster in the midst of our stuck and boring moments. At least for me, I could keep opening my eyes thanks to the full stock of coffee. Thank you so much Bu Dina, Bu Asmi, Mbak Benih,

and others who made sure our cafe did not run out of snacks and beverages! Those who go back to their hometown due to personal matters never forget to bring back the traditional snacks with a bunch of delicious flavors. Sharing is caring! Hehehe

Memories will never die, so this is not a goodbye. Spending three months in PPKBI with supportive and loving friends and mentors feels like a blink of an eye, even those hanging memories are still vivid in my mind. Saying goodbye to the last class choked me! Will we meet again? Will I ever get this kind of a chance? Can I really get to continue my study (abroad)? I decided to not worry about these questions after all. Being focused on what I have is my top priority whilst doing my best to reach my dreams: studying and getting a scholarship for Ph.D. overseas.



Photo: The last reading class of PPKBI 2018 Class A

Last but not least, see you on top, fellas! I believe that we will meet in a better and more successful state. Maybe at that time some of us have a Ph.D., maybe some still struggle in studying or scholarship hunting, and others decide to pursue other professional careers (not in academic areas). Anyway, let's fly higher and live our life to the fullest!



Photo: Participants of PPKBI 2018 Class A. The nickname (from the left to the right)

Front: Niken, Saroh, Finza, Dina, Asmi, Hijja, Arini, Mona,

Back: Novia, Iqbal, Naidi, Kris, Ibnu, Willy, Imam, Oki, Benih



Improving English and Enhancing Life Experience

Yusnaldi

Background and Intention to Enroll in the Program.

It has been a self determination to pursue my doctoral degree at a reputable university in Australia or Europe, as what I have achieved for my master degree. The plan has been around since I started my career as a marketing lecturer at The University of Teuku Umar in Aceh Province. I believe studying overseas will enhance my life and academic experience because of its academic environment, educational facilities, and ability to enrich my insight on international businesses and relationships. These thoughts motivate me to search for the opportunity to make my dream come true. Moreover, my family share the same dream that they want to experience living in a developed country and feel an international living environment.

As mentioned in an ancient quote that the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. The quote was very inspiring and encouraged me to improve my English skills in order to meet the requirement to study abroad. I started to study English by reading English books and the TOEFL test. It was not an easy task since I had not used a lot of English skill after graduating from The University of Adelaide in 2010.

Finally, the first small step began by sitting at the TOEFL ITP test and got a 535 score for the test. The score allowed me to register in the selection process of the English improvement program. In August 2018, the committee informed me that I was elected as the participant in the English Skills Improvement Program or PKBI Program which will be held in The State University of Yogyakarta. This

program was managed by The Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of Indonesia. I was so motivated to enroll in the program and received full support from my family and the dean of the faculty.

Settlement and Conquering Challenges.

Relocation was a really challenging process in terms of physically and mentally. It needed a lot of energy to find a good affordable accommodation, and adjusting to the local time. In addition, being far away from my family and my lovely daughter was not easy. Alhamdulillah there are many modern technologies and applications that assist to overcome these situations, such as websites to search and book accommodation online, video call, and mobile applications. However, it still needs time to adapt to the new environment and course requirements.

Considering there are many things that should be managed and the need to focus on course requirements, I rent premium accommodation which costs two million rupiah per month for the first month. The room was equal to the standard room of a three-star hotel in Indonesia. When the accommodation for the first month was settled, 80% of the adaptation process was accomplished. Actually, It was a good decision but it did not feel right to extend it for the second and third month since the allowance was not able to finance premium accommodation.

The Course

➤ 1st day, 1st month. 2nd month, 3rd month

The departure day was very difficult since I have to leave my little princess for three months, the longest period ever for being in long distance relationship with my family. It turned out Rambo to Rinto, tough man to be as smooth as marshmallow ☺. When I had landed in Yogyakarta Airport, I was a little bit confused about the transport that I had to take to reach downtown. Actually, the airport is not far away from the city center. It took me less than 40 minutes to reach Gejayan Street and arrive at the accommodation that I have booked online. It was two-storied accommodation with 30 rooms. It was convenient place to live but there were only limited social interaction among the renters. Maybe the

renters were too tired with their own activities and love to enjoy their time in their own room.

First day of the course was not comfortable one. I was shocked that we had to take ELTS prediction test as the benchmark of the English skill and for the placement purpose. The participants will be placed to a class based on the test results. Of course, many of us were not ready for the test. We still had jet lag, being tired after hours of flight and were adapting to the new environment.

1st month, I had back pain for the first two weeks. It was really bad and I felt so uncomfortable. It also disturbed my sleep and I only slept for less than 4 hours. The problem was related to the waist muscles which had to adapt for sitting position approximately seven hours a day from 7 am to 3.30 pm. In the PKBI program I was also one of the students who were often falling asleep in the class. Actually, it was quite embarrassing, and I was worried it would be seen as disrespectful. There was no intention to disrespect the tutors by falling asleep, it just happened spontaneously. I think it is related to my physical endurance which is also an important factor to complete study. It reminds me to live a healthy life. Otherwise, it will be difficult to achieve my goal, earn a higher degree and perform better in my job.

The 2nd month, the critical phase of the adaptation process has been passed. I moved to the accommodation which matched the scholarship allowance although the room was only less than 6 square meters and had no fancy facilities as the first one. Alhamdulillah, the neighborhood was amazing. It is close to the mosque, park/jogging track, and nearby to the local shop and small noodle restaurant (known as WARMINDO). It is a typical accommodation for most university students in Indonesia. Actually, the situation was challenging. However, the accommodation mates were really friendly. It made the challenging situation easier to conquer. In addition, the course activities became more interesting, especially when you have classmates who are so positive and supportive. It is a valuable gift, because I learned many things from them to enrich my insight about the course and life. This experience has strengthened my ability to adapt, survive and succeed.

The 3rd month, it was a stressful period of the program. Internal and external pressures to obtain high IELTS score increased significantly. And we were going to sit in the official IELTS test which was the benchmark to evaluate participants performance. Therefore, the committee arranged the outbound program and gathering night at the hillside in Sleman to reduce the tension and enjoy the valuable moment with friends. The trip was amazing and memorable since I

overcame my weaknesses and reached one of the hill peaks. The journey to reach the peak proved that nothing is impossible if we do it right and full of determination. It also motivated me to complete the program with outstanding results and conquer the obstacles in reaching my dream. In addition, within this 3rd month we must say goodbye to each other. It is not easy to describe the difficulty of saying goodbye after being together for three months and having supported each other and shared valuable time to reach our dream to study overseas. Finally, *Alhamdulillah*, I obtained an overall IELTS score as expected, although the writing score still needs a lot of improvement.



Picture 1. Yes, I reached the peak of the hill

➤ Spirit and Academic Environment

I mention specifically about the spirit and academic environment in this writing because it was a significant factor that strengthened me and enriched the spirit of learning. Even though the course participant could be considered an adult student, the education spirit is as high as an adolescent. Almost no one is intentionally absent or being not serious in class. Colleagues in PKBI class really care and support each other. There were colleagues who supplied so many enrichment materials then we printed them into handbooks and test practice materials. There were colleagues who were so fluent in speaking English that it was difficult for the rest of us to distinguish whether it was their voices or the voice of native speakers. Even one of my senior colleagues said, while listening to these eloquent speakers, the best thing to do is to be quiet and just listen with a smile and be determined that one day you will be able to do so. There were

also colleagues who are so rich in vocabulary. Sometimes their English sentences sound like Spanish or French because of their miraculous vocabulary. Everyone has their own uniqueness and strength, and ability to motivate each and support each other.

In addition, the quality of the tutors was outstanding and inspired us to do our best, improve our English skills and reach the expected result. Almost no boring class that needs to be escaped. The class session was full of interesting materials and discussion. Their experiences in teaching English and the quality of their English made the learning process so fun and we earn so much benefit to improve our English. Although there were rooms for improvement, overall quality could be rated outstanding.



Picture 2. Full of positive energy before the class began

➤ Brotherhood

Brotherhood among the participants and tutors is a valuable benefit of PKBI besides improving English and IELTS score. Within 3 months, it felt like adding dozens of brothers and sisters to your professional life. This program has strengthened nationalism and relationships among the lecturers all around the country. After joining PKBI, I had colleagues from many provinces in Indonesia. We also have a better feeling and understanding that ethics and cultural diversity are part of national resources to enrich the future of Indonesia.

Especially in class A, we were not just classmates who had a close interaction in the class. We also had class dinner at a fancy cafe to release the pressure and

had a good time together. Minang restaurant, gelato cafe, and many other cafes had been visited as part of class A family time.



Picture 3. Dinner time before back for good

Lessons Learned that Improved Personal Characters

One of the most important outcomes of education are good characters to enhance life skills and the ability to adapt and behave towards differences. I learned a lot about it through the training. During the PKBI program I had to adapt to certain demands and pressures and it was exhausting. Starting from the pressure to be disciplined, attend the class on time, the demands to achieve a good IELTS score, the pressure to complete work at home campus and various other things. It tested mental and physical endurance and educated me to be a better person.

Before the program I was a full-time lecturer but during the program I was a student. There is an increase in the sense of empathy that makes me determined to deliver better services for my students. PKBI also taught me how to be a professional lecturer, improve my attitude and the way I deliver material during the class session.

Cultural Understanding

It is an undeniable fact that understanding a culture is not as easy as reading what is written in a literature. Better cultural understanding is the result of cultural interaction and ability to respect the differences. The experience of

living in Yogyakarta, made me understand the reason that many people are attracted to visit Yogyakarta. It is one of the most popular cultural tourism destinations in Indonesia. The privileged status, the uniqueness of the government system, its foods and nature, also the way of life of the people who are rich in traditions and culture have attracted millions of tourists to visit Yogyakarta.

It is amazed me how the people of Yogya view the Sultan not only as a head of government but also as a guiding figure whose orders are respected and appreciated. The ancient temples, historical objects such as *keris* and horse-drawn carriage are taken care really well. The traditional foods and clothes are branded as prestigious objects and special gifts. All of these items are bundled in one big reason to call Yogya as special and unique city.

For me, one of the interesting things in Yogya is the *angkringan*. It is a small stall or food outlet which sells various ready-cooked traditional dishes. It does not provide fancy facilities for customers to enjoy their meals and is not located in a nice place. Most of these *angkringan* use the sidewalk as their stall location. They only provide a bench which is able to be used by less than six persons. Most of the other customers have to sit on the plastic mat to enjoy their meals without tables. It is like enjoying meals during the picnic time. It might be seen as an uncomfortable situation; however, it is the uniqueness of enjoying traditional meals and city atmosphere which attract many tourists to visit the city.

It is interesting to have detail study on the survival ability of traditional food stall in Yogyakarta. It is a best practice to create a sustainable tourism industry which not only accommodates big business practitioners but also small business owners. It needs serious attention on copying the same approach to be applied in various other cities in Indonesia. The approach to build tourism industry by incorporating small businesses and maintaining the uniqueness of the city.

Yogya is also a very plural city where people from various ethnic backgrounds live. Most of them are students who come from various provinces in Indonesia to study in various universities. Although having many visitors with various backgrounds, the differences and demographic diversity can still be managed wisely. Therefore social, inter-ethnic and religious conflicts are almost unheard of. The local wisdom of the Yogya community is able to transform diversity into strength in building harmony and unity.

Business and Tourism Environment in Yogyakarta

Towards the end of the training period, preparing souvenirs became a trending topic in every class break discussion or lunch time. Until one day this trend also made me skip a class during the program. As a short course participant, we were also considered ourselves as a tourist which caused shopping for souvenirs also an important thing to be accomplished.

The majority of Yogya's business activities are closely related to the tourism environment. This is also supported by the creative value of business people in packaging the concept of the offered products. For example, how Jejamuran packs mushrooms into various kinds of classy snacks which are served freshly at Jejamuran outlets/restaurants or taken home as classy souvenirs from Yogyakarta. Bakpia also one of famous snack from Yogyakarta. It completes the journey to Yogya when we return back with a box of bakpia. The seller's offered bakpia with different taste or additional ingredients such as chocolates, peanuts, cheese and several other choices.

The pedicab drivers around the Malioboro Street enhance the uniqueness of Yogyakarta. They offer their services at an affordable rate for all tourists. There are no such scamming prices for tourists. This condition makes the atmosphere of Yogya are always missed. A condition where tourism is able to maintain its uniqueness, keep it simple and accessible to all visitors. The Yogya tourism industry offers visitors the experience to enjoy the beauty of nature, cultural uniqueness, food and the city at an affordable rate and unique lifestyle.

Sunmor Market and Lembah UGM

Sunmor (sunday morning) is a sunday market that uses sidewalks and roads around the UGM valley and open from the dawn until 2 pm. At Sunmor we can easily find various kinds of snacks, meals for breakfast, from traditional ones such as *nasi uduk* and *lontong* to typical Japanese snacks such as takoyaki. In addition to snacks, there are also various kinds of accessories and daily stuff, ranging from clothes to children's toys. The business activities occurring in the market significantly generate positive economic impact to the society, especially to the small business owners. Yogya Sunday market should be a model to be developed in other regions in Indonesia. In addition to its economic values, the market generates positive social impact. It gathers people from different social background and provide them the opportunities to interact with each other and

spend their valuable time with the family. As the saying goes, happiness doesn't have to be expensive. We just need to visit Sunmor.

In the second month of the program and after occupying a new accommodation which represents a real life of a student (red: small room, small fan, small cupboard, mattress on the floor), UGM valley becomes one of my favorite places. This location is a fairly wide area in the form of a valley which has been transformed into a beautiful park, with various sports facilities as well as a beautiful lake and benches to relax. Many students also use it as the place to discuss their projects and assignments. And the most important thing in the park is the jogging track, or for my own condition it is better to be called a walking track. It is a nice place where I spent most of my afternoon with my housemates. The balance of life between pursuing knowledge, career and maintaining a healthy life was relatively easier to do during my participation in PKBI program.



Picture 4. UGM valley with housemates.

What is next?

This program is not just about improving the English skill of the participants and helps them to enroll at prestigious universities around the globe. Moreover, the program has united and strengthened the nationalism of the participants. It establishes relationships and professional networks among participants which might generate bigger impacts and outcomes in the developing higher education sector in Indonesia.

It has been realized that the development of a country is strategically influenced by the education sector. It is an honor to contribute in developing the

future human resource of Indonesia through education. All praises to Allah, this program gave me a higher opportunity to reach my goal to enroll in a world class university in Europe or Australia. However, in case the plan was not achieved, I have gained so many benefits from the program. It made me realize that I should always be grateful that I am surrounded with lovely Indonesian people and living in a wonderful country. I hope to keep doing my best for a better future for my lovely Indonesia.

Finally, thank you to all my PKBI colleagues, especially to my classmates. It was a great experience and one of the most enjoyable periods of my life. You are amazing. And thank you to those who have worked so hard to plan, manage and execute the PKBI program at the ministry level and to all English tutors and staff at UNY who have delivered the course professionally and improved our English skills. You were really inspiring.



Picture 5. Class A Family.

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