JAPANESE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG MALAYSIAN JAPANESE SPEAKING GRADUATE EMPLOYEES: A STUDY IN JAPANESE COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA

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by

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<td>Japanese Companies in Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second Language</td>
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<td>LAD</td>
<td>Language Acquisition Device</td>
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<td>LEP</td>
<td>Look East Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>METI</td>
<td>Ministry of Economics, Trade and Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEXT</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>MJLS</td>
<td>Malaysia Japanese Language Society</td>
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<td>MJSGEs</td>
<td>Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees</td>
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<td>MNCs</td>
<td>Multinational Companies</td>
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<td>NEP</td>
<td>New Economic Policy</td>
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<td>NHK</td>
<td>Japan Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>PJLS</td>
<td>Penang Japanese Language Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMJFS</td>
<td>Perak Malaysia-Japanese Friendship Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPBLT</td>
<td>Pusat Pengajian Bahasa, Literasi dan Terjemahan</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUAL</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUAN</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Sciences</td>
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<td>SSI</td>
<td>Semi-Structured Interview</td>
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<td>TFL</td>
<td>Truly Foreign Language</td>
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<td>USM</td>
<td>Universiti Sains Malaysia</td>
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KAJIAN KEMAHIRAN BERBAHASA JEPUN DALAM KALANGAN SISWAZAH MALAYSIA YANG BERKHIDMAT UNTUK SYARIKAT JEPUN DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Kajian kaedah gabungan telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji kemahiran berbahasa Jepun dalam kalangan siswazah Malaysia (Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs)) yang berkhidmat untuk syarikat Jepun di Malaysia (Japanese Companies in Malaysia (JCM)). Kajian ini menyelidik keperluan kemahiran mendengar, bertutur, membaca dan menulis bahasa Jepun. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga menyelidik tahap kepentingan keempat-empat kemahiran berbahasa iaitu mendengar, bertutur, membaca dan menulis. Akhir sekali, kajian ini menyelidik cabaran-cabar yang dihadapi oleh MJSGEs dalam penggunaan bahasa Jepun di JCM serta langkah-langkah yang diambil untuk mengatasi cabaran tersebut. Soal selidik telah digunakan untuk memperoleh data kuantitatif daripada 65 peserta manakala temu bual semi struktur digunakan dalam temu duga dengan 17 MJSGEs dan dengan 8 majikan berbangsa Jepun di JCM untuk memperoleh data kualitatif. Data kuantitatif dianalisis dengan menggunakan Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Data temu duga semi berstruktur ditranskripsikan dahulu, kemudian dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis tematik. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kemahiran berbahasa Jepun yang dianggap penting oleh JCM di tempat kerja ialah kemahiran mendengar (memahami arahan lisan dan mampu menentusahkan maklumat) dan kemahiran bertutur (komunikasi kerja dan komunikasi harian dengan
JAPANESE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG MALAYSIAN
JAPANESE SPEAKING GRADUATE EMPLOYEES: A STUDY IN
JAPANESE COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this mixed methods study was to investigate Japanese language skills’ proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) in Japanese Companies in Malaysia (JCM). Specifically, the requirements and level of importance of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among MJSGEs were examined. This study also investigated the challenges faced by MJSGEs in using the Japanese language in JCM and the measures they adopted to overcome these challenges. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 65 respondents. Qualitative data were collected by employing semi-structured interviews with 17 MJSGEs and eight (8) Japanese employers in JCM. While the quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the qualitative data were transcribed and analysed thematically. The results revealed that the Japanese language skills’ proficiency requirements considered important by employers in JCM in the workplace were the listening skills (understanding oral instructions and the ability to confirm information) and speaking skills (work-related and daily communication with Japanese colleagues). The findings indicate that listening and speaking skills were ranked more highly than reading and writing which is ranked the lowest. Listening and speaking were also the
most challenging skills faced by MJSGEs. To overcome the challenges, MJSGEs employed certain measures including getting guidance from the internal workplace community such as their Japanese colleagues and superiors and the external measure of utilising internet sources. MJSGEs are found to be intrinsically motivated to solve all their Japanese language skills-related issues. The findings of this study can support the setting-up of a Business Japanese major programme for Malaysian higher education institutions. In such a manner, this study become more significant.
CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Study

The competitive environment in international markets as well as international trade policies has resulted in the escalation of rapid globalisation of Japan’s industries since the late 1980s. As the economy of Japan has expanded rapidly, international communities have witnessed some increased opportunities to do business with Japan. In the Malaysian context, the business sectors and workforce are also afforded these opportunities. Among the key factors contributing to the success of the Malaysian New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971–1990) is Japanese direct foreign investment (DFI) (Smith, 2003). After the introduction of the NEP, there was a significant increase in the number of Japanese joint ventures and subsidiaries (Imaoka, 1985). By 1979, approximately 43% of the joint ventures Japanese firms had in Malaysia were involved in the manufacturing sector in electronics, chemicals, and wood-related products (Smith 1994, 2003).

Japan positions itself as one of the main trade partners for Malaysia as well as a major provider of direct foreign investment and economic assistance (Furuoka, Lim, Mahmud, & Kato, 2007; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003). In the early 1980s, Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamed, the Malaysian Prime Minister at that time, introduced the country’s “Look East” policy which was one of the factors that enhanced the bilateral relations, especially those related to commerce and economics, between the two nations. Since then, not only economic relations but also diplomatic and cultural relations and exchanges between Malaysia and Japan have strengthened and flourished.
The ‘Look East’ policy and better diplomatic and cultural relations and exchanges have resulted in more Japanese firms opting to invest in Malaysia. This has been highlighted by Shigeru Nakamura the Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia who declares that “Malaysia has five (5) ‘plus-points’; growing economy, stable politics, free of natural calamities, good infrastructure such as water, electricity and gas supplies, as well as an English-speaking workforce” (The Star Online, 27 Jan 2012). These five points are, essentially, pertinent requirements for investments to grow because they can create more jobs and can boost the local economy.

Additionally, an increasing number of Japanese firms have relocated their head offices or key operations to Singapore to oversee new investments in Southeast Asia especially in neighbouring Malaysia (The Japan Times, 14 Aug 2012). Rahil (2012) observes that the trend of expanding and relocating abroad was accelerated after the March 2011 double catastrophes of an earthquake and tsunami in Japan that made Japanese companies realise the need for the diversification of their operations as a part of their risk management policies.

Associate Professor of Strategic Management at Singapore Management University, Dr. Yoshikawa, states that the trend indicates that Japanese companies are now focusing on the fast-growing Southeast Asian markets as the economy of China experiences a cooling-off period. Dr. Yoshikawa adds that “Japanese companies’ plan to globalise their operations by hiring staff with diverse cultural backgrounds, and although Japan has highly competent engineers and managers, they do not have much experience operating in multicultural environments” (Rahil, 2012, para 12).

Nowadays, governments in developing countries are addressing the need to produce employable multilingual and multicultural graduates for the global society
Qiu, 2016). As the world becomes more interconnected, the knowledge of foreign language has become an economic commodity that enables job seekers to access foreign technology and be functionally associated with constructive, purposive and meaningful involvement in politics, security, global trade and education, amongst others (Maeno, Katsuda, & Larpsrisawad, 2013; Qiu, 2016).

Malaysia acknowledges the importance and significance of developing its human capital for the knowledge economy (k-economy) as well as for the global workplace by equipping them with the knowledge and proficiency in a foreign language (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2007, p.62). The knowledge of and proficiency in a foreign language for effective communication can surely enable Malaysian job seekers to succeed within a global workplace in a global economy (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

In the wave of globalisation and interconnectivity, Malaysia and Malaysians are not spared. Malaysian graduates and job seekers also are required to possess employability skills that include knowledge of a foreign language and foreign companies’ business practices. Malaysian leaders have also taken the initiative to embrace globalisation since the 1990s and provide education that can enable Malaysian graduates to enter the global workforce and integrate effectively with others from around the globe as part of the national economic agenda (Omar, 1982). This agenda of promoting foreign language proficiency among students has been consistently carried out (Ainol, Isarji, & Mohamad Sahari, 2007; Christian, Pufahl, & Rhodes, 2005; Tsubosaka, 2012; Welles, 2004; Zeszotarski, 2001).
1.2 Background to the Study

The relationship in commerce and business between Japan and Malaysia has been rapidly developing and expanding in recent times. This is evident in the increase of the number of joint-ventures between Japanese and Malaysian firms as well as Japanese subsidiaries in Malaysia. Consequently, the workplace in Malaysia is described to be more diversified.

In April 2014, there was a total of 1,412 Japanese Companies in Malaysia, (JCM) which are either joint ventures or wholly-owned Japanese companies (JETRO, 2014). As a result, there was a dramatic rise in the demand for individuals who possess Japanese language proficiency to work in Japanese companies. Taking this into account, Japanese language proficiency has become vital for Malaysians who look for jobs in JCM (Ooi, 2013).

Therefore, Malaysian job seekers are also increasingly seeking proficiency in the Japanese language because the sociocultural, economic, and technological developments have made the mastery of Japanese language important. Malaysian professionals are aware of the need to possess fluency in a foreign language, especially the Japanese language. This is because they believe that fluency in a foreign language can enable them to participate and compete effectively in the multinational companies, especially Japanese companies. Training professionals who possess effective foreign language communication proficiency is required for Malaysia to develop its workforce for the globalised environment. This is because knowledge of foreign languages and familiarity with practices in foreign companies and businesses are viewed to be contributing factors for success (Ainol, Isarji, & Mohamad Sahari, 2007; Hamada, 2012; Nagai, 2011; Uehara & Tao, 2015).
The Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia in its National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond 2020 stipulates that “Proficiency in the third language is vital for developing human capital that drives the k-economy as well as gears the country towards competitive innovation in the international arena,” (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2007, p.62). Malaysian universities, therefore, are required “to provide learning opportunities for students to be proficient in a third language such as Mandarin, Tamil, Japanese, French, or Spanish” (p. 66). In addition, the knowledge of and a working proficiency in a third language can give graduates an added and competitive edge in an increasingly globalised, multicultural, and diverse work environment. Furthermore, graduates with the knowledge of and a working proficiency in a third language can have opportunities to access the current and latest technology and information. The knowledge of foreign languages in a borderless world is more important, especially when nation building is highly dependent on the acquisition and transfer of foreign technology. Cross border and intercultural communication abilities are considered features of strengths for those working in JCM. Thus, successful communication is vital to the functioning of JCM.

Steinberg (2003) argued that workplace oral communication involves all communication processes within an organisation, which can be both internal within an organisation and externally carried out with other organisations. Internal communication mainly focuses on work-related issues and creates a conducive environment for individuals within an organisation to work together. For this research purpose, the study will focus on the internal communication process because this kind of communication is work-related, and it is hoped that the findings
from this research can contribute to the JCM and Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs).

In JCM, Japanese employers and Malaysian employees engage in enormous amounts of organisational communication which is more complex than communication in homogeneous organisations and cultural diversity poses an additional potential problem in communication (Horii, 2012; Wiseman & Shuter, 1994). Heterogeneous workplaces pose greater risks than homogeneous ones because the existence of differences can result in conflicts, misunderstanding, low productivity, and poor performance (Horii, 2012; Salk & Brannen, 2000). JCM consider communication abilities as an added advantage because successful communication ensures efficiency and effectiveness of any organisation. As mentioned by Qiu (2012) and Suzuki (2012), information correctly passed, received, understood, and carried out is vital to the success of a company. In JCM that are diverse in nature, Malaysian employees interact and work with other foreign employers and managers, colleagues, clients, customers, suppliers, and distributors that come from vastly different social, cultural, and communicative backgrounds.

Although both language and cultural differences pose challenges to and may have an influence on communication in multinational companies (MNCs), the language component has either been neglected and even relegated to a secondary role behind those of cultural values by international business scholars (Van & Peltokorpi, 2010). However, previous studies have revealed that cultural values influence linguistic style in a communication process and affect how individuals understand and interpret messages. Furthermore, it has been argued that culture determines how individuals interpret the meanings of messages, and culture also affects the
conditions under which messages may or may not be sent, taken note of and interpreted (George et al., 1998; Kim & Gudykunst, 1988).

Additionally, Agar (1994) further states that “language carries with it patterns of seeing, knowing, talking and acting. Not patterns that imprison you, but patterns that make the easiest trails for thought and perception and action” (p. 71). Therefore, the Japanese language that MJSGEs know and use can affect their understanding of JCM and the way they construct and transmit messages. As such, although the MJSGEs are using the Japanese language in JCM, it does not guarantee smooth and error-free comprehension, because cultural values that are manifested through language usage and communication styles act as barriers to effective perceiving, analysing and decoding of messages (Henderson, 2005). This is particularly true when it occurs in a Japanese speaking environment because the main concern of the Japanese communication style is surface harmony. Surface harmony is the glue of both the group and society as a whole in Japan and this communication style varies among MJSGEs working in JCM (Fileva & Docho, 1991; Kato & Kato, 1992).

The Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (2014) reports that Malaysia ranked ninth (9th) worldwide in terms of the number of Japanese language learners. In 2014, the number of Malaysians studying Japanese reached 33,077. In view of this huge number of Japanese language learners and the increasing expectations for graduates to be proficient and competent in a foreign language, especially in the Japanese language, there arises a need to conduct more and greater in-depth research studies on Japanese companies’ workplace requirements of Malaysian employees particularly in multinational companies such as JCM.
In addition to the responsibility of ensuring smooth and effective communication between MJSGEs and their Japanese employers, the local higher education institutions also have a role to play to prepare local graduates to be proficient in the Japanese language and to acquire the skills of smooth and effective communication with their future Japanese employers.

Based on the registration records in the School of Languages, Literacies, and Translation [Pusat Pengajian Bahasa dan Terjemahan (PPBLT)] in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in June 2016, the Japanese language is the most popular foreign language among the nine foreign languages offered in this School (509 in PPBLT in the 2015/2016 Academic Session, Semester II). Furthermore, according to JETRO’s report in 2014, there were 11,000 Malaysians working in JCM. Taking into account this increasing number of Malaysian learners of the Japanese language, this current study aims partly to investigate the requirements of the Japanese language proficiency by JCM in order to be able to design language programmes that can produce the graduates who can meet the requirements of the workplace and industry.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Several Japanese businesses have invested and started or relocated their operations abroad, especially in the Southeast Asian countries. In relation to this exercise, in recent years, bilateral trade relationships between Japan and Malaysia have expanded. One of the reasons for this rapid development of Japanese businesses in Malaysia is the decreasing and aging population due to its declining businesses in Japan. Therefore, Japanese companies in Japan are under pressure to transform into globally-focused companies (BBC News, 2013; Izumi, Ito & Ishihara, 2014). Consequently, Malaysian job seekers need to acquire a specific level of Japanese
language proficiency in order to find employment in JCM. Furthermore, the increasing number of Japanese companies has attributed to the need for employing ASEAN countries’ university graduates such as those from Malaysia who have both good proficiency in the Japanese language and knowledge of Japanese business practices (Izumi et al., 2014; Maeno et al., 2013, 2015).

Malaysians who possess a certain level of Japanese language proficiency are needed by JCM of which more than 70% of these companies are manufacturing companies (JETRO, 2014). Therefore, there is a crucial need for MJSGEs to possess the required level of Japanese language proficiency to perform effective communication at their workplace. However, it has been reported that MJSGEs face several challenges that can be attributed to their inadequate proficiency in the Japanese language. This has been reported by Yeoh, Sepora, & Manjet (2011, 2016) in their exploratory studies which have focused on the business communication needs of JCM.

Although helping students to acquire a good level of Japanese language proficiency is one of the major requirements for Japanese language education in the Southeast Asian universities (Horii, 2012; Izumi et al., 2014; Kodaira, 2012, Tsubosaka, 2012), it is extremely difficult for Japanese language learners to develop all types of competency such as linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociocultural competences within a limited period of time, especially when they are learning a foreign language in their native-language environment (Berns, 2008, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2013; Yoshida, 2004).

No doubt, several studies such as Harada (2004) and Maeno et al. (2013) have been done in Malaysian neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Singapore. These studies reported that business vocabulary, business expressions,
and business manner are the priority issues in Japanese-related companies. Besides that, other studies in the similar context have reported that the graduates’ Japanese language proficiency and communication ability should be improved (Horii, 2012; Maeno et al., 2015; Tsubosaka, 2012). Furthermore, Izumi et al., (2014) argued that several Malaysian graduates encounter varied linguistic and socio-cultural difficulties, such as use of honorific expressions, difficulties with technical terms, problems with the act of listening and expressing ideas in conversations, reading social cues behind words, hierarchical issues and so on.

However, most of the studies conducted in the Malaysian context are related to teaching and learning the Japanese language (e.g., Ang, 2003; Curriculum Development Centre, 2011; Sazlina, 2015; Wei & Sulaiman, 2009). However, this current study does not focus on these teaching and learning Japanese issues. Some other studies have focused on Japanese management style and workplace practices (e.g., Imaoka, 1985; Shaari, 2010; Taha, 2015; Yeap & Richardson, 2008; Zailani, Shaharudin & Saw, 2015). Thus, very limited number of studies have focused on requirements of Japanese language proficiency and importance of Japanese language skills among employees in JCM, especially in the Southeast Asian context.

Shimada and Shibukawa (1999) reported gaps between expectations by Japanese offshore companies and local employees working for Japanese companies in five major Asian cities, namely Seoul, Dalian, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, and Bangkok and concluded that Japanese offshore companies also have high expectations on the use of the Japanese language among their non-Japanese employees. However, their study did not identify the required level of Japanese language proficiency and challenges faced by the non-Japanese employees in Japanese language proficiency in these five Asian cities.
In the Malaysian context, the two preliminary studies that have focused on Japanese language issues on a smaller scale are Kan (2012) and Yeoh et al. (2011). Yeoh et al.’s (2011) preliminary study was conducted on a small scale involving 23 graduates and 15 employers. Yeoh et al. (2011) reported that 70% of the graduates showed that their proficiency in the Japanese language is insufficient to handle the demands of their existing work requirements because they have not mastered the Japanese language, especially its business vocabulary and expressions.

Kan (2012) showed that communication problems occurred between Malaysian and Japanese communicators due to the fact that the Malaysian workers cannot speak Japanese, while the Japanese workers can only communicate in Japanese. This setback had a direct effect on the work process and progress. The study also found that many conflicts arose due to the varied working cultures of the Japanese and Malaysian employers and employees. Intra-company cooperation, consequently, was affected.

Existing literature shows that a number of researchers (Ong, Leong and Paramjeet, 2011) focused on the need of English language skills at the Malaysian workplace but there is a lack of similar studies done in the Malaysian context for the foreign language especially the Japanese language. Therefore, it is important to conduct a study to investigate the Japanese language skills needed by the MJSGEs in JCM.

Thus, the main purpose of this study was to investigate Japanese language skills’ proficiency among MJSGEs working in JCM. The study examined the requirements and level of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among MJSGEs. This study also investigated the challenges
faced by MJSGEs in using the Japanese language in JCM and the measures
employed by MJSGEs to overcome these challenges.

1.4 Research Objectives

The current study addresses the following research objectives:

1. To examine the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening,
speaking, reading, and writing among JCM.

2. To measure the level of importance of Japanese language skills which are used by
MJSGEs working in JCM.

3. To investigate the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese
language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM.

4. To identify the corrective measures taken by MJSGEs working in JCM to
overcome the challenges they face in the Japanese language proficiency in
listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

1.5 Research Questions

This current study intends to answer the following four (4) research
questions:

1. What are the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening,
speaking, reading, and writing among JCM?

2. What are the levels of importance of Japanese language skills which are used
by MJSGEs working in JCM?

3. What are the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese
language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?
4. How do MJSGEs working in JCM overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are significant from various perspectives. First, it is hoped that the findings of this research will narrow the gap in literature and add to the world of knowledge by investigating Japanese language proficiency that is necessary for the MJSGEs to work successfully in JCM. Second, it is hoped that the findings of this research will provide feedback and guidelines for further improvement of the Japanese language curriculum in universities that offer Japanese language courses or programmes to cater to the Japanese language requirements and demands of JCM.

Third, this study is worth investigating because the existing literature indicates clearly that business communication is an important aspect at the workplace. This was revealed by Yeoh et al. (2011) who found that graduates responded that their proficiency in Japanese language is insufficient to enable them handle and cope with their work demands because they have not mastered the Japanese language especially business vocabulary and business expressions.

Fourth, the findings of this study are important for the MJSGEs. Specifically, the findings can provide insights for developing the Japanese language proficiency that MJSGEs need in order to work and perform effectively in multinational companies especially in JCM. Therefore, this study will help local MJSGEs to understand how to overcome challenges they face when they want to communicate effectively with their Japanese employers in JCM. This in turn can help
them to know how to carry out their work-related tasks and to exchange workplace-related information effectively.

Fifth, the findings of the study can pave the way for MJSGEs working in JCM to overcome the Japanese language proficiency gap between Malaysians and Japanese communicators and to minimise the barriers that hinder communication within JCM. This is necessary to ensure success in managing Japanese business communication challenges. Sixth, the findings of the current study can also provide innovative insights for understanding both successful communication and relationship building between JCM and the MJSGEs. Consequently, this will result in a higher job satisfaction for the employees and reduce the turnover rate. Indirectly it will help JCM to have employees with great experience and to obtain higher retention rate.

Seventh, feedback from the MJSGEs and JCM obtained from this study will provide a clear guideline for the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education to prepare the graduates to meet the Japanese communication entry-level for employment requirements for JCM. Additionally, the findings of this study will assist to improve the curriculum and upgrade the teaching as well as teaching materials in Japanese education in order to meet the local staff and needs of JCM.

Eighth, the findings of this study will shed light on how to strengthen the Japanese language curriculum and teaching materials at Malaysian universities where Japanese language programmes and courses are offered. In other words, the findings of this study can be considered to be useful resources for Japanese language education in Malaysia. Finally, this study will pave the way for a greater Malaysian and Japanese cooperation because this study recommends the establishment of Japanese language degree programmes in the Malaysian universities.
1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The operational definitions of the major key terms that are used in this study are stipulated in this section.

1.7.1 Japanese Language Proficiency

Proficiency refers to the ability to carry out or perform an action or function. Language proficiency refers to one’s ability to use language to achieve real world linguistic tasks, across a wide range of topics and settings (ACTFL Proficiency Guideline, 2012.). Stern (1983, 2003) defined proficiency as the actual performance of learners using linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural codes and meanings.

Additionally, Taylor (1988) affirmed that proficiency refers to the skills needed to put the linguistic knowledge into practice. In other words, proficiency refers to the ability to transform knowledge into language use. Therefore, Japanese language proficiency refers to what individuals can do with their knowledge of the Japanese language and how well they can use the Japanese language to communicate in the real world. Proficiency in the Japanese language refers to students’ abilities in the four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing).

1.7.2 Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT)

The JLPT is administered by Japan Foundation (Japanese-Language Proficiency Test, 2017) worldwide to evaluate and certify proficiency in the Japanese language of non-native speakers. It evaluates candidates’ knowledge of Japanese language vocabulary and grammar and their ability to use the knowledge in
communication in real life. It also measures Japanese language communicative competence in a comprehensive manner through three components: language knowledge, reading, and listening. While ‘Language Knowledge’ measures learners’ knowledge of Japanese language vocabulary and grammar, the reading and listening components are used to measure learners’ ability to use the knowledge in communication. The linguistic competence required and the levels for the JLPT are illustrated in this thesis on p.85 in table 2.1.

1.7.3 Japanese Companies in Malaysia (JCM)

Japanese Companies in Malaysia (JCM) refers to manufacturing companies in Malaysia which are either joint ventures or wholly-owned by Japanese (JETRO Kuala Lumpur, 2014).

1.7.4 Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs)

In this current study, the concept of Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) refers to Malaysian Japanese speaking graduate employees who graduated from Malaysian public universities (the MJSGE are those who majored or minored in Japanese language, or took Japanese language as an option or elective course in university) and are currently working in one JCM.

1.7.5 Business Communication

Norisada (1993) defined business communication as “Communication in the workplace with the goal of having fixed, practical efficacy” (p. 47). It is a kind of communication that increases business profits to reach economic goals.
1.8 Limitations of the Study

Similar to other studies, this current study has its limitations. One of the limitations of this study is related to the sample of the study. This study focuses on JCM in three states in the northern region of Malaysia (Penang, Kedah, and Perak) and Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. Furthermore, the companies selected for data collection are seven companies. Taking into account this small sample size, this research might not sufficiently provide strong support towards conclusive findings that can be directly generalised and applied to all JCM in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the research data and findings obtained from these samples are still able to provide beneficial insights on Japanese language proficiency requirements of JCM. This is because there is paucity of research that has been done on Japanese language proficiency requirements among MJSGEs working in JCM.

It is crucial to note that although only eight Japanese employers participated in this study, the views of these Japanese employers on the requirements of Japanese language in JCM could further enhance the thick description provided by the participants regarding the requirements of Japanese language proficiency required by JCM in the semi-structured interviews that were conducted. Future research could include more employers from JCM across the country in order to enrich our knowledge of the requirements of the Japanese language skills in JCM.

1.9 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One outlines the statement of the problem, issues, and gaps that highlighted the need to conduct a research study of this nature. Chapter One also provides detailed explanations regarding the significance of the study. Chapter One also lists the research objectives and research
questions that have guided the study. The limitations of the study are also presented in Chapter One. At the end of Chapter One, operational definitions that are relevant to this research study are presented.

In Chapter Two, relevant literature on the theories and research from a variety of fields pertinent to the topic of this research is reviewed. The Ethnography of Communication (Hymes, 1995), Interactional Sociolinguistics by Gumperz (1982) Cultural Dimensions by Great Hofstedes (1980) and High-Low Context by Hall (1987) which form the framework for this study are presented. These theories were chosen because they are related to the Japanese language proficiency in Japanese multinational companies in Malaysia.

Chapter Three describes the overall research design. The methodology used to collect data, the sample of the study, the research instruments, the procedures to collect data are also explained in Chapter Three. Chapter Three also includes the description of the statistical analyses performed on the data followed a discussion on the techniques and procedures used for the analysis of qualitative data.

The results of data analysis are presented in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four presents the analysis and findings of the quantitative data. Specifically, Chapter Four presents the answers to two research questions: Research Question Two and Research Question Three. On the other hand, Chapter Five reports the analysis and findings of the qualitative data. Answers to all research questions are presented in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Six, which is the final chapter, the key findings are summarised, interpreted and the results are discussed in relation to the related studies reviewed in Chapter Two. The pedagogical implications and recommendations presented in Chapter Six to serve as a useful guide to improve the Japanese language education in
Malaysia which intends to prepare the graduates to meet the Japanese language entry-level requirements for employment in JCM.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided important background to the study. The statement of the problem, research objectives, and research questions are also dealt with in this current chapter. Additionally, this chapter presents the significance of the study and the definition of the most important key terms used in this study.
CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to situate this research within the context of the existing published works in this area of study. It is hoped that this literature review fully reflects the researcher’s intention to apply a theoretical and scholarly framework to investigate the Japanese language proficiency requirements of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) by the JCM and the challenges faced by MJSGEs. Furthermore, theoretical and scholarly frameworks are intended to help the researcher to explore the level of importance of Japanese language skills and measures taken by MJSGEs working in JCM to overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the language. Specifically, the following literature review is divided into four major sections:

- Japanese Language proficiency requirements in a multinational workplace
- Japanese Language in Malaysia
- Theoretical frameworks
- Related Studies

According to Scott et al. (2002), participants of diverse backgrounds in a communication process are required to combine their background knowledge, experiences, culture, and language skills for the purpose of sharing information with other participants. This section, therefore, explores available literature on the variables investigated in this study. It mainly focuses on proficiency in the Japanese language in the context of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
To facilitate the discussion on proficiency in the Japanese language in the context of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, a global overview will be presented on issues related to these variables. The wider scope of these variables entails language, cross culture communication and JCM. Therefore, this chapter first presents literature review on language in great depth. This is followed by literature on culture, communication, and proficiency in Japanese language skills.

### 2.2 Language

In order to gain better understanding about Japanese language in the context of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, this section will begin the discussion regarding the functions and components of language. According to Kaur (2014), language is not only a means of communication, it is also a medium through which most of our knowledge is acquired. Language involves the cognitive faculty that enables humans to learn and use systems of complex communication. This shows that language is closely-linked to the thinking process of understanding. The link between language and the thinking process is obvious when one considers how language is acquired, especially, among children.

Communication, however, goes beyond how we learn a language. Communication is made possible by the mental process of encoding and decoding information (McLaughlin, Rossman & Mcleod, 1983). This process is quite complex and the complexity manifests itself when we are unable to decode information in a language whose system we have not acquired. Our mental faculty would, at the same time, be open to learning the symbols of any language if we decide to learn it (Pinker & Bloom, 2011).
According to the definition provided by Searle (2007), when the focus is on language as a means of making meaning, language is studied in three broad areas; phonology, syntax, and semantics. Language consists of three components: phonology, syntax and semantics. While the phonological component determines how words and sentences are pronounced, a syntactical component identifies the arrangement of words and morphemes in sentences. The semantic component assigns a meaning or interpretation to words and sentences. Searle (2007) argued that there must also be a pragmatic component that is not internal to specific languages that can be applied in any language.

However, using the sociolinguistics approach, according to Risager (2005), language should be conceptualised as an integrated part of society, culture and the psyche. Thus, language is always cultural in some respects. In an interconnected globalised world, it is very useful to understand the relationship between language, culture, and society. The importance of this relationship reflects that any language is a social phenomenon that must be situated in a global perspective.

Various definitions of language have been proposed, which all have a common thread among them. For example, Henry Sweet (2004), an English phonetician and language scholar, stated that language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words, and words are combined into sentences. This argument by Henry Sweet shows that language is a tool that enables us to utter distinct sounds, join them into words, and into meaningful sentences for the purpose of communicating our ideas and thoughts. On the other hand, American linguists, Bloch and Trager (1942, 1981) stated that language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates.
All the above definitions illustrate that language is a system of signs that people use to communicate among themselves. According to Henry Sweet (2004), the signs are speech-sounds. However, language also has written signs which are the alphabets that we use in writing. Therefore, communication, in any language, is only possible through the use of linguistic symbols that operate based on rules and conventions. It is these rules that give us the underlying conventions on how to form phonemes into morphemes. These rules also explain how to derive words from morphemes. It is the same rules that govern every aspect of a language such as its grammar, syntax, phonology, and semantics.

Taking into account the definitions and concepts presented in this section, it can, therefore, be concluded that language is what enables us to utter distinct sounds, join them into words, and into meaningful sentences for the purpose of communicating our ideas and thoughts. Yet, it should be noted that language is a social phenomenon where the function of language goes beyond conveying information.

In this study, the use of the Japanese language is considered to be the way the linguistic medium is used in communication. It is also understood as a dynamic and dialectical communicative process involving both relationship building and knowledge sharing (Cooren, 2006) between employers in JCM and MJSGEs.

2.2.1 Background of Language

Noam Chomsky introduced the era of generative grammar when he proposed that language structures should be viewed as internalized sets of rules that are stored in the brain (Chomsky, 1957). Chomsky’s cognitive approach that attempts to integrate the structures and the functions of language within a conceptual
framework, however, was criticised by other linguists, especially those who emphasise social anthropology. Thus, it can be understood that social anthropologists are of the view that language should not be studied as an autonomous system reproducing itself more or less independently of social and cultural structures of society (Hymes, 1996).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the theory of language in society has gained a noticeable importance in the field of social anthropology (Evans-Pritchard, 1951). Linking the concepts of language to those of both culture and society has gained prominence among social anthropologists and other researchers in recent years (San Antonio, 1987).

Hymes (1964) was one of the first anthropologists who have reintroduced the important role that language plays in the field of social anthropology. Regarding this, Hymes (1996) postulated that linguistic forms should be viewed also in terms of their social significance. As both a linguist and an anthropologist, Hymes researched, on the one hand, linguistic theory, and on the other hand, the socio-cultural aspect of language. Hymes (1972) pointed out that the notion of competence by Chomsky that deals with the ideal speaker-listener in a homogeneous speech community has no provision for competency for language use. In other words, Chomsky’s theory of competence fails to account for language use in the overall socio-cultural dimension. According to Hymes, the successful ability to perform in a language is important and performance refers to the actual use of language in a concrete situation. The limitation of Chomsky’s linguistic competence resulted in Hymes’ coining the term ‘communicative competence’ (1971) which refers not only to linguistic knowledge but also to knowledge that encompasses a set of sociolinguistic codes and rules for using them in a real situation. He believed that communicative competence is “the
most general term for the speaking and listening capabilities of a person. And the competence is dependent on two factors: (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use” (p. 16).

After Hymes has introduced the notion of communicative competence, a number of researchers wrote about communicative competence. They also used a variety of definitions. For Hymes (1972) and Campbell and Wales (1970), communicative competence should not only include grammatical competence and explicit and implicit knowledge of the rules of grammar. Rather, it should also include contextual and sociolinguistic competence and knowledge of the rules of language use. Additionally, these researchers recognised the distinction between communicative competence and communicative performance in which communicative performance is related to the actual use of a language.

In the field of language learning and teaching, linguistic competence is a term that is used to refer to the learner’s knowledge of both the structures and vocabulary of the language and his ability to produce and comprehend well-structured sentences in a language (Fischer, 1984). Savignon (1972) defined foreign language communicative competence as the ability to function dynamically in a truly communicative setting adapting to all of the informational elements in the context, regardless of whether these elements are verbal or non-verbal language. Thus, it is clear that although communicative competence implies an underlying knowledge of grammatical rules and a potential to communicate well, it also encompasses competence in an actual performance in a social situation. Therefore, linguistic and communicative competences are interdependent and having competence in one of them is inadequate. Canale and Swain (1980) refer to this combined overall proficiency as one’s true communicative competence. Therefore, integration between
both linguistic and communicative competences can produce general language proficiency. Regarding this, integration is the ultimate goal of a foreign language teaching and learning process and effort (Ellis, 2002).

There is also a growth of research on the use of language as guided within a social context, more or less, by the same practices that also guide other forms of social activity (Halliday et al., 1964). Theories that include the social aspect have been put forward regarding language acquisition and learning after Chomsky’s theories of language. Chaudhary (2002) argued that a language is a social phenomenon that does not only consist of an abstract system of formal, lexical, and grammatical features, but also fulfils a social function and has to be viewed within the social context of its use. In fact, the development of sociolinguistics or the study of language in its social setting can be traced back to 1960s. The most important feature of this field is that the development of sociolinguistics has shifted the emphasis from an abstract study of the rules of language to concrete acts of language use.

As this study examines and investigates the Japanese language skills’ proficiency requirements of JCM and also the challenges faced by MJSGEs working within JCM, three important issues are presented and discussed in this main section. These three issues are (1) language and culture, (2) language and social theory, and (3) Gumperz’s (1977, 1982) Interactional Sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistics studies have highlighted aspects of learning a language in a foreign environment. Based on the sociolinguistics theory, learners can learn a language in an environment where there are no native speakers (Chaudhary, 2002). Taking into account the purpose of this study, sociolinguistics theory is applicable to learners who learn the Japanese language in the higher education institutions in
Malaysia, where the teachers are Japanese language teachers of Malaysian descent. Based on the principles and elements of the sociolinguistics theory, when a language is learnt in this way, there must be an underlying purpose for which it is learned. In addition, the language must have some internal social function in the community (Chaudhary, 2002). In the Malaysian context, most MJSGEs learn the Japanese language because they believe that it is useful for seeking and obtaining employment. In other words, learners of Japanese in Malaysia do not learn the language for the social function in society or as a way of gaining knowledge (Ainol et al., 2007). In a multilingual environment such as JCM, people who do not share a common mother tongue may use another language for communication. Since there is a total of 1412 JCM and most Japanese people’s proficiency of English is still limited (Iwasaki, 2006), Japanese language skills are considered to be essential for local employees (Yoshida, Yashiro, & Suzuki, 2013) such as MJSGEs and other graduates for employment.

### 2.2.2 Language and Culture

Jandt (2013) highlighted that language is a set of symbols shared by a community for the purpose of conveying meaning and experience. For people with the same cultural background and same native language, they are expected to understand the meanings better as their ways of thinking are similar and their cultural background is almost the same. However, within an intercultural communication setting, people from different cultural groups tend to misinterpret each other’s messages and meanings.

Scollon and Scollon (1995) stated that one of the limitations of language is that on its own it is innately ambiguous. The ambiguity of language lies in the perspective of pragmatics, where the meaning of what is being said is affected by the
contextual situation within which the speakers operate. Scollon and Scollon (1995), therefore, argued that the context of communication affects and influences the true meaning of the interactions. Users of language may not often be aware of the underlying meaning which is usually related to the embedded cultural components within the language of its speakers. As language is ambiguous by nature, in cultural encounters, one can never be in full control of the meaning of the conversation or discourse. Regarding this, Risager (2006) stated that:

_Since the 1990s, large sections of linguistics – including anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, and research into intercultural (language) communication, language acquisition, and language teaching – have to an increasing extent highlighted the relationship between language and culture._ (p. 1)

Additionally, Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth, and Harter (2006) reported the following:

_“Culture and language are related in two ways: firstly, the transmission of culture occurs through language and secondly, culture creates a lens through which we perceive the world and create meaning; language thus develops in response to the needs of the culture or to the perceptions of the world”._ (p.61)

From the two block quotations given above, it can be realised that understanding Japanese employers’ communication style and the Japanese language that they use, MJSGEs have to understand the Japanese national culture and the culture of the JCM workplace because the Japanese language is influenced by the Japanese national culture. This phenomenon has been noticed by Pearson et al. (2006). Similarly, Gamble and Gamble (2010) also noted that culture influences the words we use and language use differs in different cultures.

It is evident from the literature review that cultural differences exist when people use language. Hall (1976), a well-known anthropologist, stated that people are
confined to the language they use in a communication process. Scholars of intercultural communication use the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to explain the relationship between language and culture. This hypothesis states that language helps us develop thoughts, and that culture affects the way we think. Thus, culture and language are closely inter-related. According to Trenholm (1986, 2008), the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is made up of two theories: linguist determinism and linguist relativity. While the linguist determinism theory is the theory that states that language determines thought, the linguist relativity theory is the theory that states that people from different language societies have different perceptions of the world. This means that language influences thought, and thought in turn affects how one uses language, and both language and thought are influenced by culture (Seiler & Beall, 2008).

2.2.2(a) Language Reflects Culture of its Speakers

One of the earliest researchers to identify and acknowledge the link between language and culture was Sapir-Whorf (1940). The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis emphasises the interdependence of language and thought. Furthermore, this hypothesis established that the structure of the language one uses as a routine can show the manner of our thinking and behaviour (Kramsch, 1998). Language reflects people’s cultural thinking aspect as well as the conscious thinking process. Furthermore, language highlights the idea that contexts influence the encoding of messages and meanings in the language (Kramsch, 1998). Cultures are both semantically encoded in the language and expressed through the actual use of the language through the encoding of meaning (Kramsch, 1998).

Presently, the hypothesis claims that “different languages encode different categories and that the speaker of different languages therefore thinks about the
world in different ways” (Fromkin et al., 2011, p. 493). The link and inter-relatedness between language and thought can be seen when individuals shape their ideas and compute their mental activities as well as when they make choices of interpretations. Fromkin et al. (2011) pointed out that language is used as the ‘medium of expression for the society’. Language reflects the state of mind of its speakers and the cultural contexts within which they operate over time. The usage reflects the unique circumstances of the social history, points of cultural contact with others and, simultaneously, their influences. Language reflects how its speakers view and understand the world, in other words, language determines how they form their world views. Furthermore, language reflects the attitudes, values, norms, and behaviours of its speakers (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Kramsch, 1998).

Language reflects cultural reality and embodies cultural diversity. People express and create experience by using language. In verbal and non-verbal ways, meanings are created and conveyed in a way that they are understood. In addition to that, language conveys meaning through the way it is being spoken; including the tone of voice, accent, and style of conversation, gestures, and facial expressions of the speaker (Kramsch, 1998). This is, therefore, related to the notion of linguistics relativity, whereby according to Kramsch (1998, p. 11), people speak in their unique ways that are different from others because people think differently and that they also have “different ways of expressing the world around them”.

The twin concepts of authenticity and appropriateness of culture are innate in native speakers (Kramsch, 1998). Non-native speakers learning a language will have to learn cultural appropriateness and it is a skill that is often difficult to acquire. The difficulties can be attributed to the fact that the concept of authenticity is not concrete; it rather changes as the contexts change (Kramsch, 1998, p. 81).
Cross-cultural, inter-cultural, or multi-cultural communication encompasses the ability to learn and acquire others’ languages and the ability to understand another person’s culture while maintaining one’s own language and culture (Yoshida et al., 2013). It is, therefore, quite impossible to separate the value, norms and Japanese workplace communication from the Japanese culture and ethical behaviour.

The Japanese ethics imbibe cultural message and reflects the norm and values of the culture (Wolf, 2013). Therefore, as this current study investigates the Japanese language proficiency of MJSGEs working in JCM, Edward Hall’s (1976) cultural dimension, intercultural communication, and intercultural workplace communication are discussed in this chapter as they determine the design of this study.

2.2.2(b) Culture and Intercultural Workplace Communication

Hall’s (1959) theory postulates that culture is communication and communication is culture. It has been argued that his theory has provided an impetus for traditional business studies to differentiate and distinguish among national cultures on the basics of the role of communication. Researchers working on intercultural business communication or intercultural workplace communication (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Varner & Beamer, 2003) refer to Hall’s (1976) dimensions of high context culture and low context culture with reference to styles of expressions.

Culture is often said to cause and create differences in the way messages are delivered and received (Freeman & Brown, 2004; Kim, 1994; Loosemore & Lee, 2002). Individuals cannot interpret or predict the behaviour of strangers accurately without first understanding the strangers’ cultural filters (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Therefore, some problems occur in an intercultural communication process within
the workplace like JCM when receivers interpret a message using their own cultural reference framework, which may result in interpreting a message differently from what is intended by the sender (Hall, 1976; Varner & Beamer, 2003).

Communication is affected when signs used by an individual of a particular culture are not recognised by individuals using values and norms of another culture to interpret the message. As such, within an international environment such as JCM, culture might hinder and distort the intended meaning in a communication process and result in communication issues between the MJSGEs and their Japanese employers. Beamer (1992) proposes that the knowledge and understanding of varied cultural factors can help users of a language to overcome communication difficulties. Bargiela and Nickerson (2003) further opine that with more knowledge of another culture, an individual can adapt and adjust better to a stranger’s frame of reference, and as a result, understand and interpret an intended message more accurately.

Therefore, in this current study, to investigate the problems faced by the MJSGEs in terms of Japanese language used in JCM, Hall’s (1976) dimensions of high context culture and low context culture with regard to styles of expression are discussed in this section.

2.2.2(c) High-Context Communication versus Low-Context Communication

Hall’s (1976) work resulted in the concepts of high-context communication and low-context communication, which comes under the umbrella of intercultural communication. The focus of his research was on examining inefficiencies and failures, such as miscommunication as a result of differing communication styles from that of the host cultures, as well as inability to speak the host language (Hall, 1950; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990).
Since that time, the spectrum of high- to low-context in communication has been used as a common platform to examine differences in style of communication and how these differences affect the communication processes within the contexts of intercultural communication, including educational institutions and workplaces that consist of foreign and local students, business people, expatriates and staff (Duronto & Nakayama, 2005; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986, 2001; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1997; Hooker, 2008; Maynard, 2007; O’Connell, 2006; Okabe 1983; Yamada, 1997). Therefore, the high-low context is an important construct for understanding culture-specific communication behaviours especially in JCM.

High-context communication, which Japanese people use, refers to the style of communication in which people receive and perceive more information from the context instead of from the words themselves (Hall, 1996). Therefore, in a high-context culture, meanings are implicitly and not explicitly expressed and are found mainly in the socio-cultural contexts or are internalised in the person. As a result, the speech style is elusive and people in a high-context culture such as the Japanese have a high degree of tolerance of ambiguity and inconsistency between verbal and non-verbal messages. The Japanese in a high-context society usually do not express themselves in a straight forward way. For the Japanese, a public display of emotions can be considered impolite or even an immature way of behaviour. Most of the time, they are reluctant to say ‘no’ to others and are careful about what they say as they try their level best not to offend. Hence, understanding information accurately in a high-context society entails being sensitive to subtle hints and having the ability to decode hidden meanings used in the Japanese communication style.
In contrast, in low-context cultures, more information is found in the verbal expression instead of from the context of the communication and as such, the majority of the transmitted information is contained in explicit verbal codes. Hofstede (1997) proposed that these low-context cultures show a low tolerance for ambiguity, which means that everything must be stated clearly in words and not require the receiver or listener to interpret the message from the context of the communication process.

2.3 Japanese Language in the Multinational Workplace

MNCs such as JCM, are more often formed as branches and subsidiaries and hence a number of languages co-exist due to both the geographical dispersion of MNCs across national borders and the multilingual profile of their workforce (Angouri, 2007). As language is the medium for intra-department and company communication, issues of management of linguistic diversity become salient for companies and also for the employees who are asked to manage increasingly complex linguistic environments, in terms of workplace or official and also social communication. According to Cooren (2006), language use is considered to be the way the linguistic medium is used in communication. Hence, language use should be understood as a dynamic and dialectical communicative process for the purposes of building relationships and sharing knowledge between different groups and individuals. Cooren (2006) explained that proficiency in Japanese language skills is important for the MJSGEs to build good relationships with their Japanese employers. At the same time, language is important as a tool for information transfer and organising social relationships, thought patterns and actions (Robichaud, 2006)
Research on language use (e.g., Vandermeeren 1999; Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002) has revealed the importance of language skills among languages other than English for business success. Consequently, it is important to understand the connection between the use of language as a social process in dealing with language issues (Lauring, 2007) in a multinational workplace such as JCM. Hence, the use of the Japanese language may have a great effect on relationship building and knowledge sharing between and among local employees and Japanese expatriates in JCM. In addition, Neal (1998) identified language problems as the major source of frustration, dissatisfaction, and friction between the local employees and foreign parent company managers working in subsidiaries. Furthermore, parallel research done by Yoshihara (1999) highlighted the importance of language issues to Japanese MNCs describing the two pillars of their international human resources management strategy as “Management by Japanese” and “Management in the Japanese language”. Studies cited above show that the Japanese language plays an important role in JCM and also influences the way JCM manage their subsidiary operations.

### 2.3.1 Importance of Japanese Language Proficiency in Workplace

According to Yoshihara (1999), even though Japanese manufacturing companies have much experience in international operations, foreign subsidiaries are traditionally managed by Japanese expatriates. Communication on important issues (such as work-related matters and technology and project transfers between subsidiaries and headquarters) has been traditionally conducted in the Japanese language.

According to Asakawa, Ito, Rose, & Westney, (2013), internationalisation of Japanese companies, with the majority being manufacturing companies, has been
particularly rapid in the 2000s due to the globalisation process and the economic recession at that time. Japanese companies are now trying to be on par with corporations in other developed countries in order to be competitive in the global business environment (Disco Inc., 2012a). This includes hiring more non-Japanese employees with intercultural communication and language skills (Disco Inc., 2012b). Therefore, proficiency in Japanese language skills is needed in JCM. Furthermore, even though English has become an important language in Japan (Disco Inc. 2012a), Iwasaki (2006) pointed out that the English language proficiency of most Japanese people is still limited. Therefore, Japanese language skills are essential for local employees such as MJSGEs and other graduates for employment (Yoshida et al., 2013).

According to Salacuse (2010) and Gamble and Gamble (2010, p. 104-105), there is a close connection between language and culture, and both language and culture play a major role in cross-cultural business communication in MNCs such as JCM. In this thesis, cross-cultural communication is used to refer to any interaction that involves representatives from more than one culture. Therefore, cross-cultural business communication, refers to the meeting of two or more individuals (or group of individuals) from different cultures that are interacting within a particular business encounter.
Figure 2.1 Cross-cultural business communication skills (Ojanperä, 2014)

Figure 2.1 illustrates four factors that contribute to effective cross-cultural business communication. Foreign language skills can be seen as one part of successful cross-cultural business communication skills. As mentioned by Hall (1976), culture influences the words we use and language use differs in different cultures. Therefore, it is hard to distinguish the effects of language from the effects of cultural factors (Welch, Welch, & Piekkari, 2005). Both language and culture play major roles in cross-cultural business communication (Salacuse, 2010). Therefore, if MJSGEs are able to communicate in the Japanese language with good Japanese language skills, they are expected to understand the Japanese culture better and this will have a positive effect on their business communication in JCM (Peltokorpi, 2007).
Furthermore, good Japanese language skills do not only enhance MJSGEs’ cross-cultural business communication skills. This has been explained by Bloch (1995) and Hoare (2012) who argued that foreign language skills can contribute to career enhancement, make people seek for jobs or positions in which they have opportunities to use their language skills. Figure 2.2 illustrates how foreign language skills can affect individuals’ job performance in multinational corporations such as JCM. Firstly, it is stated that foreign language skills affect career opportunities. The opportunities include activating recruitment, promotion, delivering more power to linguistically-skilled employees, assigning new work tasks or overseas assignments. On the other hand, employees with poor foreign language skills might not be offered these opportunities. Secondly, foreign language skills have an indirect effect on job performance such as contributing to better cultural awareness and intellectual growth (Bloch, 1995; Ojanperä, 2014). This is particularly true in the Japanese language as it is a highly contextualised language and the speaker of the language must be fully aware of (1) whether the relationship with the listeners is intimate, and (2) whether the communication is impersonal.

The Japanese society is a high-context culture society and the Japanese people usually do not express themselves in a straightforward way (Hall & Hall, 1977, 1989). This culture-specific phenomenon has often been associated with the distinction between “inside” and “outside”. In addition, the Japanese society as a high-context culture society tends to communicate indirectly, thus one does not convey one’s ideas to a listener in a direct manner. Therefore, in order to understand information accurately in the Japanese society, MJSGEs with high proficiency in Japanese language skills are expected to be more sensitive to subtle hints and be able to decode hidden meanings within the Japanese communication context. However,
there are negative effects that can be attributed to the fact that people might feel inadequate and may feel afraid of speaking in Japanese because of their poor language skills (Neeley, 2012). In these situations people’s job performance can be negatively affected. Figure 2.2 shows how language skills can have an effect on individuals’ job performance in multinational corporations.

![Diagram of Language Skills](image)

Figure 2.2 Effects of language skills on job performance in MNCs (Ojanperä, 2014)

At the company level, Charles (2007) stated that in MNCs such as JCM, Japanese language issues concern everyone in the organisation. According to Piekkari and Zander (2005), language skills can be seen as the core of international management. Therefore, even though Japanese language skills are individual skills, they have an impact on international business in JCM or on a wider scale. In international business, language skills do not only affect the performance of individuals but also the performance of an organisation as a whole (Charles, 2007, Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999).
Furthermore, as Ferner, Edwards & Sisson (1995) maintained, challenges related to using language properly may preclude a local subsidiary from exposure to shared values within MNCs resulting in jeopardising the sense of belongingness to the parent company. In addition, proficiency in the company language appears to be part of corporate identity. The broad influence of language on multinational management processes is illustrated in Figure 2.3. Clearly, language can both act as a facilitator to communication within the multinational company, as well as become an impediment to communication. Two important forms are noted in Figure 2.3: filtration (where messages are only partially transmitted); and distortion (where intended meaning is altered during the transmission of the message).

Figure 2.3 Language and multinational management (Marschan, Welch, & Welch, 1999).

Therefore, employees with good Japanese language skills can act as informal gatekeepers. Furthermore, when they play this role, they may facilitate
communication flow, such as ensuring that critical information reaches the appropriate person within the subsidiary.

2.3.2 Characteristics of the Japanese Language

The Japanese language is a potentially rich area for linguistics study, compared to English or other Indo-European languages (Minami, 2017). The Japanese language is considered a possible member of the larger Altaic family (Starostin, 2016) and it is a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) language classification: a language in which the basic word order of a transitive sentence is that of subject-object-verb. It is also an agglutinative language (e.g., the verb root is followed by a series of affixes, adjusted by voicing assimilation to accommodate the root and other affixes) (Yamada, 1992). Moreover, the use of determiners (e.g., a/an, the) is generally obligatory with nominals in English, but no such functional category exists in Japanese (Shibatani, 1990). These are but some aspects of comparison between Japanese and English.

As this study focuses on proficiency in Japanese language skills in JCM in the contexts of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the following sections discuss the characteristics of Japanese language in terms of writing, reading, and speaking.

2.3.2(a) Japanese Writing System

It is believed that learning the Japanese language is one of the most challenging tasks due to the complicated writing systems. World language writing systems are categorised into three groups: logographic, syllabic, or alphabetic systems (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Matsumoto, 2013). Japanese, which consists of
three writing systems in itself, is considered to be logographic and syllabic (Matsumoto, 2013). The three systems of Japanese writing are Kanji, Hiragana, and Katakana.

Kanji is logographic in terms of the use of symbols to represent meaning as opposed to sound. Kanji was originally developed to depict a picture of a mountain, thus giving it its meaning. Therefore, native speakers of Japanese who recognise Kanji can often guess the meaning of the symbol despite being unable to pronounce it correctly (Matsumoto, 2013). A list of 1,946 basic Japanese Kanji, Joyo Kanji, or “commonly used Kanji”, was adopted by the Japanese government in 1981 for the indication of understanding media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, posters etc.). Kanji is composed of radicals. Each radical shows the meaning of the character and the reflection of a partial meaning of the character. The complexity of combining radicals and the number of characters in Kanji makes Japanese particularly difficult for learners who do not come from a logographic background.

In addition to Kanji, Japanese writing includes the Kana system, which is broken down into Hiragana and Katakana. The Japanese Kana system is syllabic, as these systems represent spoken syllables (Matsumoto, 2013).

2.3.2(b) Japanese Reading System

Hiragana consists of 46 letters, with each letter representing one sound. Katakana is similar to hiragana and they share the same structure of vowels and consonants. Katakana is used to transcribe the foreign language. Any loan words from foreign countries are written in Katakana (Kim, 2017). The Japanese language borrows a large number of words from the other foreign languages (Daulton, 2008).

Reading and pronouncing Kanji becomes increasingly complex for Japanese foreign learners, as almost all Kanji have two or more sounds. It was found that
approximately 60% of basic Kanji have two pronunciations (Verdonschot, Heiji, Tamaoka, Kiyama, You & Schiller 2013). These pronunciations are called ‘on’ and ‘kun’. ‘On’-reading is based on Chinese pronunciations whereas ‘kun’-reading was invented by native Japanese speakers. This differentiation in reading can have an influence on a foreign Japanese learner’s reading. According to de Burgh-Hirabe (2011), Kanji, the Japanese logography, appears to be a great obstacle to fluent reading.

2.3.2(c) Japanese Speaking System

The Japanese language is a highly contextualised language and high-context groups like the Japanese have often been associated with the distinction between “insider” and “outsider” (Hall, 1977, 1989). In such a context, the speaker must be fully aware if a person to whom the speaker addresses or is speaking to belongs to the speaker’s circle. If they are in the same circle, that person is an insider. If the person does not belong to the speaker’s circle, the person is an outsider. For the Japanese society, someone’s immediate inside circle is usually the family. A second inside circle might be the office circle, such as fellow workers in a department of a company. If the person is outside of the speaker’s circle, then the person is an “outsider”. Within the inner circle, informal forms of speech are used. On the other hand, when the speaker addresses an outsider, the speaker is more likely to use the formal forms of speech. There are also possibly certain types of hierarchy that determine how the speaker should express his or her respect to the listener using honorifics.
2.4 Japanese Language proficiency

Proficiency refers to the ability to carry out or perform an action or function. Language proficiency, therefore, refers to one’s ability to use language to achieve real world linguistic tasks, across a wide range of topics and settings (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012.). Stern (2003) defines proficiency as the actual performance of learners using linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural codes and meanings. Taylor (1988) affirmed that proficiency refers to the skills needed to put the linguistic knowledge into practice. In other words, proficiency refers to the ability to transform knowledge into language use. Therefore, Japanese language proficiency refers to what individuals can do with their knowledge of the Japanese language and how well they can use the Japanese language to communicate effectively in the real world. This section discusses the required Japanese language proficiency at the workplace in terms of the language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

2.4.1 Japanese Language Listening Skill Proficiency at the Workplace

The listening skill, like the reading skill, is considered a receptive skill unlike the speaking and writing skill which are productive skills. According to Nunan (1998), listening is an active process of decoding and constructing the meaning of both the verbal message and non-verbal cues. When compared with the understanding of the processes, instructions and assessment of second language (L2) or foreign language (FL)of the speaking, reading and writing skills, the listening skill is not fully well-understood and researched (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Vandergrift, 2004; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). In fact, more research has been conducted on the
written or literacy genres (writing and reading) compare to the oracy (listening and speaking) skills.

Despite the dearth of research on the listening skill at the workplace, there are studies that highlight the importance of listening as a workplace skill. Brownell (1990) and Flynn, Valikoski, & Grau (2008) stated that “listening is considered by some to be the single most important element in the communication process, even more highly valued than speaking as a communication skill necessary in the business world” (p. 143-144). Wolvin and Coakley (1996) further highlighted that listening is of fundamental importance and is instrumental in the workplace, and that employers have identified listening as one of the most important communication skills for employees at all levels and indicate that good listening skills are an important indication of employee competence.

Workplace listening involves listening to various types of audiences including the colleagues, clients and public (Dannels, 2001). Lynch (2011) added that listening include the participation of the employees in a variety of other communicative events. The communicative events require an effective use of two-way listening skills such as meetings, training, seminars sessions and in group discussions, and interactions with clients, superiors, and others. All task and activities mentioned above require the ability of the employees to process and respond to the spoken language.

According to Rost (2005), the skill of listening is “a complex cognitive process that allows a person to understand spoken language” (p. 503). The components of the cognitive process are reception, construction, and interpretation with which the listener simultaneously decodes, comprehends, and interprets the
incoming message. Rost (2005) further stated that the most challenging elements for L2 or FL listeners are reception and construction components.

Listening applies two explicit sources of information; perceptual and conceptual. The perceptual source is based on the auditory input. Perceptual information is categorised under two axioms; firstly, having knowledge of a piece of language does not mean that it will be recognised in connected speech. The second axiom is that input does not represent intake because input will be not successfully decoded unless a high level of L2 or FL knowledge and listening proficiency is achieved (Field, 2008). Conceptual information draws upon the listener’s own worldview and topic knowledge as well as the recall of what has already been said (Field, 2008). Conceptual information serves two main purposes. Firstly, it adds to what has been decoded to enrich the understanding of competent listeners and secondly, it compensates for gaps in listening for the less experienced listeners.

The axioms of perceptual and conceptual information shed light on the relationship between the quality of information obtained from listening and how much less experienced listeners have to rely on their own world knowledge. Therefore, Field (2008) acknowledges that it is necessary for the less experienced L2 or FL listeners to rely more on context and co-text because of the difficulties they face in decoding the speech signal as a result of linguistic limitations or lack of listening experience.

Cammish (1997) pointed out that listening is a complicated process in an L2 or FL context. Furthermore, Lynch (2011) stated that the external factors that influence the challenges in an L2 or FL context are related to the speaker, the rate of speech, the accent, the text or context such as expressions, the unfamiliar content, and cultural references. Following a process in a foreign language is a difficult task.
for the MJSGEs. Studies done by Zeng (2007) have revealed that speaking rate was the most problematic factor that affects listening comprehension. Zeng’s study was also supported by Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler (1988) that an increase in speaking rate may be a critical factor in the listening comprehension of non-native learners such as MJSGEs.

Listening is a skill that poses a distinctive problem in studies as it not an observable skill to the naked eye. This is because it involves the ability to decode the spoken word and to indicate correct comprehension of what one has listened to. Although listeners’ responses can explain that they have comprehended the message by showing their recognition of words, their understanding of those words, and their ability in connecting those words to their existing knowledge base, however, there is no accurate measure of the listeners’ total understanding of the message as intended by the speaker.

2.4.2 **Japanese Language Speaking Skill Proficiency at the Workplace**

Humans have the innate ability to learn to speak before they learn to read and write. At the same time, they spend more time using the oral language rather than using language in its written form (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). According to Brown (2007), listening and speaking are learners’ language tools. Doff (2007) also pointed out that learners cannot improve their speaking ability unless they develop listening ability. Therefore, learners should comprehend what is uttered to them in order to have a successful dialogue or communication interaction. According to Shumin (1997), when students talk, the other students answer through the listening process. Therefore, speakers have the role of both listeners and speakers. The speaking skill is important as it is also integrated in the other three language skills of
listening, reading, and writing. Speaking helps learners develop their vocabulary and grammar skills and it can also help learners learn and improve their writing skill (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). The above argument is also supported by Latha (2012) who showed that grammatical competence can help speakers apply and perceive the structure of a particular language correctly in a way that leads to their fluency. Baker and Westrup (2003) stated that speaking is of the utmost importance in the workplace, therefore, proficient language speakers have more opportunities to find jobs in different organisations and companies.

Levelt’s model on speech production (Levelt, Roelofs, & Meyer, 1999) provides the theoretical perspectives on L2 or FL oral production. This model is based on three processing elements: conceptualiser, formulator, and articulator. The first element; conceptualiser, is used to form the message in the context of generating and monitoring the message. The second element; formulator, is used to formulate the language of the presentation in the context of providing grammatical and phonological structure to the message. The third element; the articulator, is used to transform the message and language of presentation into chunks of internal speech and to pass the message to the intended audience (Levelt et al., 1999).

In related to Levelt’s model, according to Bachman & Palmer (1996), among the important elements to ensure learners’ successful communicative performance in the target language are knowledge of rules in the grammar of L2 or FL, knowledge of how to organise and plan a task, topical knowledge in the target language, knowledge of how to overcome communication challenges, and learners’ affective reactions. Therefore, learners’ successful communicative performance is influenced by their communicative language ability (CLA). According to Bachman (1990), CLA is made up of knowledge or competency, and the capacity for
highlighting the competence in appropriate, and contextualised communicative language use.

Bachman (1990) proposed that for successful CLA to meet the workplace and professional needs of language users, course designers should find ways of analysing real-world jobs and tasks to identify the language users’ communicative demands in their workplace. Bachman’s (1990) proposal was supported by Leong and Ahmadi (2017) as their research proved that individuals cannot learn a language if they are not accorded opportunities for meaningful repetition and practice of the language. In other words, interactions in speaking and the opportunity to use the language in meaningful tasks give the learners the practice they need to internalise the language. Therefore, MJSGEs are expected to further improve their Japanese speaking skills in JCM because learners need a lot of practice to learn to speak and they can improve their speaking skills through listening and repeating.

According to Hughes and Reed (2017), the first and important characteristic of the ability to communicate is fluency. Fluency is related to language production and it is normally used to describe the speaking ability of learners. Furthermore, it refers to the ability to link units of speech together with ease and comfort without any strain or inappropriate slowness, or too much hesitation until it hampers communication. According to Hedge (2014), fluency refers to learners’ ability to speak in a way that they can be understood easily without any breakdown in communication particularly for those who need to use the language in their workplace and profession and those who need to keep attention to their listeners such as their customers, bosses, and colleagues in the workplace. The importance of fluency in the workplace is also documented and supported by a study by Wong (1996) in Hong Kong. In her study, she found that novice and even intermediate
level of Japanese linguistic competence was deemed to be “useless” and does not serve any purpose in the workplace setting. This is because workplace activities are highly task-oriented in nature and they come with a rigid time frame. Furthermore, she also found that a low and mediocre level of proficiency in the Japanese language may even result in misunderstanding and confusion.

Accuracy is the second characteristic of communicative or speaking ability. Mazouzi (2013) states that learners must pay adequate attention to the exactness and the completeness of language form when speaking. They should focus on grammatical structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In addition, learners’ correct use of grammatical structures requires the length and complexity of the utterances and the well-structured clauses (Thornbury, 2013). Accuracy in terms of vocabulary refers to the ability of the Japanese language learners to use appropriate words depending on the context of communication. Based on the literature mentioned above, it means that MJSGEs must possess the fluency and accuracy when they communicate in speaking so that they can communicate effectively in JCM.

According to Thornbury (2013), pronunciation is the lowest level of knowledge that FL learners pay attention to. As such, learning Japanese as a FL is problematic for some learners because Japanese language learners should also know the stress, intonation, and pitch in order to speak the Japanese language accurately. Pronunciation, stress, intonation, and pitch are important elements that enable learners to speak the Japanese language effectively.

Falsgraf, Fujii, and Kataoka’s (1993) conducted a study to identify problems related to the Japanese language and issues faced by the Japanese language learners who work in a Japanese workplace setting. Similar to other language environments, the workplace environment requires the foreign Japanese speakers to participate in
the context of making presentations, interacting with colleagues, making enquiries, and participating in group discussions. These interactions require the foreign Japanese speakers to participate actively and show their professionalism on the job. However, in several instances, the foreign speakers do not display the ability to speak well in the Japanese language and they struggle to construct proper sentences, lack confidence and are overly worried about their pronunciation. These weaknesses make them feel embarrassed, inferior, and inadequate because they face communication problems with their colleagues and superiors.

Therefore, Peltokorpi (2010) concluded that an individual’s foreign language proficiency determines his or her ability and willingness to communicate despite linguistic boundaries. It is found that foreign language speakers contribute fewer ideas in the workplace, play less active roles in communicative interactions, try to change and simplify the content, and avoid difficult to express subjects (Du-Babcock, 1999, 2006a, 2013; Du-Babcock & Tanaka, 2013; Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Santti, 2005).

In addition, Falsgraf et al. (1993) also found that despite the general consistency of linguistic functions regardless of various factors, foreign Japanese speakers show the tendency to speak less with their Japanese colleagues or employers. Similarly, Sriussadaporn (2006) in Thailand also indicated that expatriate managers felt that Thai local employees were not willing to communicate in the foreign language because they could not speak English and/or Japanese well. The study showed that although some Thai staff had interesting ideas, they had difficulty in expressing themselves in a foreign language and organising ideas in their oral and written English/Japanese presentations. As a result, Thai employees’ poor command of the foreign language might have inhibited to some extent their problem solving
and accountability abilities (Sriussadaporn, 2006). However, the study done by Shimada and Shibukawa (1999) revealed that the local employees in Kuala Lumpur use the Japanese language for the purpose of greeting and daily conversation with their Japanese expatriate superiors and colleagues. Similarly, in Singapore, Izumi et al. (2014) revealed that foreign Japanese language speakers who use Japanese in Japanese-related companies in Singapore for communication with the Japanese expatriates in their workplace.

### 2.4.3 Japanese Language Reading Skill Proficiency at the Workplace

In literacy, reading is regarded as a set of skills that can be compartmentalised, taught, and tested. Reading, however, is not simply a matter of applying skills to reading. Reading is central to and dependent on the subject area. The process of reading involves taking and understanding the meaning from the text on the surface level. However, on a deeper level, it is an activity that involves interacting with the text. Alderson (2000) explains that reading involves bringing background and external knowledge to a text. Good reading skills are vital for learners to understand the concepts. Furthermore, good readers are able to effectively transmit their competency to written and oral communication tasks.

Similarly, Krashen (1993) claimed that:

> Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, and advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers. (p. 23)

The above claim explains why reading is very important for MJSGEs in the workplace; reading does not only affect their reading abilities but also affects their writing skill and also other Japanese language elements.
Reading is also related to understanding or comprehension. Understanding depends partially on the inter-textual links the reader makes (Barnett, 1989). According to Olson & Torrance (2009), different readers in different cultural contexts create and engage with written documents in distinctive ways. They further explain that different types of reading make different demands on the readers and involve the employment of special conventions. In addition, active comprehension occurs when the reader is able to read despite the fact that there are peculiar, unknown, or even missing words. According to a socially-constructed view, reading is focused on meaning. Therefore, reading is a social practice and it is often embedded in larger social and institutional contexts.

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), foreign language readers would normally possess a greater metalinguistic awareness because they have acquired literacy skills in their native language. Metacognitive awareness enables FL readers to transfer useful reading skills and strategies in native language reading situations to aid comprehension in the FL (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Therefore, Japanese language readers can also use their knowledge of language in their first language to help them in Japanese language reading comprehension. At the same time, linguistic knowledge of the FL (e.g. vocabulary and grammar) is an important factor on comprehension. A sufficient amount of foreign language knowledge must be learnt before native language reading skills and strategies can be transferred to assist the reader to comprehend the FL texts (Clarke, 1980). This claim implies that knowledge of the Japanese language plays a more important role than native language reading ability with regard to Japanese language reading (Alderson, 1984).

One of the components of reading is knowledge about text structures. This is an important factor to consider in FL reading, especially Japanese language
reading, because the way in which ideas are organised in texts often varies from culture to culture. Chikamatsu (2003) supported this notion of reading and stated that:

*Japanese texts often begin with ambiguous, indirect meta-phonic statements, followed by a series of non-subjective, seemingly irrelevant examples or statements with the topic finally mentioned at the end of the text (p. 192).*

Chikamatsu (2003) further added that the conclusion of Japanese texts is often vague, and requires the readers to make their own conclusions. Therefore, knowledge of Japanese language text structures facilitates in reading comprehension. With the right knowledge, it is easier to identify the topic and main sentences, and relationships between sentences and paragraphs. The lack of such knowledge, however, may hinder and negatively affect reading comprehension.

It can be concluded from the discussion above that Japanese language learners are likely to face some difficulties when reading Japanese language texts that contain cultural assumptions and elements that they are unfamiliar with. It is well-documented that culturally familiar texts aid comprehension for the FL learner (Fitzgerald, 1995; Grabe, 2004). Furthermore, Japanese language readers’ native language and cultural background influence their pre-conceived ideas of as well as their attitudes towards reading, which play an important role in Japanese language reading (de Burgh-Hirabe, 2011).

### 2.4.4 Japanese Language Writing Skill Proficiency at the Workplace

Writing is an important element and skill of learning an L2 or FL because writing has always been considered to play a prominent role in learning a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL). This importance is derived from the fact that
the writing skill reinforces grammatical structures, vocabulary, and idioms that the learners have learnt. Therefore, exposing learners to the writing process is a better way for achieving the goal of writing.

The writing skill should be accorded a greater prominence to better prepare learners to cope with the communicative demands of real-life situations as writing is an important element in an L2 or FL teaching and learning process. The writing skills can be greatly developed when the learners' interests are recognised and when they are exposed to situations where they can produce authentic pieces of writing. Therefore, writing can be viewed as a process of self-discovery as the writers try to find their way while they struggle to think, compose, and put their ideas together. As such, writing is a cognitive, social, and dynamic process. For MJSGEs, the concepts and requirements of writing can be fulfilled as it is in JCM where they are required to produce authentic writing tasks. Regarding this, Saito (1992) revealed that:

*The Japanese writing system is a complex orthography involving two syllabaries (hiragana and katakana, collectively referred to as kana) and an extensive lexicon of thousands of ideographic symbols (kanji). In authentic Japanese text, kanji are used exclusively for content words, hiragana primarily for function words, and katakana exclusively for words borrowed from foreign languages.* (p.2)

Moreover, Koda (2005) mentioned that native language and foreign language orthographic differences have an impact on recognising words in the FL and this might affect the Japanese language learners’ writing process. Those who support the threshold hypothesis for a transfer of writing skills from native language to FL skills are of the view that a minimum threshold level of linguistic competence is required for effective transfer of writing skills from the native language to the foreign language. Ito (2009) found that the transfer of the writing skill from the
native language to the FL is hampered by limited proficiency in the foreign language, which is the Japanese language in his study.

Furthermore, Ktashen (1984) pointed out that learners’ writing skills in a FL can be affected by their reading experience in the FL. Learners are able to gain a greater exposure to the FL if they read various types of reading texts. By reading various types of reading texts, they expand their vocabulary knowledge, learn grammar incidentally, discover the way texts are organised, and enrich their experiences in various ways of life. Therefore, in order to write quality paragraphs, learners’ knowledge of vocabulary also plays a prominent role. Thus, writing with limited vocabulary usually creates a breakdown in communication.

Laufer and Nation (1995) commented that learners’ vocabulary knowledge and writing performance have a strong and significant correlation. This is because words have meanings and they help learners communicate with their targeted audience effectively. Due to the fact that communication requires using words correctly and appropriately in sentences, vocabulary knowledge alone, however, does not ensure accurate and effective writing. In addition, grammatical knowledge is also important. As such, the MJSGEs are required to have a wider vocabulary and a strong foundation in grammar to enable them to cope with writing tasks and organising written texts in the Japanese language in JCM.

Existing literature shows that a number of researchers focused on the need for second language learners to be exposed to a variety of genres (Hinkel, 2005; Hyland, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). However, existing literature has not focused on the writing skill for occupational purposes, skills such as assisting learners develop competence in the specific genres to help them in their academic study, workplace, and their lives in general. Izumi et al. (2014) is the only study that has a focus on
writing skills for occupational purposes in Singapore. The findings of the study revealed that the most frequent requirements for writing for the local employees in the Japanese-related companies in Singapore were writing e-mails and writing reports.

2.5 Challenges in Japanese Language Skills at the Workplace

According to the survey done by TD magazine (The Association for Talent Development, 2015), the majority (90%) of multinational organisations face language barriers in their day-to-day work and operations. The survey has revealed that language barriers can affect productivity, collaboration among colleagues, retaining customers and clients, and market expansion plans. In another survey of 600 employees of multinational corporations, language barrier was listed as a reason why 40% of global virtual teams fail in their collaborative efforts. In yet another study, 64% of business leaders reported that their organisations face language challenges in interactions between employees and customers (The Association for Talent Development., 2015). As JCM are also multinational organisations, MJSGEs might face the same challenges in their proficiency of Japanese language skills in the workplace.

2.5.1 Challenges in Japanese Listening Skill at the Workplace

Listening comprehension is one of the main listening activities in an L2 or FL classroom because learners can draw benefits from what they listen to by understanding it. However, some factors such as complexity of sentence, unknown vocabulary and possessing limited vocabulary (Underwood, 1989) may make listening comprehension a difficult task.
Studies done by Goh (2000) examined the listening challenges under three categories: perception, parsing, and utilisation. Perception challenges include difficulties with attention span and recognising sounds as separate words or groups of words, while parsing difficulties are related to difficulties with developing an intelligible mental representation of words heard. Finally, challenges with utilisation involve facing difficulties in comprehending the intended message of the speaker. These challenges arise as listeners may lack contextual knowledge and target language culture knowledge and exposure. Non-verbal clues especially those regarding facial expressions, nods, gestures, or tone of voice have a high potential to be misinterpreted by listeners from different cultures. Sharing mutual knowledge and common content makes communication easier. In JCM, MJSGEs might face the utilisation challenge more frequently because ambiguity is a common feature of the Japanese communication style.

Studies done by Zeng (2007) found that the main factor causing difficulties in listening comprehension was the speaking rate of native speakers. Distractions while listening, being unable to recognise words in speech though learners know them in writing, and new vocabulary as well as speaking rate pose challenges in listening. Zeng’s (2007) finding was supported by Bozorgian (2012) that there is a close correlation between listening comprehension and language proficiency. In other words, the higher the listening scores, the better the speaking score. Zeng’s study also correlates with a study done by Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler (1988) who found that an increase in speaking rate may be a critical factor in the listening comprehension skill of non-native learners. Underwood (1989) also stated the main obstacle to efficient listening comprehension is that the speed of delivery is beyond the listeners’ control. It is also difficult for listeners to concentrate on a speech in a
foreign language and in listening comprehension, even the shortest break in one’s attention span can seriously impair comprehension. Listeners sometimes encounter an unknown word and they stop paying attention to think about the meaning of that word. This results in their missing the next part of the speech and their listening is negatively affected.

In addition to the factors above, another important factor is listeners’ failure to recognise signals from the speaker that he/she is moving from one point to another, giving an example, or repeating a point. Discourse markers used in formal situations are comparatively evident to listeners, but in informal situations or spontaneous conversations, signals tend to be vaguer and more non-verbal in nature such as pauses that the Japanese use very frequently in their conversations, gestures and different intonation patterns (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). These signals can be missed or left undetected by listeners, especially if they are not very proficient in the Japanese language.

Another factor is the lack of contextual knowledge and learners face challenges in interpreting the meaning as intended by the speakers by means of schemata or structures of knowledge in the mind (Nunan, 1998). This factor shows that it is important for learners to possess background knowledge in order to make sense of the information they hear. In other words, while listeners can understand the surface meaning of what is spoken, they may have considerable difficulties in comprehending the overall meaning of the speech unless they are familiar with the context within which the speech is presented. In the aural perspective, the prior knowledge may facilitate their effort at understanding incoming information by relating the familiar with the unfamiliar and significant lack of such knowledge can hamper their efforts to comprehend a particular utterance.
However, from the foreign language learners’ perspective, a study done by Li and Renandya (2012) revealed that complex and compound sentences pose a greater difficulty to learners and affect listening comprehension negatively. Phonetic variations are next in line to complex sentences that present challenges for L2 and/or FL students. This is also supported by Izumi et al. (2014), a study conducted in Singapore, which revealed that the most frequent challenge faced by the local employees working in Japanese companies in Singapore was that native speakers of Japanese spoke too fast. The next problem was ‘dialect’. Therefore, this factor might be one of the difficulties faced by MJSGEs in JCM.

2.5.2 Challenges in Japanese Speaking Skill at the Workplace

There are some problems of the speaking skill that Japanese language learners face. These problems include inhibition, lack of typical topical knowledge, low or passive participation, and mother-tongue interference and use (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Another category of problems is related to the difficulty learners face in answering questions in the foreign language because they do not have much opinion about what to say as they lack the required vocabulary and grammar accuracy (Baker & Westrup, 2003).

Lukitasari (2003) carried out a study towards the learners’ speaking problem which demonstrates that learners do not possess good foreign language speaking skills because they had not learnt the important elements for speaking. These important elements are those of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Therefore, to improve learners’ Japanese speaking skill, MJSGEs have to master a lot of vocabulary, grammar and practise their Japanese language pronunciation.
To be able to speak the Japanese language effectively, the foreign language learners should have the knowledge of vocabulary and sentences in Japanese. In addition, FL learners’ grammatical competence can help them apply and formulate the structure of the target language correctly. In other words, possession of grammatical competence can enable learners to speak with fluency (Latha, 2012). In many cases, although native speakers may make some syntax mistakes, these mistakes do not alter or affect the meaning of the sentences they intend to utter. As a result, no serious problems are created for the listeners to understand them. However, the mistakes that foreign language speakers make are those that change the meaning of utterances of the original message that they intend to convey and the listeners may face difficulties in understanding the message (Mahripah, 2014).

A study in cognitive psychology which supports the possibility of avoiding short-term memory (STM) overload found that when a learner is required to perform two tasks, speaking and listening simultaneously, the learner is required to process auditory input while producing speech. These two operations must be performed simultaneously and they require some complex cognitive skills (Anderson, 1995; Nord, 1980). Consequently, a learner may become frustrated because of the difficulty they face in accomplishing the tasks.

Furthermore, foreign language learners’ speaking performance is influenced by internal and external elements such as performance conditions, affective factors, listening skill, and feedback during speaking tasks (Tuan & Mai, 2015).

Performance conditions impact speaking performance and these conditions are those of time pressure, planning, quality of performance, and amount of support (Nation & Newton, 2009). Therefore, it is very important for employers of Japanese descent to give support to the MJSGEs to encourage and motivate them to improve
their speaking skills especially when they (MJSGEs) perform their speaking task in the workplace under time pressure. Although it is necessary to give feedback on the foreign language learners’ speaking performance, learners will be demotivated and afraid of speaking if they are always corrected (Baker & Westrup, 2003). Therefore, it is recommended that the Japanese employers should always correct their MJSGEs’ mistakes constructively and positively and give them a lot of support and persuasion while speaking.

With regard to affective factors, according to Krashen (1982), several affective variables have been connected to second language acquisition (SLA). Among these factors, the three main affective variables are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

Doff (1998) stated that learners cannot improve their speaking ability before they develop their listening ability because speaking is very closely related to listening. Speakers play the role of both listeners and speakers in a communication process. It can be concluded, then, that MJSGEs will not be able to reply if they cannot comprehend the message relayed to them. Prieto (2007) showed that one effective way to improve one’s speaking skill is to interact with others, learn from others, and the choice of topics, as far as possible, should be based on the learners’ interests in order to encourage them to express their opinions freely.

The Japanese way of communication can also cause the Japanese language learners to face some problems in speaking. This can be attributed to the existence of several levels of politeness in the Japanese language. Japanese is known to have such a wide variety of honorific expressions that it is almost impossible to have any type of conversation without the use of some of them (Nishida, 1987; Kikuchi, 1997). Due to lack of honorific expressions in the Japanese language learners’ mother-
tongue, it is expected that the learners of Japanese may experience difficulties in the acquisition of Japanese honorific expressions (Miyaoka & Tamaoka, 2001). Furthermore, Yin, Ogata, Tabata, Yano (2010) suggested that understanding Japanese human relations and the need for honorific expressions could be more difficult for the Japanese language learners.

2.5.3 Challenges in Japanese Reading Skill at the Workplace

The Truly Foreign Language (TFL) has very foreign writing systems, grammar, and vocabulary for English speakers. As such, there are unique difficulties for language learners in the TFL reading skill. The Japanese language is one of the TFLs for native English speakers. The Japanese language has a very unique writing system which poses additional challenges for Japanese language learners. For example, the Japanese language has three writing systems. The phonetic alphabet systems are known as phonetic syllabic systems (Hiragana and Katakana) (Sakade, Henshall, Seeley & Groot, 2003). There are 92 of these symbols in the two syllabics that have been formally approved by the government in 1951.

Other than the phonetic syllabic characters, there are 1,945 Chinese characters (Kanji) contained in the officially approved character list known as “the Jōyō Kanji (General Use Characters) List” (Sakade et al., 2003). While the syllabics are comparatively short lists of finite sounds, the Kanji poses a bigger challenge. Reading and pronouncing Kanji becomes increasingly complex for foreign learners of Japanese, as almost all Kanji have two or more sounds. It was found that approximately 60% of basic Kanji have two pronunciations (Verdonschot et al., 2013). These pronunciations are called ‘on’ and ‘kun’. On-readings are based on
Chinese pronunciations whereas kun-readings originated from native Japanese speakers.

With the different sounds and manners of reading possible for each Kanji, and the different combinations of Kanji, a learner learning to read may encounter different combinations of sounds. For beginning to intermediate Japanese learners with limited knowledge and context in the language and culture, trying to determine the correct sound and pronunciation of a character can be very challenging. Understanding of context is essential in learning the correct reading of the Kanji. In many cases, Japanese language learners may understand the meaning of the word and the word structure (syntax), but they may not be able to produce the phonological reading of the characters they encounter that is appropriate to that context (Kuwana, 2016).

Research has found that the correlation between orthography and phonology, or writing and sounds, leaves a great impact and influence on reading development (Ehri, 1979, 1992, 2005; O'Brien, Wolf, Miller, Lovett & Morris, 2011). De Francis (1989) divided the writing system into three categories: alphabetic, syllabic, and logographic. The Japanese language consists of two orthographic systems: syllabic (Hiragana and Katakana) and logographic (Kanji) (Matsumoto, 2013). As such, in the case of reading in a foreign language, learners of the Japanese language may face the difficulty to decipher because of these variations of writing systems.

Based on the literature discussed, it can be surmised that differences in a first language and foreign language orthography can affect the accuracy of foreign language word recognition as well as the strategies used to process those words (Chikamatsu, 1996; Koda, 1989, 1996; Matsumoto, 2013). Furthermore, it has been
reported that the reading ability of the Kanji by native English speakers greatly declined when the characters increased in level of difficulty (Tamaoka, 1997; Tamaoka, Katsu & Kiyama, 2013). As such, it is expected that MJSGEs might face the same challenges when they read Japanese language documents in their workplace as Japanese official documents tend to use more Kanji compared to texts written for casual reading. Furthermore, the study done by Izumi et al. (2014) in Singapore revealed that the participants in the study indicated that ‘vocabulary’ was the most problematic for them; nearly half of the participants commented that they had difficulties with technical terms.

2.5.4 Challenges in Japanese Writing Skill at the Workplace

When writing in the L2 or FL, learners usually bring the whole culture of their native language or first language (L1) education which inadvertently includes the cultural patterns of the L1 writing. As a result, the L2 or FL writing is influenced by their L1 writing systems. Traditional and existing literature supports this contrastive rhetoric that contributes positively in the development of L2 or FL writing pedagogy (Connor, 1996). However, this traditional rhetorical pattern has been criticised as it deploys a static view that learners rely on their L1 culture and experience instead of progress and take on an active role in learning (Leki, 2000; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2002). Furthermore, it is also cited as the reason that L2 or FL writing is negatively influenced as a result of negative transfer from the L1 which differs culturally from the L2 or FL.

Language transfer (also known as L1 interference or linguistic interference) refers to speakers or writers applying knowledge from their native language to a second or foreign language. It can occur in any situation when someone does not
have a native-level command of a language, as when translating into a second or foreign language. In transfer errors, the second or foreign language learners tend to use their previous mother tongue experience as a means of organising the foreign language data. Such rules deriving from existing habits prevent correct speech from being established. Transfer errors are “interlingual” since they come from the interaction between the first and second or foreign language (Hanafi, 2014; 2015).

In this section, the focus is on the linguistic issue of language transfer. Therefore, the focus is only on the learners’ manifestation in the different aspects of the language learning interference. Phonological interference by Pyun (in Mehlhorn, 2007) claimed that language learners’ interlanguage owes phonological knowledge to L1 rules, L2 (foreign language being studied) rules, and “interrules”, the latter described as “bridges” between the already acquired languages and L2. This is manifested in speaking and reading and is usually indicated by recourse to word stress, intonation and speech sounds. However, orthographic interference occurs at the level of writing where the spelling of words is altered under the influence of native language (Hanafi, 2014; 2015). Lexical interference is manifested in speaking and writing and is represented by the borrowing of native language words which may or may not be converted to sound more natural in L2 or FL (Hanafi, 2014; 2015). Lastly, grammatical interference. L1 influences L2 in terms of word order, use of pronouns and determiners, tense and mood.

The statement mentioned above was supported by Kaplan (1966). Interference or negative transfer of native language writing conventions in foreign language writing has been hypothesized that each language and culture has unique rhetorical conventions and that they negatively interfere with foreign language writing (Kaplan, 1966; 1972; 1988; Grabe & Kaplan, 1989).
In the case of Japanese and English, previous research has generally supported the hypothesis that Japanese texts tend to be organised inductively whereas English texts tend to be organised deductively, and that Japanese students tend to use an inductive pattern in English writing (Kubota, 1998). Since the native language and foreign language negative transfer hypothesis is based on the premise that there exist culturally-unique rhetorical conventions, it can be expected that MJSGEs as English speakers might tend to use a deductive pattern in their Japanese language writing.

It has been pointed out that Japanese texts are characterised by a sudden topic shift accomplished by a paradigmatic four-unit pattern called ki-sho-ten-ketsu (Introduction-Development-Turn-Conclusion) and an inductive style in which the main idea is presented at the end (Hinds, 1983). According to Hinds (1990), in Japanese language writing the main ideas do not appear until the end and the paragraphs before the main ideas do not constitute the reasons or evidence for the main ideas. Therefore, the characteristics of written texts in Japanese, i.e., the “delayed introduction of purpose”, might be an obstacle to MJSGEs when they write in Japanese.

These factors which might affect MJSGEs in Japanese language writing are also supported by empirical studies that compared native language essays in Japanese and English (Kobayashi, 1984; Kubota, 1998). These studies revealed differences between the two languages: Japanese writers tend to use inductive patterns, whereas native English speakers tend to use deductive patterns.

Based on the literature mentioned above, the conclusion is the challenges and the factors that affect Japanese language writing skills is that we cannot discuss learners’ foreign language organisational patterns without taking into consideration learners’ native language and foreign language writing background in terms of
writing conventions, instruction, and experience, and foreign language proficiency level.

2.6 Current Status of Japanese Language as a Global Competency in Malaysia

Since the early 1990s, the Malaysian government has embraced globalisation to boost the country’s economy as well as to ensure that Malaysia remains competitive in a globalised world (Kaplan, 2001). In 1992, the government launched its Vision 2020 strategy which aims to make Malaysia a developed nation. With this vision in place, it is deemed necessary for the Malaysian workforce to be 20\textsuperscript{th} century compliant and to attain proficiency in a foreign language. The National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond 2020 (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2007, p. 62-66) stipulated that:

\textit{Proficiency in the third language is vital for developing human capital that drives the k-economy as well as gears the country towards competitive innovation in the international arena.} (p.62).

Malaysian universities have been urged “to provide learning opportunities for students to be proficient in a third language such as Mandarin, Tamil, Japanese, French, or Spanish”, (p. 66). Proficiency in a third language will enable graduates to not only get access to the latest technology and information but also to possess an added and competitive advantage in a work environment that is increasingly multicultural and diverse in nature. With competency in several languages, graduates and job seekers will inadvertently be accorded more opportunities.

As the world gets more interconnected and borderless, foreign languages increase in importance in nation building, especially in a country like Malaysia that is highly dependent on the acquisition and transfer of foreign technology. Therefore, Malaysia has established the International Languages Teacher Training Institutes for
Malaysian teachers (Singh, 1999). Most major public institutions of higher learning also offer foreign languages. Some of these institutions are Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Utara Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Universiti Teknologi Mara, and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Ainol & Isarji, 2007).

As demand for graduates to be knowledgeable in a foreign language increases, it is therefore necessary to conduct research in this topic with emphasis on the policies and practices in the planning and developing of programmes according to learners’ and employers’ foreign language needs by Malaysian institutions of higher education. In terms of research done on foreign language programmes, there is a dearth of literature in work conducted in Malaysia as most studies focused on policies and practices of the Malay and English languages with some studies focusing on the Chinese language.

Research done by Ainol et al. (2009) shows that extrinsic factors play an important role in Malaysian university students’ learning of a foreign language. Among the extrinsic factors include their future career, to make them a more knowledgeable person or to fulfil the graduation requirements. The findings also mentioned that the Japanese language is very popular among Chinese students because Chinese students indicate that they prefer to work for Japanese companies. As the Japanese language is the most popular foreign language among nine languages offered in USM (Registration Record USM, PPBLT, Semester II 2016), and the findings from the literature review mentioned above, this research focuses on the Japanese language to fulfil the needs of the students to work in JCM. At the same time, knowing the Japanese language is also important for both the local
employees and Japanese employers because this will enable the graduates to work
and excel in a Japanese business environment.

2.7 Japanese Language in Malaysia

It is the Malaysian government’s aim to produce school leavers and
graduates who can speak and understand more than one language and perform
effectively in the global world (Curriculum Development Centre, 2004). Japanese
language education was introduced in 1982 in six (6) Malaysian boarding schools
under the Look East Policy. With humble beginnings, it has now expanded greatly
and is taught in more than 50 schools throughout Malaysia, including the premier
schools. At the university level, among the twenty public universities in the country,
it has been confirmed that eighteen public universities offer the Japanese language
education programmes. University of Malaya is the only university that offers the
Japanese language as a bachelor’s degree programme in the Language Faculty, while
USM is the only university offering the Japanese language as a minor programme.
These two universities, together with the other sixteen universities, also offer the
Japanese language as an option course or elective course (Japan Foundation Kuala
Lumpur, 2016).

The Japanese language courses were first offered in the University of
Malaya at the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty in 1966. In 1982, the
University of Malaya provided a study in the Japanese preliminary curriculum at the
Japanese Matriculation Centre (Ambang Asuhan Jepun). The programme was
established to prepare Malaysian government-sponsored students to further their
studies in Japan. In 1998, a bachelor’s degree programme in Japanese Studies was
started at the Language Faculty of the University of Malaya. USM started the minor
programme for the Japanese language at the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation in 1996. Japanese language courses were first offered in 1970 as elective courses in this school.

Hence, it was quite apparent since the late 1970s that Japan would become a major player in the world economy. This situation has attracted an increasingly large number of young Malaysians to study the Japanese language. The current generation of MJSGEs has studied the language specifically for business advantage (market survey by PPBLT, USM, 2008). Japanese language proficiency and ability together with the related ability to understand the Japanese culture are seen and perceived as a key to business success in the JCM.

2.7.1 Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs)

During the 33 years between 1979 and 2012, Japanese language education outside Japan including that in Malaysia grew by leaps and bounds, resulting in significant expansion (Japan Foundation, 2013). According to the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) statistics, the number of learners of the Japanese language in Malaysia also increased by about 100% from 2005 (17,406) to 2014 (33,077) (Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur, 2014). During the period between 2009 and 2012, two surveys reveal that the number of learners increased from 22,856 to 33,077. Malaysia ranks 9th among all countries for the number of Japanese language learners overseas (Kimura, 2016). The number of teachers increased from 338 to 509, and the institutions increased from 124 to 196 (Japan Foundation, 2013).

The reason or purpose for studying the Japanese language that was cited by the highest number of institutions was “interest in the Japanese language” (62.2%). This was followed by “communication in Japanese” (55.5%), “interest in manga,
anime, J-Pop, etc.” (54.0%). Overall, interest in acquiring knowledge about Japanese was more prevalent to be utility-based motivations, with “future employment” (42.3%) ranking in fifth place, and “study in Japan” (34.0%) in seventh place.

In the 1980s, there was a wind of change when the Look East Policy (LEP) was introduced by the Malaysian government. As a result, Japanese has been introduced to Malaysians not only as a means of communication but also as a medium of science, and technology information and knowledge. Although more than twenty years have passed since the introduction of the LEP, the related Japanese language programmes remain relevant and are increasing in popularity year by year. The Japanese language is viewed by the Malaysian younger generation as an asset in securing jobs (Aziz, 2009). Although Japanese language courses are popular, in a broader perspective their contribution towards Japanese language education and an understanding of Japanese culture as a whole is far from adequate (Aziz, 2009). Although the Japanese language was introduced in 1982 in Malaysian boarding schools under the LEP and it has now spread to more than 50 schools throughout Malaysia, including at the premier schools, the Japanese language remains an elective subject and not a compulsory subject (Curriculum Development Centre, 2004). The government is still at the stage of strengthening the status of foreign language learning in its secondary schools as in the Malaysian education system, the teaching of Malay, English, Mandarin, and Tamil is given priority at the early age at the primary school level as they are the languages widely used in Malaysia.

As the Japanese language subject is not assessed in either Lower Secondary Examination (Secondary 3 National Exam) or Malaysian Certificate of Education Examination (Secondary 5 National Exam), most Malaysian students that choose to study the Japanese language are students that have a deep interest in Japanese pop
culture such as anime, and manga. Moreover, the syllabus focuses only on the teaching of Japanese culture (Sazlina, 2014). As such, the level of proficiency of the Japanese language subject in Malaysian secondary schools is at beginner’s level. Hence, students who have taken the Japanese language subject in the secondary school until Secondary 5 and decide to continue their Japanese language education when they enter university have to start from the lower level because they do not possess a strong linguistic foundation in the Japanese language (Evaluation committees PPBLT, USM, 2017).

For institutions of higher learning, among twenty public universities in Malaysia, the University of Malaya is the only university offering the Japanese language as a major programme in the Language Faculty. For this major programme, the average enrolment for every academic year is about 20 students, and when they graduate from this major course, the graduates are in the JLPT N2 to N1 level (Advanced level). USM is the only university offering the Japanese language as a minor programme with an annual average enrolment of approximately 30 students. Those who complete the minor programme are in the JLPT N4 or N3 Level (Intermediate level). The other sixteen universities offer the Japanese language as an option course or elective course. The data above shows that although Malaysia is among the top 9th top country for the number of Japanese language learners overseas, most of these Japanese language learners are at beginner’s level. Only graduates from the major or minor programmes possess Japanese language proficiency levels from intermediate to lower advanced levels, but it is a small proportion when compared to the total number of the learners (Yeoh et al., 2011). As such, with intermediate to lower advanced proficiency, these graduates who are interested to join JCM can continue their Japanese language learning in the non-profit Japanese
language societies in Malaysia, e.g., the Malaysia Japanese Language Society, Penang Japanese Language Society, Perak Malaysian-Japanese Friendship Society and Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur. In this study, the samples are from these four Japanese language centres.

2.7.2 Japanese Companies in Malaysia (JCM)

Since the 1970s, MNCs have been ubiquitous in East Asia (Imaoka, 1985). In the beginning of the 1980s, the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad introduced the “Look East” policy and designated Japan as a role model for Malaysia. Mahathir sought Japan’s assistance to realise his industrialisation programme and encouraged Japanese multinationals to invest in Malaysia and establish joint ventures with Malaysian companies (Smith, 1994; 2003). The Mahathir administration moved towards the heavy industrialisation drive and was very keen to attract Japanese multinational corporations to Malaysia hoping that more rapid and wider technology transfer from Japan would ensue. Under the “Look East” policy the virtues of the oriental society, as well as its working ethics and management style, were to be promoted in Malaysia (Furuoka, 2007).

In order to facilitate implementation of the government’s heavy industrialisation programme, Mahathir decided to employ Japanese firms’ financial resources, technological know-how, and management skills (Furuoka, 2007). He also sought and obtained support from Japanese multinational corporations for his economic policies and strived to forge strong ties with them. To provide impetus to the industrialisation programme, Mahathir encouraged Japanese companies to set up joint ventures with Malaysian companies (Anazawa, 1994).
High-profile Japanese multinational corporations began establishing joint-ventures with Malaysian partners. As Anazawa (1994) observed, while in the early 1980s “other manufacturing investments declined in Malaysia. Japanese Direct Investment (JDI) concentrated in some specific heavy industries involving joint-ventures between Malaysian public corporations and large Japanese MNCs” (p.82).

By the end of the 1980s, the investment slump in Malaysia was over and Japanese direct investment in the country reached its peak. The big inflow of investments became possible due to two factors. First of all, the Malaysian government introduced special incentives to attract foreign investors. Secondly, after the Plaza Accord (1985) the Japanese yen appreciated drastically against the US dollar which led to the expansion of Japanese companies’ investments abroad (Tsai & Tsay, 2004).

Japanese investments in Malaysia started soaring only in the middle of the 1980s after the Japanese yen appreciated drastically against the US dollar. This expansion of Japanese investments had been a part of the so-called “second wave” of Japanese direct investment flow to Southeast Asia (Furuoka, 2007). In order to reduce production costs, Japanese MNCs began creating a wider range of production networks in the region by actively investing in Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia. Manufacturing goods produced at Japanese factories in Southeast Asia were then exported to Japan or to other foreign markets. Due to this influx of investment from Japan, Malaysia and other ASEAN countries became manufacturing centres of the region before China took over this position at the turn of the century (Furuoka, 2007). Regarding this, Anazawa (1994) argued that:

*The yen appreciation from late 1985 caused tremendous growth and drastic change in JDI (Japanese Direct Investment).... The Promotion of Investment Act (1986) and deregulation of foreign equity ownership guidelines, coupled...*
with the strong yen, encouraged them (the Japanese companies) to invest in Malaysia. (p.82)

In 2002, there were approximately 1,400 Japanese firms or joint-venture companies in Malaysia. Japanese MNCs had set up their branches and factories in every part of Malaysia, including some relatively remote states such as Kelantan, Perlis, Sabah, and Sarawak.

In April 2014, there was a total of 1412 Japanese Companies in Malaysia, (JCM) that are either joint ventures or wholly-owned Japanese companies (JETRO 2014). These 1,412 Japanese companies operating in Malaysia create more than 11,000 job opportunities (JETRO, 2011). In 2011, among the 1412 JCM, 730 are in the manufacturing sector accounting for 52% of JCM. Therefore, the site of the research was focused on the manufacturing JCM in Malaysia because manufacturing JCM make up more than 50% compared to other businesses such as sales offices (11%), foreign trade and commerce (10%), services (9%), and other non-manufacturing businesses.

2.7.3 Japanese Communication Style

The Japanese communication style has always been described as one that is vague, unclear and conservative (Huruse, 1978; O’Connell, 2011). Gudykunst and Nishida (1994, p. 62) present a description of the Japanese communicative style as being “traditional mental telepathy”, “taciturnity”, “atmosphere”, “indirect communication” and “tatemae and honne” concerned with public face and real feelings after analysing communication between Japanese and North Americans. The Japanese communication style also is concerned with the concept of face, i.e., the
Japanese are said to lose face if they criticise others publicly or express negative ideas (p. 76).

In addition, March (1996) mentioned that “Japanese business is 99 percent “tatemae”, i.e., one cannot say what one really thinks” (p. 26). “Tatemae” refers to language used in public which is used to ensure and maintain harmony and good human relationships and goodwill. The Japanese communication style is also described as being focused on the non-verbal aspects, and when verbal communication is involved, emphasising indirect communication is regularly encouraged (Barnlund, 1989; Gudykunst, 1993; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994, Gudykunst, 1997).

Within these studies, Hall (1976), highly acclaimed for his work on developing the theory and practice of intercultural communication studies, in his comparative work on communication styles highlighted the differences among cultures and said that high-context and low-context communication styles are especially significant in the Japanese language and culture (Hall & Hall, 1990). According to Hall (1987), in low-context cultures and societies such as Canada, USA, New Zealand, and Australia, messages are sent through direct communication in most situations which include business and workplace environments. In these societies, there is a greater reliance on explicit verbal interpersonal communication.

In the Japanese culture, which is a high-context culture, the message is built into the communication context and participants of the communication process are required to recognise cues from the context rather than from the verbal message. When meaning is placed more in the verbal code, as Ting-Toomey (1985) claims, communication becomes more explicit and specific. The expectation of explicit
verbal messages in low-context cultures has been frequently documented in research (Hall, 1976, 1998).

Consequently, as Hall (1976, 1998) explains, due to the limited and sometimes absent explicitness in high-context communication, like that in Japan, proper and accurate interpretation of the context of the communication by the listener is required. Here, proper and accurate interpretation refers to the degree to which the original message of the sender is successfully received and interpreted by the listener. In contrast, in low-context communication contexts, the emphasis is on explicit and accurate verbal transmission of the meaning of a message.

Barriers between English-speaking people and Japanese, as Donahue (1998) explains, are often seen in the approach adopted by both parties of the communication. Japanese communication places importance on a more holistic contextual understanding of the situation, or in other words, guesswork (sasshi). This means that the ‘indirectness’ of Japanese communication is not really an attempt to be vague, but it actually is a strategy of showing politeness and respect, which allows the other party in the communication to interpret what is meant without the speaker having to be very explicit. For English-speaking people, e.g. the Americans, they tend to “make their point early”, whereas the Japanese wait to hear “reasons and supporting details” (Donahue, 1998, p. 219).

As mentioned above, a common perspective among English-speaking people is that indirectness is often related to vagueness and avoidance of confrontation (Kasahara, 1974). However, as Donahue (1998) claims, indirectness as part of the Japanese communication style often becomes a mystery as a result of overemphasising the aspects of vagueness and non-confrontation. Instead, by retranslating the term “omoiyari” from empathy to consideration for others, for
example, Donahue (1998) illustrates the different ways in which “silence” is interpreted. In other words, he stresses that vagueness and silence are deliberately inserted into the context, often determined by the social and hierarchical situations in which they are expected to be in existence, such as formal situations.

Hall and Hall (1990) place Japan at the top of the list of high-context culture and, indeed, the Japanese communication style has all the characteristics of a high-context culture, such as indirect and digressive communication. According to Nishimura, Nevgi, and Tella (2008), Japanese communication style is deeply rooted in the Japanese culture (p. 791). Therefore, the Japanese cultural context has an important influence on Japanese communication style.

2.8 Japanese Language in Japanese Companies in Malaysia

The increasing number of JCM presents inconceivable political, social, and economic challenges since the Look East policy was introduced in the 1980s. Nowadays, many MJSGEs work side-by-side with Japanese colleagues and use the Japanese language as their primary medium of communication. Following this trend, many students today are interested in studying Japanese for their future profession and careers. Furthermore, recent research indicates that one of the more realistic ways for them to fully use their Japanese language skills is to work in Japanese-related companies (Sakeda & Kurata, 2016). As this phenomenon is still relatively new in Malaysia, research has not adequately addressed the types of challenges encountered by MJSGEs at the workplace. Accordingly, this research examines the Japanese language proficiency of MJSGEs with the aim of providing useful information for the development of Japanese language education curriculum in Malaysian higher learning institutions.
Thus, studies carried out in Malaysia have been focused on learning Japanese as a foreign language at the tertiary level (Sazlina, 2014, p. 37), and many studies on language teaching and learning concentrated mainly on English as a second language (Sazlina, 2014, p. 38). Therefore, this research focuses on the literature relating to the proficiency of the Japanese language skills in JCM.

Presently, more and more students are expressing a desire to use their Japanese language skills professionally. The perception that proficiency in the Japanese language will lead to better job offers attracts more students to the Japanese language courses (market survey by PPBLT, USM, 2008). Furthermore, Cramer’s study (1990, p. 88-90) shows the importance of language in doing business with Japanese people. Foreign business people believe that the Japanese language is more than a language as it is a window into the way of thought and action which is very different from the way foreigners think and act. In this regard, higher learning institutions must provide accurate and realistic information to students especially information related to opportunities to use their language skills after graduation.

Researchers have, in recent years, begun to look into workplace foreign language needs and use (Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2009, Lockwood, 2012). Research done by Lambert (1990) found that foreign language at the workplace deals with language-related issues at the workplace and offered a comprehensive view of current research in this area and discussed issues on people who need foreign language competence. The research done by Falsgraf, Fujii, and Kataoka (1993) indicates that the demand for Japanese speakers varies according to profession and that Japanese language competence may be a useful skill that is just as important as a solid professional skill or interest, but, it is important to note that proficiency in the
Japanese language alone does not qualify job seekers for most professional positions in business.

The kind of linguistic skills required in different businesses and professions may vary according to the size of a company and the successful candidates’ positions in the company (Fixman, 1990). Smaller Japanese companies may require more assistance when dealing in the multicultural and multilingual business world since they do not have the English-speaking networks which larger companies have access to. Elementary skills may suffice for some executives who are required to socialise with their foreign partners. However, for candidates who are hired for their language skills as part of their qualifications, they may be expected to handle professional activities such as negotiating, maintaining working relations, and assuring technology transfer in a foreign language (Falsgraf et al., 1993). Hence, as has been discussed above, it is imperative that we understand the linguistic, cultural, and social problems which graduates of Japanese language programmes are likely to face.

In recent years, graduates are required to possess proficient language and oral communication skills in order to work effectively at the workplace. Oral communication skills at the workplace encompass wide-ranging situations covering making formal presentations, participation in teams and meetings and, and face-to-face interactions (Stoper & Venables, 2004).

Existing literature indicates that oral communication is of great importance at the workplace, and that graduates who join the workforce with effective communication skills can be successful in their future professions and careers (Crosling & Ward, 1999, 2002). As technology use increases at the workplace, the issues of quality, innovation and competitiveness also increase in
importance (Carnavale, Gainer & Meltzer, 1990, p. 25). Mellinger (1992, p. 79–109) stated that social interaction and communication are required when performing occupational activities which enable employees to acquire new skills. The skills acquired, in turn, help them in finding solutions when problems arise.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that looks at the relationship between language and culture states that language does not merely act as a tool for communicating thoughts, but it also shapes the thoughts themselves (Kennison & Shelia, 2014). Ferraro’s (1998) suggestions for proficiency in a FL originate from the idea that if different people communicate differently, the way they perceive the world must also be different. In other words, the ability for MJSGEs to speak the Japanese language like that of their expatriate colleagues and superiors enables them to gain a better understanding of differences of perception and thought.

Reviewing the nature of local-and-expatriate staff communication and interactions at the workplace, the study conducted by Du-Babcock & Babcock’s (1996) and Babcock & Du-Babcock (2001) has shown that the higher the interlocutor’s FL proficiency, the more positive an impact it has on workplace communication. Similarly, Selmer (2005, 2006) also expounds that FL proficiency makes workplace communication more effective.

It is deemed that proficiency in the target foreign language encourages positive adjustment by allowing the FL speakers to gain information first hand, rather than delayed by the need for translation or interpretation. It enables the FL speakers to be exposed to the foreign culture through the use of its language and, as a result, they were able to bridge the gaps between the two cultures and establish personal relationships through frequent and direct communication (Selmer, 2005, 2006).
Studies on Japan also describe how expatriates with insufficient proficiency in the host country language were intentionally or unintentionally excluded from the communication network because of people’s natural tendency to interact in their native language (Froese, 2010; Peltokorpi, 2007). According to Froese, Peltokorpi, and Ko, (2012), inadequate language proficiency can consequently act as a natural barrier to intercultural communication and information flows in the workplace and that can have a negative influence on foreign employees’ work-related adjustment. By contrast, a high level of proficiency in the target language can enable foreign employees to adopt appropriate work values and behave appropriately at the workplace (Takeuchi, Yun, & Russell, 2002).

For workplace communication to be successful, MJSGEs require proficiency in Japanese language skills to achieve effective communication in a culturally diverse workplace. Furthermore, according to Rafoth and Rubin (1988), and Mohammad Mohammadi (2015, p.93) successful communication has to occur within a particular context and is embedded within its distinct discourse community.

Halliday (1978) stated that communication involves more than an exchange of words between parties; it is a “sociological encounter” (p. 139) and by way of an exchange of meanings during the communication process, the reality of a society is “created, maintained and modified” (p. 169). In Austin's (1962) earlier work on speech acts theory where, as cited by Clyne (1994, p. 2), language and thus communication is seen as an “instrument of action” that shows the capacity of language.

Within a workplace environment in which the staff members are diverse and varied in terms of age, gender, nationality, culture, and ethnic backgrounds, employees' communication is determined by differing cultural values and norms
resulting in varied preferred modes of interaction. These elements are therefore subject to interpretations that are different from the speaker's intended meaning (Witherspoon & Wohlert, 1996; Wierzbicka, 2003).

For successful communication at the workplace, MJSGEs are required to be equipped with an understanding of the Japanese culture and knowledge of Japanese business practices to overcome difficulties that may arise. As the nature of the business world becomes more globalised, the communication processes within an organisation are affected. As organisations are now managing and handling operations that transcend national boundaries, the requirement for MJSGEs to have Japanese language and cross-cultural understanding has increased in importance (Liu & Beamer, 1997).

Carnavale, Gainer and Meltzer (1990, p. 31) pointed out that in order to achieve flexibility and adaptability for the workforce to remain competitive, good teamwork skills are a necessity. Teams made up of staff members from diverse background must be cross-functional. Team members must be aware of differing cultural backgrounds when communicating with each other. Carnavale et al. (1990) recommended that “people need to know how to understand each other, communicate their own thoughts and beliefs and listen to what others have to say” (p. 159). Therefore, in order to understand the Japanese employers’ thought, cultural values, and norms, MJSGEs have to understand the Japanese communication style and to know their preferred modes of interaction.
2.9 Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT)

The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) is administered worldwide to evaluate and certify proficiency in the Japanese language of non-native speakers. The JLPT has been offered by the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (formerly Association of International Education, Japan) since 1984 as a reliable and valid measurement to evaluate and certify the Japanese language proficiency of non-native speakers.

Test applicants have become more diverse, and the use of JLPT results has expanded from skill measurement to include employment screening and evaluation for promotions and pay raises as well as use as a measure of one’s language qualification (The Official World wide Japanese Language Proficiency Test Website, 2017).
To continually ensure the relevance and accuracy of the JLPT, the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services introduced a revised version of the test in 2010. This new test incorporates the most advanced research in Japanese pedagogy and testing theory, and reflects the vast wealth of data accumulated since the original JLPT was launched in 1984.

Figure 2.4 The Japanese Language Proficiency Test

Source: The Official World wide Japanese Language Proficiency Test Website (2017)

The JLPT places importance not only on knowledge of Japanese language vocabulary and grammar, but also on the ability to use the knowledge in actual communication. In order to perform various "everyday tasks" that require language, not only language knowledge but also the ability to actually use it are a prerequisite. Therefore, as shown in the Figure 2.4, the JLPT measures comprehensive Japanese language communicative competence through three elements: "Language Knowledge" to measure (1) - knowledge of Japanese-language vocabulary and grammar, and "Reading" and "Listening" to measure (2) - the ability to use the
knowledge in actual communication. Due to the large scale of testing, answers are machine-scored. However, the JLPT does not include sections to measure speaking or writing proficiency skills directly.

Table 2.1 Linguistic Competence Required for the JLPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Linguistic Competence Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N5</td>
<td>This is the lowest level test, and it demonstrates learners’ ability to read and understand basic Japanese. The reading portion of the test will require that learners comprehend sentences and common expressions that are written in Katakana, Kanji, and Hiragana. The listening portion will test the learners’ ability to understand conversation about common topics encountered in classrooms and everyday life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N4</td>
<td>This test also has a reading and a listening portion and will assess learners’ ability to do all of those things in the N5 level, plus the learners’ ability to read more difficult material in Kanji with a stronger vocabulary and knowledge of Kanji characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3</td>
<td>The N3 level is probably most appropriate for those who are re-locating to Japan and who need to be able to navigate through more complex daily living situations. The reading section will incorporate everything in N5 and N4 levels but include additional materials, such as news summaries and short literary passages. The listening portion still revolves around everyday situations but requires the ability to understand when the language is spoken at a moderate pace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2</td>
<td>To select this test and have a good chance of passing it, learners will need to read passages on a variety of topics – literary, news and magazine articles, and to be able to relate the intent and opinions of the writers. The listening portion will contain conversations on lots of topics at an almost normal speed, and learners will need to demonstrate that they understand facts and nuances of conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1</td>
<td>This is the most difficult of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test levels and should be selected by those who have strong proficiency. The reading portion will require comprehension and analysis of complex content – news editorials, literary works, abstract concepts, and other elements. Listening will be at normal rates of speed and require a substantial vocabulary in order to understand and interpret conversations, news reports, and other contents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: The Official Worldwide Japanese Language Proficiency Test Website, 2017)

The JLPT has five levels: N1, N2, N3, N4, and N5. The easiest level is N5 and the most difficult level is N1. N4 and N5 measure the level of understanding of basic Japanese that is mainly taught in Japanese classes. N1 and N2 measure the level of understanding of Japanese used in a broad range of scenes in actual everyday life. N3 is a bridging level between N1/N2 and N4/N5.
Linguistic competence required for the JLPT is expressed in terms of language activities, such as reading and listening, as shown in Table 2.1. Although it is not indicated in the table, language knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is also required for successful execution of these activities.

2.10 Business Japanese Competencies (BJC)

The present study investigates the requirements of proficiency in Japanese language skills for MJSGEs to work in JCM. As such, it is necessary to discuss what BJC is and how it is different from communicative competence as defined by many linguists such as Canale and Swain (1980). According to Izumi et al. (2014), communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) is the fundamental competence for BJC, and other competences such as intercultural competence, pragmatic competence are also important for BJC. Besides these, business specific knowledge and skills are necessary for MJSGEs to work competently for JCM. The "Guidebook of Business Japanese Education for Foreign Students for Japanese Educational Institutions" (2006) published by the Ministry of Economics, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MEXT) presents a comprehensive framework for BJC. According to this guidebook, BJC covers the following three areas:

1. Business Japanese proficiency required for working in Japan: Advanced communication skills for smooth communication and advanced discussion skills.

2. Knowledge of and understanding Japanese corporate culture: How to work in Japan, Japanese business culture, knowledge of the business industry, professional development.
3. Fundamental competencies for working people: Cooperation, teamwork, ability to be fit into Japanese organisations.

Other than the BJC, the definition from the “Advanced Education Program for Career Development of Foreign Students from Asia” (2007), which specialises in educating foreign students from Asia, with support from a consortium of global Japanese corporations and universities, provides a similar framework to the above:

1. Highly specialised education to meet corporate needs;
2. Business Japanese proficiency required for working in Japan;
3. Japanese business education; and
4. Fundamental competencies for working people.

These references suggest that not only a high proficiency level of the Japanese language but also various other knowledge and skills which enable foreign employees to work in the Japanese environment are required. However, these seem to be too demanding for MJSGEs because they have no opportunities to learn Japanese and obtain advanced level proficiency at universities in Malaysia, and also, all of these may not be simply applied to the workplace in Malaysia because the main language used in business is English and the business culture might be adapted to the local culture, although it depends on the industry and the role of each employee. Nevertheless, there must be some tendencies among all MJSGEs in terms of using the Japanese language at the workplace, and finding such tendencies would be a useful resource for Japanese language education in Malaysia.
2.11 Related Theories and Model for Culture, Language and Society

This section discusses in detail the theoretical approaches of communication, language, and culture that have guided this study. In order to investigate the requirements of the Japanese language of JCM and also the challenges faced by MJSGEs in JMC, the theoretical frameworks of Ethnography of Communication (Hymes, 1974, Neustupny, 1978, 1987) and Interactional Sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1992a, 1992b) are used to contextualise the present study.

2.11.1 Language and Social Theory

Most employees need to encounter career language use that is different from theirs as many business activities have expanded in the global market (Welch et al., 2005). In this study, language use refers to the linguistic medium that is used in a communication process. According to Cooren (2006), language use is a dynamic and dialectical communication process that involves building relationships and sharing knowledge between individuals and members of different groups. Hence, the communication process is considered to be the transfer of information and the organisation of thought patterns, actions and social relationships (Robichaud, 2006). As indicated above, the facilitating role played by language enables acquisition and the transmission of information when individuals engage in social interaction with others (Feely & Harzing, 2003). Hence, it is possible that language use may have an enormous effect on the definition and description of boundaries, the building of relationships, and the sharing of knowledge among groups in JCM.
The previous section described language as a socio-cultural resource that exists within multilingual organisations, highlighting how language can facilitate and reflect social identities and relationships. This section explores this notion further by emphasising the connection between the use of language and the underlying organisational social structures.

According to Gumperz and Hymes (1972) and Morgan (2004), language is the sociolinguistics concept of a speech community. It brings together a community of language users that are limited by a set of common linguistic codes and registers. It means that access to a speech community is determined by the internal members of a group in JCM. In order to gain acceptance into JCM, MJSGEs must undergo a socialisation process which involves the learning of norms and practices that are collectively practised, and the common language used in JCM.

Bourdieu (1991) described the social power of speech communities as compared to that of the local environment of interaction known as the linguistic market. In describing language use within a social context, Bourdieu (1991) explained how individuals can be excluded from society if they do not have the specific and minimum qualifications and competences that are required to be accepted by a particular group within the community. These competences include specialised knowledge, interaction style, or an acceptable level of proficiency of the language used by the majority. This shows that language competence involves not only a linguistic ability to choose the correct form of a particular language but also a pragmatic ability to adapt language to social situations and contexts.

The above discussion shows that language can represent some position of power that individuals can use in a particular social context to identify themselves.
For the purpose of investigating MJSGEs’ use of the Japanese language in the interactions between MJSGEs and JCM, Neustupny’s framework of interaction is applied.

2.11.3 Language and Social Interaction within the Multilingual Workplace

Theorists in management recognise the role that language plays as a facilitator for the acquisition and transmission of information by way of social interactions with others (Dhir & Gökê-Parifolá, 2002; Feely & Harzing, 2003). The ongoing expansion of business activities into a global market means that most MJSGEs and JCM interact in intercultural situations. Accordingly, MJSGEs may face more communication challenges and issues of misunderstandings mainly due to the lack of knowledge with regard to linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural rules (Gumperz, 1982; Neustupny, 1987).

Previous studies on language use within multinational companies suggest that multilingualism gives rise to a difficult situation that has a great implication for cross-cultural communication (Marschan-Piekkari el at., 1999). According to the research done by Bourdieu (1991) and Jenkins (2000), communication practices within most Danish organisations indicate that employees’ behaviour cannot be explained by way of their language skills alone. They must also be examined in relation to theories of social identity. Therefore, for this study, Neustupny’s framework of interaction will be applied to explore the challenges faced by MJSGEs in the use of the Japanese language in JCM.
2.11.4 Ethnography of Communication

This section discusses the literature on communication, language, and sociolinguistics which are important elements in Neustupny’s framework of interaction. This section starts with a description of Hymes’ Framework of Communication (1974) because Neustupny developed the rules of communication based on Hymes’ framework.

2.11.4(a) Hymes’ Framework of Communication (1974)

The ethnography of communication, which is based on anthropology and linguistics, was developed by Hymes in his series of papers published in the 1960s and 1970s, and further developed by Neustupny (1978, 1987) and others such as Saville-Troike (1989) and Bourdieu (1991). Hymes (1974) proposed an ethnographic framework to describe various factors involved in any particular communicative event.

According to Hymes, when a message is to be conveyed successfully and appropriately, numerous speech act components must be chosen by a speaker for the realisation of any act of speaking (Hymes 1972a, 1972b, 1974). According to Hymes (1972a, 1972b) and Saville-Troike (1989), the primary focus of communication ethnography is the community that uses and speaks the language. In other words, the construction of the speech community and communication within the community in a systematic way are the focus of communication ethnography. While it aims at describing and analysing communicative behaviour in particular cultural settings (a speech community), it is also intended to formulate theories “upon which to build a global meta-theory of human communication” (Saville-Troike 1989, p. 2).
Hymes lists eight components of communication (Hymes 1972a, 1972b, 1974; Saville-Troike 1989). The first component is the setting and scene, which indicates the time and place of a communicative event. The second one is the participants, including speakers, listeners, and/or audience. The third component is the ends which refer to socially and customarily expected outcomes as well as participants' goals. The fourth one is act sequence which includes message forms and content. The fifth component is key which indicates tone and manner of the transmission of the message, such as in an ironical way or in a serious mode. An instrumentality is the sixth component, which means choice of channel (for instance, oral, written, or manual) and choice of dialect, code, or register. The seventh component is the norms which participants use to interpret their ongoing interaction. The final component is genre which refers to types of discourse, such as lectures, prayers, poems, and jokes.

Based on Hymes’ framework of communication, Neustupny further developed the rules of communication (Neustupny, 1982, 1987). The eight components in Neustupny’s framework are switch-on rules, setting rules, participant rules, variety rules, content rules, message rules, channel rules, and management rules.

Various studies have adopted the ethnographical approach to analyse and describe spoken discourse. This approach has been used also to investigate how social meaning is conveyed by members of a speech community, what speakers should know to be able to communicate appropriately with members of a particular speech community, and the manner speakers acquire communicative competence. According to Hymes (1974) and Neustupny (1978, 1987), communicative competences are governed by the rules of communication, linguistics,
sociolinguistics, interaction and cultural knowledge. Hymes views language as “a socially situated cultural form” and as a dynamic form.

It can be concluded that any piece of communication transmitted and received requires the skills of speakers and listeners for the communication process to be successful. When misunderstanding or ambiguity is detected in the spoken language, a researcher may utilise the framework of Hymes and Neustupny to investigate and identify reasons for the specific problems and challenges.

2.11.4(b) Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS)

Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) is one of the research areas focusing on intercultural communication. IS analysis refers to naturally occurring interactions by taking participants’ social relationships into consideration (Schiffrin, 1994). IS is based on diverse disciplinary areas including anthropology, sociology, and linguistics, and its research focuses on issues regarding culture, society and language (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 95). Similar to ethnographers, IS researchers describe and analyse communication in terms of knowledge encompassing the linguistic, interactive, and sociocultural phenomena, which must be shared by participants. For instance, linguistic knowledge includes verbal and non-verbal elements and their patterns and organisations in particular speech events.

IS is a sub-discipline of linguistics, which is concerned with studies of intercultural or interethnic communication and studying how language users use social interactions to create meaning (Gumperz 1977, 1982). Therefore, in order to achieve communicative goals successfully and appropriately, participants should share interactive and sociocultural rules, in addition to having a common linguistic knowledge (Gumperz, 1982; Saville-Troike, 1989).
Interactive knowledge covers perception of salient features in communicative situations, selection, and interpretation of forms appropriate to specific situations, role, and relationships, norms of interaction and interpretation regarding contextualisation cues and strategies for achieving goals.

Sociocultural knowledge refers to knowledge regarding background information, such as socioeconomic structure, customs, and traditions of the society, participants’ values and attitudes, cognitive schemata, and the enculturation processes which include the transmission of knowledge and skills (Saville-Troike 1989).

In everyday face-to-face conversations, however, participants generally have a certain degree of shared knowledge through which they can interpret the meaning of the ongoing communication correctly and appropriately. Based on this shared knowledge with regard to linguistic, interpretive and sociocultural rules, participants can infer the propositional and interactional meanings of the discourse correctly and appropriately (Gumperz 1990).

The theoretical framework of IS consists of three important concepts: frame, contextualisation cues and inference. MJSGEs interpret the meaning of the ongoing communication based on an interactional frame of shared expectation and understanding, in the intercultural situations, MJSGEs may not mutually understand propositional meaning, mainly due to the lack of shared linguistic knowledge. They may also misinterpret the interactional meaning of the ongoing communication, such as the JCMs’ intentions and attitudes, primarily due to the lack of shared frames, common communicative rules, mutually understood interpretive norms and sociocultural rules. Interpretive norms refer to subtle contextualisation cues, which include verbal and non-verbal signs in the ongoing communication. These norms
help speakers to imply what they mean, or implicitly clarify what they mean, and also assist listeners to make inferences about the ongoing communication (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992, p. 229).

Contextualisation cues are conversational routines, non-verbal cues, code-switching, code-mixing and shift in register and variety in the spoken discourse, which may not be fully shared by participants in intercultural situations. The term inference has been used by Gumperz to refer to “those mental processes that allow conversationalists to evoke the cultural background and sociocultural expectations necessary to interpret speech” (cited in Duranti & Goodwin, 1992, p. 229).

IS researchers have shown how people with shared linguistic knowledge may misunderstand each other. This is because they may contextualise each other’s utterances very differently due to their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, they may interpret each other's intentions, attitudes, and abilities differently. This may often result in misunderstandings and speakers reaching a negative evaluation of their listeners who do not share the same interactive norms and sociocultural knowledge.

Therefore, MJSGEs with advanced Japanese proficiency may not have much difficulty in conveying and understanding propositional meaning when interacting with their Japanese interlocutors in JCM in Japanese. Hence, the communication challenges they are facing are not linguistic, but are more interactional and sociocultural in nature. Such misunderstandings are mainly due to differences in participants’ interpretive norms, interactive norms, and discourse strategies.

Therefore, in order to investigate why and how the challenges faced by MJSGEs in the use of the Japanese language in JCM, this study employs Neustupny’s framework of interaction, which considers language, cultural and social
factors affecting participants and situations (Tannen, 2005; Yamada, 1992; Szatrowski, 1994).

2.12 Neustupny's Framework of Interaction

The previous section has dealt with some central issues related to the purpose of the study and reviewed important related studies. In this present study, the researcher has adopted Neustupny’s framework to analyse the challenges faced by MJSGEs in the use of the Japanese language in JCM. In this current study, Neustupny’s framework of interaction was adopted to help the researcher to describe and analyse the data in terms of the eight components of communication.

The present research aims to investigate and identify the challenges faced by MJSGEs in using the Japanese language in JCM. To stay focused on the investigation mentioned above, it is of great significance to study the degree of shared knowledge among participants in terms of the linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociocultural rules of the language in use (in this research, Japanese). According to Neustupny's framework of interaction (Neustupny 1978, 1979, 1987, 1995), which was derived from Hymes (1972a, 1972b), interactive competence encompasses competencies in sociocultural practices and communication, which in turn, is made up of competencies in linguistics and sociolinguistics (Figure 2.5).

In order to interact effectively and appropriately in the business domain, participants must possess all types of competences, that is, linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural competences (Marriott, 1990).
Among the types of competences presented in Figure 2.5, linguistic competence is often considered to be the most vital competence for success in communication. However, previous studies (Gumperz 1982; Marriott 1990) report that mere linguistic competence to produce or decode grammatically correct sentences does not necessarily lead participants to engage in successful communication if they do not know the appropriate sociolinguistic rules which govern the particular communicative situation. Neustupny categorises rules of communication into the following eight rules (1982, 1987) which are based on Hymes’ theory of the ethnography of communication (Hymes 1972a, 1972b):

1. Switch-on rules (under what conditions?)
2. Setting rules (when and where?)
3. Participant rules (who?)
4. Variety rules (in what "language ")?
5. Content rules (what?)
6. Message rules (in what form?)
7. Channel rules (through what medium?)
8. Management rules (how to deal with communication problems?).
Sociocultural competence covers a wide range of components of culture and society, which do not seem to directly affect an individual's communicative competence or behaviour. Yet, without such knowledge, participants may not be able to interact appropriately, since they may fail to interpret the meaning of the discourse in progress or the intention of their counterparts in the discourse correctly and appropriately (Gumperz 1982; Neustupny 1985a, 1985b, 1987; Pride, 1985). Examples of these sociocultural components which may affect participants' interaction in the multilingual workplace are their counterparts’ way of life and values, as well as customs and tradition, religion, education system, history, geography, and the socio-economic structure of the society to which their counterparts in the discourse belong (Neustupny, 1987).

In this research, the cultural component is the Japanese communication style which is deeply rooted in the Japanese national culture that is practised at the JCM, and the language used is Japanese. In the context of the present study, the eight components of communication which form the framework of Neustupny's Framework of Interaction (1982, 1987) are:

1. Switch-on rules: Under what conditions do participants switch on communication in the Japanese language? With regard to switch-on rules, answers to the following questions may vary depending on situational variables: how and when communication in the Japanese language occurs; how and when it is reduced; how and when it is totally avoided.

2. Setting rules: Where and when do participants communicate? Setting rules govern the use of time and place of communication. Since the data were collected at various offices in JCM, the setting can be roughly categorised as a multilingual workplace. However, in terms of the time of occurrence of
communication in the Japanese language, it can be roughly divided into working and non-working hours (such as tea time, lunch time, and after-office hours).

3. Participant rules: Who participates in communication in the Japanese language? Participants are employers consisting mainly of Japanese native speakers (JCM) and MJSGEs who speak Japanese as a FL. They are categorised as members of the in-group, and their relationships can be categorised as employers-employees relationships. They may speak informal Japanese with fewer honorifics, since they are categorised as in-group members.

4. Variety rules: What types of languages do the participants use to communicate? In this research, MJSGEs in JCM interact with their Japanese employers mainly in the Japanese language. The spoken Japanese language in the data can be categorised into different varieties/registers, such as formal/informal varieties, native/non-native varieties, and spoken/written varieties.

5. Content rules: What content is communicated in the Japanese language? With regard to content rules, answers to the following questions may vary depending frequently communicated or discussed by participants; what content (topic) tends to be less frequently communicated or discussed; and what kind of attitudes, intention, and meta-messages (friendliness, closeness, distance, solidarity, rapport, or politeness) are communicated through the conversational processes.

communicate in a sequence. In relation to message rules, answers to the following questions vary depending on situational variables: what, and how discourse strategies are used; what kind of routine components (such as words/phrases, sentences, paralinguistic features, and non-verbal elements) are used; and how sequences discourse start, proceed and end.

7. Channel rules: What channels of communication are used? Messages can be communicated in various ways: verbal/non-verbal channels and oral/written channels. The choice of channel in the study is mostly oral.

8. Management rules: How do participants maintain their communication? Management rules regulate the way participants label communication acts, assess and evaluate them, interpret them, and adjust/correct them through repair if necessary. In the present study, employers in JCM and MJSGEs may apply different types of management rules due to their lack of shared knowledge pertaining to norms of interaction and interpretation.

When applying Neustupny’s framework in this study, it is apparent that among the eight components, those such as setting rules and participant rules are quite fixed, whereas those such as switch-on rules, variety rules, content rules, message rules, channel rules, and management rules may vary greatly depending on the situation.

2.12.1 The Language Management Process

Among the eight components, the management rules are the main rules of communication in Neustupny’s framework. The Language Management Theory, in accordance with the Language Planning Theory, was originally developed as the
"linguistics of language problems". The management rules help the interactants deal with communication problems in interaction.

The Language Management Theory (LMT) assumes that the speaker often “notes” the discourse the moment it deviates from or does not conform to the norm or expectation. The speaker may then “evaluate” the deviation (or other noted linguistic phenomenon) positively, negatively or in a neutral way. The speaker may further “select or plan an adjustment”, and finally, “implement” the adjustment (Kimura, 2014). Kimura (2014) has suggested adding another stage to the model, namely, a fifth stage, the “feedback”, or more generally “post-implementation” stage, since participants in language management sometimes seek feedback on, or check the success of, the adjustment implementation. The language management process constitutes different stages of language management as follows (Kimura, 2014, p. 6):

1. noting (of a deviation or other phenomenon)
2. evaluation
3. adjustment design
4. implementation
5. post-implementation/feedback

According to Neustupny’s theory of correction (1978), which was later referred to as “language management” (Neustupny, 1985a), deviation from linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociocultural norms may or may not be noted by either or both interactants of the communication process.

As explained earlier in this chapter, there are numerous factors involved in the effective and successful accomplishment of any conversation such as opening and closing, topic nomination and management and the organisation of turn-taking must be implemented by participants. Therefore, according to Neustupny’s language
management rules, the interactants adopt various adjustment strategies to cope with negatively evaluated inadequacies. To make sure the communication is successful, linguistic and sociolinguistic rules as well as the rules of linguistic correction (language management rules) must be implemented.

2.13 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework that is displayed in Figure 2.6 presents how the theories on which this study was built are interrelated and how they inform the construction and formulation of the research objectives. This theoretical framework exhibits clearly the variables that are the main concerns of this study. For each variable, the theoretical framework shows the theory from which the variable was taken or derived.

The two major categories of the theoretical framework are the variables and the theories. As shown in Figure 2.6, the dependent variables are the Japanese language and Japanese communication style. The Japanese language is a variable that is derived from Gumperz’s Interactional Sociolinguistics and Neustupny’s framework of interaction.

Figure 2.6 illustrates the use Neustupny’s framework of interaction to investigate how social meaning is conveyed by members of a speech community, what speakers should know in order to communicate appropriately within the speech community, and how speakers acquire communicative competence.

According to this theory, communicative competence consists of not only the rules of communication, including both linguistic and sociolinguistic rules, but also the rules of interaction, and cultural knowledge. The language that is investigated in this study is the Japanese language.
Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) views the communicative processes through which participants in face-to-face interactions mutually and collaboratively achieve the goal of shared understanding with regard to linguistic, interactive and sociocultural knowledge (Gumperz, 1992a). This theory focuses on issues regarding language, culture, and society (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 95). One of the earliest researchers in this discipline is Sapir-Whorf (1940). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis explains the link that exists between language and culture (1940). This hypothesis states that language helps us develop thoughts, and that culture and language are closely inter-related.

The Japanese communication style is the variable that was constructed in this study. It is based on Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) that investigates linguistically and culturally heterogeneous communities, and also the dimension of culture which are Hall’s dimensions of high-context culture and low-context culture with regard to style of expressions.

As shown in Figure 2.6 below, the relationships among variables are represented using the large bold arrows. These large bold arrows represent three research questions investigated in this study.
Figure 2.6: Neustupny’s Framework of Interaction (Neustupny, 1978, 1987, & 1995)
2.14 Related Studies on Japanese Language at the Workplace

There is a lack of empirical studies that examine whether knowledge of a foreign language and culture gives MJSGEs the added advantage at the workplace. The benefits of having adequate knowledge of a foreign language could be intangible and difficult to quantify. Some of the previous studies have focused on recruiters’ demand for foreign language skills (Grosse, 2010; Kumayama & Makita-Discekici, 2010), the economic value of foreign languages (Grosse, Critz, & Tuman, 1998), American and European perspectives on Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) (Crosse, 2004) and the evolution of LSP (Grosse, 2007). Furthermore, several books have been published on issues related to business languages, particularly those edited by Fryer and Guntermann (1998) and Abrate (1998).

Based on interviews with both business people and some Japanese employers in Hong Kong, Aibara (2009) reported that there are four problematic areas Japanese employers face when communicating with Hong Kong business people. These problems are (1) contact situations enlarged the psychological distances between Hong Kong business people and Japanese employers, (2) gaps of understanding about job responsibilities, (3) differences of communicative behaviour due to pragmatic differences, and (4) lack of communication ability. In another study, Aibara (2012) further examined the perception differences between Hong Kong business people and Japanese employers who were working in Hong Kong. She recommended that for the purpose of defining the scope of Business Japanese Education, it is important to exclude general business skills from Japanese language competence, and judge with great care and detail the kind of business skills that should be included.
On the other hand, from the perspective of employees, research done by Miyazoe Wong (1996) in Hong Kong reported that non-Japanese employees who work in the Japanese-related companies evaluated their Japanese linguistic skills as being more or less satisfactory to carry out their assignments, but they admitted that they should continue developing them. They unanimously agree that the novice or intermediate level of Japanese linguistic competence was “useless” in workplace settings. Since the activities at the workplace are highly task-oriented with a rigid time frame, a mediocre level of Japanese proficiency may actually lead to misunderstanding and confusion. Most of them mentioned that their Japanese sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence should be developed further to work more smoothly and successfully with Japanese. The sociolinguistic competence that most of them found difficult was related to the usage of honorifics, back channelling, choice of topics and pragmatic competence. On the other hand, pragmatic competence enables them to appropriately express apology and react to compliments in Japanese.

From the employers’ point of view, non-Japanese staff members are highly regarded only when their professional knowledge is excellent and vital to the development and operations of the company. They will not view non-Japanese employees’ Japanese language proficiency as an asset unless it is of an advanced or superior level as only this level of proficiency can facilitate and enhance their communication and the business operations of their firms (Wong, 1996).

Although the studies reviewed above were carried out in Hong Kong, for the purpose of assisting MJSGEs to succeed in attaining the acceptable level at their workplace, the Malaysian higher institutions should design a comprehensive curriculum and syllabus to develop students’ awareness and understanding of the
Japanese culture and enhance their linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural competence in the Japanese language.

The decline in business in Japan particularly as a result of decreasing and aging population has forced some Japanese companies in their home country to take the transformation route to become globally-focused companies. Japanese companies are accelerating their globalisation efforts by opening up positions for foreign employees. Due to this reason, an increasing number of Japanese companies are looking to universities particularly those in ASEAN countries to employ excellent fresh graduates particularly those from Malaysia and Singapore (Izumi et al., 2014).

Above all, Malaysians and Singaporeans with adequate Japanese language proficiency are highly sought after by JCM and those in Singapore. However, few studies have been carried out on how the Japanese language is used by Malaysian and Singaporean business people, what competences are necessary to work for Japanese-related companies, and what types of challenges the business people face when they communicate in the Japanese language.

One of the studies that have focused on Japanese language needs that have been conducted in Malaysia are the studies done by Shimada and Shibukawa (1999) who investigated the needs of the Japanese language by Japanese companies in five (5) Asian nations namely Seoul, Dalian, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, and Bangkok. They reported that there are gaps between expectations by Japanese companies and foreign employees working for Japanese companies and concluded that Japanese companies have too high expectations on the use of the Japanese language. However, the local employees only use the Japanese language to greet and to engage in daily conversation with internal parties.
In the Malaysian context, a study done by Tiong (2000) in a German multinational company to investigate the importance of language skills for the different levels of job requirements showed that there are different types of language association between White Collar and Blue Collar workers. Furthermore, Tiong’s (2000) findings revealed that there was a significant correlation between English language and the White Collar Staff and Malay language with the Blue Collar Staff.

In another study conducted in Malaysia by Ong, Leong and Paramjeet (2011), to determine the English language skills required by local public university graduates at the workplace in Malaysia indicated all the four skills of speaking, writing, reading and listening are required for these tasks. However, most of them experienced difficulties carrying out everyday workplace tasks due to a lack of proficiency in and mastery of English language. Their problems lie mainly in the area of speaking and writing skills. From the finding above, it is expected that the MJSGEs may be facing the problem in same skills as both speaking and writing are productive skills.

Harada (2004), Horii (2012), Maeno et al. (2013), and Tsubosaka (2012) analysed the needs of the Japanese language in Japanese-owned companies in Bangkok. The common findings from the needs analysis suggested that the major factor of communication breakdowns is cultural differences. In India, Mugdha (2007) and Kondo, Kim, Mugdha & Ikeda (2013) revealed that Indian employees working for Japanese employers in India felt dissatisfied as they cannot succeed in business communication at the workplace although they have achieved intermediate level of Japanese language qualification. However, the opinion of the Japanese employers is that the Japanese language courses that are offered in India are not able
to ensure their employees have acquired the ability to respond appropriately in business communication at the workplace.

Furthermore, studies carried out investigating the business communication problems of Japanese companies in Taiwan have revealed that both Japanese expatriates and local Taiwanese found that working ethics and cultural values were the factors causing the perception gap between the Japanese expatriates and the Taiwanese (e.g., Chen, 2010; Kudou, 2004, 2007; Kondo, 2007; Muto & Tobe, 2004; Suzuki, 2012). Kondo (2007) concluded that the communication conflicts between native Japanese business people and non–native Japanese business people from Asian countries are stronger than those from Western countries, and the conflicts become worse after 5 years of working in the same environment.

It should be noted that all studies reviewed above were conducted in various Asian countries. Furthermore, previous studies have shown Japanese sociolinguistics and sociocultural competence should be developed further to enable a non-native Japanese language speaker to fit into a Japanese company more smoothly and successfully.

With reference to the studies reviewed above, it can be concluded that the expectations of Japanese employers of their employees’ Japanese sociolinguistics and sociocultural competence are high. Thus, the urgent issues that deserve attention of researchers and institutions of higher education in Malaysia are related to how to prepare locally-designed Japanese language programmes that help graduates to attain the expected Japanese sociolinguistics and sociocultural competence by the time they graduate. In order to help the graduates to succeed in attaining the level in their Japanese language which is expected in the Japanese-related companies, there is a
need to investigate in detail the requirements of proficiency in the Japanese language of the Japanese companies and the problems faced by MJSGEs in the workplace.

As can be seen above, a number of studies have been conducted from various perspectives and recent studies tend to focus on communication conflicts or intercultural problems. Based on these previous studies, the present study aims to obtain the overall picture of the use of the Japanese language and the language challenges faced by MJSGEs in JCM.

2.15 Chapter Summary

The main focuses of this chapter are (1) reviewing previous related studies, (2) presenting some important major concepts, and (3) describing related theories and models. This chapter has highlighted that it is obvious that FL learning consists of several important components that include proficiency of language, competence in grammar and communication, and a change in attitude towards one’s own and others’ cultures. Learning a FL involves learning how to communicate as well as discovering how much flexibility the target language accords learners the ability to maneuver grammatical forms, meanings and sounds, and to reflect on, or even go against, socially accepted norms in both of their own culture and that of the culture of the target language (Nagai, 2011; Ni, 2011). Therefore, teaching and learning a FL cannot be achieved properly without some insights into the culture of the FL speakers (Soon, 2013, 2014).

The results of the literature review affirm that cross-cultural communication is of the utmost importance to members in a society, especially in international organisations. Therefore, to be able to achieve success and effectiveness in cross-cultural communication, individuals are required to recognise, learn, and value other
cultures in addition to learning to use the FL. This is because it is difficult for people of different cultures to communicate with each other.

Individuals of different cultural backgrounds must possess and cultivate a caring attitude to enable them to overcome the feelings of superiority or inferiority. Therefore, cultural values must be acknowledged, and individuals of a communication process must listen actively to ensure that facts, opinions, and emotions that are communicated are correctly received and understood.

Having reviewed the literature underpinning cross-cultural communication, Interactional Sociolinguistics and Neustupny’s Framework of Communication, it can be concluded that it is of the utmost importance for mutual understanding among individuals and for individuals to accommodate other cultures to successfully and effectively achieve cross-cultural communication, especially in an environment or society in which cross-cultural communication in essential and important for the survival of mankind.
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

While Chapter One has mainly introduced the research problem, the research objectives, and the significance of the study, Chapter Two reviewed the related literature and offered a detailed explanation on the related theories and models concerning culture, language, and social factors. The current chapter presents and describes the research design of this study, sampling procedures, and the instruments used for data collection. Additionally, techniques and procedures used for data analysis are provided in this chapter.

This chapter starts with a description of the research design of this study. This description also provides justifications for the selection of the selected research design. The research design of this study is a mixed-methods design that was employed to investigate the requirements of Japanese language proficiency by the Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) to meet entry-level employment requirements of JCM. This research also identified the levels of importance of Japanese language skills used by MJSGEs working in JCM. Furthermore, this research examined the challenges encountered by the Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency. These challenges were examined in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Additionally, the study focused on how MJSGEs working in JCM overcame the challenges they encountered in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in JCM.

The present study attempted to answer the following four research questions:
1. What are the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in JCM?
2. What are the levels of importance of Japanese language skills which are used by MJSGEs working in JCM?
3. What are the challenges faced by MJSGEs in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM?
4. How do MJSGEs working in JCM overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

3.2 Research Design

The research design of this study is a mixed-methods design in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Justifications for the selection of this particular research design are provided in this chapter. The following section describes the research design, the data collection method, the sampling method and the sample, the instruments, and the processes and techniques employed for data analysis. Figure 3.1 below shows how the research design of this study is connected to both the research questions and the data of the study.
As shown in Figure 3.1 above, according to Punch & Oancea (2014), any research design covers four main aspects or components which are interrelated and interconnected. These four aspects are listed within the large brackets. While the first aspect is related to the strategy to be used in research, the second aspect is the framework to be utilised in the design of the study. The third aspect concerns the subject (what or who will be studied) in the study. The fourth aspect includes the tools, instruments, and procedures that will be employed for collecting and analysing the data.

The last few decades have witnessed the emergence of a new trend in conducting social research. This new trend is the employment of the mixed-methods
research design that has evolved as a new alternative or as a “third way” in research (Creswell, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Regarding this new trend of research, Flick (1992) argued for a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research, where each approach follows its own “method-appropriate criteria” (p.175). In the mixed-methods research design, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed for the aim of answering a particular research question or set of questions (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Among other approaches, the most common and well-known approach to the mixed-method in research is the triangulation design (Creswell, Plano-Clark, 2011; Guttmann and Hanson, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). As highlighted by Morse (1991, p. 12), the purpose of this particular design is “to gather different but complementary data on the same topic” in order to understand the research problem completely. For the present study, the triangulation mixed-method design was employed. It involves the sequential and separate collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Figure 3.2 shows the triangulation design as proposed by Creswell (2003, p.214)
There are various benefits of triangulation for this study. The employment of this design will enable the researcher to produce greater and richer data.

Among the four variants of the concurrent triangulation design, the convergence model (Creswell, 1999; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) was chosen and used in this study. Using the convergence model as reference, the researcher collected and analysed both quantitative and qualitative data separately on the same phenomenon. Then, the different results were converged during the interpretation to discuss whether the results from both study components converge or show divergence. The researcher’s justification for this variant of concurrent triangulation design is that this variant of design helps the researcher to obtain well-validated and substantiated findings and it compensates for the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another method (Creswell et al., 2003; Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2015).
Figure 3.3 above shows the variant of the convergence model triangulation design by Creswell (1999). The convergence of the results is performed through comparing and contrasting the different results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). As reflected in this model, the mixing of the two methods occurred at two stages: the data analysis stage and the interpretation of the results stage. In this study, the results obtained through quantitative and qualitative analyses are used to compare and validate quantitative results with qualitative results.

3.3 Triangulation Design

The four research questions of this study were addressed by collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data. The following sub-sections explain the quantitative data and qualitative data instruments and how they were triangulated.
3.3.1 Quantitative Approach

In this study, the quantitative approach was used for the purpose of wider representation to answer the four research questions. The Japanese Language Questionnaire (JLQ) was administered to participants selected through purposive sampling (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This type of sampling is a procedure a researcher may employ to choose a particular group of participants based on predetermined criteria about the extent to which the sample selected could contribute to the study (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996).

JLQ was used to investigate the level of importance of Japanese language skills used by MJSGEs working in JCM. Furthermore, JLQ was also used to obtain challenges experienced by MJSGEs working in JCM.

3.3.2 Qualitative Approach

According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), data triangulation in a qualitative study occurs in a variety of forms. Moreover, Creswell (2007) and Taylor, DeVault and Bogdan (2015) stated that data collection in qualitative research is normally elaborate, taking into account various sources of data collection, such as interviews, field notes, documents, and audio-visual materials.

For this study, the methodological triangulation of the qualitative data was performed with the use of semi-structured interviews with the participants who were MJSGEs; audio-taped and transcribed, and semi-structured interviews with the JCM participants who are Japanese employers or supervisors of MJSGEs (audio-taped and transcribed). Conducting an interview is one of the most common methods of collecting qualitative data and it has been employed in several previous studies (e.g.,
Peltokorpi, 2007). The interviews used in this study is a follow-up procedure that followed the administration of the questionnaire.

The interviews used in this study are semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are mostly planned carefully before they are carried out (Spaulding, Lodico & Voegtle, 2013). Taking these issues into account, prior to interviewing the participants, the researcher of this study developed an interview protocol that included a list of questions (semi-structured interviews with the participants who were MJSGEs was pilot tested with nine MJSGEs, and semi-structured interviews with the JCM participants who are Japanese employers or supervisors of MJSGEs was pilot tested with two JCM employers) to be asked in the interviews along with the major topics to be the focus of discussion with the interviewees.

The interviews carried out in this study focused on interviewee-led accounts of their experiences, their challenges regarding Japanese language used, and how MJSGEs working in JCM overcame challenges which they encountered in their Japanese language proficiency.

3.3.3 Triangulation Design and Data Analysis

There are several statistical techniques that are applied to answer research questions. Statistical analysis involving descriptive and inferential analysis, frequency count, reliability test, and chi-square was carried out to answer the research questions. However, the thematic analysis approach was used to analyse MJSGEs’ and JCMs’ interview transcriptions.

Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated in this study to reveal areas of convergence and also areas in which the data suggest divergent findings. It
is worthy to mention that collecting both quantitative and qualitative data is justified. The merger of both forms of data (quantitative and qualitative data) in this research allowed the researcher to compare and validate the results obtained from two different perspectives. Figure 3.4 displays the visual diagram of the triangulation design of this study.

As it is shown at the top of Figure 3.4, the main purpose of the study is to examine Japanese Language skills’ proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) working in JCM. Based on this purpose, a mixed-methods design was selected. The figure also reveals that purposive sampling was adopted to select participants to answer the questionnaire and to select participants for the semi-structured interviews. MJSGEs from the Penang Japanese Language Society, Perak Malaysia-Japanese Friendship Society, Malaysia Japanese Language Society, and Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur were invited to take part in the study. Before obtaining the consent of MJSGEs to participate in this research, they were given an oral briefing on the nature and objective of the research, the requirements of participation in the study, the method of data collection, and their responsibility as potential research participants. In the middle of the figure, the techniques and procedures of data analysis are shown. While statistical analysis was used to analyse data obtained from questionnaires, coding and content analysis were used to analyse qualitative data obtained from the interviews. The results of the analyses of both the quantitative data and qualitative data were triangulated and integrated, as is shown at the bottom of figure. Finally, the interpretation of the results was largely based on comparing the results of the analysis of the quantitative data and qualitative data.
Investigating Japanese Language skills’ proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) in Japanese Related Companies in Malaysia (JRCSM)

Mixed Method

**QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION**
Administration of the Japanese Language Questionnaire (JLQ) to MJSGE (n=65)

Non-Probability Sampling (Purposive)

**QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION**
Administration of semi-structured interviews:
1. Semi-Structured Interview with MJSGE (n = 17 MJSGEs)
2. Semi-Structured Interview with JRCSM employers (n = 8 employers)

Sampling Procedure

Nested Sampling Design

Analysis of the Japanese Language Questionnaire (JLQ) data:
- descriptive statistics
- Inferential statistics
- Frequency count
- Reliability test
- chi-square
- Anova

Results of quantitative data analysis

1. Analysis of semi-structured interview with MJSGEs
2. Analysis of semi-structured interviews with JRCSM participants:
   - Coding, content thematic analysis
   - Analysis for recurrent themes

Results of qualitative data analysis

Triangulation and Integration of the quantitative and qualitative

Interpretation based on comparison of QUAN and QUAL

Figure 3.4 Triangulation design for data collection and data analysis
3.4 Sampling Procedures

This study utilised purposive sampling with the aim of selecting all accessible participants who could provide accurate and reliable information regarding the research problem. This is because purposive sampling involves selecting a sample that yields the most comprehensive understanding in the form of rich information on the topic and comprises elements that encompass the most representative qualities of the population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Babbie, 2007). In addition, according to Creswell (1998) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), purposive sampling ensures that only participants who can make a valuable contribution to the research are chosen to participate in the study.

The objective of sampling individuals for the quantitative research is based on the criteria of choosing individuals that are representative of the Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduates Employees (MJSGEs) who graduated from local public Malaysian higher education institutions so that the results can be generalised to the population of the study. For this study, MJSGEs working in JCM were selected. Participants were chosen as it was believed that they could provide information that contributed to the study and help the researcher to answer the research questions of the study (Plowright, 2011)

3.4.1 Sampling Selection Criteria for MJSGEs

The Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) who graduated from local public Malaysian higher education institutions and have the minimum of the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) qualification with N3 or above (N2 and N1) were selected for this study. These graduates have the ability to understand the Japanese language used in everyday situations, and they are able to
navigate through more complex daily living situations. They have worked in JCM for more than one year — a duration that helped them gain experience in dealing with the JCM employers at their workplace. Only the local public Malaysian higher education institutions graduates were selected in this study. This was done because, based on the JLPT registration data from northern region, more than 70% of the candidates were from the local public Malaysian higher education institutions, followed by students from the residential schools and working adults (Registration data from Penang Japanese Language Society, 2016).

The selection of this group of participants in this study was based on three criteria. First, participants have to be a degree holder who graduated from local public Malaysian higher education institutions. Second, they have learned Japanese language in local public Malaysian higher education institutions and have a minimum level of The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) qualification N3 or above. Third, they have worked in JCM in the manufacturing sector for more than one year and have dealt with JCM employers at their workplace.

The justification of selecting these MJSGEs based on their JLPT level is because from the literature review in Chapter Two, among the 18 local public universities that offer the Japanese language education programmes, two universities offer the Japanese language as major or minor programme while the other 16 universities plus the 2 universities offer the Japanese language as an option course or elective course. These 18 public universities have different Japanese language course outline, therefore they have different way of evaluation. In addition, the current generation of university students had studied the Japanese language specifically for the business advantage (Aziz, 2009; Maekrt survey by PPBLT, USM, 2008; Yeoh, Tengku Sepora & Manjet, 2011, 2016, 2017). Therefore, since 2010, JLPT results
has expanded from skill measurement to include employment screening and evaluation for promotions and pay raises as well as a measure of one’s language qualification (The Official World Wide Japanese Language Proficiency Test Website, 2017). In this study, JLPT had been used as a criteria to select the MJSGEs. This is because JLPT is administered worldwide to evaluate and certify proficiency in the Japanese language of non-native speakers.

Four organisations were officially approached to obtain relevant data concerning the MJSGEs population. This was done through sending a letter to each organisation (Appendix A). These four organizations are Penang Japanese Language Society (PJLS), Perak Malaysia-Japanese Friendship Society (PMJFS), Malaysia Japanese Language Society (MJLS), and Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (JFKL). Data obtained from the four organisations indicate that there were 126 MJSGEs registered in the three Japanese language societies and The Japan Foundation in January 2016. Among these 126 MJSGEs, 82 obtained JLPT N3 and above.

The justification of selecting these MJSGEs from these four organisations is that most of the universities in Malaysia can only offer elementary level Japanese language courses. Two exceptions among these universities are Universiti Malaya and USM. While Universiti Malaya offers the Japanese language as a major programme, USM offers the Japanese language as a minor programme. Therefore, it is difficult to claim that students who join these programs can gain an acceptable level of proficiency level of Japanese language before they start working at Japanese companies in the country. After completing their studies, graduates planning to work in JCM and to continue their Japanese language study can choose among the Penang Japanese Language Society, Perak Malaysia-Japanese Friendship Society, Malaysia Japanese Language Society, and Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur.
Organisations mentioned above were approached in order to get the relevant data about possible participants in this study. The permission of the chairperson in each of the four organisations of MJSGEs was obtained before the administration of the questionnaire (Appendix B). Before obtaining the consent of MJSGEs to participate in this research, the researcher gave them an oral briefing on the nature of the research, the requirements of participation in the study, the method of data collection, and their responsibility as potential research participants. They were then given the participation consent forms to participate in the study (Appendix C). Interested MJSGEs were requested to contact the researcher and confirm their participation in the study and at the same time submit the completed consent forms.

The participants in this study who agreed to voluntarily participate in the research had obtained a minimum of N3 or above in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) qualification, had worked in JCM in the manufacturing sector for more than one year, and had dealings with JCM participants at their workplace. The questionnaires were completed by 65 MJSGEs. After that, 17 participants from the 65 participants who completed the JLQ volunteered to take part in the semi-structured interviews. Although the number of participants in the semi-structured interviews is small, the insights generated through a qualitative inquiry depend more on the richness of the information obtained from the interviewees for meaning making and not making general hypothesis statements (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Mason, 2010). Moreover, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2005) “The subjectivity which is built into a non-probability sample derives from the researcher targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself” (p.102).
3.4.2 Sampling Selection Criteria for JCM Participants

The JCM participants in this study comprised eight Japanese business individuals who were approached through email correspondences (Appendix D). The researcher obtained their information and details through MJSGEs who had participated in semi-structured interviews as their employee or subordinate. The JCM participants were invited to participate in the study and upon their agreement, they were requested to sign a letter of consent which provided them with adequate information about the nature of the research (Appendix E). The participants were, for the most part, business owners, directors, production managers, marketing managers and business executives. All these participants represented some well-established companies.

Three basic criteria were used in the selection of the JCM participants for the study. The first criterion for selection was the participant’s nationality; a Japanese employer who had interactions with the MJSGE participants for at least one year. The second criterion used in the selection was that the JCM participants had to be the Japanese employers from JCM who were working and communicating most frequently with the MJSGE participants in the semi-structured interviews. This is to ensure that the research problem can be identified comprehensively. The third criterion was that the selected JCM participants should have been Japanese employers from JCM that are in the manufacturing sector.

Among the 17 JCM employers who were invited to participate in this study, only eight JCM employers gave their permission to be interviewed. The JCM employers were selected to be interviewed because they were involved in supervising MJSGEs (the participants in the semi-structured interviews). In the other words, they were selected using the nested sampling method. The eight JCM participants were
selected from seven different companies from Penang, Kedah, Perak, and Kuala Lumpur. The interviews focused on participants’ experiences and the requirement of Japanese language for MJSGEs. Table 3.1 below shows the number of employers who participated in the interviews and their company location in Malaysia. For ethical considerations, the company names are not given here.

Table 3.1 Employers and Companies in Malaysia included in the Semi-Structured Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of the JCM</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W (Kuala Lumpur)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W (Kuala Lumpur)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (Perak)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (Kedah)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (Kedah)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P (Penang)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P (Penang)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up, a purposive sampling was utilised in this study for the selection of employers to participate in the semi-structured interviews. This sampling was utilised as the selected participants have experienced the phenomenon being investigated. This measure ensured that data converged more easily (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

3.5 Research Site

The site of the current study is JCM. There are 1,412 Japanese companies operating in Malaysia, creating more than 11,000 job opportunities (JETRO, 2011). In 2011, it was reported that among the 1,412 JCM, 730 JCM were from the manufacturing sector. It has been pointed out that 52% of JCM are involved in manufacturing. So, the site of the research focused on the manufacturing JCM in Malaysia because they constitute more than 50% as compared to other sectors, such
as sales office (11%), foreign trade and commerce (10%), services (9%), and other non-manufacturing businesses.

Based on the data from JETRO (2014), the distribution of the manufacturing Japanese Companies in Malaysia, the largest numbers of these companies are in Selangor, Johor, Penang, Kedah, and Perak. Only the JCM in the northern region of Malaysia (Penang, Kedah, and Perak) and Kuala Lumpur were selected in this research because MJSGEs who participated in the semi-structured interviews were mainly from these four areas.

3.6 Research Instruments

Based on the research objectives, research questions and theoretical framework, three research instruments were employed to collect data. These instruments are questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with MJSGEs and semi-structured interviews with employers selected from JCM. In the present study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to enhance the triangulation process. This triangulation method, as highlighted by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2002), provides a helpful technique with multiple perspectives on a single phenomenon.
According to Creswell (2005), the researcher uses various techniques to analyse data from each instrument and to find evidence to ensure that the study will be accurate because data have been drawn from multiple sources of information. Taking this into account, the researcher of this study employed this triangulation technique for increasing reliability and validity. Figure 3.5 illustrates the phases of data collection and the instrument(s) employed in each of the present study. As shown in Figure 3.5, for conducting the present study, the first phase involved collecting data through the questionnaires that were given to MJSGEs. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were carried out with MJSGEs. Finally, the third phase included carrying out semi-structured interviews with JCM employers.

**Figure 3.5** Instruments of the present study

| First Phase: Japanese Language Questionnaire for MJSGEs  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(65 MJSGEs completed the questionnaire)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Second Phase: Semi-Structured Interviews with MJSGEs  
| (17 MJSGEs who completed the questionnaire volunteered to be interviewed) |
| Third Phase: Semi-Structured Interviews with Employers of the MJSGEs from JCM  
| (Eight employers of the 17 MJSGEs interviewed agreed to be interviewed) |
3.6.1 Japanese Language Questionnaire (JLQ)

The first instrument used in this study for data collection was the questionnaire. The researcher adapted the Japanese Language Questionnaire from Shimada and Shibukawa (1999) and Tiong (2002). The questionnaire forms the main instrument for collecting data whereby it was used to help systematise data collection and to provide a database for analysing Japanese language used and challenges faced by MJSGEs in JCM. The items in the questionnaire are mainly close-ended for the ease of quantification and comprehensiveness. All items in the questionnaire are structured in the objective form, utilising the Likert scale. The participants were required to simply indicate the extent for various statements which are related to the level of the importance of Japanese language skills used by MJSGEs working in JCM and also the challenges they faced. Table 3.2 below presents the details of the questionnaire and justification items adapted from Shimada & Shibukawa (1999) and Tiong (2000).
Table 3.2 Details of the adapted items and justification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Items and description</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section I – Personal Information</td>
<td>9 items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section II – Academic Achievement and Level of Japanese Language Proficiency</td>
<td>6 items</td>
<td>□80-100% □50-70% □20-40% □Less than 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section III – Japanese Language Use at the Workplace</td>
<td>2 items were adapted from Shimada &amp; Shibukawa (1999). (Approximate percentage of time using the Japanese language for work-related matters).</td>
<td>□80-100% □50-70% □20-40% □Less than 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section IV – Identification of: 1) Japanese Language Use and Related to Job Descriptions</td>
<td>Question 1 was adapted from Tiong (2000). (Regularity of languages used at the workplace). Questions 2 and 3 were adapted from Tiong (2000). Question 2 was on the importance of language skills required by the MJSGEs to have in Japanese language proficiency. Question 3 was divided into four sections: Section A: Listening Skills Section B: Speaking Skills Section C: Reading Skills Section D: Writing Skills</td>
<td>□Very important □Important □Less important □Not important at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Challenges Faced in the Japanese Language at JCM</td>
<td>Question 4 was adapted from Shimada &amp; Shibukawa (1999) Question 4 (MJSGEs encounter any challenges in using Japanese Language at work). Question 5 was adapted from Shimada &amp; Shibukawa (1999) Question 5 was on the challenges faced in the use of Japanese language at the workplace. Question 5 was expanded into 6 detailed sub-items on challenges faced.</td>
<td>□Yes □No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire includes four sections. While the purpose of Section I in the questionnaire is to investigate MJSGEs’ personal information, Section II focuses on obtaining information on participants’ academic achievement including their level of Japanese language proficiency. Section III is concerned with the use of Japanese language at the workplace, specifically the percentage of time spent using Japanese for work-related matters. Section IV aims to identify the importance of language skills required for job descriptions and the challenges faced in using Japanese at the workplace. Question 4 was adapted from Shimada & Shibukawa (1999).
of Japanese language proficiency. Items in Section III focus on obtaining the percentage of using the Japanese language for work-related matters. Section IV is to investigate the level of importance of Japanese language proficiency skills used by MJSGEs working in JCM. Although the last question in this section is a closed-ended questions, open-ended questions were also given for the participants to provide their experience related to the challenges they faced while working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency.

The Japanese Language Questionnaire (JLQ) (Appendix F) was administered to MJSGEs. The Japanese Language (JLQ) was adapted based on items in questionnaires of Shimada and Shibukawa (1999) and Tiong (2000). Items from Shimada and Shibukawa’s questionnaire are considered suitable to be selected for this study as the questionnaire has been pilot-tested and administered with significant statistical findings to overseas foreign employees in five cities: Seoul, Dalian, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, and Bangkok (Shimada & Shibukawa, 1999). As Shimada and Shibukawa’s questionnaire was written in the Japanese language, the researcher had to translate this questionnaire from the Japanese language to the English language. After the translation, the questionnaire was sent to the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur for verification of its content. The foundation requested two Japanese language lecturers who are experts in Japanese language education and had experience in research to verify the translation (Appendix G). Tiong’s (2000) questionnaire that was used for the construction of the questionnaire used in this current study has also produced reliable and valid data. The JLQ also included items for gathering demographic and background information of the participants.

To validate the questionnaire, the JLQ used in this study was tested in a pilot study. The JLQ was pilot-tested in November 2016 with 20 MJSGEs. The aim
of employee questionnaire was to investigate the use of the Japanese language and the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM.

3.6.2 Interviews

Interviews in general are an essential method among other methods used to collect qualitative data. Bryman (2006) pointed out that the semi-structured interview is almost the most popular type of data collection method used in qualitative research. At the most basic level, interviews are conversations that are done to comprehend the world from the participant’s standpoint (Johnstone, 2000). Moreover, Kvale (1996) suggested that interviews diverge from scientific explanation, instead aiming to clarify the meanings of personal experience and the lived world of the participant. The mixture of structured and semi-structured questions is a common combination in ethnographic research (Creswell, 2003; Kvale, 1996).

The second and third instruments utilised in this study were semi-structured interviews for MJSGEs and JCM employers/supervisors. For this research purpose, the interview questions related to the research questions are provided in Appendix H and Appendix I. While Appendix H lists the semi-structured interview questions for MJSGE participants, Appendix I itemises the semi-structured interview questions given to JCM participants. Using these types of questions, the researcher could identify, describe, and classify the themes. The interview questions were adapted from Shimada & Shibukawa (1999) and Tiong (2000).

According to Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and Mckinney (2012), it is important to ascertain that the questions in the semi-structured interviews are explicit and they are easy to be understood by the participants. Furthermore, it is
recommended to ensure that participants can understand and comprehend the questions, recall the information from their memory, regulate the answers with the questions and finally provide the required response (Sudman, Bradburn, & Schwarz, 2010). To confirm the content validity, the two semi-structured interviews (the semi-structured interview questions for MJSGEs and the semi-structured interview questions for JCM participants) were reviewed by two lecturers: A and B from the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur. They are experts in Japanese language education and have experience in research. The Japan Foundation has dispatched highly-qualified Japanese experts to core Japanese language institutions around the world to advise on curriculum and teaching material development, nurture local teachers, support inter-teacher network construction, etc., with the aim of promoting the localisation and independence of Japanese language education in each country.

Therefore, the two experts were sought for the purpose of checking drafts of questions, assessing whether the questions meet the study objectives and whether they are consistent with the principles of suitable questionnaire design. The two experts confirmed the quality of the questions in the semi-structured interviews.

3.6.2(a) Semi-Structured Interview with the MJSGEs.

In the semi-structured interviews with the MJSGEs, the nested sampling design was used. Nested sampling design, represents sampling strategies that facilitate valid comparison of two or more members of the same subgroup, wherein one or more members of the subgroup represent a sub-sample of the full sample. The aim of this sub-sampling is to take a sub-sample of cases from which further data can be extracted (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Therefore, the MJSGEs (65 of the MJSGEs) who responded to the questionnaire were invited to participate in this
semi-structured interviews (17 of the MJSGEs). When the interview was scheduled, the venue and time of the interview were also identified.

The purpose of these interviews with the MJSGEs is to collect information about the use of Japanese language and the challenges faced by them at their workplace and the corrective measures taken by them to overcome the challenges in JCM.

The semi-structured interview sessions were held at various dates, times and venues. Venues for interviews were selected based on what was convenient to the 17 participants who volunteered to take part in the semi-structured interviews. Each semi-structured interview session lasted between 20 minutes to half an hour. In each session, the participants were provided with an introduction to the study and purpose of the semi-structured interview. It is one kind of data collection process in which during the interview, the researcher asks questions and records answers from only one participant at a time (Creswell, 2012). Each participant was also given a consent form (Appendix J). All participants who participated in the semi-structured interviews signed the consent forms and returned them to the researcher during their interview sessions.

All interviews were audio-taped and the researcher transcribed the responses immediately after the interview ended. Audiotaping the interview increases the reliability and validity of the interview (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Although there were interview guidelines (Appendix H), the participants were given the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns pertaining to any aspects of the use of the Japanese language, challenges faced by them in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the measures taken by them to overcome the challenges in JCM. The transcriptions were analysed using qualitative text
analysis. According to Creswell (2003), this kind of qualitative text analysis is performed to “generate themes and statements from participants in the initial qualitative data collection stage” (p. 221).

3.2.6 (b) Semi-Structured Interview with the JCM

The JCM employers of those MJSGEs who participated in the semi-structured interviews were approached to participate in the semi-structured interviews. While it was important to understand the use of the Japanese language, challenges faced by the MJSGEs and the strategies they used to overcome the challenges they faced in JCM, it is also important to consider the JCM employers’ perspective as they could have different viewpoints. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews with the JCM employers is to gain better understanding of the MJSGEs’ use of the Japanese language in JCM, the challenges faced by them in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and the measures taken by them to overcome the challenges in JCM. At the same time, the semi-structured interviews with JCM employers are conducted to investigate the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM. Therefore, these interviews offered a point of comparison and verification for the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews conducted with MJSGEs. Furthermore, these interviews were conducted as the JCM employers supervising the MJSGEs “are likely to be more knowledgeable and informative about the subject under investigation” (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 1993, p.378).

Eight employers from seven different Japanese-related companies involved in this study volunteered to take part in the semi-structured interviews. It is worthy to mention that the researcher was unable to interview a representative of the employers
from the other three Japanese-related companies even after formal and informal attempts involving face-to-face contact or email correspondences were made with them. The employers who were not interviewed cited some reasons such as the interview questions might conflict with their human resource management policies or training and education for all levels of employees. Some other employers were busy or unavailable to take part in the semi-structured interviews.

These eight semi-structured interviews took place after all the semi-structured interview sessions with the MJSGEs have been completed. The interviews were conducted in the office of each company. Each session lasted between 20 minutes to half an hour. In each session, the JCM participants were provided with an introduction to the study and purpose of the interview. The employers were also given a consent form (Appendix E). Each of the eight participants who agreed to take part in the interview signed the consent form and returned it to the researcher during their interview sessions.

Appendix I provides the interview guidelines which includes the interview questions which were constructed by the researcher based on the purpose and the research objectives of the study. Although the interview guidelines were adhered to, the JCM participants were given the opportunity to discuss other issues which are related to (1) concerns pertaining to the MJSGEs’ use of the Japanese language in JCM, (2) the challenges faced by them in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and (3) the measures taken by MJSGEs to overcome the challenges they faced in JCM. The interviews were audio-taped and the researcher did the transcription immediately after interview ended. The transcriptions were analysed using qualitative text analysis. According to
Creswell (2003), this kind of qualitative text analysis is used to “generate themes and statements from participants in the initial qualitative data collection stage” (p. 221).

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The quantitative data involves administration of the Japanese Language Questionnaire to MJSGEs working in JCM. The qualitative data for this study were gathered from semi-structured interviews with the MJSGEs who participated in the questionnaire. After interviewing the MJSGE participants, their JCM employers were requested to participate in the semi-structured interviews.

Figure 3.6 Mixed-methods data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007)

In addition, the qualitative and quantitative data in this study has equal weightage and are independent of each other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The analysis was conducted to converge the findings from the mixed-methods data
collection. Figure 3.6 shows the forms of mixed-methods data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

3.7.1 Data Collection Procedure for the Interview

Certain information could be obtained or confirmed by actually talking to the interviewees. Similarly, it is possible to identify any discrepancies between information gathered from both employees and employers. These interviews were used to support the data gathered from the questionnaires. For the present research, the primary qualitative data gathering technique used for this study is the one-to-one interviews with the MJSGEs and also JCM. In these interviews, participants were given the chance to talk about the challenges the MJSGEs faced in Japanese language use and the measures they used to overcome these challenges.

The interview guidelines (Appendix H for MJSGEs and Appendix I for JCM employers) were used to facilitate the interviews. Much of the literature on qualitative research interviews (Dick, 2002; Foddy, 1993; Kvale, 1996; McNamara, 1999; Patton, 2002; Richards, 2009) emphasises the importance of providing the participants with a framework and time frame so that the emergent themes and issues can be explored efficiently. This in turn can make the participants aware of the aims of the interview. Therefore, it is important to remain aware of this, so as to develop the interview guidelines with sufficient flexibility. The main goal is to obtain a balance between the formal questions and any spontaneous, but meaningful, interaction with the MJSGEs and JCM participants in the interview. By doing this, it is hoped that a deep insight into the themes and issues explored could be obtained and then provided to the participants. Although the interview guidelines were adhered to, the participants were given the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns
pertaining to any aspects of the Japanese language challenges faced by MJSGEs in JCM.

Questioning was done in a systematic and consistent manner and the researcher tried to probe far beyond the responses offered by the participants over and above the prepared questions (Berg, 2001). Krueger’s categories of questions (2014) (Table 3.3) and Krueger’s (2000) data collection flow chart (Table 3.4) were adapted to guide the present study.

Table 3.3 Categories of questions (Krueger, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Participants get acquainted and feel connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory</td>
<td>Begins discussion of topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Moves smoothly and seamlessly into key questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>Obtains insight on areas of central concern in the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>Helps researcher determine where to place emphasis and brings closure to the discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 Data collection flow chart of semi-structured interview adapted from Krueger (2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Flow Chart of the Semi-Structured Interview</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sequencing of questions</td>
<td>Opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions, ending questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Capturing and handling data</td>
<td>Audio-taping, field journal notes of researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coding of data</td>
<td>Placing codes in the margin of the interview transcript</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All interviews were audio-taped and the researcher did the transcription immediately after the interview ended. According to Fraenkel & Wallen (2008), audiotaping the interview increases the reliability and validity of the interview. Researcher’s observation as an interviewer and researcher was recorded in the field journal during and immediately after the semi-structured interview for further analysis. The transcriptions were analysed using qualitative text data analysis.
(Kuckartz, 2014). In qualitative research, this kind of qualitative design is utilised to obtain the data that “generate themes and statements from participants in the initial qualitative data collection stage” (Creswell, 2003, p. 221)

### 3.8 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to address any ambiguities in the questions besides removing bias items and to improve the format of questions. In the present study, the pilot study was conducted on a small sample (n=20) similar to the potential participants at the Penang Japanese Language Society to determine whether the participants understand the question items in the questionnaire and semi-structured interview.

#### 3.8.1 Pilot Study for JLQ

A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability and validity of JLQ. Reliability test refers to the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable (Hair et al., 2006, p.137). One of the most common indicators of internal reliability is Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. For the present study, Cronbach’s Alpha was used as a reliability coefficient to indicate how well the items in a set were positively correlated to one another. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to test reliability of the questionnaire used in this study.

Table 3.5 Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient value (George & Mallery, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Coefficient Value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_ &gt; .9</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ &gt; .8</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ &gt; .7</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ &gt; .6</td>
<td>Questionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ &gt; .5</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ &lt; .5</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To pilot the JLQ, it was administered to a small sample (n=20) similar to the potential participants. The pilot study was conducted at the Penang Japanese Language Society. The result of the pilot study questionnaire was analysed using Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient. The pilot test result indicated high internal consistency reliability. George and Mallery’s (2016) rule of thumb on the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient that ranges between zero and one was applied for this study. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient is shown in Table 3.5.

The alpha coefficient for the pilot questionnaire is .859, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. Although the internal consistency of the items in the scale is good, Dornyei (2010) argued that the pilot study can highlight items such as wording which may not be clear and reveal items that are difficult for the participants to understand. The pilot study may reveal the items that should be deleted because they turn out to measure something irrelevant. Therefore, the results of the pilot study were further used to make minor improvements and adjustments on the JLQ.

3.8.2 Pilot Study for Semi-Structured Interview with MJSGE Participants

Qualitative data was obtained through the use of interviews. The semi-structured interviews in this study were one-to-one interviews between researcher and the participants. At the end of the questionnaire section, the participants in the questionnaire used in the pilot study were asked to write their names and contact numbers if they were interested and willing to be interviewed. Nine participants volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews of the pilot study. Each interview took approximately between 20 and 30 minutes depending on participant’s
answers. These participants were able to provide feedback on the questions in the interview guidelines for MJSGEs.

### 3.8.3 Pilot Study for Semi-Structured Interview with JCM Participants

From the nine MJSGE participants who volunteered to participate in the semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to approach two of the JCM employers who are the employers of the participants in Penang. Each interview took approximately between 15 and 25 minutes depending on participants’ answers. These participants were able to provide feedback on the questions used in the interview guidelines for JCM employers.

The feedback on both semi-structured interviews was obtained based on the following guidelines provided by Pole and Lampard (2002, p.135-136):

1. Are the questions asked clearly specified and unambiguous?
2. Are the questions asked in a linear and incremental manner so that questions follow a logical order?
3. Do the questions provide latitude for a range of different views?
4. Does the interviewer probe and seek clarification on responses where necessary?
5. Does the interview come to a conclusion by allowing any loose ends to be tied up?

After the interview sessions ended, the transcription of each interview was coded, reviewed, and analysed to determine themes and develop the findings into meaningful explanation. The input from the pilot semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to improve the questions asked during the semi-structure interviews with the MJSGEs and employers in JCM. The steps listed above enabled the
researcher to confirm the questions in the semi-structured interview aligned with the research questions.

3.9 Anonymity of Participants in Semi-Structured Interviews

A trustworthy study needs to be valid, reliable, and ethical (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Hence, this research used pseudonyms to ensure anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of data related to particular participants. A coding scheme was developed to code the semi-structured interviews for MJSGEs (Appendix K), and participants of JCM employers (Appendix L).

The 17 MJSGEs who took part in the semi-structured interview were coded according to a number provided to each participant and a letter used to identify their region. Therefore, each participant was coded according to the region he/she was attached to the JCM. For example, a participant who participated in the interview session from a particular region is coded as PM2A. The symbol P represents the region, M represents MJSGE, number 2 represents the participant’s number, and A represents the company’s code.

The eight JCM participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews were coded according to a number provided to each employer and a letter used to identify their region. For example, an employer interviewed in company A is coded as KJ1A. The Symbol K represents the region, J represents JCM, 1 represents the employer’s number, and A represents the company’s code.

3.10 Data Analysis

The aim of this study is to investigate the requirements of Japanese language proficiency by MJSGEs to meet entry-level employment requirements of
JCM. This study also aimed to identify the levels of importance of Japanese language skills used by MJSGEs working in JCM. Furthermore, this study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency and the strategies they employed to overcome the challenges they faced in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

One of the following sections focuses on describing the statistical techniques that were applied to analyse quantitative data collected in this study. The techniques used for the analysis of qualitative data are described in Section 3.10.2.

### 3.10.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis involved presenting and interpreting numerical data in the form of descriptive statistics. Some statistical techniques were applied to analyse quantitative data of this study. In the present study, descriptive statistics was used. The specific techniques are frequency, cumulative frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation (SD). The definition of each of these techniques is given in Table 3.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>The number of times a particular score appears in a set of data.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Statistics that standardise the total number of cases to a base value of 100.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative frequency</td>
<td>Frequency that shows the number of cases up to and including that value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>The sum of all scores in a distribution divided by the total number of cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>The measure of dispersion that is the square root of the variance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.10.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Generally, analysis of qualitative data involves transcribing, identifying, coding, and categorising themes found in the data. The data analysis of qualitative data in this study provided a thick description that focuses on (1) the requirement of Japanese language proficiency by the MJSGEs (see Appendix I), (2) the levels of importance of Japanese language skills used by MJSGEs working in JCM, (3) the challenges faced by the MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency, and (4) how they overcome the challenges they faced in their Japanese language proficiency in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (see Appendix H).

In social sciences, hermeneutic approaches are an alternative text analysis procedure. This approach has the longest tradition of text analysis and is important to the qualitative content analysis or qualitative text analysis (Bruns, 1992). There are several approaches of text analysis on an explicit hermeneutical background which include:

- Objective Hermeneutics
- Grounded Theory Coding
- Psychoanalytical Text-interpretation
- Biography Analysis
- Psychological Phenomenology

Qualitative data analysis is a form of analysis in which understanding and interpretation of the text play an essential role. In the present study, grounded theory coding was adopted for analysing the qualitative data. Grounded theory coding
describes a procedure of coding textual materials and defining the codes with memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded theory coding is known as a systematic method for constructing a theoretical analysis from data. This method provides analytical strategies and implicit guidelines for data collection (Charmaz, 2014). In this current study, this theory assisted the researcher to improve the analysis of the qualitative data. Figure 3.7 shows the general process of qualitative text analysis employed in this study.
(Kuckartz, 2014). The diagram shown in Figure 3.7 portrays the sequential process and highlights its circular nature. The analysis process should be seen as a non-linear process in which various phases or method areas are not strictly separated from each other. The research questions of this study are central to each of the five method areas.

The general process of qualitative text analysis is commonly utilised to obtain the data that “generate themes and statements from participants in the initial qualitative data collection” (Creswell, 2003, p.221). The themes are the essential outcome of coding, abstract constructs, and analytical patterns (Grbich, 2013). Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data-set.

In order to interpret the results of quantitative data collected from semi-structured interviews, “thematic coding” was utilised to classify the data. This was done in order to reduce the amount of participant’s responses. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), themes refer to the important issues found in or extracted from the data in relation to the research questions. When themes are obtained, qualitative researchers can identify some levels of patterned response or meanings within the data.

In the present study, participants’ responses to each of the interview questions were documented separately. After documentation, codes or categories were created for each of the emerging concepts. Then, after reviewing the responses repeatedly, the researcher came up with some categories which were marked based on the common theme. For qualitative text analysis, profile matrix play an important role. The profile matrix can be analysed in two directions: horizontally and vertically.
In the horizontal direction, each single row shows an overview of a particular person’s statements. This can provide a case-oriented perspective by the thematic categories of the analysis. On the other hand, in the vertical direction, each column gives a topic-oriented perspective. This can help the researcher to view all of the participants’ statement regarding a given topic or theme (Kuckartz, 2014). In the present study, the researcher used the vertical matrix to analyse the qualitative data.

According to Braun and Clarke (2012, p.57-71) and Clarke & Braun (2013, p.120-123), there are six phases to guide thematic analysis. Table 3.7 below presents these six phases of thematic analysis.

In the present study, the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher followed the six phases as a guide for thematic analysis. First, after the MJSGEs participants’ responses were collected, the researcher transcribed (Appendix M) and organised data through initial coding. The researcher sifted through the transcribed data from interview to find the statement, phrases, and ideas that are relevant to the research questions of the study. The researcher also sought to find relationships between various themes that were specified by participants in the interviews.
Table 3.7 Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.57-71; Clarke & Braun, 2013, p.120-123)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of the process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Familiarisation with the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Searching for themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reviewing themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Defining and naming themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Writing up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, the interview data collected from the participants selected from JCM were also transcribed. However, the interviews with the JCM were conducted in the Japanese language. After the JCM participants’ responses were collected, the researcher translated all responses from the Japanese language into the English language (Appendix N). To verify the translation, the president of the Penang Japanese Language Society (a former Japanese language teacher from USM) verified
the translation. After the verification, the translation was sent to the director of USM Japanese Cultural Centre (a former Japanese language teacher from USM) to check the accuracy of the translation (Appendix O). These two teachers had more than 15 years of experience in teaching the Japanese language to undergraduate students at the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM.

3.10.3 Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, the researcher collected and analysed quantitative and qualitative data separately. Then, the different results were converged by comparing and contrasting the different results during the interpretation. The researcher used this analysis procedure to compare result or to validate, confirm, or corroborate quantitative results with qualitative findings. The analysis procedures employed in this study could lead to well-validated and substantiated findings. Figure 3.8 shows the concurrent data analysis procedures in triangulation design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) used in this study.

![Diagram of data analysis procedures](image)

**Figure 3.8 Concurrent data analysis procedures in triangulation design (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007)**
3.11 Answering the Research Questions

The quantitative data analysis and qualitative text analysis were done to provide insights into the requirements of Japanese language proficiency by the Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs), the levels of importance of Japanese language skills used and the challenges faced by the MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency. Table 3.8 summarises the research questions, mode of data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Table 3.8 Research questions, mode of data collection and data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Mode of data collection</th>
<th>Data analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM?</td>
<td>Semi-Structured Interview with JCM participants</td>
<td>Systematic coding, emergent themes, patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the levels of importance of Japanese language skills used by the MJSGEs working in JCM?</td>
<td>JLQ, Semi-Structured Interview with JCM participants</td>
<td>Frequency counts, descriptive and inferential statistics, Systematic coding, emergent themes, patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are the challenges faced by MJSGEs in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM?</td>
<td>JLQ, Semi-Structured Interview with JCM participants</td>
<td>Frequency counts, descriptive and inferential statistics, Systematic coding, emergent themes, patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do MJSGEs working in JCM overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?</td>
<td>Semi-Structured Interview with JCM participants</td>
<td>Systematic coding, emergent themes, patterns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.12 Validity and Reliability

Mixed-methods research was found to be the most appropriate design for this study for some reasons as have been explained in previous sections. For example, this mixed methods design helped the researcher to improve validity of theoretical propositions. It also enhanced obtaining a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study than it is possible with a more narrow methodological approach (Webb, 2000). It has also been considered useful in specifying research question, familiarising the scholar with the subject and context, and in confirming that all participants understand the concepts and measures in a similar way.

Triangulation of methods can enable researchers to address a broader range of attitudinal and behavioural issues, and to develop converging lines of inquiry that can be used to make the findings and conclusions of the study more convincing and accurate (Yin, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, Guba’s (1981) model of trustworthiness was chosen. Guba's (1981) model is based on the identification of four aspects of trustworthiness that are relevant to both quantitative and qualitative studies. These four aspects are (a) truth value, (b) applicability, (c) consistency, and (d) neutrality. Based on the philosophical differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches, the model defines different strategies of assessing these criteria in each type of research. Cuba's (1981) model describes four general criteria for evaluation of research and then defines each from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective.

Considering the issues of the reliability and validity, based on the use of Lincoln and Guba’s (2011) model of trustworthiness, the research design and instrumentations of this study were adapted to ensure both reliability and validity.
The model of trustworthiness was used to develop strategies that introduced standards of quality into this study. Specific strategies were employed throughout this study to increase the worth of qualitative work. In the context of trustworthiness of the results and interpretation obtained from the analysis of the qualitative data in qualitative research in general, Lincoln and Guba (2011) introduced four criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability) that collectively could be combined to determine the trustworthiness of an inquiry.

Taking these four criteria of trustworthiness, the methods employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data collected in this study include two aspects: triangulation of sources (JLQ, semi-structured interview with MJSGEs, and semi-structured interview with JCM employers), and triangulation of methods (quantitative and qualitative). Both types of triangulation ensured the trustworthiness of this current study. The semi-structured interviews with MJSGEs and semi-structured interviews with JCM employers allowed checking of one informant’s description against another informant’s description of the same issue. To enhance validity, the semi-structured interview with MJSGE participants and semi-structured interviews with JCM employers were audio-taped and transcribed immediately after the interviews ended (Frankel & Wallen, 2008).
Table 3.9 Demonstration of reliability of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Prolonged and varied field experience</td>
<td>Meeting and interacting with the participants and their employers (JCM employers) during the research period. The JLQ, semi-structured interview questions with MJSGE participants, and semi-structured interview questions with JCM employers were prepared using the literature review. The data collection methods, data analysis and literature review were used to verify categorisation of data obtained. Researcher’s two supervisors (main supervisor and co-supervisor) reviewed the synthesis of all data gathered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Nominated sample</td>
<td>Purposive sampling technique was used. A thorough description of methodology is provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dense description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Dependability audit</td>
<td>Questionnaire items were adapted based on literature review. Interview questions were developed after doing literature review and conducting pilot interviews. A complete description of data analysis protocol is provided. The research methodology is fully described. The data collection design, methods, data analysis and literature review were used to triangulate and verify findings from the data gathered. A consensus discussion of the synthesised data was held with the researcher’s two supervisors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methodology triangulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>Researcher’s two supervisors reviewed the synthesis of all the data gathered. Triangulation was employed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peer debriefing was conducted to ensure the quality of researcher’s inferences, interpretation and conclusions based on the data analysis. To do peer debriefing, one academic staff where the researcher is attached to was requested to review and evaluate the qualitative reports. The academic staff provided comments on aspects of language, content, and organisation of the thesis. The researcher incorporated the relevant comments provided by the academic staff into the thesis.

Member checking was also conducted to enhance the validity of the reports of data collected. The transcripts of the semi-structured interview with MJSGE
participants and with JCM employers were emailed to the MJSGE participants and JCM employers for member checking. Encouraging responses on the accuracy of the transcripts were received from some of the MJSGE participants and JCM employers.

Thick description of this research provided evidence for the transferability of interpretations and conclusions from the qualitative investigation. The researcher also recorded reflexive notes of personal thoughts while conducting the semi-structured interviews with MJSGEs and semi-structured interviews with JCM employers that provided information for all four criteria of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability). This allowed for responses that seem unusual to be noted and checked later against other notes and remarks. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (2011), reflexive notes allowed the researcher to record a variety of information continuously throughout the research about the researcher herself and the participants.

It has been argued that reliability is achieved through consistency in the findings over time, location and circumstances (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). For this study, reliability was achieved by explaining the theory underlying this study, triangulating data, and by making an audit trail. The audit trail described in detail how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived from the data. Table 3.9 presents the demonstration of reliability of this study.

### 3.13 Ethical Considerations

All participation in the research was voluntary. Before embarking on the study, MJSGEs and JCM participants were given an oral briefing separately on the objectives of the study, the nature of the study, requirements of participation, and their role in the study. This was followed by providing the MJSGEs participants and
JCM participants with a statement document that detailed the information of the study for their record. The MJSGEs and the JCM participants who volunteered to participate in the semi-structured interviews were provided two copies of the consent form. They had to acknowledge their participation in the study and return one of the copies of the consent form to the researcher and keep the other copy for their record.

The MJSGEs and JCM participants were assured that their names would remain anonymous in the research. Furthermore, they were assured that their identities would remain confidential. Anonymity of MJSGEs and JCM participants was observed throughout the study with the use of a coding system developed by the researcher. This was implemented by using pseudonyms for the MJSGEs and JCM participants in the coding system. Additionally, they were also informed that data collected would be used for research purposes only.

3.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research design used in this study. This chapter also has dealt with the data collection instruments that were used in this study. These instruments are the JLQ, the semi-structured interviews with the MJSGEs, and the semi-structured interviews with the JCM participants. Following that, this chapter has also explained in detail the coding system developed by the researcher and data analysis procedures. How reliability and validity were maintained in the study was also explained in this chapter. The following chapter reports the results of the analysis of qualitative data.
CHAPTER 4- QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter focused on the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis approaches, the current chapter presents the results of the quantitative data analysis. It is important to mention that the quantitative data were collected using questionnaires. In this study, the collection of quantitative data corresponded to the four research questions which are:

1. What are the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM?
2. What are the levels of importance of Japanese language skills which are used by MJSGEs working in JCM?
3. What are the challenges faced by MJSGEs in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM?
4. How do MJSGEs working in JCM overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) was used to analyse the participants’ responses in the JLQ. Specifically, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data. Before reporting the results of the quantitative data analysis, profiles of the participants based on the data in the personal and demographic information section of the questionnaire are reported. This is followed by reporting the results of other sections in the questionnaire.
4.2 Profile of Participants

In this section, background information of the participants is reported based on the analysis of the data provided by the participants about themselves. This background information includes gender, age, race, position level, and level of education. Following that, this chapter proceeds to report the participants’ Japanese language achievement, as well as the relationship between their Japanese language achievement and the positions they hold in JCM. The frequency distribution of each demographic factor was recorded and converted into percentage scores.

The distribution of participants’ profile is reported visually through the use of pie charts, bar charts, and histograms. The use of each one of these types of visualisation is done based on the nature of the data. The participants’ demographic profiles presented in this section encompass participants’ gender, age, race, position level, and duration served in current company.
Gender distribution of the participants is displayed in Figure 4.1. The gender pie chart indicates that the majority of the participants are female, representing 72.31% of all participants. Based on the statistics from the Penang Japanese Language Society (PJLS), Perak Malaysia-Japanese Friendship Society (PMJFS), Malaysia Japanese Language Society (MJLS) and Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur, 80% of the members who registered in the three Japanese language societies and the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur in January 2016 were female.
Age distribution of the participants was plotted using a histogram as shown in Figure 4.2. The distribution of participants’ age is positively skewed, meaning that age of participants is skewed towards young age, with the mean age of 34.75 years old. This result show that due to globalisation, the workplace/industry requirement has actually motivated the younger generation or graduates to have a good level of proficiency in the Japanese language.
A pie chart was employed to depict the race distribution of participants as shown in Figure 4.3. The pie chart in Figure 4.3 shows that the majority of the participants are Chinese (73.85% of total participants). This is followed by Malay participants with 20% and Indian participants with only 6%. This is consistent with the statistics obtained from PJLS, PMJFS, Malaysia Japanese Language Society (MJLS), and records obtained from the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur. According to the records of these organisations, most of the Japanese language learners are Chinese. Similarly, the analysis of the background information of the participants in this study reveals that more than 70% of the Japanese language learners are Chinese. This finding correlates with the finding of research done by Ainol ea al. (2009) which shows that extrinsic factors play an important role in Malaysian university students’ learning a foreign language. Among the extrinsic factor, future career is
one of the important factors. Their research also resulted in the finding that the Japanese language is very popular among Chinese students because Chinese students indicate that they prefer to work for Japanese companies. Moreover, Koda (2005) mentioned that native language and foreign language orthographic differences have an impact on recognising words in the foreign language and this might provide an intrinsic motivation for the Chinese students to learn the Japanese language as the Chinese characters are from the same orthographic origin like the Japanese language.

Figure 4.4 Distribution of participants’ position level

This section reports the participants’ position level in JCM. It is essential to mention here that the position level is used in this study to refer to the position of a participant in his/her organisation. Participants were asked to write the job title of
their present position in the questionnaire. Using the U.S. Department of Commerce Occupational Classification System (Forret & Dougherty, 2001), four categories were constructed for participant’s current position. Jobs in translation, engineer, technical, and other professional areas were categorised as “professional” and jobs in general management were categorised as “managerial”. This is similar to procedures followed in other career-related research studies (Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Therefore, in this research, the professional staffs include mainly engineers and translators. Marketing managers, production managers, accounting managers, department heads, section heads and including assistant managers were group as “managerial”. Other position levels which include general workers were grouped under “others” category. For executives position, the participants are not considered as top management level; among the executive posts include executives in the finance department, human resource department, business analysis department and marketing department.

As shown in Figure 4.4 above, the “others” category represents 20% of the total participants. The bar chart displayed in Figure 4.4 reveals that the majority of the participants are in the executive (29.23%), managerial (29.23%), and professional (21.54%) levels. It is important to mention that the distribution of the participants in terms of levels of position is included in this study in order to ensure that the findings are generalizable across all position levels of workers in the manufacturing industry. The analysis of the item on level of position revealed that executive, managerial, and professional staff represented 80% of participants.
Based on the histogram in Figure 4.5 above, the distribution of participants’ duration in JCM clearly showed a positive skewed shape. In addition, the distribution skewed towards shorter duration, resulting in the mean duration value of 4.55 years. This specific result shows that participants who are equipped with the Japanese language are relatively young.
4.3 MJSGEs’ Academic Achievement

This section reports results regarding participants’ number of years spent on learning the Japanese language, type of Japanese course (major, elective, optional, and minor), and the level of JLPT achieved. The section also reports the relationship between participants’ level of position and their level of JLPT.

Figure 4.6 Participants’ years of studying the Japanese language

Figure 4.6 presents the distribution of MJSGEs’ number of years spent on learning the Japanese language. Based on the chart in Figure 4.6, most of the participants have studied the Japanese language for three years or more (43.08% of total participants). In fact, this result is consistent with the statistics from the Japan
Foundation Kuala Lumpur (2016) which reported that the majority of Japanese language learners in Malaysia are still in the intermediate level (N3). In order to achieve the advanced level of JLPT, learners who study the Japanese language outside Japan need to spend more than three years practicing the Japanese language to pass the higher levels of JLPT (N2 and N1) (Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur, 2016).

Figure 4.7 Type of Japanese language course taken

The study also sought data related to the type of Japanese language course that participants have taken. Specifically, the type of Japanese language course included major, minor, elective, and optional paper. The results regarding these types of Japanese courses are shown in Figure 4.7 above. The majority of the participants
(59.3%) were taking the Japanese language as an optional paper. This is followed by participants who were taking the Japanese language course as a minor programme (with 33.9%), and as an elective paper (6.8%). Based on the results reported here, none of the participants was studying the Japanese language as their major programme. Thus, these results reflect that in Malaysia, university students do not choose the Japanese language as their major course. This can be attributed to the fact that most of the Malaysian higher education institutions offer the Japanese language course as either an optional course or an elective course.

![Figure 4.8 Participants’ level of JLPT](image)

In this study, data regarding the level of JLPT achieved by participants were also obtained. The bar chart in Figure 4.8 above shows that the majority of the participants obtained JLPT N3 level and N1 level with 40% and 35.4% of the total number of participants, respectively, and 24.6% of the participants obtained JLPT N2
level. It is important to note that none of the participants achieved N4 or N5 level of JLPT. N4 and N5 which are beginner levels were excluded from this study.

Table 4.1 Cross tabulation of position level and JLPT levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JLPT level</th>
<th>Position level</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Managerial</th>
<th>Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N1 (Old Level 1)</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>13.00%</td>
<td>39.10%</td>
<td>47.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2 (Old Level 2)</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>6.30%</td>
<td>31.30%</td>
<td>43.80%</td>
<td>18.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3 (Old Level 3)</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>46.20%</td>
<td>42.30%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2(n=4) = 36.356$, p value $= 0.000$

Table 4.1 shows the cross tabulation of participants’ position level and JLPT level using exact count and percentage. Based on the results reported in Table 4.1, the chi-square test ($X^2(n=4) = 36.356$) showed that p value is less than 0.05, indicating that there is a significant relationship between the levels of JLPT and position of participants. With reference to the groups presented in Table 4.1, participants with higher JLPT levels tend to hold managerial and professional positions in JCM. On the other hand, the participants with lower JLPT level tend to hold other position levels which include general workers under “others” category. For instance, the majority of participants who had JLPT N1 level hold managerial and professional positions. Both of these two categories accounted for 86.9% of participants with JLPT N1 level.

In comparison, participants who obtained JLPT N3 level hold executive position and others (general work). Both these categories represent 88.5% of the total participants. Thus, it can be concluded that in the manufacturing industry that requires a high level of proficiency in the Japanese language, participants who have higher JLPT levels have more opportunities for promotion to a better job position.
The current study showed that good Japanese language skills can lead to a better position in JCM. This can be attributed to the fact that participants with good Japanese language skills can communicate effectively with others inside and outside the organisation and perform better in the workplace.

4.4 MJSGEs’ Japanese Language Use

This section reports the results of participants’ use of the Japanese language during and after office hours. While Section 4.4.1 deals with subjects’ responses regarding their use of the Japanese language when they are at work, Section 4.4.2 focuses on the use of the Japanese language when participants are outside their offices after office hours.

4.4.1 Japanese Language Use during Office Hours

Figure 4.9 shows patterns related to the participants’ use of the Japanese language during working hours. To obtain participants’ use of the Japanese language during office hours, in the questionnaire they were asked to indicate the approximate percentage of time they use the Japanese language for work-related matters. It is important to note that the question was coded 1 = “81-100%”, 2 = “50-79%”, 3 = “10-49%”, and 4 = “<20%”, thus the higher the score, the lesser the Japanese language use. The bar chart given in Figure 4.9 reveals that the majority of the participants (about 74%) demonstrate significant Japanese language use during working hours. In other words, about 75% of participants used more than 20% of their working time to communicate in Japanese. This finding clearly showed that JCM have a high dependency on the Japanese language to communicate with other individuals in their organisations.
Figure 4.9 Japanese language use during office hours

Table 4.2 Japanese language use during office hours by position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Japanese language in work-related matters</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>38.981</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.994</td>
<td>17.764</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>44.619</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 displays the result of one-way ANOVA to examine the differences in Japanese language use during working hours among participants of different position levels. Based on data presented in Table 4.2, it can be observed that the position level of participants showed a significant difference in level of Japanese language use ($F = 12.994, p$ value $\approx 0.000$) during office hours at 0.05 significance level. Furthermore, Figure 4.10 reveals that participants in managerial and professional positions tend to have higher percentage of using the Japanese language during their working hours. This finding revealed that the participants who hold the positions as managers and professionals are the individuals who use the Japanese language more intensively in JCM.
4.4.2 Japanese Language Use after Office Hours

Figure 4.11 Japanese Language use after office hours

Figure 4.11 above reveals the pattern of the participants’ Japanese language use after office hours. Based on the bar chart in Figure 4.11, it can be recognised that the percentage of use of the Japanese language drops drastically after office hours. This is an obvious result because 35% of the participants claimed that they used the Japanese language for only more than 20% of their time after the office hours.
Table 4.3 Japanese language use after office hours by position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Japanese language after office hours</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>11.61</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>7.729</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>30.543</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42.154</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.12 Mean plot for Japanese language use after office hours by position level

Table 4.3 displays the results of one-way ANOVA for the differences in the use of the Japanese language after working hours for participants of different position levels. The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the level of Japanese language use ($F = 7.729$, $p$ value $\approx 0.000$) among participants of different position levels after office hours at 0.05 significance levels. Likewise, the mean plot
in Figure 4.12 depicts that the participants who hold managerial and professional positions are the individuals who use more Japanese language (low mean score is higher use) even after office hours.

After presenting the results of the analysis of the questionnaire items that focus on the participants’ background information, the following two main sections reports the quantitative answers to Research Question Two (Section 4.5) and Research Question Three (Section 4.6).

**4.5 Research Question Two**

This section displays the results of the level of importance of Japanese language skills based on views of participants working in JCM (Research Question Two). To answer this research question, the data were collected from 65 participants who were working in manufacturing JCM. The participants responded to 38 items that focused on obtaining data on the level of importance of Japanese language skills used by the participants working in JCM. In these 38 items, the Likert scale ranging from one (very important) to four (not important at all) was used to evaluate the relative importance of the items. For a better reporting of the results, scale one (very important) and scale two (important) were combined; and scale three (less important) and scale four (not important at all) were also combined. Yet, when the data of an individual item showed significant results, no combination with other scale was done. This occurred in some cases across the data of the 38 items.
Figure 4.13 Level of importance of Japanese language skills in JCM

Data for the bar chart above was obtained from the questionnaire, Section IV, Question two. Figure 4.13 shows participants’ responses regarding the level of importance of four major skills in the Japanese language proficiency. Based on the data reported in the bar chart (Figure 4.13), it can be observed that listening and speaking skills are the top two most important Japanese language skills that are required by participants for Japanese language proficiency. Both these two skills reflect relatively low mean values of 1.492 and 1.615, respectively. Furthermore, one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the significant differences in the level of importance of the four major skills in the Japanese language across different position levels (Table 4.4).
Table 4.4 Japanese language proficiency requirements in four major skills by position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.692</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>0.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>29.554</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.246</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.106</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>0.697</td>
<td>0.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>32.279</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33.385</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>26.594</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.865</td>
<td>15.654</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>34.545</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.566</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61.138</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>23.995</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.998</td>
<td>14.118</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>34.558</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58.554</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the results reported in Table 4.4 above, no significant differences were found for listening and speaking skills because their corresponding *p* values (sig. column) were greater than 0.05 (the significance level that was set before the analysis). This result reflects that across all position levels, listening and speaking skills are viewed to be equally important for Japanese language proficiency at the workplace for MJSGEs.
As far as the reading skill is concerned, the result revealed that there are significant differences in the level of importance for Japanese language proficiency among position levels of participants at 0.05 ($F_{3,61} = 15.654, p \approx 0.000$). Furthermore, Figure 4.14 shows that the participants who hold the managerial and professional positions are the individuals who need more for reading skills in the Japanese language, compared to those who hold the position as executive and others. Apart from that, the results in Table 4.4 also showed that there is a significant difference in the level of writing skills requirement for Japanese language proficiency between different position levels of participants at 0.05 ($F_{3,61} = 14.118, p \approx 0.000$).
In addition, Figure 4.15 reveals that participants’ who hold the position as managers and professionals are the individuals who need more writing skills (lower mean score indicates higher requirement level). Therefore, participants who hold managerial and professional positions (associated with higher JLPT levels) showed that they needed to use reading and writing skills at their workplace more than those who hold the position as executive and others (those with lower JLPT levels). Lastly, it is important to state that the mean values for the four language skills were lower than 2.5 (Figure 4.13), indicating that these four skills are indeed important across all position levels.
4.5.1 Level of Importance of Four Major Skills’ Sub Skill in JCM

The levels of importance of the four major skills in the Japanese language were calculated based on their underlying sub-skills.

Data shown in the bar chart above was obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question three. Figure 4.16 shows the level of importance (mean values) for four major skills. By comparing the mean scores, the data revealed that the listening skill is the most important skill, supported by the lowest mean value of 2.193 (lower value indicates more important). Next, the second most important skill (in relative comparison) is speaking with the mean value of 2.549, followed by the reading skill (mean = 2.681), and finally the writing skill (mean = 2.957).
For in depth analysis, the level of importance for the four major skills were compared across the position levels of participants using ANOVA, as summarised in Table 4.5. Based on these results, \( p \) values (Sig. column) for the listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill and writing skill were greater than 0.05. Thus, this study revealed that there are no significant differences in the level of importance for listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills for participants of different position levels. This study concludes that across all position levels, the speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in the Japanese language are equally important for the participants.

Table 4.5 Level of importance for Japanese language skills by position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.593</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.531</td>
<td>0.923</td>
<td>0.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>35.118</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.576</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36.711</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.162</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>0.628</td>
<td>0.600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>37.628</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.617</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38.79</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.301</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td>0.638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>46.544</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.763</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47.845</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>0.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>44.687</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45.076</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.2 Level of Importance of Listening Skill in Japanese Language

Figure 4.17 depicts the level of importance for each sub-skill of the Japanese listening skill using a bar chart. Based on the chart, it can be observed that understanding oral instructions (mean = 1.923), understanding discussions (mean = 1.8), and understanding face-to-face conversations (mean = 1.769) are the three most important listening sub-skills. Besides that, all of the sub-skills except understanding
formal talks and speeches showed mean values of less than 2.5 (midpoint of 4 points Likert scale), indicating that they are all important.

![Figure 4.17 Level of importance for each sub-skill of the Japanese language listening skill](image)

In conclusion, the six sub-skills of the listening skill (which are answering phone calls, understanding oral instructions, understanding discussions, understanding proceedings of meetings, understanding face-to-face conversations, and understanding conversation over the phone) are important for the participants. The specific important sub-skills for the participants include understanding oral instructions, understanding discussions, and understanding face-to-face conversations.
### Table 4.6 Level of importance for listening sub-skill of the Japanese language by position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.957</td>
<td>2.117</td>
<td>0.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.397</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening - answer phone calls</td>
<td>8.872</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>0.515</td>
<td>0.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening - understand oral instruction</td>
<td>1.695</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.697</td>
<td>1.404</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening - understand discussion</td>
<td>2.997</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.999</td>
<td>0.957</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening - understand proceeding of meeting</td>
<td>3.949</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.999</td>
<td>1.082</td>
<td>0.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening - understand face to face conversation</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.257</td>
<td>0.308</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening - understand conversation over the phone</td>
<td>4.719</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.573</td>
<td>1.082</td>
<td>0.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening - understand formal talks and speeches</td>
<td>8.061</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.687</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance level of each specific sub-skills of the listening skill was compared among the different levels of position. The results are summarised in Table 4.6. The results showed that participants from different position levels did not show significant difference in the level of importance for all the sub-skills of the listening skill at 0.05 significance levels. Thus, all the seven sub-skills of the listening skill are equally important across the different position levels of the participants.
4.5.3 Level of Importance of Speaking Skills

Twelve sub-skills were measured under the speaking skill of the Japanese language. The bar chart in Figure 4.18 depicts the level of importance for each sub-skill in the Japanese speaking skill. By comparing the mean scores of all sub-skills, the participants pointed out that the top three most important sub-skill of the speaking skills are greetings (mean = 1.862), face-to-face conversations with Japanese colleagues (mean = 1.923), and communicating with Japanese colleagues (mean = 2.138).

In general, the five speaking sub-skills that were deemed to be important encompassed greetings, telephone conversations, face-to-face conversations, communicating with Japanese colleagues, and work-related conversations with Japanese colleagues.

Table 4.7 shows the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the differences in the level of importance of Japanese speaking sub-skills among participants with different levels of position. No significant differences were found between the level of importance for all speaking sub-skills and different positions held. Subsequently, it can be noted that all the twelve Japanese speaking sub-skills are equally important across different position levels.
Figure 4.18 Level of importance for each sub-skill of the Japanese language speaking skill
Table 4.7 Level of importance of speaking sub-skills of the Japanese language by position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking – greetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.455</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.485</td>
<td>1.528</td>
<td>0.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>59.299</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.972</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63.754</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - conversing over the phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>7.424</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.475</td>
<td>1.756</td>
<td>0.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>85.96</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.409</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93.385</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - conversing face to face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.702</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.567</td>
<td>2.083</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>45.913</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50.615</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - receiving customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>0.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>77.026</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.263</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81.015</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - communicate with customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.667</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.556</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>91.779</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.505</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93.446</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - communicate with Japanese colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.548</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td>0.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>75.206</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.233</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77.754</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - communicate with Japanese customers and clients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.738</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.246</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>96.477</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.582</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.215</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - work conversation with Japanese colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.244</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>86.31</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.415</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88.554</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - discussions and negotiations with customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.074</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.358</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>0.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>95.479</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.565</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96.554</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - chairing meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.671</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>0.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>69.868</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.145</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75.538</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - oral reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>6.603</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.201</td>
<td>1.423</td>
<td>0.245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>94.381</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.547</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.985</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking - giving presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.487</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>101.402</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.662</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102.862</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5.4 Level of Importance of Reading Skills

For Japanese reading skills, the levels of importance of eight sub-skills were presented in Figure 4.19. Based on the results given in the bar chart, reading e-mail (mean = 2.031) is the only sub-skill with a mean value of less than 2.5. This obviously indicates that this skill was the most important for the majority of the participants. The bar chart in Figure 4.19 also revealed that the sub-skill of reading e-mail was rated by the majority of the participants as the most important skill among other reading sub-skills in JCM. This was clear as the mean value of this sub-skill was the lowest (mean = 2.031). In addition, reading memos, reading business letters, and reading business reports showed significant levels of importance. Therefore, it can be concluded that reading e-mails and the three reading sub-skills mentioned above were also viewed to be important by the participants.

The differences between the level of importance of each specific sub-skills of the reading skill and different levels of position were examined and the result was reported in Table 4.8. At 0.05 significance levels, all the sub-skills showed insignificant differences in level of importance between the positions held by the participants, except for reading memos ($F_{3,61} = 3.338, p = 0.025$).
Figure 4.19 Level of importance of sub-skills of Japanese reading skill
Table 4.8 Level of importance for each sub-skill of Japanese language reading skill by position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading - read memos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>13.546</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.515</td>
<td>3.338</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>82.516</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.353</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96.062</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading - read circulars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>8.645</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.882</td>
<td>2.302</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>76.34</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.251</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84.985</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading - read business reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.528</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.176</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td>0.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>84.318</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.382</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87.846</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading - read business letters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.538</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.368</td>
<td>0.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>85.016</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.394</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86.554</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading - read manuals and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructions</td>
<td>1.232</td>
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<td>0.289</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88.062</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading - read industry regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.423</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>62.038</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62.462</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading - read e-mail</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.969</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>82.969</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading – faxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.357</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.786</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>84.428</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.384</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89.785</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.20 Mean plot for the level of importance of reading memos by position levels
To further understand the differences of importance level in terms of reading memos, the mean plot was presented in Figure 4.20. The result presented in Figure 4.20 reveals that the sub-skill of reading memos is more important to managers and general workers (others category in the questionnaire). This is because this sub-skill scored low mean scores by managers and general workers, compared to those in executive and professional positions.

4.5.5 Level of Importance of Writing Skill

Figure 4.21 presents the importance level of eleven sub-skills of the Japanese writing skill. Based on the data presented in the chart, writing e-mail (mean = 2.492), and translating from other languages into Japanese (mean = 2.462) are the two most important sub-skills for writing in the Japanese language. Further, the study also revealed that nine writing sub-skills are less important for participants because the mean values of these nine sub-skills were greater than 2.5. These nine less important sub-skills are translating from Japanese into other languages (mean = 2.523), writing reports (mean = 2.954), filling up forms (mean = 2.954), writing letters (mean = 3.077), writing notices (mean = 3.338), writing memos (mean = 3.292), writing fax messages (mean = 3.185), editing written materials (mean = 3.138), and writing proposals (mean = 3.108). Therefore, it can be concluded that the two sub-skills that are deemed to be important for the participants are writing e-mails, and translating from other languages into Japanese.
Table 4.9 shows the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the differences in the importance of Japanese writing sub-skills across different levels of position. The results show that there is no significant difference in the level of importance for all the writing sub-skills across different positions held by the participants. Thus, it can be surmised that all the eleven Japanese writing sub-skills are equally important across different position levels.
Table 4.9 Level of importance for writing sub-skills of Japanese language according to position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing - write reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.469</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.156</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>0.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>79.393</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.302</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82.862</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - write letters</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.594</td>
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<td>0.531</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>87.021</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.427</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88.615</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - write notices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td>0.610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>56.844</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58.554</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - write memos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>0.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>66.65</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.093</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67.446</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - write email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>104.2</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.708</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104.25</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - write fax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.996</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.665</td>
<td>1.477</td>
<td>0.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>68.789</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.128</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73.785</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - edit written materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.789</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>0.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>74.964</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.229</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75.754</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - fill up forms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.529</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>84.333</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.383</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86.862</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - write proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>87.377</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.432</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88.246</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - translate to Japanese language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.108</td>
<td>0.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>110.15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.806</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116.15</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing - translate from Japanese language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td>0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>115.77</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.898</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122.22</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Research Question Three

This section focuses on answering Research Question Three which examines the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The participants were provided with items for challenges faced by MJSGEs in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The items included closed-ended and open-ended questions. For closed-ended questions, likert scales ranging from one (Strongly agree) to four (Strongly disagree) were employed to assess the degree of difficulty of the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM. Open-ended questions were also given to the participants to provide their experience regarding the challenges they faced while working in JCM, especially in their use of the Japanese language. The challenges mentioned by the participants in the open-ended questions were analysed by categorising them into themes.

For closed-ended and open-ended questions, in cases where the data shows significant result for an individual scale, they were reported individually.

4.6.1 Challenges Faced in Listening Skills

This section reported the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is an open-ended question. The data was analysed by categorising them into themes (Listening Skills).

Figure 4.22 shows the percentages of listening challenges faced by the participants according to five major themes. The results revealed that the use of the Japanese language dialects and speed of speech are the top most challenges faced by participants when using Japanese in listening. About 49% of the participants indicated that they encountered challenges in understanding communication when
their Japanese colleagues use Japanese dialects in their conversations. Furthermore, 49% of the participants pointed out that they faced difficulty in understanding communication when their Japanese colleague speaks Japanese language in a fast speed.

Apart from that, the study found that the second major listening challenge for the participants was “difficult vocabularies/sentences”. Besides that, another major listening challenge faced by participants was the “Japanese way of communication”.

![Figure 4.22 Listening challenges faced by the participants (%)](image)

Figure 4.22 Listening challenges faced by the participants (%)
4.6.2 Challenges Faced in Speaking Skills

This section reports the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is an open-ended question. The data was analysed by categorising them into themes (Speaking Skills).

Figure 4.23 below presents the percentages of all speaking challenges based on participants’ responses which were analysed and grouped into four major themes. According to the chart in Figure 4.23, one of the participants’ critical challenges is the time they take in constructing utterances in Japanese. This critical challenge scored 73.85% of participants’ responses. The analysis of data also revealed that the participants encountered difficulties in expressing their ideas and opinions in the Japanese language. About 61.54% of the participants marked this as one of the major challenges for them. The second major challenge faced by the participants is the difficulty in using honorific and humble expressions, which has about 17% mentioned rates.
4.6.3 Challenges Faced in Reading Skills

This section reports the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is an open-ended question. The data was analysed by categorising them into themes (Reading Skills).

Figure 4.24 below presents the percentage of reading challenges based on frequency. The challenges indicated by the participants were divided into four major themes. In the case of reading in the Japanese language, three major challenges were encountered by the participants. The three major challenges include difficulty in understanding Japanese language written in texts (50.77%), limited vocabularies (50.77%), and identifying and reading Japanese characters (43.08%), especially Kanji.
Figure 4.24 Reading challenges faced by the participants (%)
4.6.4 Challenges Faced in Writing Skills

This section reports the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is an open-ended question. The data was analysed by categorising them into themes (Writing Skills).

As shown in Figure 4.25, writing challenges encountered by the participants were divided into three major themes: limited vocabulary, limited grammar knowledge, and the way of writing in the Japanese language. It can be understood that two major challenges faced by the participants in writing in the Japanese language are limited vocabularies and limited grammar knowledge. The percentage of each one of these two challenges is 56.92%. Yet, the challenge of the Japanese language way of writing can be considered as a second major challenge because it was rated by only 38.46% of the participants.
This section is devoted to identifying the most and the least reported challenges faced by the participants. Overall, Table 4.10 shows a comparative summary of the four types of challenges faced by the participants. Among all the types of challenges, time taken in constructing utterances in Japanese was the top challenge because 73.80% of the participants indicated that it is the most reported challenging sub-skill. Meanwhile, only 3.10% of the participants revealed that they faced difficulty in the Japanese way of speaking. Therefore, it can be concluded that the most difficult challenge encountered by the participants in the speaking category is the time taken in constructing utterances. On the other hand, the least reported
challenge encountered by the participants in the speaking category is the Japanese way of speaking.

Table 4.10 Four types of challenges faced by 65 participants based on frequency and percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Types of Challenges</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td>Use of Japanese dialects</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speed of speech</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult vocabularies/ sentences</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty in understand honorific and humble expression</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Japanese way of Communication</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td>Time taking in constructing utterances</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficultly to express idea/opinion</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty in using Honorific and humble Expressions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japanese way of Speaking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>Limited Vocabularies</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited Grammar knowledge</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japanese language way of writing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td>Limited vocabularies</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited grammar knowledge</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty in understanding Japanese language written text</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and read the Japanese Characters</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.6 Participants’ Challenges according to the Position Level

This section reports the challenges count per person across the position level of the participants. In reporting the results, scale one (strongly agree) and scale two (agree) are combined for reporting purposes. It is important to note that scale one and scale two were coded as “1”. Additionally, scale three (disagree) and scale four (strongly disagree) are also combined for reporting purposes. It is important to note that scale three and scale four were coded as “0”.

ANOVA was conducted at each major skill to assess the differences in challenges count per person between participants’ position levels. The results are reported in Table 4.11. For listening challenges, the result shows that there are
significant differences \( (F_{3, 61} = 11.744, p \approx 0.000) \) in the count per person across different positions held by the participants at 0.05 significance levels (refer to Figure 4.26). The number of listening challenges increases for the participants who hold managerial and professional positions. Thus, the study concludes that the participants who hold the position level as managers and professionals will have more listening challenges when using the Japanese language in JCM.

Table 4.11 Challenges count per person according to position level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen_count</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>10.961</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.654</td>
<td>11.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18.977</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.938</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak_count</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>12.992</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.331</td>
<td>15.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>17.07</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.062</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write_count</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.807</td>
<td>5.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>31.795</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40.215</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read_count</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>21.738</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.246</td>
<td>17.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>25.401</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47.138</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the result shows that there is also significant difference \( (F_{3, 61} = 15.476, p \approx 0.000) \) in the speaking challenges count per person between different positions held by the participants at 0.05 significance level. Figure 4.27 reveals that the number of speaking challenges increase for the participants who hold managerial and professional positions. Thus, this study claims that participants in managerial and professional positions tend to face more challenges in speaking the Japanese language, possibly due to their job roles.
Apart from that, this study also examined the differences in reading challenges count per person across different position levels held by the participants. The result reveals significant differences in the reading challenges count per person across different positions held by the participants at 0.05 significance levels, \( (F_{3, 61} = 17.401, p \approx 0.000) \). According to Figure 4.28, it can be concluded that participants in managerial and professional positions tend to face more challenges in terms of reading in the Japanese language.

For writing challenges, the study found significant differences \( (F_{3, 61} = 5.385, p = 0.002) \) in the writing challenges count per person between different positions held by participants at 0.05 significance levels. Figure 4.29 shows the mean plot for writing challenges count per person, separated by different position levels. Based on Figure 4.29, it can be observed that the participants in managerial and professional positions faced more challenges in the writing skill compared to those in the other two positions. Subsequently, this study concludes that participants who hold managerial and professional positions are prone to face more writing challenges in the Japanese language.
Figure 4.26 Mean plot of listening challenges count per person by position level
Figure 4.27 Mean plot of speaking challenges count per person by position level
Figure 4.28 Mean plot of reading challenges count per person by position level
4.6.7 Comparison of Participants’ Challenges Faced in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing Skills

This section reports the results of comparing the overall challenges faced by participants in using the Japanese language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Figure 4.30 shows the bar chart for the level of agreement from participants regarding the four major challenges in using the Japanese language. Based on the questionnaire, the answer scale ranged from 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree. Accordingly, the lower the score, the higher the participants’ agreement.
level akin to the challenges faced. Based on the chart, the listening and speaking skills are the most reported challenging skills faced by the participants, with mean values of 1.6 and 1.646 respectively. On the other hand, writing and reading in comparison are the least reported challenging skills faced by the participants, with mean values of 2.323 and 2.385 respectively. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that challenges in the four skills were lower than midpoint of 2.5 (4 points Likert scale), indicating that the four Japanese language skills are challenging for MJCSGEs.

Figure 4.30 Bar chart for comparison across challenges
4.6.8 Comparison of Challenges according to Proficiency levels (JLPT N1, N2 and N3)

This section compares the differences between proficiency levels (JLPT N1, N2, N3) based on the challenges count per person faced by the participants. This section reports the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is a close-ended question. In presenting the results, scale one (strongly agree) and scale two (agree) are combined for reporting purposes. It is important to note that scale one and scale two were coded as “1”. Additionally, scale three (disagree) and scale four (strongly disagree) are also combined for reporting purposes. It is important to note that scale three and scale four were coded as “0”, thus the higher the score, the higher the challenges faced by the participants.

Table 4.12 ANOVA results of challenges count per person for listening, speaking, reading, and writing by proficiency levels (JLPT N1 N2 N3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen_count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.182</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.091</td>
<td>5.033</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>25.757</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.938</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak_count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.759</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.380</td>
<td>5.831</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>25.302</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.408</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.062</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write_count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>40.051</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40.215</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read_count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>8.393</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.197</td>
<td>6.716</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>38.745</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.625</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47.138</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4.12, at a significance level of 0.05, the ANOVA results reveal that there are no significant differences between the proficiency levels in the writing challenges. However, there are significant differences between the proficiency levels (N1, N2, and N3) in the listening (p = 0.009), speaking (p = 0.005)
and reading (0.002) challenges faced by the participants. A post-hoc analysis was conducted to find out which of the proficiency levels that are different from each other in terms of the challenges faced by the participants in the listening, speaking and reading skills. The results are provided in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Multiple comparisons and Tukey HSD for challenges count per person for listening, speaking and reading by proficiency levels (JLPT N1, N2, and N3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Level of JLPT</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of JLPT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen_count</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>N2 .302</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>.20 .81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N3 .585</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>.22 1.31</td>
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<td>.946</td>
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<td>.08 1.29</td>
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<tr>
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<td>N3</td>
<td>N1 -.764</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-1.31 -.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N2 -.683</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-1.29 -.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*

For the listening and speaking challenges faced by the participants, the results revealed that the participants with N2 have no significant differences to those with N1 and N3 respectively. However, there is a significant difference in N1 and N3. A mean plot for the mean differences in listening and speaking challenges is provided to show these differences. Figures 4.31 and 4.32 reveal that participants with N3 level of proficiency encountered few challenges in listening and speaking as compared to participants with N1 level of proficiency.
Figure 4.31 Mean plot of JLPT level vs mean of listening challenges faced by participants

Figure 4.32 Mean plot of JLPT level vs mean of speaking challenges faced by participants
For the reading challenges faced by participants, the results revealed there are no differences between participants with N1 level of proficiency and participants with N2 level of proficiency. However, there are significant differences between participants with JLPT N1 level and N3 level. In addition, there are significant differences between participants with JLPT N2 level and N3 level. A mean plot for the mean differences in reading challenges is provided in Figure 4.33. It is revealed that participants who had obtained JLPT N1 level are the participants facing more challenges in reading skill as compared to the participants who had JLPT N2 and N3 level.

Figure 4.33 Mean plot of JLPT level vs mean of reading challenges faced by participants
4.6.9 Comparison of the Challenges between Japanese Language Proficiency Levels (N1, N2, and N3)

This section reports the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is a closed-ended question. This section intends to compare the differences between proficiency levels (N1, N2, and N3) based on the agreement rank on the challenges faced by the participants (four levels of agreements).

Table 4.14 ANOVA results of the comparison of the challenges between Japanese language proficiency levels (JLPT N1 N2 and N3)

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<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>.447</td>
<td>1.340</td>
<td>.269</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>20.705</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking challenges</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>.401</td>
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<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>22.197</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.358</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writing challenges</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>.561</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>49.287</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.795</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50.215</td>
<td>64</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading challenges</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>.624</td>
<td>.539</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>52.330</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.844</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53.385</td>
<td>64</td>
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</table>

The results in Table 4.14 show that there are no significant differences between the three proficiency levels in the agreement rank in facing the listening (p = 0.269), speaking (p=0.401), writing (p = 0.561) and reading (p = 0.539) challenges.
4.6.10 Comparison between Japanese Language Skills’ Proficiency (Difference among Positions based on Challenges Count)

This section intends to compare the differences in the four type of challenges (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) among the four different positions of managerial, executive, professional and others in comparison with participants’ JLPT proficiency levels.

Table 4.15 ANOVA results of challenges count per person according to position level for Japanese language proficiency level N1

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<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>Listen_count</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.652</td>
<td>4.632</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>7.131</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak_count</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>2.640</td>
<td>11.617</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>.227</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Write_count</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
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<td>.482</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read_count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5.094</td>
<td>9.462</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>.538</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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This section reports the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is a closed-ended question. The purpose of the data was to compare the challenges count per person by position level for JLPT proficiency N1 level.

For the participants who had obtained JLPT N1 level, ANOVA results in Table 4.15 show that there are significant differences in the four type of challenges (listening, p=0.022; speaking, p=0.000; writing, p=0.000 and reading, p = 0.001) among the four different positions of managerial, executive, professional and others.
A post-hoc analysis was done to investigate further the mean differences count per person based on each of the challenges faced by the N1 participants. A post-hoc analysis has been conducted and the results are shown in Table 4.16 below.

Table 4.16 Differences count per person on each of the challenges faced by the JLPT N1 participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>(I) Position Level</th>
<th>(J) Position Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound</th>
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<td>Managerial</td>
<td>-.556</td>
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<td>.362</td>
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<td>Managerial</td>
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<td>.389</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>-2.07</td>
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<td>Executive</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>-.535</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>-1.21</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1.091*</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>2.07</td>
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<td>Managerial</td>
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<td>.318</td>
<td>.116</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Managerial</td>
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<td>.311</td>
<td>.001</td>
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<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>-.697*</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.011</td>
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<td>Managerial</td>
<td>1.364*</td>
<td>.311</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Managerial</td>
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<td>.452</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-3.33</td>
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<td>1.333*</td>
<td>.463</td>
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<td>.16</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>.848*</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.641</td>
<td>-1.68</td>
<td>.79</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.007</td>
<td>-2.85</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
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<td>.489</td>
<td>.641</td>
<td>-1.79</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
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<td>Managerial</td>
<td>1.636*</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>2.85</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Professional</td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>.192*</td>
<td>.330</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.16 shows that those in the managerial position have no significant differences compared with executives and professionals, respectively, in the listening challenges count per person. However, executives and professionals show a significant difference in the listening challenges count per person. By referring to the mean plot in Figure 4.34, it can be seen that professional participants face more
challenges when compared to the executive participants. It should be noted that there are no significant differences between those in managerial positions and those in professional positions.

Figure 4.34 Mean of listening challenges count per person according to position level in Japanese Language Proficiency JLPT N1 Level

For the speaking challenge (Figure 4.35) and reading challenge (Figure 4.36) categories, it can be concluded that executives and managers have no significant differences in the mean challenges count per person. However, both executives and managers have significant differences compared to those in professional positions in both speaking and reading challenges (Table 4.16). Based on the mean plot, it can be concluded that professionals encounter more speaking and reading challenges count per person as compared to those in executive and managerial positions.
Figure 4.35 Mean of speaking challenges count per person according to position level in Japanese language proficiency JLPT N1 level
Figure 4.36 Mean of reading challenges count per person according to position level in Japanese language proficiency JLPT N1 level

For the writing challenges (Figure 4.37), those in managerial and professional positions show significant mean differences. In addition, executives show a significant difference compared to managers and professionals. Based on the mean plot below, it can be concluded that those in both managerial and professional positions encounter more challenges as compared to those in the executive position.
It can be concluded that for participants who had obtained JLPT N1 level, executives encountered less challenges in listening, speaking, writing, and reading. This can be attributed to the fact that the challenges count per person is relatively low. However, participants who hold the professional position faced more challenges in those skills. The participants who hold managerial positions faced more challenges in writing as compared to other Japanese language skills. Besides the proficiency JLPT N1 level, the analysis focused on the challenges count per person by the position level for proficiency JLPT N2 level. The ANOVA results are shown in Table 4.17.
This section reports the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is a closed-ended question. The purpose was to compare the challenges count per person by position level for proficiency JLPT N2 level.

Based on the ANOVA results, participants who had obtained Japanese language proficiency JLPT N2 level, there is no significant difference in the position level in the four challenges count per person. This was observed because all \( p \)-values are more than the significant level of 0.05. A post-hoc analysis and mean plot were conducted. For the participants who had obtained Japanese language Proficiency JLPT N3 level, ANOVA results were obtained as shown in Table 4.18.

**Table 4.17 ANOVA results of challenges count per person by position level for proficiency JLPT N2 level**

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</tr>
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<td>.137</td>
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<td>.532</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speak_count</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>252</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>.447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>3.181</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>265</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.938</td>
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<td><strong>Write_count</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>Within Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>Between Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
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Table 4.18 ANOVA results of challenges count per person by position level for proficiency JLPT N3 level

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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.272</td>
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<td>0.211</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.385</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak_count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.228</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.614</td>
<td>9.527</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>6.311</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.274</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11.538</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write_count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.613</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.807</td>
<td>7.295</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>8.848</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.385</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14.462</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read_count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.940</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.470</td>
<td>4.763</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>7.098</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.038</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section reports the data obtained from the questionnaire; Section IV, Question number five, and this question is a closed-ended question. The purpose of the data analysis was to compare the challenges count per person by position level for proficiency JLPT N3 level.

Based on the results reported in Table 4.18, there are significant differences among the position levels in the speaking (p = 0.001), writing (p = 0.004), and reading (p = 0.019) challenges count per person. A post-hoc analysis was conducted and the results are displayed in Table 4.19. The results show that other positions and managerial positions have significant differences in the speaking (p = 0.001), writing (p = 0.008), and reading (p = 0.016) challenges count per person. Meanwhile, executive and managerial levels have significant differences in speaking (p = 0.043) challenges count per person. On the other hand, other positions have significant difference compared to the executive position in the writing (p = 0.026) challenges count per person.

Although the mean plot shows that participants at the managerial level have the highest mean count of listening challenges count per person, it has no statistically significant difference (Figure 4.38 (a)). Figure 4.38 (b) showed that participants at
the managerial position have the highest mean challenges count of speaking and have significant differences from the executive and other position levels based on the post-hoc analyses. For the writing challenges in Figure 4.38 (c), the managerial level showed the highest mean count. Yet, it has no significant differences from the executive position. The reading challenge results has significant differences for the others and managerial positions.

Table 4.19 Difference among the position level of the participants in the speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>(I) Position Level</th>
<th>(J) Position Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen_count</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>-.273</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.346</td>
<td>-.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>-.333</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.346</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>.299</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>-.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>-.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.299</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>-.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak_count</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>1.417*</td>
<td>.338</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>-.879</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>-1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.417*</td>
<td>.338</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>.879*</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write_count</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>.727*</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>1.333*</td>
<td>.400</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>-2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>.727</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>-.606</td>
<td>.404</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>-1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.333*</td>
<td>.400</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>.404</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>-.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read_count</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>.356</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>-.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>1.083*</td>
<td>.359</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>-1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>.356</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>-.727</td>
<td>.362</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>-1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.083</td>
<td>.359</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>.727</td>
<td>.362</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>-.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.
Figure 4.38 Mean plot of four challenges count per person according to position level in proficiency JLPT N3 level
4.6.11 Relationship between the Position level and Japanese Language Proficiency Level

This section intends to report the relationship between all position levels and Japanese language proficiency levels (Table 4.20). A cross tabulation was obtained in order to study the relationship between the position level and the Japanese language proficiency level by using a chi-square test.

Table 4.20 Relationship between the position level and Japanese language proficiency level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Level</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Managerial</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of JLPT</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>N2</td>
<td>N3</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Count</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Count</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Count</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Count</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Count</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A chi-square test was performed to test the relationship between the proficiency level and the position level of the participants. The results obtained as shown in Table 4.21.
Table 4.21 Chi-square tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>36.356a</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>43.741</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>32.235</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.20.

An association between the Japanese language proficiency level and the position level was found, with $\chi^2 (6, N = 65) = 36.356$, $p \approx 0.000$. The Japanese language proficiency level and the position level are dependent on each other. This can be attributed to the fact that those with higher Japanese language proficiency levels are more likely to hold the managerial and professional positions. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that 18.5% (12 out of 65) of the other positions level apart from those in managerial, professional and executive levels were in N3 while the percentage of position in managerial, professional and executive categories was less than 18.5%. Figure 4.39 below shows the position level in comparison with the level of JPTL. It can be noticed that the number of participants in higher proficiency increases when participants have higher positions. Thus, participants with professional and managerial positions with level N1 are more than those in levels N2 and N3. Meanwhile, for the positions of executive and others, they have a higher frequency in the N2 and N3 levels. This means that those who are in higher positions have obtained higher JLPT levels.
This section sums up the results of quantitative data analysis. This study revealed that the most important skills for MJSGEs are the listening and speaking skills. These are followed by the reading skill and lastly the writing skill. However, the findings of the current study indicate that across all position levels, listening and
speaking are the equally important skills for Japanese language proficiency at the participants’ workplace.

For the reading skill, the findings revealed that the MJSGEs who hold managerial and professional positions are the individuals who required more reading skills for Japanese language proficiency as compared to those who hold the position as executive and “others” in JCM. Similarly, for the writing skill, the findings revealed that MJSGEs who hold the managerial and professional positions need to have a higher level in their writing skill in the Japanese language at their workplace. Therefore, MJSGEs who hold managerial and professional positions (associated with higher JLPT levels) showed that they applied more reading and writing skills in their workplace compared to those who had lower JLPT levels. However, the findings indicated that the four skills are indeed important across all position levels pertaining to Japanese language proficiency.

Based on the reporting of the quantitative data findings, it can be summarised that the most challenging skills encountered by the participants are listening and speaking. On the other hand, writing and reading are the least challenging skills reported by the participants. The participants indicated that the most challenges they faced in the listening skill were the use of Japanese dialects and the speed of speech of the Japanese speakers. For the challenges faced in the speaking skill, the participants faced critical challenges with regard to the time taken to construct utterances and difficulty to express ideas or opinions. For the reading skill, the MJSGEs indicated that difficulty in understanding Japanese language written in texts, limited vocabularies, and to identify and read Japanese characters especially Kanji were the major challenges they faced in reading. Two major
challenges faced by MJSGEs in writing in the Japanese language are limited vocabularies and limited grammar knowledge.

The findings also revealed that the participants who hold managerial and professional positions in JCM tend to use more Japanese language during their working hours. Thus, it can be concluded that the participants who hold managerial and professional positions faced more listening, speaking, reading, and writing challenges in the Japanese language. This can be attributed to the nature of the roles of their job. The findings also revealed that the proficiency level of the Japanese language of MJSGEs and their position levels in JCM are dependent on each other. This means that those who hold managerial and professional positions have obtained higher JLPT levels and they are the participants who faced more listening, speaking, reading, and writing challenges.

### 4.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the results of the data analysis of the quantitative data obtained though the questionnaire used in this study. Specifically, this chapter provided answers to Research Question Two and Research Question Three.
CHAPTER 5- QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter has reported the results of the analysis of the quantitative data, this current chapter presents the results of the qualitative data that were gathered through semi-structured interviews which were conducted with 25 participants: 17 MJSGEs and eight JCM employees. Specifically, this chapter reports the findings of the four research questions addressed by this study.

The headings of the sections in this chapter correspond to the four research questions. Section 5.3 reports the answer to Research Question One, Section 5.4 focuses on the answer to Research Question Two. Research Questions Three and Four are answered in Sections 5.5 and 5.6, respectively. However, before reporting the results of the analysis, participants’ demographic data are presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 in Section 5.2.

5.2 Participants’ Demographic Profiles

Table 5.1 shows the demographic data of MJSGEs while Table 5.2 presents the demographic profiles of JCM. Table 5.1, on the demographic information of the MJSGEs, presents details on (1) the region from which the participant was selected, (2) the participants’ Japanese language proficiency, and (3) the gender of the participants. Furthermore, for each participant, the researcher developed an ID to be used as code to differentiate a participant from another. Each ID, unique to each participant, consists of four characters: two letters, a number, and another letter. The first letter is used to represent the region, while the second letter is used to represent the MJSGE participants. The third and the fourth characters represent the participant
and the company he/she works at, respectively. For example, in the ID “WM1A”, W is used to represent the region for Kuala Lumpur, M is used to represent MJSGE, and 1A refers to the first participant from Company A.

Table 5.1 MJSGEs Participants’ Demographic Information (17 employees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>JLPT</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>WM1A</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WM1B</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WM1C</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WM1D</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>AM1A</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AM1B</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AM1C</td>
<td>N2</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AM1D</td>
<td>N2</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AM1E</td>
<td>N2</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>KM1A</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KM1B</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KM1C</td>
<td>N3</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>PM1A</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PM1B</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PM1C</td>
<td>N3</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PM2C</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PM3C</td>
<td>N3</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 JCM Participants’ Demographic Information (8 employers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>WJ1A</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WJ1B</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>AJ1A</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>KJ1B</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KJ1C</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>PJ1B</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PJ2C</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PJ3C</td>
<td>Assistant General Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 provides the demographic data on the employer participants in the study. For each participant, data regarding the region from which the participant was selected, the position of the participant, and the gender of the participants are presented. It should be noted that in Table 5.2 the system used in creating the codes that represent the participants who were selected from JCM is similar to the coding...
system used to identify the participants selected from MJSGEs. For example, in the
code WJ1A, W is used to represent Kuala Lumpur, J is used to reflect that the
participant was selected from JCM. The last two characters (1A) are used to refer to
the first participant from Company A.

As can be seen in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, four MJSGE participants and two JCM
participants were from Kuala Lumpur. Five MJSGE participants and only one JCM
participant were from Perak. From Kedah, there were three MJSGEs and two JCM
participants. Majority of the participants were from Penang; five MJSGEs and three
from JCM.

5.3 Research Question One

Data obtained from the one-to-one semi-structured interviews with eight JCM
participants are used to answer Research Question One (What are the requirements
of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among
JCM). This section presents the findings of the semi-structured interview conducted
with participants from JCM. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the semi-
structured interview with the eight JCM participants. These themes are listening,
speaking, reading, and writing skills. Table 5.3 shows the themes which emerged
from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the JCM participants. In
addition, Table 5.3 presents the categories and sub-categories that are related to
the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading,
and writing in JCM.
Table 5.3 Thematic category for requirements of Japanese language proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Understand oral instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Able to confirm information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Understand conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Understand discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Understand proceedings of a meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Work conversation with Japanese colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Daily communication with Japanese colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Communicate with Japanese customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Conversing over the telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oral reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read e-mails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Read business reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Read manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Read instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write e-mails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Write reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.1 Proficiency Requirements for Japanese Listening Skills

Table 5.4 shows the selective categories for the Japanese listening skill. As illustrated in Table 5.4, five codes emerged from the content analysis of the semi-structured interviews with eight participants from JCM regarding the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in the listening skill.

Table 5.4 Sub-categories of listening skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1 Understand oral instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Able to confirm information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Understand conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Understand discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Understand proceedings of a meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, 87.5% of the participants stated that speaking and listening are the two most important skills required for working in JCM. However, only three participants from JCM (WJ1B,
KJ1C, and PJ1B) ranked the listening skill as the top most important skill that is required in the workplace. Furthermore, five participants from JCM (WJ1A, AJ1A, KJ1B, PJ2C, and PJ3C) ranked the speaking skill as the top most important skill required at the workplace. However, PJ1B stated that in his company, the speaking skill is the third important skill among the four major Japanese language skills.

5.3.1(a) Understanding Oral Instruction

As mentioned by KJ1C and PJ3C, JCM viewed listening skill to be important because it is required by all JCM and it can help the MJSGEs to understand the instruction given by the JCM employers. Specifically, KJIC and PJ3C emphasised that (1) understanding oral instruction and (2) being able to confirm information with their interlocutors are viewed to be two of the requirements. The two excerpts taken from the interviews with KJIC and PJ3C support this finding.

_I think listening is the most important step. As for myself, I can understand the English language I heard but can hardly tell what I want to say in English language. Those who learn Japanese language may know this, you understand the Japanese language that you heard, but you find it difficult to say what you want to. It is the same as English language to us. Therefore, when I tell the local staff something in Japanese language and they understand it, they may reply me in English language. So, this will make up our communication._ (KJ1C)

_If it is something important and related to work, we will try our best to get our message passed to each other. Especially the message related to safety, in that situation, we really hope that the local staffs are able to understand in Japanese language to make sure the message was conveyed 100% to them._ (PJ3C)

5.3.1(b) Ability to Confirm Information

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews also show that the ability to confirm information is an important sub-skill among all the listening sub-skills. This is reflected in one of the following quotations taken from the interviews with PJ1B.
For his company, the most important skill is listening because it is highly needed for mutual communication at the workplace in JCM. PJ1B also pointed out that the listening skill is important for MJSGEs to understand the oral instruction and to confirm the information with their interlocutor.

*I think the ability of listening is important. If they can understand the job instruction, they will be able to follow the instruction. Besides, if they can understand the content that they were told, they will be able to ask back for confirmation. Even if they are not able to ask back using Japanese language, they will be able to confirm in English. Therefore, to improve the listening ability is important in mutual communication.* (PJ1B)

5.3.1(c) Understanding Conversation

Based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, the majority of JCM participants ranked the speaking skill as the top most important skill at the workplace. Yet, one of the JCM made a comment regarding the importance of the listening skill.

*Even only listening will do. If one can understand what he/she heard, he/she may explain or reply it in English. Although I can’t speak English language, I can understand what I heard. If both understand each other’s word, then they will be able to try to communicate. Of course, if the local staffs are able to speak in Japanese as well, then it will be tremendous.* (WJ1B)

According to WJ1B, in order to avoid a communication breakdown between the expatriate and the local staff, especially when both parties speak the same language, the Japanese listening skill can enhance their communication. This is because of the fact that by using the Japanese language, both parties can understand each other’s utterances and convey their ideas or explanation effectively.
5.3.1(d) Understand Discussion and Proceedings of a Meeting

PJ1B, PJ2C, WJ1A, AJ1A, and KJ1B indicated that MJSGEs are required to understand conversation, understand discussion, and understand proceedings of a meeting. They also indicated that MJSGEs are required to have a high level of proficiency in the Japanese listening skill. They also added that this high level of proficiency in the Japanese listening skill should be equivalent to JLPT N2 and above. However, KJ1C, WJ1B, and PJ3C revealed that MJSGEs are not required to understand conversation, understand the discussion, or understand proceedings of a meeting. Therefore, the responses from these three JCM participants revealed that MJSGEs are required to have a moderate level of the listening skill. This moderate level is equivalent to JLPT N3.

Moreover, PJ1B and WJ1A indicated that the Japanese language proficiency is a requirement for employment in their companies. For these two participants, JLPT N1 level is sufficient. However, the other six participants from JCM did not set the Japanese language proficiency as their requirement for recruitment. However, they highly evaluated the MJSGEs who have Japanese language proficiency skills.

The requirements of Japanese language proficiency in the listening skills and its sub-skills among participants from JCM were investigated through semi-structured interviews with participants from JCM. The findings are summarised in Table 5.5.
Table 5.5 Requirement of Japanese language proficiency in listening skill and sub-categories among JCM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JRCSM Participant</th>
<th>Importance of Listening Skill</th>
<th>Understand Oral Instruction</th>
<th>Able to Confirm Information</th>
<th>Understand Conversation</th>
<th>Understand Discussion</th>
<th>Understand Proceedings of Meeting</th>
<th>JLPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJ1A</td>
<td>Second importance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ1B</td>
<td>Second important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ1C</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ1B</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ2C</td>
<td>Second important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ3C</td>
<td>Second important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ1A</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ1B</td>
<td>Second important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.2 Proficiency Requirements for Japanese Speaking Skills

Table 5.6 shows the sub-categories for the Japanese speaking skill. As illustrated in Table 5.6, five sub-categories emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the eight participants from JCM. The interviews focused on issues related to the requirements of proficiency in the Japanese speaking skill.

Table 5.6 Sub-categories of speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1 Work conversation with Japanese colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Daily communication with Japanese colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Communicate with Japanese customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Conversing over the telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Oral reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.2(a) Work Conversation with Japanese Colleagues and Daily Communication with Japanese Colleagues

According to KJ1C, since the company he was attached to is a global company, the Japanese staff members need to have proficiency in the English language. The company set up a policy that requires the Japanese staff members who are assigned to work in overseas locations to be proficient in speaking in the English language. KJ1C who was assigned to work in Malaysia obtained the minimum proficiency in the English language. Yet, he mentioned that MJSGEs with good Japanese language speaking skills are preferable, especially when they hold supervisory positions such as section head or section manager. In this position, it requires good speaking skills to enhance communication between the Japanese expatriates and the local staff, as illustrated in the comment below:

*For my case, I am in the management position, when I need to give out instruction, it is quite difficult for me to convey my mind. I mean to tell my mind using English language, under this circumstances, I hope the local staff who knows Japanese language will help me in convey the instruction to the local staff who not able to communicate in Japanese language. (KJ1C)*

KJ1C stated that when a local staff member has a high level of proficiency in the Japanese language, effective communication can be achieved. However, KJ1C mentioned that his company does not require either a high proficiency in the Japanese language or a particular JLPT level. KJ1C added that MJSGEs are required to have the ability of understanding the meaning that employers want to convey to them. Thus, according to KJ1C, the proficiency level that the MJSGEs in his/her organisation was required to have is lower than the moderate level. In other words, for KJ1C, the proficiency level that MJSGEs are required to have is equivalent to N4
because MJSGEs in his organisation are not required to communicate with Japanese customers or counterparts from the headquarters.

WJ1B also stated that his company did not require MJSGEs to communicate with Japanese customers or counterparts from the headquarters. However, he added that MJSGEs who hold the position such as section head and section manager are required to (1) speak the Japanese language, (2) understand instruction, and (3) have the ability to pass the messages to their operators or subordinates in the local language. He indicated that the MJSGEs can act as a ‘go-between’/interpreter for the local staff who are not able to communicate in the Japanese language with the Japanese employers or convey the JCM message to their subordinates in an effective way. Therefore, for this situation, WJ1B is of the view that MJSGEs are required to have a moderate level of proficiency in the Japanese language. This moderate level of proficiency in the Japanese language is JLPT N3.

*For those who are able to speak, for example subsection chief, section manager, line leader, if they can speak Japanese, they will understand what I said, then they will pass my message to the operator or subordinate in the local language. I wish that the local staffs who are able to communicate in Japanese language will use the language for that situation. (WJ1B)*

AJ1A, the only participant from Perak, stated that his company does not require those working in offices to have a high level of proficiency in the speaking skill. Yet, he said that his company demands a high level of speaking skill from those who deal with clerical work including those in executive and manager positions who have to communicate with Japanese colleagues and Japanese customers. The level of Japanese language proficiency required by his company is JLPT N3, an intermediate level of the Japanese language proficiency.

Moreover, KJ1C, WJ1B, and AJ1A added that the Japanese language proficiency enhances the communication between the JCM and MJSGEs. They also
noticed that when the local employees understand the Japanese language, they will be able to adapt to the workplace nature in a faster way because they are able to understand the Japanese language easily. Therefore, they revealed that the speaking skill is important for those who want to gain mutual understanding. However, KJ1C and AJ1A indicated that MJSGEs are expected to be able to communicate in the Japanese language in the workplace but are not expected to use honorific and humble expressions such as expressions used by Japanese employees in their headquarters.

My company do not require high Japanese proficiency, as long as I can get what they mean, I think that will be good. However, if the local staffs understand Japanese language, they will be able to accept the Japanese companies’ business manner easily. (KJ1C)

For me, I think is not necessary for the local staff to follow the Japanese special business manner such as the use of honorific words, the way to write e-mail and so on. As the lack of business manner is rather remarkable among young Japanese, we don’t intend to force the local staff to learn it. If they can understand the Japanese practices such as be punctual, keep promise, it will be good. (AJ1A)

AJ1A added that the lack of business manners such as the use of honorific words is rather remarkable among young Japanese. Thus, Japanese expatriates do not intend to force the local staff to learn it because the content of the message is more important compare to the form of the sentences. AJ1A further expressed that when local staff can understand the Japanese practices such as being punctual, keeping promises, it is sufficient for the company.

5.3.2(b) Communicating with Japanese Customers

More than half (62%) of the JCM mentioned that the speaking skill is the most important skill that is required by JCM. This was mentioned by AJ1A, KJ1B, PJ2C, PJ3C, and WJ1A. The speaking skill is considered the most important skill
when MJSGEs need to deal with Japanese customers from various countries and also when they need to deal with their counterparts in the headquarters in Japan. Furthermore, PJ2C and PJ3C mentioned that globalisation has forced the Japanese companies to make learning English as one of the requirements for their staff. Therefore, those who are assigned to work overseas must have passed the Business English language test that is set by the company. This is applicable to expatriates in Malaysia who have obtained the minimum ability in the English language skill. It means that the Japanese expatriate in JCM in Malaysia can communicate with MJSGEs using basic English. However, when MJSGEs deal with Japanese customers from various countries and when they deal with their counterparts in the headquarters in Japan (those who are not able to communicate in the English language), MJSGEs must have a high level of the Japanese speaking skill. According to PJ2C and PJ3C, the requirement of the Japanese language proficiency in the speaking skill is equivalent to the level of JLPT N2 and above.

*I work under production and sales department and I have information exchange with the staff of sales companies from various countries. I am in charge of Japan, there are also few local staff who in charge of Japan, so when we deal with the Japanese customer from Japan, we have to use Japanese language. (PJ2C)*

*In JCM, English language will be used. However, in the head quarter, there are people who can’t speak English language. Therefore, it will be good to have local staff who is able to speak Japanese language. (PJ3C)*

5.3.2(c) Conversing over the Telephone

Regarding the importance of the speaking skill at her workplace, PJ2C indicated that MJSGEs have to communicate over the phone with the headquarters when there is an urgent need for conveying a particular message. This mostly occurs when the counterpart from Japan does not have a high level of proficiency in the
English language and the problem cannot be solved through e-mails. In this case, it is easier to solve the urgent issues if local staff is able to communicate in the Japanese language. Taking this into account, PJ2C revealed that her department requires a high proficiency in the Japanese speaking skill.

*For the person in charge of Japan sales, they required high level, for simple business mail, phone call, meeting, they will require Japanese language. In case of emergency, they have to communicate over the phone. For that situation, if the counterpart is not good in English, the problem cannot be solved over the phone, and it will be too late to send e-mail thus problem cannot be solved in time. If local staffs know Japanese language, the problem can be solved immediately. In this case, it will be easier to work if local staffs know Japanese. (PJ2C)*

5.3.2(d) Oral reporting

WJ1A, KJ1B, and PJ1B state that all speaking sub-categories (Table 5.7) including the oral reporting are required in their organisations. Therefore, they require a high Japanese language proficiency. PJ1B pointed out that a person will not be recruited when he/she fails to meet the Japanese proficiency requirement. The level JLPT required by his company is N2 and above.

*During the staff meeting, it will be good if they are able to explain the situation in a concrete way. It is expected that they produce comprehensible, acceptable work in discussion and presentation. (PJ1B)*

According to WJ1A, it is better for MJSGEs to have higher level of Japanese language proficiency and the level of JLPT required by her company is JLPT N1. According to WJ1A, the speaking skill and understanding what the other party said are the most important skills. It has been noticed by KJ1B that in order to have a mutual understanding, the speaking skill is very important in JCM. Therefore, her department requires a high level of Japanese language proficiency at JLPT N2 and above.
In order to have mutual understanding, I think speaking skill is important. The local staffs around me speak very fluent Japanese and they are also familiar with the Japanese culture, the Japanese have high expectation from them. Compare to those who don’t speak Japanese language. I feel that their work load is a lot. (KJ1B)

Based on interviews with five JCM participants (PJ2C, PJ3C, KJ1C, WJ1B, and AJ1A), it can be observed that the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in the speaking skill differed from one participant to another. For AJ1A, PJ2C, and PJ3C, MJSGEs need some sub-skills in speaking (Table 5.7). These sub-categories are work conversation with Japanese colleagues, communication with Japanese colleagues, communication with Japanese customers, and conversation over the telephone with Japanese customers from various countries and with their counterparts from the headquarters in Japan. In addition, KJ1C and WJ1B mentioned that the MJSGEs are required to have the sub-skill such as work conversation with Japanese colleagues and daily communication with Japanese colleagues.

Almost more than half of the JCM participants (KJ1B, PJ1B, PJ2C, and PJ3C and WJ1A) revealed that MJSGEs are required to have a high level of the speaking skill which should be equivalent to JLPT N2 and above. Additionally, less than half of the JCM pointed out that MJSGEs are required to have a moderate level of the speaking skill which should be equivalent to JLPT N3 and N4. These participants are AJ1A, KJ1C, and WJ1B.

Data concerning the requirements of the Japanese language proficiency in speaking and the sub-categories (sub-skills) among JCM were obtained using semi-structured interviews with JCM and the findings are summarised in Table 5.7 below.
Table 5.7 Requirement of Japanese language proficiency in the speaking skill and sub-categories among JCM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JRCSM</th>
<th>Importance of Listening Skill</th>
<th>Work Conversation with Japanese Colleagues</th>
<th>Daily Communication with Japanese Colleagues</th>
<th>Communicate with Japanese Customer</th>
<th>Converse Over Telephone</th>
<th>Oral Reporting</th>
<th>JLPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJ1A</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ1B</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ1C</td>
<td>Second important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ1B</td>
<td>Third important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ2C</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ3C</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ1A</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ1B</td>
<td>Second important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.3 Proficiency Requirements for Japanese Reading Skill

Table 5.8 shows the sub-categories for the Japanese reading skill. Four sub-categories emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews which were conducted with eight participants from JCM regarding the requirements of proficiency in the Japanese reading skill. Compared to the listening and speaking skills, the Japanese reading skill is the least important skill that is required by JCM. In fact, half of the JCM (WJ1B, AJ1A, KJ1C, and PJ3C) mentioned that the Japanese reading skill is not required at their workplace.

Table 5.8 Sub-categories of reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read e-mails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Read business reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Read manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Read instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.3(a) Read E-mails and Read Business Reports

PJ1B, PJ2C, WJ1A, and KJ1B mentioned that MJSGEs need to possess the reading skill. According to PJ1B, it is necessary for MJSGEs to be able to communicate or exchange communication in the Japanese language via reports and e-mails. PJ1B indicated that the required level of proficiency in the Japanese reading skill is equivalent to JLPT N2. Since PJ2C’s department depends on e-mails much more than other means of communication, her department prefers to recruit those who understand the Japanese language. Thus, the requirement of the Japanese language proficiency is a high level, which is equivalent to JLPT N2 and above. PJ2C further stated that as her department is a production and sales department, MJSGEs have to read manuals and instructions written in the Japanese language. She stated that although the requirement is for some categories such as section head and manager, it will be an added advantage when MJSGEs are able to use the Japanese language.

As a big company, for those who do not have direct contact with head quarter, he/she may think that Japanese language is not necessary, but anyhow if one knows Japanese it will be a merit if one were to have contact with head office. (PJ2C)

WJ1A stated that although the ability to read and write is equally important for her workplace, MJSGEs have to have good abilities in reading and understanding manuals. This is reflected in the following excerpt taken from the interview with WJ1A.

My workplace require both skills however, when writing is concerned, I will be able to help them (MJSGEs) but they have to read and understand the manual, so compare to writing, reading will be more important. (WJ1A)
5.3.3(b) Reading Manuals and Reading Instruction

WJ1A stated that other than manuals, MJSGEs must understand e-mails they receive from their Japanese counterparts in the headquarters of their firms. This is a compulsory task for MJSGEs who hold the positions as section head or manager because they have to understand the content of the e-mails. Therefore, the level of the reading skill required in WJ1A’s company is equivalent to JLPT N1.

Other than speaking and listening skills, reading skills is the third important skill required in my department. They do writing as well, they require both skills however, when writing is concerned, I will be able to help them but they have to read and understand the manual, so compare to writing, reading will be more important. (WJ1A)

KJ1B, another participant, stated that for her company, the reading skill is ranked the third important skill after both the speaking skill and listening skill. Her company requires MJSGEs to have proficiency in the reading skill. This level must be equivalent to JLPT N2 level.

Among JCM participants who required the reading skill in their companies, PJ1B is the only participant who mentioned that the writing skill is more important than the reading skill.

The manager must be able to write e-mails and reports, the requirement of level of writing skill’s proficiency is high; they must be able to produce comprehensible, acceptable work in discussion, presentation and writing reports. (PJ1B)

The requirements of the Japanese language proficiency in reading and the sub-categories of reading in JCM were also investigated through semi-structured interviews with the JCM. The findings are summarised in Table 5.9.
Table 5.9 Requirement of Japanese language proficiency in the reading skill and sub-categories among JCM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JRCSM</th>
<th>Importance of Reading Skill</th>
<th>Read Emails</th>
<th>Read Business Reports</th>
<th>Read Manuals</th>
<th>Read Instruction</th>
<th>JLPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJ1A</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ1B</td>
<td>Third important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ1C</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ1B</td>
<td>Fourth important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ2C</td>
<td>Third important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ3C</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ1A</td>
<td>Third important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ1B</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.4 Proficiency Requirements for Japanese Writing Skills

Table 5.10 shows the sub-categories for the Japanese writing skills. As illustrated in Table 5.10, two sub-categories emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews which were conducted with the eight participants from JCM regarding the requirements of the Japanese language proficiency in writing.

Table 5.10 Sub-categories of Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1  Write e-mails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2  Write reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only three JCM participants (PJ1B, PJ2C, and WJ1A) required their MJSGEs to have proficiency in Japanese writing skills. PJ1B is the only JCM participant who said that the writing skill is more important than the speaking and reading skills. According to PJ1B, writing reports and e-mails are the necessary tasks in his department. Thus, MJSGEs are not recruited when they fail to meet the Japanese language proficiency requirements in writing. His department requires MJSGEs to have at least JLPT N2 level.
To my company, writing reports in Japanese language is a necessary task, so writing skill is very important. Even though the most important skill is listening, however, writing skill is also important. The point that I am particularly concern about the local staff is, it is better that they improve their writing skill. (PJ1B)

The other two JCM participants (PJ2C and WJ1A) revealed that the writing skill is the least important skill. For them, it is the fourth important skill at their workplace. According to PJ2C whose department is production and sales department, MJSGEs have to deal with many e-mails that are exchanged with the Japanese sales companies. Thus, MJSGEs have to write business e-mails to their Japanese customers. At the same time, they have to write reports in the Japanese language too. Therefore, her department required a high level of proficiency in the Japanese writing skill. This level should be equivalent to JLPT N2. WJ1A stated that MJSGEs in her company have to write business e-mails to customers and have to write reports in the Japanese language to their counterparts in various countries. Therefore, her company requires MJSGEs to have a high level of the writing skill. This level must be equivalent to JLPT N1.

For the present job, my department required high level of Japanese proficiency because the local staffs have to write e-mails to the Japan side, they have to write the reports too. (WJ1A)

Table 5.11 Requirement of Japanese language proficiency in the writing skill and sub-categories among JCM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JRCSM</th>
<th>Importance of Writing Skill</th>
<th>Write Emails</th>
<th>Write Business Reports</th>
<th>JLPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJ1A</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ1B</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ1C</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ1B</td>
<td>Second important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ2C</td>
<td>Fourth important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ3C</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ1A</td>
<td>Fourth important</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ1B</td>
<td>No required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The requirements of the Japanese language proficiency in writing and the sub-categories among JCM participants were investigated through semi-structured interviews which were carried out with the JCM. The findings are summarised in Table 5.11.

Based on the semi-structured interviews with the JCM, the findings showed that the most important skill required among JCM are the speaking skill, followed by the listening, reading, and writing skills.

5.4 Research Question Two

To answer the Research Question Two (What are the levels of importance of Japanese language skills are used by MJSGE working in JCM), data were obtained from the questionnaire which was reported in this thesis in Chapter Four. Data were also obtained from semi-structured interviews with 17 MJSGEs. This section presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews conducted with MJSGEs working in JCM.

After the analysis of these interviews, four themes emerged from the findings of the semi-structured interview with the 17 MJSGE participants. The themes are the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Table 5.12 shows the themes that emerged from the findings of the semi-structured interviews with the MJSGE participants, it also shows the categories and sub-categories for the level of importance of the Japanese language skills used by MJSGEs in the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills among JCM.
Table 5.12 Thematic category for the level of importance of Japanese language skills used by the MJSGE in JCM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1. Understand oral instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Understand discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Understand face-to-face conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. To confirm information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Answer telephone call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Understand formal speech during meeting or video conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1. Greeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Work communication with Japanese colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Daily conversation with Japanese colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Attending meeting and video conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Answer or communicate through phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Communicate with Japanese customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1. Read emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Skype or Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Read reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Read technical documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Read internal circulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Read instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1. Write e-mails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Write reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Write technical materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Write manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Write instructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.1 Level of Importance for Japanese Listening Skills

Table 5.13 shows the sub-categories for listening. As illustrated in Table 5.13, six sub-categories emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews which were carried out with 17 MJSGEs. The focus of the interviews was on the level of importance of the Japanese language skill used by MJSGEs in the Japanese listening skill. The sub-categories are shown in Table 5.13 below.
Table 5.13 Sub-categories for the level of importance of Japanese language listening skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1 Understand oral instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Understand discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Understand face-to-face conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 To confirm information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Answer telephone call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Understand formal speech during meeting or video conferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly all MJSGEs from the four difference regions of JCM who participated in the interviews highlighted that the Japanese listening skill is the most important skill in workplace communication, compared to the speaking, reading, and writing skills. This finding is consistent with one of the findings obtained from the questionnaire investigation which has been reported in Chapter Four, Figure 4.13. Based on the data reported in the bar chat in figure 4.13, listening skill is the most important Japanese language skills that is required by MJSGEs participants for Japanese language proficiency. Furthermore, for the listening skill, among the six sub-skills that emerged from the analysis of semi-structured interviews with 17 MJSGEs, understanding oral instructions is the most important listening sub-skill. This finding is also supported by the findings obtained from the questionnaire investigation which has been reported in Chapter Four, Figure 4.17.

5.4.1(a) Understanding Oral Instruction

All MJSGE participants stated that understanding oral instructions is the most important listening sub-skill that they need at their workplace. This is because they need to make sure that the instructions they receive from their boss or colleagues are correctly interpreted. This is important because MJSGEs need to make sure that the action they take to implement the task is in accordance with their boss’ or
colleagues’ intention. According to KM1A, the listening skill is very important because she needs to understand the instructions given by her Japanese superior. PM1C, who is a manager from the research and development department, stated that making sure that the instructions he receives from the headquarters are correctly interpreted is the most important sub-skill for him. This is reflected in the following excerpt.

*I will always prepare a notebook or paper for them to write down when I have certain parts which I don’t understand. Then, I will use electronic translator to translate those written Japanese language into English language.* (PM1C)

**5.4.1(b) Understanding Discussion**

The majority of the participants noted that the following listening sub-skills are important at their workplace: 1) understanding discussion during meetings, 2) understanding the daily conversation, and 3) confirming information. The participants also noted that at their workplace, there are various activities that need these sub-skills. Furthermore, the participants stated that the above activities are important for them, because without understanding discussions and conversations, and also without the ability to confirm information, it is impossible for them to discuss and express their ideas in the Japanese language. AM1B stated that the Japanese language is necessary for higher positions such as managers, supervisors, and heads of departments. Regarding this, AM1B further explained that:

*I think that listening is the most important skill because such like manager, they need to understand the discussion from the Japanese expatriate or from the head quarter and transfer the message to the local staff or their subordinate.* (AM1B)
5.4.1(c) Understanding Face-to-Face Conversation

PM1A and PM1B stated that the workplace requirement for the Japanese language is different depending on the position and department they work in. However, they mentioned that the most important Japanese language skill is listening, this is because of in JCM settings, the ability to understand conversations is important. They further explained that to understand Japanese colleagues’ daily conversation is important because having this sub-skill, it can help them to build good relationships with their Japanese colleagues. This finding can be realised in the excerpt given below.

*For me, I have no problem to understand the conversation, I always chat with my Japanese colleagues not only about work matter but also daily conversation. The Japanese expatriates are closer to those who are able to communicate in Japanese language. (PM1B)*

5.4.1(d) Confirm Information

According to AM1A, AM1C, and AM1D, the ability to understand the conversations of their JCM employers is an important sub-skill. To be able to perform this, they showed that they can use the Japanese language or English language to confirm instructions they received. However, AM1C noted that when there are difficult terms, MJSGEs need to consult their Japanese colleagues.

*There are some special terms for engineering, which I cannot understand because my background is computer science, in that case, I will ask the colleagues about the terms that mentioned. (AM1C)*

5.4.1(e) Answer Telephone Call

KM1A stated that she needed to answer phone calls from Japanese counterparts. KM1A highlighted that most of her counterparts in Japan lack the ability to communicate in the English language effectively. Thus, the listening skill is
very important in these situations. Majority of the participants mentioned that they need to answer phone calls from the headquarters located in Japan and from their Japanese customers in Malaysia. To carry out these activities, they have to use the Japanese language, as shown in the excerpt given below.

*Basically, I need to understand the instruction given by the Japanese superior. Then, I have to answer the call when there is a phone call from Japan and the daily conversations with the Japanese colleagues. (KM1A)*

5.4.1(f) Understanding Formal Speech during Meetings or Video Conferences

WM1C asserted that listening is the most important skill that MJSGEs need for understanding formal speech during meetings or video conferences. WM1C revealed that they needed to understand instructions given by their Japanese superiors, to understand discussions conducted among their Japanese colleagues, and to listen to and understand formal speeches during meetings or video conferences. Slightly more than half of the participants noted that they need to attend meetings or video conferences and they have to understand formal speeches and discussions in Japanese language. This is made clear by WM1C in the following excerpt.

*I think listening is default the most important, because you need to understand what the managers said because meeting or video conference are conducted in Japanese. (WM1C)*

5.4.2 Level of Importance for Japanese Speaking Skills

Table 5.14 shows the sub-categories for speaking. As illustrated in Table 5.14, six sub-categories emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with 17 MJSGE participants. The focus of the interviews was on the level of importance of the Japanese language skill used by MJSGEs in the speaking skill. The
sub-categories are shown in Table 5.14. The following sub-sections present findings related to these sub-categories.

Table 5.14 Sub-categories for the level of importance of Japanese language speaking skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.2(a) Greetings, Work-related Communication with Japanese Colleagues and Daily Conversation with Japanese Colleagues

All MJSGE participants from the four difference regions of JCM responded that the speaking skill is more important than the reading and writing skills in workplace communication. All of them noted that they used the Japanese language to greet and communicate with the colleagues and superiors. They also used Japanese language to discuss issues related to their work. They usually have face-to-face interactions with their Japanese colleagues on job issues. The findings are consistent with the findings obtained from the quantitative data which was reported in Chapter Four, Figure 4.18. According to Figure 4.18, the five speaking sub-skills that were deemed to be important encompassed greetings, conversing over the phone, conversing face-to-face, communicate with Japanese colleagues and work-related conversation with Japanese colleagues.

In the semi-structured interviews, the researcher managed to gain deep insights from the participants. The participants noted that they have to decide the
formal or informal form when they use the Japanese language at their workplace.

The two excerpts given below support these findings.

*My working environment is communicating in Japanese 100%. I have to deal with Japanese colleague either in formal or informal form. If I am talking with the colleague then I will use informal form, while if superior then I will use honorifics.* (WM1A)

*For normal conversation, I conversed with them formally and informally. However, I use formal sentences for most of the time during meeting.* (PM2C)

5.4.2(b) Attend Meetings and Video Conferences

Slightly more than half of the participants revealed that they have to attend meetings and video conferences which are conducted in the Japanese language. These activities require MJSGEs to communicate in the Japanese language. According to PM1C and PM2C, the speaking skill is considered important, especially when having meetings or video conferences with the headquarters that are located in Japan, because most of the counterparts in Japan are not fluent in the English language. The following excerpt reflects this finding.

*I always interact with Japanese both e-mails and video conference. Video conference is tougher because the video conference is ongoing live with the Japanese and when there are difficulties, I cannot use any tool to help me.* (PM1C)

According to PM3C, during meetings she needs to explain to her Japanese colleagues issues related to work, such as explaining the results of analysis. She noted that some of her Japanese colleagues are unable to understand her explanation when it is given in the English language. Hence, she believed that a high level of the Japanese language speaking skills is very important for this explanation task.
5.4.2(c) Answer or Communicate through Telephone

Slightly more than half of the participants, who are mainly in managerial positions, noted that they need to communicate in the Japanese language in phone conversations with the headquarters for urgent issues. According to PM1C and PM2C, this communication takes place using the Japanese language, because most of their Japanese colleagues from the headquarters are not good in the English language. Additionally, PM1C and PM2C stated that they can express their opinions clearly and can interact with their Japanese colleagues in the headquarters effectively, compared to other local colleagues who are not good in the Japanese language.

Speaking skill is need for urgent issues via phone call because e-mails take time. So, whenever I need immediate confirmation, I will call to head quarter. (PM2C)

5.4.2(d) Communicating with Japanese Customers

AM1B, PM1B, and WM1A who hold the managerial positions indicated that they need to deal with Japanese customers from various countries. Taking this into account, the speaking skill is considered to be very important at their workplace. For this, they are required to have a high level of the Japanese language proficiency.

I have to communicate with Japanese daily. Beside communicate with Japanese colleagues, I need to deal with the Japanese customer too. Japanese language is necessary for higher position like manager, supervisor, and department head. For higher position such I mentioned, the Japanese language requirement needed is JLPT N1. (AM1B)

According to PM1C, PM2C, and KM1A, although the JCM do not specify any JLPT requirements, the possession of good proficiency in the Japanese language can be an advantage in JCM. The advantage of this appears when the headquarters
assigns important tasks to local employees who can communicate effectively in the Japanese language. These advantages include more business trips to Japan, building up good relationships with the Japanese expatriates, and better opportunities for promotion. Furthermore, according to PM3C, based on her experience in JCM, she concluded that the Japanese employers have more trust on those who can communicate in Japanese language. Japanese employers tend to communicate more with MJSGEs who can speak the Japanese language not only in formal conversations and also in daily conversations. Therefore, it is an advantage for MJSGEs to build good relationships with their Japanese employers.

*I also need to explain to the Japanese on the final result of the analysis which is conducted in my company or vendor. I think high level of Japanese language speaking skill is very important for this explanation task in order to make them truly understand and avoid misunderstand. (PM3C)*

### 5.4.3 Level of Importance for Japanese Reading Skills

Table 5.15 shows the sub-categories for the Japanese reading skills. As illustrated in Table 5.15, six sub-skills emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews which were conducted with 17 MJSGE participants regarding the level of importance of the Japanese language skill used by MJSGEs in the reading skill. The sub-skills are shown in Table 5.15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read e-mails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Skype or Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Read reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Read technical documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Read internal circulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Read instructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.3(a) Read E-mails and Skype or Line

In terms of the reading skills, all MJSGE participants responded that reading e-mails is a necessary daily activity in their workplace. This finding is supported by the finding obtained from the quantitative data which has been reported in Chapter Four, Figure 4.19. The bar chart in Figure 4.19 show that reading e-mails was the most important sub-skill for the majority of MJSGEs. AM1A stated that reading and sending e-mails is an activity that she does every day. Sometimes she needs to communicate with her Japanese counterparts by chatting via Skype or Line.

5.4.3(b) Read Report

Most of the participants who hold managerial and executive positions stated that they need to read e-mails from customers in Japan, colleagues and also e-mails from the top management. They revealed that they need to read reports, documents, and materials which are related to specifications and features of some products in the Japanese language.

I read e-mails the most; I will receive e-mails from the top management or customers in Japan or the colleagues in job. Besides, most of the manuals and instructions are in Japanese language. (KM1A)

5.4.3(c) Read Technical Documents and Instructions

All participants from the professional group stated that they need to read documents written in the Japanese language. Examples of these documents are preliminary reports, technical materials, internal circulation, and instructions.

I need to understand the preliminary report made by the Japanese in which the analysis has been conducted in Japan. Usually, they only translate simple information to English language, but other details such as technical information will not translated to English as they have limited ability to do the translation. Hence, I need to have high level of reading skills in Japanese language for this task. (PM3C)
Therefore, PM3C (an engineer in one of the JCM) reported that there is no mandatory requirement for the Japanese language in her company. Yet, to facilitate work done by MJSGEs, she thinks that MJSGEs should have the ability to understand the Japanese technical term because detailed information is given in the Japanese language. Yet, she expressed that due to the language barrier and the limited ability of JCM to translate the preliminary reports into the English language, the MJSGEs often get less detailed information. According to AM1C, AM1D, and AM1E who work as translators in JCM, the reading skill is very important for them in their workplace. Based on the semi-structured interviews, these participants were hired to translate technical materials, preliminary reports, e-mails, letters, documents, internal circulation, and instructions from the Japanese language into the English language or the Malay language and vice-versa.

As a translator, I need to read a lot the materials in Japanese every day. And I need to translate the materials that I read to English language, sometime to Malays language. Most of the materials I translate are document, letter, circulation, and instruction. Sometimes technical article related to the products. (AM1D)

However, the requirements of the Japanese reading skill proficiency vary based on the positions held by the participants. Based on the interviews with the participants, the Japanese reading skills are needed for those in higher positions. PM1B asserted that the demand for proficiency in the Japanese language differs based on the positions and departments of MJSGEs. For example, his role requires a high level of proficiency in Japanese, especially in the reading and writing skills.

The requirement of Japanese language reading skill proficiency is different because of the position and department that the person is working. For example, my role does require high level of Japanese proficient. (PM1B)
PM1C also stated similar concerns because his position as a manager in the research and development department requires a high level of proficiency in the Japanese language. His responsibilities include receiving materials and information from the headquarters in Japan, specifications and features of the products. One of his responsibilities is to transfer information from the headquarters to his department and to his subordinates. Therefore, he must make sure that there is no ambiguous content in the documents he intends to send. Additionally, he has to make sure that information is clear before transferring them to his department and subordinates.

Thus, it can be concluded that the importance of the reading skill which is required in JCM varies according to the positions held by MJSGEs and their job requirements. In other words, the variations in the type of reading materials depend on participants’ proficiency level, position, and type of job.

### 5.4.4 Level of Importance for Japanese Writing Skills

Table 5.16 shows the sub-categories for the Japanese writing skill. As illustrated in Table 5.16, five sub-skills emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews which were conducted with 17 MJSGE participants for the level of importance of the Japanese language skill used by MJSGEs in writing. The sub-skills are shown in Table 5.16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write e-mails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Write reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Write technical materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Write manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Write instructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.4(a) Writing e-mails

For the Japanese writing skill, all of the participants stated that the most important task in their workplace is writing e-mails. All participants stated that they have to write e-mails to their counterparts in Japan and their Japanese colleagues within the organisations. The findings from the quantitative data also revealed that writing e-mails is the most important sub-skill for writing in the Japanese language. Majority of the participants revealed that they refer to previous e-mails written by their Japanese colleagues or refer to the sample e-mails provided by the Japanese employers in order to learn the Japanese way of writing e-mails. AM1E stated that she refers to previous e-mails provided by her mentor in order to understand the format and template.

5.4.4(b) Write Technical Materials

The majority of the participants, especially those who hold the positions of managers and executives, stated that they need to reply emails sent by their colleagues in Japan. They also have to write reports, and technical documents. For these written materials, they use formal and honorifics forms because the e-mails and reports are sent not only to the headquarters in Japan, but also to other countries. WM1A, WM1C, and PM1B stated that they have to write reports to describe data collected after analysis.

For finance analysis, when the analysis is done then I have to elaborate it. Before elaboration, I need to write into a report then I will listen to the feedback and explain the report. (WM1A)

According to WM1A and PM1B who hold the managerial position, their companies require a high proficiency in the Japanese language because it is used not
only for daily conversations but also for Business purposes. For PM1B workplace, the Japanese writing skill is the most important skill.

*For my job, writing skill is very important. I am used to write e-mails in Japanese, and I am getting more fluently. I was told that it is important to know how to write in Japanese, but knowing the way of writing an e-mail to the Japanese is more importantly because it makes them feel you are close to them. (PM1B)*

5.4.4(c) Write Manuals and Write Instructions

All participants who hold the professional position, such as engineers and translators, stated that they need to write only technical documents. Only one participant, who is an engineer, revealed that the materials she needs to write are mainly technical e-mails and reports.

Four participants stated that the materials they translate at their workplace are mostly technical materials, manuals, and instructions. They need to translate them from other languages into the Japanese language and vice-versa. All participants, especially those who are translators, are required to have a Japanese language proficiency level which is equivalent to at least N2 in order to perform effectively the tasks assigned to them. Thus, based on the semi-structured interviews, the translators commented that the level of their Japanese writing skills can meet the requirements of writing at their workplace.

However, PM1B indicated that the demand for Japanese language proficiency differs based on the department and position an employee holds. PM1B’s department does require a high level of proficiency in the Japanese writing skills. For his department, the Japanese language is an essential requirement, and the required level is N2 and above. Thus, job applicants are not recruited when they fail to meet the Japanese proficiency requirement. Compared to other participants, the participants
who hold the managerial position and those who work as translators stated that the Japanese writing skill is important.

5.5 Research Question Three

This section reports answers to Research Question Three (What are the challenges faced by MJSGEs in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM). The challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing are reported based on the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire and the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews which were conducted with 17 participants. The challenges faced by MJSGEs are categorised according to the thematic analysis comprising four themes and their sub-themes: listening (five sub-themes), speaking (four sub-themes), reading (four sub-themes), and writing (three sub-themes).

The challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in the four Japanese skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are described according to the thematic analysis of listening, speaking, reading and writing and their sub-themes.

5.5.1 Challenges Faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in Listening Skill

Based on the findings of the semi-structured interviews, five sub-themes emerged in the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in listening. The sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the MJSGE participants are (1) use of Japanese dialects, (2) speed of speech, (3) difficult vocabularies and sentences, (4) difficulty in
understanding honorific and humble expressions, and (5) the Japanese way of communication. The following sub-sections discuss these sub-themes with some excerpts taken from the semi-structured interviews.

5.5.1(a) Use of Japanese Dialects

Japanese dialects play an important role in understanding the spoken language. In this study, about half of the participants in the semi-structured interviews reported that they encounter difficulties in understanding Japanese dialects spoken by Japanese employers. WM1A, WM1B, WM1D, PM1B, and PM2C (who passed the JLPT N1 level and considered as advanced Japanese language speakers) revealed that their difficulty faced in the Japanese listening skill was caused by the slang and accents used by Japanese employers. The findings above concur with the findings obtained from the quantitative data that has been reported in Chapter Four, Figure 4.2.2. The bar chart revealed that Japanese language dialects and speed of speech are the top most challenges faced by MJSGEs in the listening skill.

_In my workplace, there are Japanese employers who come from different place in Japan. Then, they all have different slang and accent when we speak. I can understand when they speak in general Japanese, but not the Kansai dialects. Some dialects are hard to understand._ (WM1A)

_I would say I can understand 95%, the 5% I cannot understand probably is because of the slang or accent used. I found certain accent or dialects are very difficult to understand._ (WM1A)

PM1B explained that difficulties he faced in the Japanese listening skill depend on the Japanese employers. He further elaborated that when Japanese employers use standard Japanese and speak at a moderate pace, he finds it easier to listen and understand the conversation. However, PM1A, who is an advanced
Japanese language speaker, revealed that she does not face any difficulty when listening to her Japanese employers when they use Kansai dialects, because she can understand the accent, although understanding the accent was one of the challenges she faced when she first started working at JCM. She indicated that extended exposure to the Japanese dialects was crucial for comprehending spoken Japanese successfully. She indicated that it took her about one year to develop abilities to understand the accent of her Japanese employers.

AM1C and KM1A, revealed that the challenges they faced in Japanese listening are the use of Japanese accents and slang, and the dialects used by Japanese from the Kansai and Tohoku regions. AM1C who works as a translator revealed that:

> Sometimes I cannot get to the point because I don’t understand their accent they used during the conversation, and there are different dialects used by Japanese who come from different area. Some of them even not realized that their accent is not the general or standard Japanese language, therefore, the Japanese employers from Japan are still speaking with regional dialects in Malaysia. (AM1C)

KM1A stated that the difficulty she faced in Japanese listening also impaired her ability to interact orally. She mentioned that she was unable to answer her Japanese employers directly when she did not understand the requirements of the question due to her employers’ slang and accent. Furthermore, KM1A said that she needs more time to understand and respond to a remark given orally. KM1A also added that when the Japanese employers spoke fast, it was much more difficult to understand the slang and accent because she faced difficulties in capturing the words they uttered.
5.5.1(b) Speed of Speech

The speaking rate was the second problematic factor that affects the listening comprehension of MJSGEs. The most frequently occurring response was that Japanese employers spoke too fast. 35% of the participants indicated that the speed of their Japanese employers’ speech also plays an important role for them in understanding spoken Japanese. As mentioned by KM1A, when her Japanese employers speak fast, it is much more difficult for her to capture the words they utter especially when they used a dialect. It caused the inability to comprehend the spoken utterances of the speakers. KM1A further stated that although she obtained JLPT N2 level and had work in JCM for fourteen years as an executive, she still faces challenges when listening to her Japanese employers who always tend to speak fast.

PM1C has been working for thirteen years as manager in JCM and the following excerpt reflects this finding:

*I find that I have a hard time to understand what they say because they speak relatively fast. Many of my Japanese employers and colleagues use the Kansai dialect and it is hard to catch exactly what is said when they speak fast. (PM1C)*

PM1A, who obtained JLPT N1 level and has fourteen years of work experience in JCM, indicated that she does not face any challenges in the Japanese listening skill in her workplace. Yet, she revealed that sometimes she faces challenges in understanding her Japanese employers when they speak too fast.

Most of the participants mentioned above are from various positions and who obtained various Japanese language proficiency levels, but the rate of the speaker’s speech affected their abilities in understanding the Japanese language.
5.5.1(c) Difficult Vocabularies and Sentences

The findings of the semi-structured interviews show that the most frequently encountered challenge for the participants was ‘vocabulary’. This finding is consistent with the finding obtained from the quantitative data. Difficult vocabularies and sentences are among the top three challenges faced by MJSGEs in listening skill.

More than half of the participants mentioned that they faced some challenges in understanding their Japanese employers’ oral communication when they use words that they have never heard before. Nearly half of the participants commented that they faced difficulties in understanding technical terms.

The challenges the participants faced in understanding the Japanese employers’ accent become more critical when the Japanese employers use technical terms or discipline-specific vocabulary in their oral communication. This was stated by WM1D as follows:

_Sometimes I cannot get to the point because I don’t understand the vocabularies they used during the conversation, and there are different dialects used by Japanese who come from different area._ (WM1D)

Another challenge in understanding the Japanese employers’ oral communication was the lack of knowledge in specialised technical terms. Most of the participants also revealed that they lack the possession of good content knowledge that to enable them to understand the meaning of the technical terms or specific vocabularies used during oral communication with their Japanese employers. The participants who mentioned this challenge are PM1B, PM1C, WM1B, WM1D, and KM1B (managers), WM1C (executive), PM3C (engineer), and AM1C and AM1D (translators). Excerpts given below reflect this finding.
Sometimes, due to the lack of the knowledge in Japanese, I cannot understand when there are some technical terms used in the work place. Vocabulary is a struggle as well and it is doubly difficult if technical terms are being used. (WM1B)

I don’t know most of the vocabularies they used in the sentence, because I don’t have sufficient understanding of the vocabularies, sometime is because their sentences were complicated. (PM1C)

There are some special terms for engineering, which I cannot understand because my background is computer science. (AM1C)

From the participants’ responses, the two reasons for the challenges faced in understanding the Japanese employers’ oral communication are given below. Firstly, the sentence complexity and unknown vocabulary make listening comprehension difficult. Secondly, the Japanese employers’ accent makes it more difficult for the employees to understand the specific terms. Thirdly, the lack of content knowledge hampers participants’ understanding of the meanings of words used during oral communication.

5.5.1(d) Difficulty to Understand Honorific and Humble Expressions

The challenges faced by MJSGEs in listening in Japanese is related to "Honorific and Humble Expressions". According to KM1B and AM1B, they face some challenges when their employers use honorifics because MJSGEs feel confused with honorifics such as using humble expressions. The difficulty faced by MJSGEs is the uncertainty in the use of correct or suitable honorific expressions. KM1B, a manager in JCM, mentioned that:

The usage of honorific expression with other people who has a higher hierarchy, honorifics are difficult to grasp because I have a hard time figuring out who should be in my inner circle and who isn't. (KM1B)
AM1B, a manager in JCM, revealed that he faced challenges in listening because in business manners, about 70% of the sentences are polite words including honorific expressions. AM1B pointed out that his inability to understand honorific expressions caused some misunderstanding with customers during phone conversations. He further indicated that honorific expressions can cause serious communication difficulties. Responses of the participants show that MJSGEs are confused when they encounter honorific expressions in the message.

5.5.1(e) The Japanese Way of Communication

A few participants stated that the Japanese way of communication created interaction problems between the JCM and the MJSGEs. For example, WM1C mentioned that the differences in cultural background, beliefs, and language and the communication style complicate communication between JCM and MJSGE. Furthermore, AM1A stated the practices of the Japanese communication style, indirect way of expressing their message make it very difficult for MJSGEs to interpret their messages effectively. Furthermore, MJSGEs face difficulties in understanding the meanings of utterance.

I find it difficult to get to the point when listening to Japanese, as Japanese tend to express their idea and opinion indirectly, sometimes I am not able to get to the real meaning, and I have to guess their intended message. (AM1A)

KM1B explained that the conflict, misunderstanding, and communication breakdown between JCM and MJSGE can be attributed to the way the Japanese employers express or communicate their messages. Sometimes, their messages are
ambiguous and difficult to understand. This can cause the intended message to be conveyed unsuccessfully by the Japanese employers to MJSGEs.

*Japanese are always being indirect, sometimes I cannot understand the social cues behind the words. Lastly we are always advised trying to reduce the usage of reject or decline such as saying ‘no’, therefore, sometimes I feel confuse, because you cannot say what you really think.* (KM1B)

AM1B, who is a manager working in JCM for more than 20 years, stated that the Japanese language used in business manners is always very polite, often hierarchical and indirect.

*The way of Japanese communication style is to maintain harmony in the workplace. Their communication style is to achieving smooth communication, because of that their communication style is indirect. I think the purpose is to avoid conflict, but it make the local employees faced problem to understand their intended meaning. I can understand their sentences but sometime I feel confused with their intended meaning.* (AM1B)

From the responses of the four participants mentioned above, the interactions between the JCM and MJSGEs were unsuccessful due to the fact that the interlocutors do not share the same communication style. Thus, though MJSGEs may understand the sentences correctly, they may not have understood the intended message completely.

### 5.5.2 Challenges Faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in Speaking Skill

Based on the findings of the semi-structured interviews, four sub-themes emerged in the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in speaking. The sub-themes that emerged from the findings of the semi-structured interviews with the MJSGE participants are (1) time needed to construct utterances, (2) difficulty to express idea and opinion, (3) difficulty in using honorific and humble expressions, and (4) Japanese way of communication. These
findings correspond with the findings obtained from the quantitative data analysis in Chapter Four, Figure 4.23. The following sub-sections discuss the findings related to these sub-themes.

5.5.2(a) Time Needed to Construct Utterances

The time needed to construct utterances is the most challenging aspect of the Japanese language for MJSGEs in JCM. More than half of the participants (58.8%) expressed their frustration regarding the time they need to construct utterances. They revealed that to select suitable words in the suitable contexts is one of the challenges they faced. The participants who made these comments are those with advanced level in the Japanese language proficiency. These participants are AM1B, KM1C, PM1A, PM1B, PM1C, PM2C, WM1C, and WM1D. All these participants hold high positions such as managers except WM1C who holds the position of an executive. The amount of time the participants need to construct utterances frustrated them because it slows down the conversation between them and their Japanese employers. This also affected their fluency in the Japanese speaking skill. This is reflected in the following excerpts from the semi-structured interviews:

*Is difficult to express myself, I need time to construct sentences. Therefore, I need in advance preparation in order to construct proper Japanese language, otherwise, I cannot express myself freely. (PM1A)*

*I do feel tough because it is difficult for me to have a proper sentence arranged in my thought before speaking out. Therefore, I need some preparation for what I am about to speak and this preparation takes up lots of time. I have always found that I always lack of vocabulary, not enough understanding of the words and sometimes I do make grammar mistake. (PM1B)*

Another challenge mentioned by AM1B, PM1A, PM1B, PM1C, PM2C, and WM1D is the pressure of time during meetings. Most of them stated that they always
hesitate while constructing what they want to say in the meeting. They also faced challenges regarding (1) using suitable vocabulary to convey their messages and (2) how to use grammar accurately during meetings. The researcher had the opportunity to find out more details regarding the challenges they faced during the semi-structured interviews with the MJSGEs. The challenges they mentioned during the semi-structured interviews are summarised below:

- Being worried about the use of inappropriate words
- Time pressure which makes them unable to think about the suitable words during conversation;
- Lack of confidence;
- Being worried about the use of appropriate grammar, vocabularies, words, sentence and context;
- Need to think carefully before speaking.

AM1B stated that one of the challenges they faced is constructing utterances during meetings and it could be attributed to their listening comprehension. The lack of understanding the Japanese employers’ feedback hampers AM1B’s ability to comprehend what was said during some of the meetings he attended at his workplace. PM1B mentioned that he has similar challenges during meetings. PM1B indicated he faced challenges in paraphrasing sentences and phrases correctly and smoothly. This made it difficult for him to persuade others during meetings. Furthermore, some of the challenges the participants faced are lack of topical knowledge and grammatical structure.

Those holding managerial positions and who are advanced level of Japanese language speakers felt frustrated regarding the challenges they mentioned above.
PM1C said that during meetings he faced the difficulty of expressing complex notions concisely within a short period of time. Furthermore, he faced the difficulty of understanding the specialised expressions used in business communication.

AM1B, PM1B, and PM1C said that the challenges they listed above affect their fluency in speaking. Thus, they felt frustrated because this challenge affects their speaking performance during meetings.

*I cannot express myself clearly, and my grammar and structure is not good as well. The way I speak during meeting is not polite enough; I use general conversation habit during meeting. (AM1B)*

*I find it difficult to speak fluently. I can speak at a slow pace and the sentences I construct are short. I always try to reconstruct the sentence to make it understandable and polite. (PM1C)*

5.5.2(b) Difficulty to Express Idea and Opinion

PM1A, PM1B, and AM1A (advanced Japanese language speakers) stated that they can speak fluently when they are given enough time to prepare what they want to say. They mentioned that when they are prepared in advance, they are able to use sentences that are more complex and are able to express their opinions more fluently.

However, half of the participants revealed that they faced challenges in expressing their ideas or opinions concisely. Based on the semi-structured interviews with MJSGEs, the most frequently occurring challenges are (1) lack of knowledge in the Japanese language, (2) the use of general, specific and technical terms, and (3) grammatical structures. The participants expressed frustration over not having enough command of vocabulary, grammar, expressions, and difficulty in presenting ideas effectively in meetings.

*When there is a situation, I find it difficult in explaining it to the Japanese colleagues or the superior because I cannot explain well to them due to the lack of knowledge in technical terms. Sometimes, due to the lack of the*
knowledge in Japanese language, I cannot understand when there are some technical terms used in workplace, I cannot remember anything to say. (KM1A)

I would say there is no any problem for me in speaking Japanese language. It was no problem during reporting in the meeting, but when there is question asked, I will have the difficulty in giving feedback. I think the problem happens because the vocabularies used are too difficult and the slang of the Japanese employers. (WM1A)

KM1A and WM1A reported that they cannot express their ideas because they were not able to comprehend what is uttered to them. It can be concluded that they were not able to explain their ideas because they lack knowledge of technical terms which in turn made it difficult for them to understand what they hear.

I have always found that I always lack of vocabularies, not enough understanding of the words and sometimes I do make grammar mistakes. I cannot express myself clearly, sometime I even cannot remember anything to say. I think this is due to my grammar and structure is not good as well. I need to think before I speak, otherwise I will have difficulty to express myself. (AM1C)

I find that I am lack of understanding of the vocabularies. It is difficult to express myself and I often cannot get to the point that I try to say. (AM1E)

Japanese language’s grammar is different from my mother tongue, mostly I spend lots of time for thinking a complete sentence before talk with my Japanese colleagues and superiors. (KM1C)

For KM1C, grammatical competence is a barrier for her to apply and perceive the structure of the Japanese language correctly. This affected her fluency in the Japanese speaking skill. Overall, the participants felt that because of their insufficient vocabulary knowledge, the uses of phrases and sentences in their speaking were inadequate to enable them to fully and clearly express themselves. Furthermore, their grammatical mistakes made it difficult for them to convey their messages effectively. In general, the participants felt that their Japanese language proficiency was not adequate to effectively express their ideas and opinions.
5.5.2(c) Difficulty in Using Honorific and Humble Expression

Japanese honorific and humble expressions (Keigo) are so complicated that even the Japanese themselves are not always proficient at it. Therefore, honorific and humble expressions are widely known to be one of the most difficult linguistic items to acquire for Japanese language learners. About 35.3% of the participants reported that they struggle with the honorific expression because they are uncertain about how to use the correct or suitable honorific expressions.

The main problem I face is the usage of polite form in Japanese language. I am weak in using Keigo to talk with the Japanese superior. I cannot understand Keigo. I always worry if I am not using the honorific expression properly, I will offend them or rude to them. (AM1D)

I faced the problem regarding the usage of honorific expression with other people who has a higher hierarchy. I always worry that inappropriate use of honorific expression will harm the relationship with the superiors or the Japanese customers. (KM1B)

The challenge for me is using honorifics. I find it difficult to understand some Japanese superior or customers when we speak. For me I think that it is good to use ‘desu’ form and ‘musu’ form when conversation, because I am not confidence with the usage of Keigo. Therefore, most of the time, I felt simple ‘masu/desu’ politeness is more than enough. (AM1A)

Based on the responses from the semi-structured interviews, the participants expressed their anxiety regarding the use of honorific and humble expressions. More than half of the participants indicated that they were worried regarding the inappropriate use of honorific expression. They thought that it would affect their relationship with the superiors or offend their guests or customers. They revealed that they sometimes mixed polite terms with casual forms during conversations with superiors, their guests, and customers. Furthermore, they faced challenges in finding the appropriate level of honorifics when talking to Japanese guests or customers. Therefore, they said that when they were not sure of what or which honorific and
humble form to use, they would use the ‘masu/desu’ form with regular words to avoid unintended misuse of honorific expressions.

Based on the findings from the semi-structured interviews with the JCM and comparing them with the responses from MJSGEs, there is a mismatch between MJSGEs and JCM because the current study reveals that JCM do not expect MJSGEs to use the honorific expressions.

5.5.2(d) Japanese Way of Communication

The Japanese communication style is deeply rooted in the Japanese language and is known as indirect and digressive communication. In this style, few words are used and there is no reliance on contextual cues. Eight participants pointed out that the Japanese way of communication is one of the challenges they faced. They indicated that they faced difficulties in understanding the real meaning or message in conversations with their Japanese colleagues and superiors due to the use of indirectness in their communication style. Therefore, they always face some difficulty in responding to the hidden message in a conversation.

They tend to circle around but do not speak directly. I realise different characters, different words of expression, because of the difference in culture. (WM1D)

I could not understand clearly what they trying to say due to their way of communication, always implicit. Their communication style always being indirect, so sometime I cannot understand the social cues behind the words. (WM1C)

Due to the communication style difference, I find it difficult to understand some Japanese colleagues when we speak. I find it difficult to get to the point when listening to Japanese. (AM1A)

Sometime I really can’t understand what they really want to express and I have to guess their hidden meaning. (WM1B)
PM1A indicated that during negotiations with her Japanese counterparts, she is always worried about her negotiation strategy. This is because she fears that her style is too direct and pushy for the Japanese people.

Japanese tend to communicate indirectly, when discuss important things in the meeting, to avoid misunderstand their message, I always try to confirm their intentions directly, after confirmed that, I will negotiate with them in direct manner. I know this is not their preference way of negotiation, but during meeting or when the discussion dealing with work, I have to do so. (PM1A)

Based on the semi-structured interviews with the 10 participants who hold managerial positions, more than half of them indicated that choosing an appropriate level of directness in interactions is one of the challenges they faced during meetings or negotiations with their Japanese counterparts. According to the participants, in the Japanese communication style, the verbal part of the communication is always vague or indirect and when it is combined with the language barrier, it causes some confusion for MJSGEs.

5.5.3 Challenges Faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in Reading Skill

Based on the findings of the semi-structured interviews, four sub-themes emerged in the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in reading. The sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the MJSGE participants are (1) vocabulary knowledge, (2) limited grammar knowledge, (3) difficulty in understanding Japanese language written text, and (4) difficulty in identifying and reading the Japanese characters.

Based on the findings of the questionnaire investigation, the findings showed that the most challenges faced by the MJSGEs in reading skill were (1) difficulty in
understanding written texts in the Japanese language and (2) limited vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the current study validates the consistency of the findings obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative data.

5.5.3(a) Vocabulary Knowledge

Nine of the participants responded that reading in the Japanese language is the least important challenge they faced. However, five of the participants said that they faced the difficulty of understanding Japanese language vocabulary while reading materials in the Japanese language. Three of the participants (AM1C, AM1D, and AM1E) indicated that they faced some difficulty with technical terms. This is because they are not familiar with the technical terms and do not understand the meanings of the terms used. However, the other two participants who hold managerial positions (KM1C and WM1A) mentioned that they faced difficulties related to Japanese vocabulary because they do not understand the meaning of some particular vocabulary.

_When there is a word that I cannot understand, I have to make sure the meanings of words were correct when I interpret them. Since I am in finance field, the result is more important compare to grammar, the problem I faced was because of the vocabulary but not sentence nor the grammar._ (WM1B)

_For the task in my workplace, mostly I can understand Japanese e-mails but sometime not 100% understanding the whole e-mails about. Sometime I may misunderstand the meaning of e-mail as my vocabularies still not strong. My vocabularies still weak._ (KM1C)

The challenges related to Japanese vocabulary can be attributed to the use of technical terms and business expressions. The interviews with the participants revealed that there were significant variations in the type of reading materials depending on their positions in JCM.
5.5.3(b) Limited Grammar Knowledge

Only two participants pointed out that they faced some difficulty in reading Japanese language materials due to their weakness in Japanese grammar knowledge. Both of them indicated that grammar knowledge influences their reading comprehension. The challenges the participants faced are:

- Do not understand Japanese phrases.
- Do not understand Japanese text structure
- Difficult to understand the relationship between sentences or paragraphs.
- Difference between the sentence structures of the Japanese language and English language
- Text structure and contextual knowledge.

AM1B who is a manager in JCM stated that:

*I read Japanese language materials a lot in my office, the only problem I faced were text structure and grammar used. It cause me cannot understand the proposal info that send from my superiors or colleagues. (AM1B)*

KM1C as manager in JCM, cited she is not confident with her understanding of the content of the e-mails due to her grammar and sentence structure weakness, sometimes she found that she did misunderstood the meaning of the e-mails she read due to the difficulty to understand the relationship between sentences.

5.5.3(c) Difficulty in Understanding Japanese Written Texts

Only two participants mentioned that they faced a challenge in reading Japanese language materials. They attributed this to the Japanese way of communication. The Japanese way of communication does not only influence the way they speak but also influences their written texts. The challenges stated by the participants are:
- Indirectness of Japanese way of expressing ideas causes the difficulty to understand the meaning of written texts.

- Difficult to understand the content because of the sentence structures and also lack of business culture knowledge.

According to AM1B,

*I would say for me reading is the least problem I face is comfortable level with less difficulties. The only problem is their sentence AIMAI (ambiguous)...... In that case, I will ask Japanese or correspondent to confirm the meaning. (AM1B)*

*The difficulty I face in the reading I do for my task in workplace is the understanding of true meaning behind the e-mails received from the Japanese. Japanese are very indirect when mentioning things. (PM2C)*

### 5.5.3(d) Identifying and reading Japanese Characters

Four participants stated that they faced some difficulty in reading Japanese language materials due to the difficulty in understanding Kanji.

*I have trouble of understanding the Kanji, but I have no problem when reading Hiragana and Katakana, but Kanji is very difficult to read. (PM1C)*

*Due to the different usage of the same Kanji, the pronunciation is different too. The common usage of Kanji is not applicable in reporting. (WM1A)*

*For me, the biggest problem was Kanji, because the Kanji used in business terms are different from our daily use. Besides, the Kanji used is more advance. (WM1C)*

*It is very difficult to read if I can’t remember the Kanji. It is very difficult for me to read Kanji. I know that Kanji holds important meaning, but if just Hiragana, I may not understand the meaning. (PM3C)*

However, the difficulty level of understanding Kanji for the participants differs based on the participants’ mother tongue. For participants whose mother tongue is Mandarin, Kanji is not a problematic to them.
Reading for me no many problem, as I know Mandarin, I can guess the meaning of the Kanji even sometime I do not know how to read the Kanji but I can guess the meaning, it can help me to understand the material I read at that moment. (WM1B)

5.5.4 Challenges Faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in Writing Skill

This section reports the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language writing skill. Three sub-themes that emerged from the findings of the semi-structured interviews with the MJSGE participants are: (1) limited vocabulary knowledge, (2) limited grammar knowledge, and (3) Japanese way of writing. The findings of the semi-structured interviews correspond with the findings of the quantitative data analysis which showed that limited vocabulary knowledge and limited grammar knowledge were the two top most difficult challenges faced by the MJSGEs in the writing skill.

5.5.4(a) Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

The writing skill in the Japanese language is the least important skill compared to the other three major skills in the Japanese language. Two (11.8 %) participants said that they do not really need to write in the Japanese language at their workplace. They are KM1A and WM1D. However, three (17.6%) participants, AM1A, PM1B, and WM1A stated that the writing skill is a must in their job task.

Four participants (KM1C, KM1B, WM1B, and WM1C) explained that they did not face major challenges in writing in the Japanese language because they only write in limited task assignments, and they are given a template or an example by their Japanese colleagues or superior. According to WM1C, a senior executive who is a system analyst;
I don’t have to write report because there is a template given by the company. What I have to do is just input the data and report and explain what are the data and the reason of the data shown. I also need to deal with other department because I need to understand the reason the data shown and source of the data, after that my department will forecast for the future data. (WM1C)

Four participants (PM3C, AM1C, AM1D, and AM1E) who are involved in professional tasks in JCM stated that they faced some challenges in Japanese vocabulary. The lack of knowledge of general and technical terms poses a challenge to the participants in their writing skill.

I need to write e-mails to my manager for the itinerary, I do not know how to compose a proper e-mails due to limited vocabulary knowledge. Sometimes, I take a long time to search the suitable words in writing an e-mails, sometimes I am worry the words I am using, and I took long time to decide which one is better. (AM1E)

I need to write reports to explain to the Japanese on the final result of the analysis which is conducted in my company or in vendor side. High level of Japanese language writing skill is very important for this explanation task in order to make them truly understand and avoid misunderstand. I need to use the common technical terms which Japanese is using, or else they won’t get the meaning. But, it is hard to find the equivalent technical terms in Japanese, I take long time to search the terms and verify the meaning. (PM3C)

5.5.4(b) Limited Grammar Knowledge

Six participants stated that they faced some difficulty in writing from textual sources because of weaker language skills such as limited grammar and vocabulary knowledge, and they lack ability to construct proper sentences. They also faced some challenges in finding the right words and structures when writing in the Japanese language.

I only able to write e-mails by using simple Japanese. I need to write Japanese in reply e-mails, or write online chat software. I have problem in
construct sentence. It is hard and I spend much time for reply an e-mail. (KM1C)

I can write to Japanese via chat but need to verify meaning and the sentence structure to avoid offending people. I need to learn more in writing formally and informally. (PM3C)

I am not confidence with the language grammar and sentence structure I used when writing an e-mail. I always ponder before I send an e-mail, because I worry the tense I used whether correct, otherwise it will sound rude to the recipient. (KM1B)

Three participants (AM1A, PM1B, and WM1A) with JLPT N1 level indicated that they need to write in JCM on a daily basis. The writing skill is necessary in their job.

I write e-mails every day. I need to write e-mails to Japan, to Japanese customers or my colleagues, the Japanese who are in Japan. Everyday e-mails reading and sending is a must for me. Sometimes will do conversation or chatting via SKYPE or LINE. I don’t face many problems in writing, only sometimes I need to confirm the sentence I used with my boss and colleagues. (AM1A)

I have to reply the correspondence to the international colleagues in Japan and other e-mails correspondence almost daily for those written materials, reports as many as e-mails. Basically, my superior will assess the content written when I report to him or her. All written e-mails and correspondence are in Keigo (honorific), sometimes I need to confirm the usage of Keigo (honorific) with my superior or Japanese colleagues. (WM1A)

I find it is fun to write in Japanese and I feel satisfactory when I start to master it. Till now, I am still able to cope with those challenges by writing it slowly and spend some time to check for mistakes before sending the e-mail out. (PM1B)

Based on the interviews with the participants, only a few of the participants (AM1A, PM1B and WM1A) use the formal way in writing in the Japanese language. A few of them said that they produce texts in the Japanese language which require the production and construction of complex sentences. Those who produce these types of texts are highly proficient speakers working in JCM. Therefore, the challenge faced
in the Japanese language writing skill depends on their job types and their Japanese language proficiency levels.

5.5.4(c) Japanese Way of Writing

Four participants indicated that the Japanese way of writing is different from the way of writing in the English language. They stated that the Japanese way of communication is indirect and this is reflected in the way they write too. However, the English language is defined to be a straightforward language. Therefore, their superior and Japanese colleagues always remind them regarding their challenges they encounter in writing.

*I am used to writing e-mails in Japanese and I am getting more fluently. I do refer to the e-mails that are written by Japanese colleagues, so that I can learn their way of writing an e-mail. I was told that it is important to know how to write in Japanese, but knowing the way of writing an e-mail to the Japanese is more importantly because it makes them feel you are close to them.* (PM1B)

*I faced the difficulty to write in Japanese, the way of writing in Japanese is different with English, I always need my colleagues to correct it. I find it difficult to construct sentences in Japanese specific format, like business writing style.* (WM1D)

*I find honorifics to be difficult in writing, but in business setting, I try to be using formal and honorific as much as I could. Sometimes, I get help from my Japanese colleagues because I am not sure that my writing is correct manners or not” [PM2C].

*I try to construct proper Japanese language when I reply the e-mails to the sender in Japanese. I cannot apply the usage of honorific expressions correctly.* (KM1C)

Thus, four participants expressed their anxiety about the Japanese way of writing and also the difficulty of using honorifics. From the feedback obtained from these participants, it is clear that they are aware of the different ways of writing in the Japanese language because all of them are highly proficient in the Japanese language.
5.6 Research Question Four

This section present answers to Research Question Four (How do MJSGEs working in JCM overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The findings of the measures taken to overcome the challenges faced in their Japanese language proficiency are categorised into four themes. The themes are listening (four sub-themes), speaking (four sub-themes), reading (sub-themes), and writing (sub-themes).

5.6.1 Overcoming the Challenges in Japanese Listening Skill

Four sub-themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews that focused on the measures taken by MJSGEs to overcome the challenges faced in their Japanese language proficiency in listening. These four sub-themes are (1) strategies of listening, (2) use of external Japanese language resources, (3) human resources, (4) improving one’s Japanese language listening skill.

5.6.1(a) Strategies of Listening

Nine participants disclosed that doing a lot practice continuously is very crucial to ensure that they are able to overcome the difficulty they face in listening. They stated that doing a lot of listening in the Japanese language can help them to overcome the challenge of understanding the Japanese employers’ accents. These measures immensely helped MJSGEs to listen to and understand the conversation better. PM1A reported that she took more than one year to practise to adjust to the accents of her Japanese employers’ Kansai dialect.
AM1A indicated that listening to the conversations carefully, paying more attention while listening, and concentrating on the conversations are helpful ways to overcome the challenges MJSGEs face in the Japanese listening skill. KM1A, WM1D and AM1B mentioned that they use the English language to confirm with the Japanese employers to ascertain the content or the message the employers try to convey to them. According to WM1D, when she is not able to comprehend the conversation, she will listen carefully and ask more questions.

Two participants (KM1C and AM1D) explained that it is their responsibility to request the Japanese employers to repeat the speech until they understand what is spoken. To inform the Japanese employers that they are not able to follow their message when they speak too fast, and to request the Japanese employers to slow down their rate of speech are some of the ways to overcome their listening challenges. However, most of the participants reported that they hesitate to do so as this will slow down the conversations.

*When they are talking to fast, I unable to catch up what they are talking about, only some single word or phrase that I can understand from their conversation, I will inform them and ask them to slow down. Sometimes I did ask them to repeat.* (KM1C)

*I would ask for a repetition to make sure what I heard is same as what the person said. Especially when the Japanese is using double negative sentence and technical terms.* (AM1D)

Another two participants said that they just focused on the point of the conversation in order to overcome the challenges they face in listening.

*When I can’t understand their conversation due to their slang, I will just skip those words during the conversation, because the interaction is rapid.* (WM1A)

*When I can’t understand the Keigo they use, I will paraphrase the sentences spoke by the Japanese and simplify it on my own.* (AM1E)
5.6.1(b) Use of External Japanese Language Resources

Using external resources to help in the listening task is also considered one of the measures in overcoming the Japanese language proficiency challenge in listening. Five participants stated that they listen to broadcasts in the Japanese language and try to get used to their speed of speaking. They watch Japanese YouTubers’ video for practice in order to be familiar with their speed of speaking. This measure helped them to understand the Japanese employers’ speech. By repeatedly listening to the audio, the participants mentioned that their understanding of the Japanese conversations and improvement of their Japanese language proficiency are further enhanced.

*I have only tried practicing and adapt to the conversations because only practicing and adaption by listening to the NHK news. That’s only way I use to overcome them.* (PM1B)

*Familiarize myself with the speed of Japanese talking by listening to Japanese contents such as Japanese Web radio, free talk CG, reality show etc.* (PM3C)

The participants indicated that listening to Japanese channels or NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) helped them to improve their listening skills. By listening and watching the video of workplace conversations with similar content, MJSGEs are able to understand the Japanese employers’ conversations. YouTube is also an alternative media resource mentioned by the participants.

*To increase vocabulary, I often watch Anime. For work related (technical) vocabulary, I learn from Google Translation (not to be trusted 100%) by translating from Japanese documents.* (PM2C)

*For the special terms which I cannot understand, I will check by using the internet and refer to the documents.* (AM1C)
Therefore, downloading movies and listening to the dialogues also helped MJSGEs to improve their Japanese language proficiency. Listening difficulty caused by the lack of understanding of workplace vocabulary also can be overcome by the use of Google Translate and other useful websites that can provide users with meanings of vocabulary.

5.6.1(c) Human Resources

Assistance provided by the Japanese colleagues is also one way to overcome the challenges faced in listening. WM1D said that approaching other Japanese colleagues who are proficient in the English language to explain a speaker’s speech helped her to overcome the difficulties she faced in the listening skills.

*Sometimes I cannot get to the point because I don’t understand the vocabulary they used during the conversation. I will listen carefully to the Japanese interlocutor, then I will show the Japanese colleague who are close to me or more proficiency in English the part of the actual work or thing that I want to discuss about. (WM1D)*

*I will always prepare a notebook or paper for them to write down when I have certain parts which I don’t understand. Then I will use electronic translator to translate those written Japanese into English. (PM1C)*

AM1A, KM1A, PM1A, and WM1B also revealed that they sought assistance from their Japanese colleagues and that helped them to improve their Japanese language proficiency.

5.6.1(d) Improving their Japanese Language Listening Skill

KM1B stated that she found that the Japanese communication style is very different from the Malaysian communication style. Without understanding their communication style, sometimes it might create misunderstandings between the local staff and Japanese employers. To overcome the difficulty in listening, she depends
on downloading and watching Japanese movies, and listening to conversations in the Japanese language. These strategies helped her to improve her Japanese language proficiency. In the meantime, helped her to learn the Japanese communication style. PM2C indicated that to overcome the difficulty he faced in listening, he tried hard to learn the Japanese language to improve his Japanese language grammar and sentence structure.

5.6.2 Overcoming the Challenges in Japanese Speaking Skill

Four sub-themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews that focused on the measures taken by MJSGEs to overcome the challenges faced in their Japanese language proficiency in speaking. These four themes are (1) pre-presentation preparation, (2) use of external Japanese language resources, (3) human resources, and (4) improve their Japanese language speaking skill.

5.6.2(a) Pre-presentation Preparation

Five participants indicated that preparation before meetings allowed for easier recall of information. It allowed them to self-check if the grammar and language of their speech are suitable for the content. It also helped them to check whether the ways they speak are acceptable at the Japanese workplace.

For meeting or presentation, I always do advanced preparation in order to construct proper Japanese language. (AM1B)

Because I am weak in using Keigo, so, before meeting I spend a lot of time for thinking a complete sentence and the polite form. (KM1C)

I need some preparation for what I am about to speak, I do feel tough because it is difficult for me to have a proper sentence arranged in my though before speaking out, but I don’t encounter any problem if I am well prepared for the presentation. (PM1B)
I will arrange the sentence in my mind first before I talk and make sure that I use ‘Teinigo’ so that I don’t offend people. (PM3C)

Therefore, preparation before an actual meeting or presentation gave the participants the confidence and provided them with the opportunity to deliver a better explanation in the Japanese language.

PM1C asserted that the slower pace of speaking allows him to correct grammatical mistakes and to revise for better and more appropriate vocabulary to use before making an oral speech. He further explained that this allows him to ensure that he uses precise vocabulary, correct sentences, and the suitable Japanese way of communication to convey his viewpoints in meetings.

I do participate in the meetings because there are always meeting about the design concept which related to my job. To make sure I can convey my massage correctly, I try to speak at a slow pace and construct short sentence, it will help me to think for the correct vocabulary, construct sentences and also the way to speech. I can pronounce better when I speak at slow pace. (PM1C)

5.6.2(b) Use of External Japanese Language Resources

Three participants mentioned that the use of Google Translate and other multimedia resources helped them to reduce the challenges they faced in the Japanese speaking skill. PM1C, KM1B and AM1E indicated that they use an electronic translator to translate what they want to say or present to their Japanese superiors or colleagues into Japanese language. They explained that although the translation is not always accurate, it assisted them to communicate with their Japanese counterparts, especially those who are not proficient in the English language.

There will be no problem for the expression because I always check by using Google translation before I say it. (KM1B)
I use the electronic dictionary to search the technical terms that I need to speak to my Japanese employer. (AM1E)

5.6.2(c) Human Resources

Three participants indicated that communication with the Japanese colleagues in the Japanese language and using the words from workplace context help them to improve their Japanese speaking skills. AM1E stated that the encouragement and assistance in terms of vocabulary choice and sentences from their Japanese colleagues can improve MJSGEs’ self-confidence in speaking and can help them to understand the Japanese way of communication better.

The Japanese colleagues who socialize with the local staff not only working hour, this can allow the local staff to learn more about their way of communication and also their thought. (AM1E)

PM1A and WM1A indicated that they always seek help from their Japanese colleagues when they face challenges in explaining work-related issues in the Japanese language. PM1A suggested that the Japanese employers should assist the local employees when they communicate in the Japanese language. Japanese employers can do this through correcting their mistakes whenever necessary. Furthermore, socialising with the local staff to increase the interaction between the Japanese employers and local employees can enhance the communication between both parties.

5.6.2(d) Improving their Japanese Language Speaking Skill

About 10 participants indicated that they should continue developing their Japanese speaking skills. WM1D highlighted that continuous studying of the Japanese language, watching Japanese animes, videos, and movies, listen to Japanese songs, and speak more frequently in Japanese with colleagues helped her to improve
her speaking skill. Furthermore, WM1D explained that she needed to learn more vocabulary and to understand the Japanese communication style. She indicated that she always tries to construct her Japanese sentences in a polite manner. When she faced challenges regarding the different way of the Japanese communication style, she consults her colleagues.

WM1C mentioned that she attends Japanese classes at the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur to improve her grammar in the Japanese language. She also mentioned that she attends online classes and courses to improve her speaking skills. AM1B and PM1B indicated that they always learn from their mistakes in order to overcome their challenges in the speaking skills.

*I always make note when there is a mistake pointed out by the counterpart and I keep practicing and practicing. (PM1B)*

*I will learn from the mistake and keep practicing the polite method of conversation. (AM1B)*

*In my opinion, the initiative of the employee is very important. We should not afraid of speaking Japanese because it has to be familiarized. Once, the employee is adapted to it, then the employee will become better and have improvement. (PM1B)*

The other six participants indicated that they always try to strengthen their grammar, construct proper sentences, and continue improving their honorific knowledge. They also indicated that they try to practice their speaking skills by talking to their Japanese colleagues even through the use of “broken Japanese”. They shared that continuous speaking in broken Japanese helps them to improve their Japanese language proficiency as it boosts their confidence to speak. Furthermore, AM1A stated that her Japanese employers and colleagues always encourage their employees to speak in the Japanese language. When the employees
take the initiative to speak in the Japanese language, the Japanese employers and colleagues are always very willing to assist them.

WM1B suggested that the company can provide Japanese language class for the employees. She also suggested that the company should provide training courses for the employees in order to help them to understand the Japanese communication style and the Japanese culture.

5.6.3 Overcoming the Challenges in Japanese Reading Skill

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the 17 MJSGEs revealed that the participants use three measures to overcome the challenges they faced in the Japanese reading skills. These three measures are (1) use of external Japanese language resources, (2) human resources, and (3) improving their Japanese language reading skill.

5.6.3(a) Use of External Japanese Language Resources

More than half of the participants indicated that the Japanese reading skill is the least challenging for them compared to the other three skills. This is because they have time to analyse and understand the sentence. Furthermore, they disclosed that re-reading two or three times can help them in understanding the idea presented by the writer. However, they revealed that re-reading is time consuming. In addition, the participants indicated that for those who understand Mandarin, they can guess the meaning of Kanji. Therefore, their Mandarin proficient can help them to understand the materials written in the Japanese language. They further explained that their Mandarin proficient provides an important intrinsic motivation for them to learn the
Japanese language because both Japanese language and Mandarin are similar in character (logographic).

The most frequent measure the participants use to overcome the reading challenge is the use of Google Translate. All participants revealed that they use Google Translate to check the meaning of the Kanji and the pronunciation too. They also use the Google Translate to search for the meanings of difficult words and technical terms.

AM1E who works as a translator in JCM revealed that she uses an electronic dictionary to search for the meaning of technical terms. PM1B, PM3C, and WM1C mentioned that they use some external resources to overcome the challenges in their Japanese reading skills. This is reflected in excerpts given below:

*I use Google Translate frequently because it is the most convenient tool. Sometimes I use the software which developed by my company for the purpose of translation.* (WM1C)

*I do utilise on those technology facilities. I will check the dictionary and make notes on those difficult Kanji and vocabularies.* (PM1B)

*I usually use Google Translate to help me read Kanji and translate some difficult words. But if the translation becomes weird, I will cross check with dictionary apps in my smartphone; Takoboto or countercheck with my Japanese employers.* (PM3C)

Using search engines such as Google has assisted the participants in understanding materials written in the Japanese language. All participants indicated using Google Translate and online dictionaries make reading less stressful. Apart from that, eight participants added that using a dictionary helps them in overcoming challenges they face in the Japanese reading skills.
5.6.3(b) Human Resources

The second frequent measure used by the participants to overcome challenges they face in the Japanese reading skill is the use of human resources. All of them mentioned that they try to use the external resources to overcome their reading challenges. When the external resources cannot help, they look for their employers or colleagues to assist them. Eight of the participants indicated that seeking help from their employers and colleagues is the second choice. Yet, they stated that they prefer to use technology because sometimes it is difficult to seek help from their Japanese colleagues at the workplace.

*If I have problem, I will use Google Translation to search the meaning. Sometime I seek for colleagues help when I couldn’t find it or when the translation was weird. (KM1A)*

*I would use the Internet and dictionary to get the correct word to use in translation. Lastly, if I cannot find it online then I will only ask the Japanese. (AM1C)*

*I use Google Translation to translate meaning of the words, if I still not sure about it, then I will ask my colleagues, boss or use the dictionary. My boss would support me. (WM1D)*

5.6.3(c) Improving their Japanese Language Reading Skill

Improving one’s Japanese reading skill is also vital in ensuring that one can understand the materials written in the Japanese language. However, AM1C explained that it depends on the materials written in the Japanese language. Therefore, the specific content knowledge is also important to ensure understanding. According to AM1C, the meaning of technical words used in Japanese documents is one of the challenges he faces. To overcome this challenge, he indicated that he searches information on WiKipedia because this will give him access to a wide range
of relevant vocabulary. This measure facilitates the understanding of specialised vocabulary and words. Furthermore, the use of WiKipedia improves his reading skills and vocabulary knowledge.

Five participants indicated that they read Japanese materials online to improve their reading skills. They also mentioned that reading books and learning sentences used in documentaries help them to overcome their reading challenges. AM1E said that she uses authentic materials to improve her reading skills.

_I will use the dictionary to get the explanation of the technical terms. I try my best to use authentic materials to improve my reading skill._ (AM1E)

PM3C indicated that she tries to familiarise herself with the same Kanji over time until she can remember the Kanji character. This helped her to improve her reading skill because most of the Japanese official documents are written in Kanji. PM1C also stated that he uses similar measures by trying to memorise the Kanji at the workplace to overcome the reading challenges he faces.

_I have trouble of understanding the Kanji, but I have no problem when reading Hiragana and Katakana. I try to memories those vocabularies written in Kanji, the Kanji form, sound and meaning._ (PM3C)

5.6.4 Overcoming Challenges in Japanese Writing Skill

Four sub-themes emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with 17 MJSGEs that focused on the measures taken by them to overcome the challenges participants encounter in the Japanese writing skills. These four sub-themes are (1) strategies of writing, (2) use of external Japanese language resources, (3) human resources, and (4) improving their Japanese language writing skill.
5.6.4(a) Strategies of Writing

Compared to other Japanese language skills, the writing skill was the least challenging to the participants. This is because not all participants are required to write in the Japanese language in JCM. Only the professional group and managers need to write in the Japanese language in JCM.

According to PM1B, doing a lot of practice continuously is very crucial to develop the ability to overcome challenges related to the use of the correct vocabulary, writing grammatically correct sentences, and writing professionally. Seven participants from the professional group and those who hold the managerial positions in JCM stated that they did a lot of practice in writing in Japanese in order to improve their writing skills. However, PM1A stated that referring to the standard format of business writing and books on business writing can help MJSGEs to overcome challenges in the Japanese writing skills.

*I refer to the format provided by my Japanese colleagues, I always restricted to the standard ways of writing to avoid mistake. Sometimes, I referred to the books of business writing. I think the higher education institution should provide business writing and conversation topic in the Japanese curriculum. (PM1A)*

*I will read native Japanese mail writing format and learn it. I also read Yahoo.jp news every day at least once to improve my vocabularies and grammar. (PM2C)*

*I write it slowly and spend some time to check for mistakes before sending the email out. For most of the time, I will check my writing on my own, but when there is a mistake point out by the counterpart, I will take note of it, and keep practicing until I won’t do the same mistake in writing. (PM1B)*

*Basically, my superior will assess the content written when I report to him or her. After several times, I will understand what method should be used to solve the problem in my writing. (WM1A)*
AM1E added that she reads reports written by her colleagues to get better ideas on the format of the Japanese writing style. AM1E and PM3C disclosed that they use memorising techniques to improve their writing. They read and memorize words relevant to their discipline to use them in their writing. Apart from that, they search for the most suitable words to construct their sentences. They further explained that they memorise technical terms that are frequently used at their workplace because this can help them overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese writing skills.

Therefore, read their Japanese colleagues’ reports, read the sample of e-mails and memorize words that are frequently used in their workplace were the main measures taken by the MJSGEs to overcome challenges they faced in the Japanese writing skills.

5.6.4(b) Use of External Japanese Language Resources

The participants disclosed that the use of dictionaries and Google Translate assists them to overcome challenges they face in their Japanese writing skills. Seven participants stated that they referred to online dictionaries and Google Translate when writing in the Japanese language. They mentioned that these online tools are very useful to them. PM1C added that the use of technology facilities helps him to learn new words and improve his Japanese writing skills.

*I would use Google Translate to translate those vocabularies form English to Japanese to make sure the translation will be correct. (PM1C)*

*Google Translation is very useful for me especially when I need to write the sentence for my presentation. (WM1B)*

Three participants indicated that they refer to search engines such as Google Translate to improve their writing and to gather information. KM1C disclosed that
she uses Google Translate to form sentences and to check the grammatical mistakes from various websites. Similarly, PM3C indicated that she uses the Google Translate to correct her language errors before she submits her reports to her superiors. PM1B, a higher proficient Japanese language speaker, indicated that he still relies on dictionaries and online translation websites. Technology and online facilities play important roles in assisting the participants overcome challenges they face in the Japanese writing skills. This was stated by WM1D and AM1E:

As I said, I cannot understand Kanji, instead of using Kanji, I use Hiragana and I will check by using Google after writing, the search engines will help to search the relevant Kanji. (WM1D)

I would refer to the format and template. Besides, I will Google to check for my mistake after writing, I used AutoCorrect for correcting the sentences. After I’ve finished writing, I will use “excite.jp” to double check my sentences once in a while. (WM1E)

5.6.4(c) Human Resources

The participants mentioned that they use human resources to help them to overcome challenges in writing. All of them disclosed that they try to use the external resources such as Google Translate and online dictionary sites to overcome their writing challenges. They would use the human resources only when the external resources cannot help them in a particular situation or they discover that the sentences they construct are not clear. These participants indicated that they would then seek for help from their employers and colleagues. However, they indicated that they prefer to use technology and online facilities which are more convenient. They also pointed out that it is not always possible to seek help from their Japanese colleagues at the workplace because they are working under time constraints.

When I feel that the sentence is weird, I will ask my Japanese colleagues. I feel this is a way for me to improve my writing in Japanese language. (WM1B)
AM1A and WM1A disclosed that they also approached Japanese employers or colleagues for guidance on writing format. According to WM1A, she sometimes approaches her superior to find the right format to use in her writing.

*My superior will show and change my grammar mistake. Besides, he or she would provide me guidance.* (WM1A)

AM1A indicated that it is important to assign a senior to guide or to train a new staff in Japanese companies. The Mentor system is a good practice in Japan, but it is not implemented in JCM yet. It can help the new staff to adapt to the Japanese working environment, at the same time transfer the Japanese working culture to the new staff.

*Based on my experience in Japanese company, I think to teach Japanese thinking to local staff is difficult, but assign a senior to guide the new staff maybe can help. Job training and hands-on are important because they can learn from the process.* (AM1A)

WM1C also indicated that assigning a mentor to an employee during the job training period is important. This is because it can prevent the new or junior employee from making mistakes. She mentioned that based on her experience, the mentor system she received might have helped her the most in overcoming the writing challenges she faced when she first joined the JCM. Generally, job training and hands-on materials are important because MJSGEs can gain valuable experience from them.

*I did receive support from colleague too. My company will also assign a mentor to guide us until we are on track. At the beginning, I did not know how to compose a proper e-mail, I follow the sample given by my mentor, follow sample e-mail draft and show to my senior. After sometime, I am able to write and send e-mails without the review.* (WM1C)
5.6.4(d) Improving their Japanese Language Writing Skill

Most of the participants stated that they listen to the spoken form of Japanese on YouTube and NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) to improve their Japanese proficiency and to improve their writing skill. According to PM1B, a website channel that provides the transcript of what is spoken helps him to improve his listening, speaking, and writing in the Japanese language.

PM2C disclosed that he tries to use formal and honorifics form as much as he could in formal writing, but he finds that honorifics is difficult in writing. He is trying to read native Japanese mail writing format and learn to use it. He indicated that he needs practice and if possible, he would like to put himself (at least for one year) in a fully native Japanese environment. He suggested that the higher education institutions can enhance their Japanese education curriculum by requiring learners to gain real exposure in a native Japanese environment as part of their practicum component. He added that Japanese employers and superiors should learn English language and should train the local employees to adapt to the Japanese workplace environment.

PM3C indicated that she tries to read simple Japanese books to improve her vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammar knowledge. This also helps her to learn the Japanese way of constructing sentences. She also suggested that Japanese employers should assist MJSGEs whenever they try to use the Japanese language. PM3C also suggested that JCM should support the MJSGEs to improve their Japanese language proficiency. She added that JCM should be patient and give fresh graduates some time to adapt to the Japanese environment.

Initially, I would suggest the company provides environment with Japanese and English, so the fresh graduates can learn and understand easily. Hence, the improvement will be significant in short time. Besides, superior should
give them chances and probation period so they can learn from their mistake. (PM3C)

5.7 Summary of the Qualitative Data

This chapter has presented the findings gathered from the qualitative data involving the semi-structured interviews with 17 MJSGE participants and eight JCM.

Based on the analysis of the qualitative data, it can be summarised that the speaking and listening skills are the two most important skills that MJSGEs are required to possess while working in JCM. The less required skills are the reading and writing skills. Among the two less required skills mentioned above, more than half of the employers (JCM) indicated that the reading skill is more required than the writing skill in JCM. However, based on the qualitative data findings, the requirements of Japanese language skills vary based on the positions that MJSGEs hold in JCM. Based on the interviews with JCM participants (employers) and the MJSGE participants who hold managerial and professional positions, the general Japanese language proficiency level required of MJSGE managers and professionals is quite high to enable them to execute their tasks effectively in JCM.

Regarding the level of importance of Japanese language skills that are used by the MJSGEs in JCM, it can be summarised that the listening skill was the most emphasised compared to the other Japanese language skills. The second important skill was the speaking skill followed by the reading and writing skills. Relatively few participants were required to write in the Japanese language in a formal way. Only those who hold the professional and managerial positions are required to produce written texts in Japanese. These written materials are mainly business documents and reports and the level of Japanese language proficiency required to carry out these written tasks effectively is high.
The major challenges faced by MJSGEs in JCM are in listening and speaking. In the listening skills, they face challenges that are related to the use of Japanese dialects and the speed of speech of the Japanese speakers. For speaking challenges, the participants indicated that the challenges they faced were time needed in constructing utterances and in expressing ideas or opinions. It can be summarised that the participants who hold managerial and professional positions in JCM tend to have to use the Japanese language more frequently at their workplace. Therefore, they face more listening, speaking, reading, and writing challenges.

The most frequently employed measures to overcome the challenges faced by the participants are the use of internet resources such as Google Translate, online dictionaries, YouTube, NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), and other relevant resources. Furthermore, they also depend on guidance from their Japanese colleagues and superiors. In addition, to overcome the challenges in listening, the participants disclosed that doing a lot practice continuously is very crucial to overcome the difficulty they face in listening. The challenges in speaking were overcome by focusing on continuous studying Japanese language, watching Japanese anime, videos and movies, listening to Japanese songs and practising speaking more frequently.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reported the results of the analysis of the qualitative data. Specifically, this chapter reports the results of all the four research questions of this study. First, this chapter reports the results related to the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM. This is
followed by the findings related to the levels of importance of Japanese language skills which are used by MJSGEs working in JCM. Then, the challenges faced by MJSGEs in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM are presented. Finally, the measures employed by MJSGEs working in JCM to overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing were presented.
CHAPTER 6- DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion and conclusions of this research study. It starts with an overview of the purpose and the research design of the study. Then, the summary and discussion of the findings are elaborated in detail. Finally, the pedagogical implications, recommendations, and directions for future research are discussed.

6.2 Purpose and the Research Design of the Study

This study investigated the requirement of the Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM. This study also investigated the level of importance of the four major Japanese language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) used by MJSGEs in JCM. Lastly, this study also investigated the challenges encountered by MJSGEs when using the Japanese language in JCM and the measures they took to overcome these challenges.

The study is predicated on the premise that the higher education institutions in Malaysia must strengthen the Japanese language curriculum by incorporating real exposure to the Japanese language for the learners. This can be done through creating opportunities where the Japanese style environment exists. Such Japanese language curriculum can also prepare the graduates to adapt to the Japanese working environment and to practise their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills especially the listening and speaking skills as these two Japanese language skills are found to be the most required skills by JCM.
This current study investigated the following questions

1. What are the requirements of Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM?
2. What are the levels of importance of Japanese language skills which are used by the MJSGEs working in JCM?
3. What are the challenges faced by MJSGEs in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among JCM?
4. How do MJSGEs working in JCM overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

6.3 Summary of the Major Findings

This section presents the summary of the key findings from the quantitative and qualitative data. Although all findings have been extensively reported in Chapters Four and Five, this section focuses on integrating the findings of the study.

6.3.1 Requirements of Japanese Language Skills’ Proficiency in JCM

The Japanese language skills’ proficiency requirements that were considered important by JCM in the workplace were the listening skill (understand the oral instructions and ability to confirm the information) and speaking skill (work-related communication with Japanese colleagues and daily communication with Japanese colleagues). On the other hand, the Japanese language skills’ proficiency requirements that were considered less important were reading and writing skills. However, the requirements of the Japanese language reading skill and writing skill vary based on the positions that the participants hold in JCM. In other words, the participants who hold managerial and professional positions (engineer and translator)
are required by the JCM to be able to read and write in the Japanese language while those who hold executive and and other positions are not required to possess these skills.

For JLPT qualification requirement, six of the JCM mentioned that their companies do not set the JLPT qualification for entry-level employment. However, for certain departments and positions, two of the JCM required that the candidate must have JLPT N1 level (advance level of Japanese language proficiency) for their employment. Overall, the JCM explained that for the MJSGEs to work effectively in their JCM, they should have obtained at least JLPT N3 level (intermediate level of Japanese language proficiency). However, the JCM also mentioned that to enable MJSGEs to function well in their workplace, it is hoped that MJSGEs should obtain JLPT N2 level (upper-intermediate level of Japanese language proficiency). Therefore, from the feedback of the JCM, it can be concluded that the intermediate level (JLPT N3) of Japanese language proficiency is the lowest entry level for MJSGEs to work in JCM. However, for MJSGEs to function and handle the job tasks effectively in JCM, JCM require the MJSGEs to exhibit upper-intermediate level of Japanese language proficiency (JLPT N2).

Most of the JCM participants indicated that although their companies do not set the JLPT entry-level qualification for employment in JCM, they would give priority to those who are specialised in technology and have a good proficiency in the Japanese language. This is because they think that since the MJSGEs can understand the Japanese language, she or he will be able to adapt at the JCM workplace faster.

On the other hand, two JCM participants even indicated that it is not necessary for MJSGEs to follow the Japanese special business manner such as the
use of honorific expressions and words. This is because the lack of business manner is rather obvious among young Japanese themselves, therefore, they do not intend to force the local staff to master it.

6.3.2 Level of Importance of Japanese Language Skills

For the level of importance of the four major Japanese language skills used by the MJSGEs working in JCM, the findings from the quantitative data and semi-structured interviews with the MJSGEs reveal that the listening skill is the most important followed by the speaking skill. The findings show that the reading skill is the third important skill used by MJSGEs in JCM. Finally, the writing skill is considered to be the least important skill used by MJSGEs in JCM.

Based on the findings from the quantitative data and semi-structured interviews with MJSGEs, the listening skill is the most important Japanese language skill required in JCM. This study found that the important Japanese listening sub-skills are understanding oral instruction, understanding discussion, understanding conversation, the ability to confirm the information, answering telephone call, and understanding formal speech or video conference. Subsequently, understanding oral instruction, understanding discussion, understanding conversation, and the ability to confirm the information are the four most important listening sub-skills for MJSGEs working in JCM. More specifically, understanding oral instruction given by the superiors in the company is the most important listening sub-skill needed by MJSGEs at their workplace. These important listening sub-skills were followed by understanding discussion, especially during meetings and understanding their Japanese colleagues’ daily conversation in the workplace. The above three listening sub-skills were important for MJSGEs because they will be equipped with the
necessary skills to confirm the information they hear from their Japanese superiors and colleagues. Consequently, answering telephone call is important to them only when they deal with their Japanese counterparts in Japan. Understanding formal speech or video conference are important only for MJSGEs who need to attend video conferences.

For the speaking skill, greetings, work-related communication with Japanese colleagues, daily conversation with Japanese colleagues, attending meeting and video conference, answer or communicating through telephone and communicate with Japanese customers are the important speaking sub-skills. Greetings, work-related communication with Japanese colleagues, daily conversation with Japanese colleagues, and attending video conference are the four most important speaking sub-skills for MJSGEs. More specifically, the most frequent contexts where MJSGEs use Japanese language is to greet their direct superior(s) and colleagues, followed by using the Japanese language to discuss work-related issues at the workplace.

The speaking skill is considered by the participants to be important during meetings with their Japanese superiors, colleagues and counterparts who are not proficient in the English language. Furthermore, the speaking skill is also considered important when there is video conference with other colleagues (who are not fluent in the English language) at the headquarters. In addition, the Japanese language speaking skill is important when MJSGEs need to communicate with the headquarters for urgent issues in a telephone conversation and most of them are the MJSGE participants in managerial positions.

For the reading skill in the Japanese language, this study revealed that among all reading sub-skills, reading e-mails, reading reports, reading letters, reading memos, reading technical documents, reading internal circulations, and reading
instructions were considered by the participants as the important reading sub-skills. However, the importance of any of these reading sub-skills depends on the position and profession held by MJSGEs. All the MJSGE participants mentioned that reading e-mails is a necessity at the workplace in JCM.

However, for those in managerial and executive positions, besides reading e-mails, they need to read reports and technical documents. Reports and technical documents include mainly the materials written in the Japanese language to describe specifications and features of the products.

The professional group includes participants for whom all reading sub-skills (reading e-mails, reading Skype or Line’s massage, reading reports, reading technical documents, reading internal circulation, and reading instructions) are important. More specifically, the participants need to read and reply e-mails on a daily basis. The participants sometimes need to check with their Japanese counterparts via Skype or online chat. However, the internal circulation and instruction materials are included under general and technical materials such as documents, preliminary reports, and technical materials.

For the writing skill in the Japanese language, this study revealed that the important writing sub-skills for MJSGEs are writing e-mails, writing reports, writing technical documents, writing manuals, and writing instructions. However, this study showed that the importance of these writing sub-skills depends on the position held by MJSGEs. All participants stated that writing e-mails is a necessity for all MJSGEs at their workplace. However, for those in the managerial and executive positions, besides writing e-mails, they need to write reports as much as they are required to write e-mails. They are also required to write technical documents.
The professional group indicated that they need all writing sub-skills. In addition, the translators indicated that they need to translate texts from English or Malay into the Japanese language and to also translate from the Japanese language into other languages. More specifically, the participants from the professional group need to write e-mails on a daily basis. However, for reports and technical documents, only the participants who hold professional and managerial positions are required to produce formal written forms in the Japanese language.

6.3.3 Challenges Faced by MJSGEs Working in JCM in their Japanese Language Proficiency in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing

The challenges faced by the MJSGE in listening were the use of Japanese dialects, speed of speech, difficult vocabulary and sentence structures, difficulties in understanding honorific and humble expressions, and the Japanese way of communication. More specifically, the participants’ challenges in listening can be attributed to the use of slang and accents of the Kansai and Tohoku regions of their Japanese employers. Furthermore, the speaking rate of native Japanese speakers makes it difficult for MJSGEs to comprehend the spoken utterances by the speakers.

The MJSGEs also faced challenges in the use of difficult vocabulary and sentence structures, difficulties in understanding honorific and humble expressions, and the Japanese way of communication in the listening skill. From the quantitative analysis, it was revealed that the listening challenges faced by MJSGEs depend on the positions they hold. This study concluded that for the participants who hold the position as managers, they will face more listening challenges in the Japanese language. Based on the findings from the interview with the MJSGEs, it is clear that
the MJSGEs who hold the position as managers are the participants who attend meetings and video conferences more frequently than other participants.

The challenges faced by the MJSGEs in speaking were the amount of time they take in constructing utterances, difficulty to express ideas and opinions, difficulty in using honorific and humble expressions, and the Japanese way of communication. More specifically, the participants’ challenges included the use of appropriate grammar and vocabulary, sentence structures, and context when they construct sentences, organising ideas and expressing opinions with clarity to make sure the accurate message is conveyed to Japanese speakers. Other difficulties included uncertainty in the use of correct or suitable honorific expressions and difficulty in responding to the hidden message in a conversation because of the Japanese way of communication which is indirect and digressive in style.

The challenges faced by MJSGEs in reading were limited vocabulary knowledge, limited grammar knowledge, difficulty in understanding Japanese language written text, and difficulty to identify and read the Japanese characters. More specifically, the limited vocabulary knowledge includes understanding the technical terms and business expression. The weakness of their grammar knowledge influences their reading comprehension.

In addition, it can be concluded from the findings of this study that the participants who hold more important or higher positions such as managers encounter more challenges in terms of reading in the Japanese language. The MJSGEs who hold the managerial position are the participants who need more reading skills in JCM. This is because they need to read technical and general reports that they receive from the headquarters in Japan.
The study revealed that the challenges faced by the MJSGEs in writing are similar to those of reading. Examples of these challenges are limited vocabulary knowledge, limited grammar knowledge, and difficulty in understanding the Japanese way of writing. More specifically, the difficulties faced by the participants were caused by the lack of knowledge in general and technical terms and the difficulty in writing from textual source because of weaker language skills such as limited grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Other challenges include the ability to construct sentences as the Japanese way of writing is very different from the style of writing in the English language. However, the findings of this study revealed that participants who hold managerial and professional positions are prone to face more writing challenges in the Japanese language. This is because they are the participants who need to write reports and e-mails in the Japanese language at their workplace.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings, listening and speaking are both relatively the most challenging skills faced by the participants. On the other hand, writing and reading are, in comparison, the least challenging skills faced by the participants. Among all the types of challenges faced, based on the findings from the quantitative and also qualitative analyses, it can be concluded that the major challenge faced by MJSGEs in the speaking skill is the amount of time taken in constructing utterances. MJSGEs find that the Japanese way of speaking is not as tough compared to the previous challenge. The findings also revealed that the Japanese language proficiency level and the position MJSGEs hold are inter-related. This is because those with higher Japanese language proficiency levels are likely to hold higher important positions such as managers. In addition, those with higher Japanese language proficiency levels (JLPT N2 and N1) face more challenges in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is because they are the participants
who use the Japanese language actively regularly at their workplace to handle their job tasks such as attending meetings and video conferences conducted in the Japanese language. These participants communicate frequently with their superiors and counterparts in the headquarters in Japan compared to other MJSGE participants in JCM.

6.3.4 Measures Employed by MJSGEs to Overcome the Challenges they faced in Japanese Language Proficiency in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing

The main measures employed by MJSGEs to overcome the challenges faced in Japanese language proficiency in listening were doing a lot of practice continuously by using external Japanese language resources such as NHK and Japanese language programmes to ensure that they can overcome challenges of understanding Japanese employers’ accents, and paying more concentration when participating in conversations. Apart from that, using the English language and asking the Japanese speakers to confirm the content or the message they are conveying are also some measures that are employed by MJSGEs. Furthermore, improving their Japanese language grammar and sentence structure constructions are also some of the measures employed to overcome the challenges in listening. However, requesting the Japanese speakers to repeat or slow down their speech is not the most employed measure. This is because the MJSGEs are reluctant to make the request as they are worried that this will slow down the conversations in JCM where everyone is working under a time constraint.

To overcome the challenges in Japanese speaking skills, the participants mentioned that they continue developing their Japanese speaking skills by trying to
strengthen their grammar and vocabulary, construct proper sentences, and continue improving their knowledge and use of honorifics by using external Japanese language resources such as anime, video, and movies to overcome their challenge in speaking. Using the electronic translator to translate into the Japanese language before speaking to the Japanese speakers and making pre-presentation preparations before presentations and meetings are also frequently employed by the participants to overcome their challenge in speaking. The two least employed measures to overcome speaking challenges in JCM by the participants include practising their speaking skills by talking to their Japanese colleagues and requesting native Japanese speakers to slow down their rate of speaking.

Regarding the measures to overcome the challenges in Japanese reading skills, the participants mentioned that the two most common measures they employed were repeating reading the materials until they understand the content and using Google Translate to help them understand the reading materials. Apart from that, the participants used online and print dictionaries to overcome the challenge faced in reading Japanese language materials. The second measure used by the participants to overcome their reading challenge is the use of human resources such as their Japanese employers or colleagues. Reading Japanese language materials online and reading books were the two least employed measures.

In terms of writing, the two most frequent measures used by the participants to overcome their writing challenge were practising writing continuously and using the standard format of business writing as a reference. Measures such as referring to internal Japanese language resources and using technological tools and facilities such as dictionary and Google Translate are useful in helping the participants overcome their challenges in writing. The second frequent measure used by MJSGEs
to overcome their writing challenge is getting help from their Japanese employers and colleagues to assist them in writing. Reading books and requesting their employers to edit or provide feedback on their writing were the two least employed measures.

6.4 Discussion of the Findings

This section critically discusses the findings of this study against the backdrop of the related literature review presented in Chapter Two. The discussion of the findings looks into four interconnected issues: (1) the requirements of Japanese language proficiency skills in JCM, (2) the level of importance of Japanese language skills, (3) the challenges faced by MJSGEs working in JCM in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and (4) the measures employed by MJSGEs to overcome the challenges they encounter in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

6.4.1 Requirements of Japanese Language Proficiency Skills in JCM

Regarding the entry-level qualifications of the Japanese language proficiency, only two JCM set the JLPT N1 level as a recruitment requirement. The other six JCMs do not set the JLPT level as their recruitment requirement. However, those six JCM indicated that MJSGEs are highly evaluated by the JCM when they have professional knowledge and Japanese language proficiency as an asset to facilitate their communication and the business operations of their companies. The participants from JCM indicated that although their companies do not set the JLPT qualification for employment in JCM, they would give priority to those who are specialised in technology and have a good proficiency in the Japanese language. This
is because they think that since the MJSGEs can understand the Japanese language, she or he will be able to adapt faster and better at the workplace. This resonates to a certain degree with the findings of Wong (1995) and also Bloch (1995) who revealed that language skills should be considered as binary; that is they work best in tandem with non-language skills. It also echoes the finding by Seo (2000) that the Japanese language is useful for obtaining employment. The findings of this study mentioned above concur with these three important issues.

First, the finding of this study revealed that the JCM would give priority to those who are specialised in technology and have a good proficiency in the Japanese language. This finding is consistent with the research done by Falsgraf et al. (1993) who revealed that the Japanese language proficiency is a useful skill and it is also as important as a solid professional skill. However, proficiency in the Japanese language alone does not qualify job-seekers for most professional positions in business.

Second, the JCM would give priority to those who have a good proficiency in Japanese language. This is because they think that since MJSGEs can understand the Japanese language, they will be able to adapt at the workplace faster. Furthermore, if the local staff understand the Japanese language, they will be able to adapt to the Japanese companies and business policies and practices easily such as being punctual, keeping promises, and so on. This finding is consistent to a certain degree with the findings of Ruth (2013) who revealed that the Japanese ethics imbibes cultural message and reflects the norm and values of the culture. Furthermore, this finding resonates with the hypothesis of the Sapir-Whorf that looked at the relationship between language and culture. It stated that language does not merely act as a tool for communicating thoughts, but it also shapes the thought
themselves. In other words, this finding also supports the suggestion by Ferraro (1998) who stated that the ability for MJSGEs to speak the Japanese language as it is spoken by their expatriate colleagues and superiors enable them to gain a better understanding of differences of perception and thought. Furthermore, this finding also echoes the research done by Selmer (2005, 2006). Selmer (2005) indicated that proficiency in the target foreign language enables the foreign language speakers to be exposed to the foreign culture through the use of its language. Thus, they can be able to bridge the gaps between the two cultures and establish personal relationships through frequent and direct communication. This finding is also consistent with the comment by Takeuchi et al. (2002) that a high level of proficiency in the target language can enable foreign employees to adopt appropriate work values and behave appropriately at the workplace. In other words, adequate language proficiency can consequently act as a natural bridge to intercultural communication and information flows at the workplace and that can result in a positive influence on foreign employees’ work-related adjustment.

Third, the finding echoes the comment by Yoshida et al. (2013) who argued that Japanese language skills are essential for local employees for employment. This is also supported by Ainol et al. (2007) who revealed that learners of the Japanese language in Malaysia learn the Japanese language because they believe that it is useful for obtaining employment.

The finding mentioned above is very important as it supports the theoretical framework that is applied in this study. According to Gumperz and Hymes (1972) and Mogan (2004), language is the sociolinguistics concept of a speech community. The sociolinguistics concept brings together a community of language users that are limited by a set of common linguistic codes and registers. It means that access to a
speech community is determined by the internal members of a group in JCM, and in order to gain acceptance into JCM, MJSGEs must undergo a socialisation process which involves learning norms and practices that are collectively practised, and the acquisition of the language used in JCM.

The qualitative finding also revealed that even though most of the JCM do not set the Japanese language proficiency test (JLPT) as a recruitment regulation, MJSGEs with good Japanese language proficiency are preferred by the JCM. This is because JCM had commented that the Japanese language proficiency does not only enhance the communication between the JCM and MJSGEs, but it will also enable MJSGEs to adapt at the workplace faster because they are able to understand Japanese thought easily. The feedback from the JCM echoes the findings by Salacuse (2010) and Gamble and Gamble (2010), who mentioned that there is a close connection between language and culture, and both language and culture play a major role in cross-cultural business communication in MNCs such as JCM. The finding revealed that good Japanese language skills do not only enhance the MJSGEs’ cross-cultural business communication skills, but these skills also contribute to career enhancement, make people seek for job or positions in which they have opportunities to use their language skills as argued by Bloch (1995) and Hoare (2012). Accordingly, the finding from this study also revealed that the Japanese language course offered in higher education institutions in Malaysia must subscribe to the Japanese language curriculum that can enable the Japanese language learners to obtain intermediate level of Japanese language proficiency before they graduate. This is to make sure that the graduates can obtain employment and can work effectively and efficiently in JCM.
Regarding the Japanese language skills required by the JCM, the study showed that speaking and listening are the two top most important skills required by JCM for MJSGEs at the workplace. Among these two skills, speaking is the more important skill that is required at the JCM workplace. The study also revealed that reading is the third important required skill and writing is the least required skill by the JCM. However, the finding also showed that the requirements of the four major skills by the JCM depend on the position and also the job type of MJSGEs. This finding again resonates to a certain degree with the findings of Fixman (1990). According to Fixman (1990), the kind of linguistic skills required in different businesses and professions may vary according to the size of company and the successful candidates’ positions in a company.

The Japanese language listening skill required by the JCM is mainly related to the ability to understand the oral instruction and confirm the information. The above sub-skills were required by the JCM is because it is pertinent for the MJSGEs to be able to follow the job instruction correctly. Furthermore, if they understand the instruction in the Japanese language given by their Japanese employers, they can use the English language to confirm the job task even though they are not able to speak in the Japanese language. The ability of MJSGEs to confirm the oral instruction given by JCM was considered very important when dealing with safety issues. Furthermore, understanding the oral instruction is considered important by the JCM because the Japanese expatriates face the same challenge when MJSGEs use the English language to communicate with them. While they understand the English language spoken by MJSGEs, they face the challenge to express their idea or message in the English language. If MJSGEs are able to follow the oral instruction and use the English language to confirm the message, the Japanese expatriates are
able to use the Japanese language to explain the instruction. Therefore, understanding the oral instruction was considered an important sub-skill for the listening skill for the purpose of mutual communication.

The Japanese language speaking skill was the top most important skill required by the JCM among the four major skills. More than half of the JCM required a high level of speaking skill. This level is equivalent to JLPT N2 and above. This finding was supported by Baker and Westrup (2003) who stated that speaking is of vital importance at the workplace. Therefore, language speakers have more opportunities to find jobs in different organisations and companies. However, the speaking skill required by JCM was different because it depends on the position and the job type of the participants. This concurs, to a certain extent, with the findings of Falsgraf et al. (1993) who mentioned that elementary skills may suffice for some executives who are required to socialise with their foreign partners. However, for candidates who are hired for their language skills as part of their qualifications, they may be expected to handle professional activities such as negotiating, maintaining working relations, and assuring technology transfer in a foreign language. Therefore, MJSGEs who are managers are the participants who faced more challenges in speaking skill because they are the participants who need to attend meetings and video conferences conducted in the Japanese language. They are also required to present in the Japanese language during meetings or video conferences.

The most important speaking sub-skill was work-related conversations with Japanese colleagues. However, if the work-related conversation was between the MJSGEs and the Japanese expatriate in JCM, the JCM do not require the MJSGEs to have a high level of Japanese language proficiency. This is because the conversation
can be done in the English language which can be used as an alternate option. For communication with branch offices overseas, the Japanese companies required their Japanese staff to learn the English language too. Those who are assigned to work overseas such as in Malaysia must pass the business English language test administered by their companies. Therefore, those Japanese expatriates in JCM are able to communicate using basic English language.

However, for MJSGEs who need to deal with the Japanese customers from various countries and when they need to deal with their counterparts in the headquarters in Japan, the JCM required MJSGEs to have a high level of Japanese language proficiency as many of their counterparts in Japan are not able to communicate in the English language. This is because they need to conduct their work-related conversations in the Japanese language with their Japanese counterparts by telephone, especially when an emergency issue arises. Furthermore, those MJSGEs who need to attend or present in meetings and to attend video conferences are required to have a high Japanese language proficiency.

In addition, those who hold positions such as section heads and section managers are required to have at least moderate level Japanese language proficiency (JLPT N3) because they can function as intermediary between the Japanese expatriate staff and local employees. However, the JCM do not expect the MJSGEs to use honorific or humble expressions in their conversations as the content of the message and the clarity in conveying the message properly to the local employee are more important compared to the form of communication. The JCM also indicated that even the native Japanese young generation face difficulties in the use of honorific and humble expression. Therefore, they did not expect MJSGEs to use the honorific expressions.
The study revealed that reading Japanese language is the third important skill required in JCM. Half of the JCM did not require MJSGEs to have Japanese language reading skill. However, the other half of the JCM who required MJSGEs to have the reading skill stated that they required MJSGEs to have upper-intermediate level in reading. This level is equivalent to JLPT N2 level. The JCM required MJSGEs to have a high level of reading skills, especially those who hold the positions as managers because the MJSGEs need to read e-mails and reports mainly from their headquarters and to convey the message to their subordinates who are mainly local employees.

Communication through e-mail is highly ranked as the major reading sub-skills to be used in JCM. The e-mail is one of the methods that is used widely in JCM to communicate with the headquarters, therefore, the MJSGEs are required to understand the content of the business e-mails. Other than reading e-mails, MJSGEs are also required to read business reports, manuals, and instructions. The reading skill is also important for MJSGEs who need to translate manuals and instructions from the Japanese language into other languages because they need to understand what is written in the Japanese language in order to translate it into the English or Malay language.

This study revealed that writing in the Japanese language is the least important skill required by the JCM. Yet, writing e-mails and business reports are the two skills that have been revealed by this study to be important for the MJSGEs. This echoes, to a certain degree, the finding of Izumi et al. (2014). From the qualitative data findings, it is clear that writing skill is only required by the JCM when the MJSGEs hold certain positions and perform certain job types that require them to write e-mails and reports. Therefore, for that particular position and job type, the
JCM required a high level of Japanese language proficiency. This level is equivalent to the upper-intermediate level and above (JLPT N2 and N1). In fact, the MJSGEs will not be recruited if they not fulfil the requirement.

To sum up, this study showed that reading skill is the third important skill and writing skill is the least important skill required by the JCM. This may imply that MJSGE’s reading ability is more important than writing ability in JCM.

6.4.2 The Level of Importance of Japanese Language Skills

According to the feedback from the MJSGEs, the listening skill was the most important skill for JCM workplace communication, when it is compared to the speaking skill. This finding supported the statements by Brownell (1994) and Flynn et al. (2008) who pointed out that listening is considered by some to be the single most important component in the communication process, even more highly valued than speaking as a communication skill necessary in the business world. These findings also concur with the findings reported by Wolvin and Coakley (1995) who showed that listening is instrumental at the workplace where employers identified listening as one of the most important communication skills for employees at all levels. This indicates that good listening skills are a vital aspect of employee competence.

However, the findings from the requirement of Japanese language skills’ proficiency from the JCM revealed that speaking was the most important skill required at the JCM workplace. This was a mismatch between data obtained from JCM and those obtained from MJSGEs.

The mismatch finding showed that the MJSGE place the listening ability more important than the speaking skill compared to the JCM’s requirement. It is
possibly due to the MJSGEs’ need to understand the work instruction to enable them to act accordingly. Furthermore, the MJSGE indicated that if they can understand the oral instruction, they may use English language to confirm their understanding of the information. Therefore, this is the reason why MJSGEs consider the listening skill as more important than the speaking skill.

MJSGEs ranked the speaking skill as the second most important skill because they indicated that if they are able to understand the oral instruction from and the conversation with their Japanese superiors or colleagues, they can use the English language to respond.

The most frequent situation in which MJSGEs used the Japanese language was greeting their direct superiors and immediate colleagues. In such a context, the Japanese language was used for the purpose to build good relationships with the Japanese expatriates in JCM. The findings from the interviews with MJSGEs also revealed that the daily conversations with the Japanese colleagues are important for MJSGEs to build good relationships with the Japanese expatriates and also to understand their thoughts. This finding is consistent with that of Cooren (2006) and Robichaud (2006) who reported that language used at the workplace should be understood as a dynamic and dialectical communicative process for the purpose of building relationships. At the same time, language is important as a tool to transfer information and to organise and understand social relationships, thought patterns, and actions. The finding mentioned above also echoes the result of the research studies by Gudykunst and Kim (1984), Kramsch (1998) who suggested that language reflects the attitudes, value, norms and behaviour of its speakers.

The second frequent use of the speaking skill was to discuss the work-related issues with superior and colleagues in workplace. This echoes to a certain degree, the
finding of Shimada and Shibukawa (1999) and Izumi et al. (2014). The findings from Shimada and Shibukawa’s studies revealed that the local employees in Malaysia used the Japanese language for the purpose of greetings and daily conversations with internal parties. This situation is similar in Singapore as, the findings by Izumi et al. revealed that the Japanese language is used more frequently for communication with internal parties rather than external parties such as clients or business partners in Japanese companies in Singapore. The communication activities are mainly discussions on work-related issues with superiors and colleagues at the workplace.

In addition, the findings from the qualitative data revealed that the MJSGEs indicated that the speaking skill is important for them to build good relationships with the Japanese expatriates and gain trust from them. This opinion matches that of the JCM as the JCM too indicated that if the local employees understand the Japanese language, they will be able to adapt at the workplace faster because they are able to understand the Japanese thought easily. This finding resonates with the opinion of Ojanparä (2014) who stated that many of the effects of language skills are indirect such as better cultural awareness and intellectual growth. This is particular true in the Japanese language as it is a highly contextualized language and the speaker of the language must be fully aware whether the relationship with the listeners is intimate and whether the communication is impersonal. Therefore, if the MJSGEs are able to communicate in the Japanese language with good Japanese language skills, they are expected to understand the Japanese culture better (Peltokorpi, 2007), and this will contribute to their business communication in JCM.

However, the MJSGEs noted that although the JCM do not specify any Japanese language proficiency required for their employment, they indicated that for the MJSGEs holding the managerial positions, especially when they need to attend
meetings and video conferences that are conducted in Japanese language, and also when they need to deal with the headquarters located in Japan for urgent issues, a high level of proficiency is required. For these contexts, knowing the Japanese language can be an advantage for those working in JCM. This finding is in tandem with the statement made by Bloch (1995) that foreign language skills can contribute to career enhancement. According to Bloch (1995) local employees who can communicate effectively in the Japanese language can be assigned to important tasks, can get more business trips to Japan, can have better opportunities for promotion, and can build good relationships with the Japanese expatriates.

The finding also revealed that the Japanese employers tend to communicate more with MJSGEs who can speak the Japanese language proficiently. This finding resonates with the findings of Marschan (1997) who mentioned that language can act as facilitator for employees to communicate within the multinational company. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with the findings reported by Charles (2007) and Marschan-Pickkari et al. (1999) who stated that in international business, language skills do not only affect the performance of individuals but also the performance of an organisation as a whole. Therefore, the MJSGEs indicated that the speaking skill is important for their career even though JCM do not set the Japanese language proficiency as a requirement for employment. MJSGEs’ opinions were echoed by feedback obtained from JCM as JCM mentioned that the MJSGEs with Japanese language proficiency are more preferable in order to foster mutual understanding. Therefore, the speaking skill is an important skill in JCM. The finding supports the study reported by Hoare (2012) who showed that language skills can also make people search for jobs or positions in which they have opportunities to use
their language skills. Therefore, employees’ language skills can, to some extent, shape people’s careers.

For reading, unlike speaking, there were variations in the number and type of reading materials depending on the participants’ job type, position, and JCM requirement. Job type, position and the JCM requirement are also related to the type of materials participants read. The professional group read more types or variations of materials compared to other participants. MJSGEs holding managerial and executive positions need to read extra materials such as reports and technical documents. The reports and technical documents mainly are the materials related to product specifications and features written in the Japanese language.

Relatively few participants revealed that they were required to produce formal written form in the Japanese language. Only those who belong to the professional group and the managers were required to do so as they need to write reports and technical documents. Essentially, all of those who did these tasks have high Japanese language proficiency. Similar to the reading skill, there were variations in the number and type of writing tasks depending on the participants’ job type, position, and JCM’s requirement. Job type, position and the JCM’s requirement also determine to the type of materials MJSGEs have to write in JCM.

6.4.3 Challenges Faced by MJSGEs Working in JCM in their Japanese Language Proficiency in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing

The finding of the current study revealed that the MJSGEs faced two most challenges on a continuous basis. These are the listening skill and speaking skill challenges. This is because listening and speaking skills are the two most important and frequently used skills in JCM. From the semi-structured interviews with the
employers, it has been revealed that listening and speaking skills are the two most required skills for Japanese language proficiency in JCM. Therefore, it was reported in this study that MJSGEs encounter less challenges in both the reading and writing skills.

Furthermore, from the semi-structured interviews with the JCM, the findings revealed that the requirement of the participants’ Japanese language proficiency is dependent on the positions they hold. Thus, those in managerial positions who have to attend meetings and video conferences conducted in the Japanese language, and communicate with the headquarters located in Japan by telephone are required to have high Japanese language proficiency. From the quantitative findings and semi-structured interviews with MJSGEs, the findings revealed that the positions held by the participants show significant differences in the Japanese language use during office hours. The current study discovered that the participants who hold the managerial position are the participants who use the Japanese language more frequently during working hours. Therefore, they are the participants who face more challenges in terms of the listening and speaking skills.

The listening challenges faced by the participants can be attributed to the use of dialects, speed of speech, and the difficult vocabulary and sentence structures used by their interlocutors. This echoes to a certain degree, the findings of Li and Renandya (2012) who concluded that complex and compound sentences pose a greater difficulty to learners of the Japanese language and can negatively affect listening comprehension. The finding from this study supports what has been reported by Underwood (1989), Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler (1988) who found that an increase in speaking rate may be a critical factor in the listening comprehension skill of non-native learners.
In terms of challenges faced in the listening skill, the most frequently occurring challenge was the use of dialect by the Japanese expatriates. Certain dialect or accents are very difficult to understand because they have totally different structural and phonological features from the standard Japanese language which are commonly used in teaching materials and by teachers. Thus, this finding echoes the findings reported by Izumi et al. (2014). The findings also revealed that some native Japanese in JCM still use regional dialects in Malaysia because they are not aware that the Japanese language they use is not the standard form.

The second challenge faced in the listening skill by the MJSGEs was that the Japanese in JCM speak too fast. This coincides, to a certain degree, with the findings of Underwood (1989), Zeng (2007), and Izumi et al. (2014) who all revealed that speaking rate was the most problematic factor that affects listening comprehension. For learners of a foreign language, the speed of speech is always considered to be one of the challenges for them because the speed of speech is determined by their interlocutors and not controlled by them. The finding also disclosed that when the JCM used a Japanese dialect, it is hard for the MJSGEs to catch exactly what is said. This creates challenges that are more serious for the MJSGEs, especially when listening to the interlocutors who speak fast.

The third listening challenge faced by the participants is related to difficult vocabulary and complex sentence structures used by their interlocutors. According to the findings from the semi-structured interviews, MJSGEs face difficulty in recognising new vocabulary and complex sentences. This is the most difficult factor that negatively affects listening comprehension. This finding is consistent with the findings of Li and Renandya (2012) who reported that listening comprehension is the key point in listening activities. The factors such as unknown vocabulary and
sentence complexity make listening comprehension difficult for the MJSGEs. Consequently, the MJSGEs have difficulty in comprehending the intended message of the speakers.

This finding also concurs with the explanation by Lynch (2011) and the findings reported by Izumi et al. (2014) in Singapore. These two studies reported that sentence complexity and unknown vocabulary, especially technical terms, make listening comprehension difficult. They added that uncertainty in the use of correct or suitable honorific expressions and the indirect Japanese way of expressing their messages make it difficult for the MJSGEs to interpret or identify the meaning of utterances.

The speaking challenges faced by the participants can be attributed to the challenges of the amount of time taken in constructing sentences, difficulty to express ideas and opinions in Japanese, and the Japanese way of communication, and difficulty in using honorific and humble expressions. The finding from this study also revealed that in order to understand information accurately in JCM, the MJSGEs with good proficiency in Japanese language skills are expected to be more sensitive to subtle hints and be able to decode hidden meanings within the Japanese communication context.

The most difficult or important challenge faced by the MJSGEs in the speaking skill is the amount of time needed in constructing utterances before they speak. The findings from this study resonate with the findings by Nation and Newton (2009). This challenge frustrates the MJSGEs due to the slow or unpolished Japanese speech that they produce. This makes it difficult for the MJSGEs to accomplish their tasks, especially during meetings and presentations. At the same time, it also affected their fluency in speaking and the MJSGEs feel frustrated because these challenges
have a negative impact on their speaking performance during meetings. The MJSGEs face difficulties in paraphrasing smoothly, persuading others, and explaining things clearly and concisely within a limited amount of time due to lack of vocabulary and expressions. This finding concurs with the finding of Tuan and Mai (2015).

The factors that cause MJSGEs to take longer time to construct the utterances were insufficient vocabulary knowledge, special technical terms, special expressions used in business, grammatical problem, and also being worried and conscious during conversations. Thus, MJSGEs may be worried that an inappropriate word is used. They may also face the difficulty to express complex notions concisely within a short period of time. The challenges faced by the MJSGEs are similar to those reported by Lukitasari (2003) who demonstrated that learners do not possess good foreign language speaking skills because they have not learnt the important elements for speaking. These important elements are those of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The challenges faced by the MJSGEs supported those reported by Latha (2012) who showed that grammatical competence can help speakers apply and perceive the structure of particular language correctly in a way that leads to their fluency.

The second challenge faced by MJSGEs in the speaking skill is in expressing their ideas and opinions because they cannot find the suitable words, especially technical terms, structures and expressions in suitable contexts. The finding also revealed MJSGEs faced the challenge of vocabulary to use or how to use grammar and how to construct sentences accurately. MJSGEs expressed frustration over their lack of vocabulary and mentioned that they have difficulty in presenting ideas at meetings. The above factors hamper their efforts to express their thoughts effectively. This feedback from MJSGEs is supported by Nation and Newton (2009)
who mentioned that performance conditions impact speaking performance and these conditions are those of time pressure and planning.

It is very difficult for the foreign language learners to express ideas and opinions in a foreign language because they do not have many opinions or views regarding what to say, especially the Japanese way of communication which is very different from their mother tongue. The findings also revealed that the MJSGEs cannot express their thoughts because they are not able to comprehend what is uttered. As stated by Segal (2010), people sharing the same culture understand the non-verbal communication of each other, but it might not be as obvious for people from another culture.

The third challenge faced by the MJSGEs in the speaking skill was in getting the real meaning or message in their conversations with their Japanese colleagues and superiors due to their indirectness of the Japanese communication style. The MJSGEs faced the problem of understanding the intended message of the Japanese speakers. This can be attributed to the Japanese way of communication. Furthermore, this is because Japan is a high-context culture as cited by Hall (1981) who stated that a lot of information is conveyed through environment cues rather than by expressing knowledge verbally. As stated by Hall (1981), the Japanese way of communication in indirect and in a round about way. Such indirect communication style may mislead their interlocutors and this may be the reason the MJSGEs fail to read the real intended message or misunderstand their JCM’s hidden messages. The Japanese way of communication also makes the MJSGEs fail to respond to their interlocutors because they are not able to understand their Japanese interlocutors’ intended message. As reported by Shumin (1997), the foreign language learners should comprehend what is uttered to them in order to have a successful
dialogue. This means that during the communication activities, the MJSGEs are not only playing the role as listeners but also as speakers.

Furthermore, the Japanese way of communication also creates challenges for the MJSGEs when they are speaking to the Japanese speaker whose status is higher than them or their clients or customers. This is because in the Japanese language, there are several levels of politeness. This finding echoes with those stated by Peltokorpi (2007) who mentioned that different forms are used depending on the context and relationships between people engaging in a conversation or communication. The language used by a superior to the subordinate and the in-group to the out-group is different. This is referred to as “honorific expressions”, which show the level of politeness and seriousness of the Japanese language. Language is used delicately in Japan since strangers and superiors are spoken to using different words and terms of reference. The finding stated above is in agreement with Nishida (1987), Kikuchi (1997) and Miyaoka and Tamaoka (2001) who found that the Japanese way of communication can pose a challenge in speaking for the Japanese language learners. This is because the Japanese language has wide variety of honorific expressions. At the same time, the lack of honorific expressions in the Japanese language learners’ mother-tongue can make learners of Japanese language experience difficulties in the acquisition of Japanese honorific expressions. The finding also further echoes the findings reported by Yin et al. (2010) who showed that Japanese language learners find it difficult to understand Japanese human relations and the need for honorific expressions.

The finding also revealed that the MJSGEs struggle with the honorific expressions because they are uncertain when it comes to using the correct or suitable honorific expressions. This finding is also reflected in the findings of the study done
by Miyaoka and Tamaoka (2001) in China who revealed that the native Chinese speakers face some difficulty to understand Japanese human relations and honorific expressions. This is because honorific expressions are one of the most difficult linguistic items to acquire for the Japanese language learners. Therefore, in the current study, the MJSGEs expressed their anxiety about unintentional misuse of honorifics. However, the current study revealed that the JCM do not expect MJSGEs to use the correct honorific expressions as nowadays, even the native Japanese young generation face difficulties using honorific expressions in the Japanese language. This shows that there is a mismatch between MJSGEs and JCM concerns and expectations.

The finding of this study also showed that the MJSGEs who hold managerial positions indicated that choosing an appropriate level of directness in status-differentiated interactions was the main challenge they faced during meetings or negotiation with their Japanese counterparts. According to the participants, the concept of the Japanese communication style, which includes the verbal part of the communication, is always vague or indirect; especially when it occurs with the language barrier that they face. Based on the findings from the quantitative data and semi-structured interviews with the MJSGEs, the feedback from the MJSGEs revealed that the MJSGEs experienced the linguistic and sociocultural difficulties in the speaking skill. Therefore, the findings revealed that MJSGEs faced challenges in the speaking skill not only because they lack linguistic competence, but also because they lack sociocultural competence. This finding supports the theoretical framework of this study, i.e., Neustupny’s framework of interaction (1978, 1987, and 1995) which proposes that the MJSGEs must produce linguistic competence (Japanese language proficiency) and sociolinguistic competence (Japanese communication
style) to interact effectively with the Japanese expatriates at the cross-culture workplace such as JCM.

The findings of the current study revealed that the participants faced less challenges in both the reading and writing skills. Based on the findings from the quantitative results, the participants faced less challenges in the reading skill and the writing skill compared to the other two skills (listening skill and speaking skill). This is because the reading skill and the writing skill are not as frequently used by the MJSGEs in JCM as compared to the listening and speaking skills. From the semi-structured interviews with their employers, it has been revealed that the Japanese language proficiency skills requirement that were considered less important were the reading skill and the writing skill.

However, the requirements of the Japanese language reading skill and writing skill vary according to the positions at JCM held by the participants. Thus, the more important the position of the participants such as managerial positions, the more they need the reading and writing skills. Furthermore, MJSGEs who are in the professional group such as engineers and translators are also required by JCM to be able to read and write in the Japanese language. These groups of MJSGEs mentioned that they faced more challenges in the reading and writing skills. This finding concurs with Tamaoka’s (1997, 2013) findings in which he stated that the participants with important positions such as managerial positions face challenges when they read Japanese language documents at their workplace as official Japanese documents tend to use more Kanji compared to texts written for casual reading.

Comparing the reading skill and the writing skill, reading skill ranked third most challenging by MJSGEs among the four major Japanese language skills. The challenges they faced in the reading skill were mainly were limited vocabulary
knowledge and difficulty in reading Japanese language materials. These difficulties can be attributed to the difficulty of Kanji. This finding is consistent with the findings reported by Matsumoto (2013) who mentioned that the Japanese language consists of two orthographic systems: syllabic (Hiragana and Katakana) and logographic (Kanji). Taking this into account, in the case of reading in the Japanese language, MJSGEs may face difficulties to decipher the messages written in Japanese.

Based on the feedback from the participants, the limited vocabulary knowledge that they face is in understanding technical terms and business expressions and not related general vocabulary. However, from the participants who stated that they face a challenge in vocabulary, there are significant variations in the type of reading materials that they have to read depending on their job type. Job type and company type also influence the type of materials the participants read and also the challenges that they face. The most frequent challenge occurring in terms of vocabulary was lack of knowledge of technical terms. This is because even native Japanese face difficulties in dealing with technical vocabulary. Therefore, it must be more difficult for the MJSGEs. The findings mentioned above resonate with the findings of the study done by Izumi et al. (2014) in Singapore.

However, regarding the challenge faced in reading Kanji, the finding revealed that the difficulty level of Kanji for the participants is different based on the participants’ mother tongue. If the participants’ mother tongue is Chinese, then Kanji is not a problem for them. As cited by Mori (2013), the native speakers of Japanese or the learners who are from a logographic background, they can recognise Kanji by guessing the meaning of the symbol despite being unable to pronounce the character correctly. However, since the participants do not come from a logographic
background, the complexity of combining radicals and the amount of characters in Kanji make Japanese particularly difficult for them. This is because the Japanese writing system is a complex orthography involving two syllabaries (Hiragana and Katakana) and an extensive lexicon of thousands of ideographic symbols (Kanji). This finding supports the finding reported by De Courcy and Birch (1993) who argued that Kanji, the Japanese logography, appears to be a great obstacle to fluent reading.

For the writing skill in the Japanese language, this study showed that the writing skill in the Japanese language is the least important skill compared to other three major skills in the Japanese language for MJSGEs. Relatively few of the participants write Japanese in a formal way. Only three of the participants mentioned that they produced texts written in Japanese which required the production of complex sentences and paragraphs in business e-mails and reports. Therefore, the participants revealed that they faced less challenges in the Japanese writing skill compared to the other three Japanese language skills. The participants, who mentioned that they were required to write in the Japanese language in JCM, revealed that the challenges they faced in writing were limited grammar knowledge, Japanese way of writing, and limited vocabulary knowledge.

The most difficult challenge faced by MJSGEs who need to write in the Japanese language in JCM was limited grammar knowledge. This difficulty can be attributed to weaker language skills of MJSGEs such as limited grammar, limited vocabulary knowledge, and a lack of ability to construct Japanese sentences correctly. The current finding echoes the findings of Latha (2013) who reported that grammatical competence can help speakers and writers to apply and perceive the structure of language correctly.
The second challenge faced by the MJSGEs in the Japanese language writing skill is related to getting the right words and structures when writing in Japanese. Thus, similar to their challenges in constructing sentences, MJSGEs encounter the same challenge in the speaking skill.

The challenges MJSGEs faced in the Japanese way of writing can be attributed to the difficulty they faced in constructing sentences in Japanese, especially difficulties related to the format and style of business writing which are both different from the English language. The difficulties can be attributed to the fact that MJSGEs lack understanding of Japanese phrases, Japanese text structure, connection between sentences or paragraphs written in Japanese. Furthermore, these difficulties occur because the structure of the Japanese language sentence is different from that of the English language.

This finding supports what was hypothesized of Kubota (1998). The challenge faced by the MJSGEs can be attributed to the characteristics of written texts in Japanese which is different from those in the English language. One of the characteristics of Japanese language written texts is that the main ideas do not appear until the end. Another feature of written texts in Japanese is that the paragraphs given before the main ideas do not constitute the reasons or evidence for the main ideas. This indicates that Japanese written texts have inductive patterns, whereas English language written texts are deductive in nature. Therefore, it can be expected that the MJSGEs who are mainly English language users might tend to use a deductive pattern in their Japanese language writing.

The third challenge faced by the MJSGEs in writing was limited vocabulary knowledge. The participants who revealed that they faced this challenge were mainly engineers and translators involved in professional tasks in JCM. The challenges they
faced were limited vocabulary and the lack of general and technical terms knowledge. These findings are similar to the challenges they faced in reading. For reading, the participants faced challenges when they encountered technical terms. However, for the writing skills, both general and technical terms are challenging for them. It can be concluded that the finding of this study is echoed by the finding in the study done by Lukitasari (2003), which demonstrates that learners do not possess good foreign language skills because they had not learnt the important elements such as vocabulary and grammar. The important finding gained from this study is that the lack of vocabulary and grammar had affected the MJSGEs’ performance in speaking, reading and writing in Japanese language.

6.4.4 Measures Employed by MJSGEs to Overcome Challenges Encountered in their Japanese Language Proficiency

This section discusses the measures employed by the participants to overcome the challenges faced in their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The discussion also involves responses regarding the employers’ responsibilities in helping the participants to overcome these challenges.

Several measures were employed to overcome the challenges faced in the Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is very important to mention that the participants showed their motivation to learn the Japanese way of communication, writing business e-mails and business reports, making presentations at meetings, and Japanese business practices at their workplace.

The most frequently measures employed by MJSGEs to overcome their challenges in speaking, reading and writing in Japanese language are making
advance preparations before speaking at meetings and presentations, preparing drafts of e-mails and reports, revising the draft, preparing a final draft, and, to a certain extent, integrating Japanese colleagues or superiors’ feedback as much as they can.

For external sources, the measure used by the participants includes accessing the internet to use Google Translate to translate their written work from the English language into the Japanese language. Additionally, they sometimes use Google Translate and print and online dictionaries to search for the meaning of new vocabulary encountered. Some MJSGEs mentioned that they use Google Translate to check their sentences before speaking, before presentations, and before sending their e-mails and reports.

To overcome the challenges in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the participants put in additional effort to improve these skills by using the media such as movies, NHK news (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), and TV dramas to practice and enhance their listening and speaking skills. The qualitative findings showed that the participants took the initiative to practise continuously by listening to external Japanese language resources such as NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) and Japanese language programmes such as dramas and movies to help them overcome their linguistic limitations or lack of listening experience. These measures taken by the MJSGEs supported those reported by Field (2011) who acknowledges that foreign language listeners have to draw more upon context and co-text because of the difficulties they face in decoding the speech signal. Regarding the measure the MJSGEs use to overcome the challenges they face in the listening skill, the participants indicated that they use the English language to check their understanding with their Japanese colleagues and superiors to confirm the content or message they are trying to convey to the MJSGEs. The other measures to overcome their listening
challenges include asking the Japanese expatriates to speak at a slower pace or to repeat certain information.

In addition, the MJSGE participants indicated that the media mentioned above also fosters their intercultural competences and enhances their ability to speak with their Japanese colleagues and superiors who have different cultural identities, social values, and behaviours. Furthermore, further reading texts written in the Japanese language, getting feedback from their Japanese colleagues or superiors on their work, and improving their Japanese language skills helped the MJSGEs to overcome the challenges they face in their Japanese language proficiency in terms of reading, and writing.

The second measure of overcoming the challenges MJSGEs faced in the Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing is consulting the Japanese colleagues and superiors to guide or to check their work. The participants also took the initiative to consult their Japanese colleagues and superiors to seek their advice and guidance in writing e-mails and reports. It is evident from the current study that the JCM also realised the cultural difficulties MJSGEs face and tried to reduce such challenges. For example, JCM participants mentioned that they do not expect local staff to use honorific expressions like the Japanese. Furthermore, they do not expect MJSGEs to behave just like Japanese expatriates. At the same time, they also try to adjust their way of speaking when they are communicating with MJSGEs. They mentioned that they do this through reducing their speaking speed, trying to use simple and clearer sentences by stating more directly, and refraining from using regional dialects.

An alternative measure employed by the MJSGE participants is self-improvement because most of them expressed their wish to have higher proficiency
in their Japanese language speaking skill. The participants mentioned that they try to do pre-presentation and meeting preparation. They revealed that they continue developing their Japanese language speaking skills by trying to strengthen their grammar, vocabulary, construct proper sentences and using external Japanese language resources such as anime, videos, and movies to overcome their speaking challenges. The MJSGE participants also pointed out that they try to use the electronic translator to translate from the English language into the Japanese language before they speak to the native Japanese speakers. However, this finding revealed that the two least employed measures to overcome speaking challenges in JCM by the MJSGE participants include trying to practise their Japanese language speaking skill by talking to their Japanese colleagues and requesting native speakers to decrease their speaking pace. This finding showed that the participants may be concerned that the inappropriate slowness or too much hesitation will hamper communication (Hughes & Reed, 2017).

This finding also revealed that the participants do not actively take the initiative to practise their Japanese language skill with their Japanese colleagues in JCM. This finding contradicts with the finding by Leong and Ahmadi (2017) who proved that individuals cannot learn a language if they are not given opportunities for meaningful repetition and practice of the language. Therefore, MJSGEs are expected to further improve their Japanese speaking skills in JCM by practising the language with their Japanese colleagues because learners need a lot of practice to speak. They can improve their speaking skills through listening to their Japanese colleagues and repeating the Japanese language.

To overcome the Japanese language reading difficulty, the most frequently used measures by the participants were reading the material frequently, referring to
external sources such as accessing the internet (Google Translate and YouTube), using the online dictionary and depending on their Japanese expatriate colleagues to help them to overcome the Japanese language reading challenges. Another measure employed was memorising and practising a certain number of Kanji or vocabulary every day. Furthermore, some of the participants made some efforts to read Japanese newspapers or listen to NHK news (Japan Broadcasting Corporation).

Similar to speaking challenges, the alternative measures employed by the participants to overcome the challenges they faced in reading is self-improvement. The participants persisted in practice to improve their writing skill by referring to their Japanese colleagues’ standard format of business writing and by using the technological tools and facilities such as online dictionaries and Google Translate to overcome their writing challenges such as vocabulary, Kanji, expressions, and grammatical structure. The participants also approached their Japanese employers and colleagues to assist them in their writing. The participants who are required by their JCM to write in the Japanese language showed that they have taken advantage of their natural aptitude and used it to its maximum capacity by marshalling their discipline and variety of learning strategies.

6.5 Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this mixed-methods study yield significant implications on pedagogical considerations to help MJSGEs overcome challenges in their Japanese language proficiency skills and fulfil the JCM requirement agenda.
6.5.1 Japanese Language for Business Purposes

The study proposes the establishment of Japanese language degree programmes in Malaysian universities in order to provide a more conducive academic support for the Japanese language learners and to make sure they are equipped with good Japanese listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Through this, they will be able to work in a Japanese working environment after they graduate. This can be achieved when graduates are prepared to meet the Japanese language proficiency requirements for employment in JCM. Furthermore, these degree programmes will help local MJSGEs to interact effectively with their Japanese employers in JCM in order to carry out their work-related tasks and to exchange workplace-related information through their Japanese language listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. This will indirectly ensure successful communication and help JCM and the local MJSGEs build good relationships. This will result in a higher job satisfaction among employees and can reduce the turnover rate. Indirectly it will help JCM to have employees with both good and related work experience and ensure higher retention rate in their companies.

The findings of this study will serve as a guide to promote the establishment of Business Japanese major programmes for business purposes (BJM) to the Malaysian higher education institutions’ management. The setting up and offering of BJM would be the most significant contribution of this study for the benefit of the Japanese language learners and the Malaysian higher education institutions by focusing on enhancing the language ability of the foreign language learners’ proficiency in the Japanese language. Japanese language competencies must still play an important role for the graduates because language is not a simple collection of words and grammar. Rather, language is a complex structure of behaviours dictated
by both socially appropriate and culturally meaningful conventions. The language competencies would help the MJSGEs to understand the Japanese way of thinking and behaviour. The findings of this study also reveal useful teaching implications for Japanese language education in Malaysia. Therefore, the BJM foundational objectives as a complete course for the Integrated Japanese Language Courses to improve the Japanese language proficiency, Business Japanese Course, and Japanese Companies Business Practices can support the university’s improvement efforts to produce graduates who can fulfil the requirements of JCM. In other words, it will augur well with Malaysian universities’ aim to produce the graduates with employability skills. The core areas that can help to achieve the agenda are practical Japanese language courses for Japanese language proficiency and, business purposes and improved Japanese language curriculum and pedagogy for undergraduate or degree programmes.

The main justifications for BJM as a practical Japanese language proficiency programme for business purposes is to cater to the increasing number of Japanese language learners who take the Japanese language course with the aim to possess employability skills that include knowledge of the Japanese language and knowledge of Japanese companies’ business practices at the university. The limitations of the Japanese language course for business purposes offered in Malaysian higher education institutions must be overcome. Currently, USM is the only university that offers a Japanese language for business purposes course in Malaysia. However, this course is only one of the courses which is combined with four other Japanese language integrated courses in the Japanese language minor programme that is offered in USM. This can be understood from the fact that most universities in Malaysia only offer elementary level Japanese language courses except for a few
universities such as Universiti Malaya and Universiti Sains Malaysia. Therefore, the proficiency level that is achieved before starting work at Japanese companies is limited. As such, it is suggested that more opportunities for learning Japanese should be given to learners. Additionally, it would enhance their employability if they could get opportunities to take a Business Japanese Course before graduation so that their Business Japanese Competencies (BJC) can be fostered before they seek employment and start working for Japanese companies. It is hoped that the BJM’s curriculum can equip the graduates with the Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, give graduates an added and competitive edge in an increasingly globalised, multicultural and diverse work environment and also enable them to get access to current and latest technology and information with their Japanese language proficiency level. In addition, it is hoped that BJM will enable Malaysian graduates to enter the global workforce and integrate well with others from around the globe as part of the national economic agenda.

6.5.2 Internship in JCM

The findings of this study reveal that both JCM and MJSGE stated the same hope; i.e., the Japanese language learners from the local universities are afforded ample opportunities to undergo their internship in JCM. It is important to encourage MJSGEs to intern in JCM environment and gain exposure to JCM business practices to prepare them to work in JCM and to fulfil the requirements of JCM so that MJSGEs can adapt to JCM. Interning in JCM will also help Japanese language learners improve their Japanese language proficiency through real world practice of their Japanese language in JCM. It is also important for MJSGEs to learn the Japanese working environment. When the universities in Malaysia and JCM work
together to implement joint-internship programmes, Japanese language learners will be given the exposure in the real world as they are working in a complete Japanese style environment. This will also help MJSGEs to get adapted to the Japanese communication style such as the way the Japanese speak and write, which is very different from the Malaysian way of speaking and writing. The exposure will also help them adapt themselves to the Japanese working environment and practices. For the benefit of JCM, the universities in Malaysia needs to produce graduates who can fulfil the needs of JCM.

Therefore, it is important for JCM to provide training sessions to allow the Malaysian Japanese language learners to practise their Japanese language skills and understand the Japanese business practices, culture, and thought. Assigning a mentor to the trainees or new employees during the job training is important as it can prevent them from making mistakes and at the same time improve their Japanese language proficiency. Generally, job training and hands-on practice are important because they can gain a lot of useful experience. In addition, it is hoped that the JCM will provide free talk sessions for Japanese language learners or employees, encourage them to participate in meetings conducted in the Japanese language to practise their Japanese language listening and speaking skills. It would also be beneficial if Japanese employers are at hand to assist them whenever they use the Japanese language at the workplace. Similarly, by training the Japanese language learners or MJSGEs, JCM will be aware of the language and culture difficulties faced by the Japanese language learners and MJSGEs. It is hoped that JCM will be more tolerant and patient in giving fresh graduates some room and space to adapt to the Japanese working environment during their probation period so that they can learn from their mistakes. It will also help to improve the communication between the Japanese employers and
local employees by providing an avenue for the Japanese employers to understand the language problems that MJSGEs faced. It would be helpful for employers in JCM to adjust their way of speaking when they are communicating with the Japanese language learners and MJSGEs. Furthermore, it will help the local employees to understand the Japanese employers’ thought or know how to communicate with them.

6.5.3 Collaboration in Education Programmes between Malaysian and Japan Universities

In order to facilitate the development of effective learning to enable the Japanese language learners and MJSGEs to become skilful Japanese language speakers and employees, Malaysian universities should enhance their teaching and learning by establishing collaborative education programmes with universities in Japan.

It is hoped that under these collaborative education programmes, through lectures on job training and Japanese cultural experiences, Malaysian Japanese language learners will not only be able to develop their expertise, but also learn about Japanese professional ethics such as team work, time management, and loyalty to work. This kind of collaborative effort with Japanese universities will provide a great learning experience and skill development opportunity for Japanese language learners in Malaysian universities. The main aim of the education programme collaboration with Japanese universities is to provide opportunities for the Japanese language learners to improve their Japanese language listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
6.6 Directions for Future Research

Understanding how the participants in JCM fulfilled the Japanese language skills’ proficiency requirements, faced the challenges in their Japanese Language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and how they employed some solutions to overcome the challenges faced have been researched and explored extensively in this study. Nevertheless, the findings of this study identified five other issues that have not been completely answered in this current study or by previous studies. These issues should be addressed in future research to enhance our understanding of the use of the Japanese language among the MJSGEs in JCM. These five issues are presented and discussed below.

Firstly, employers in JCM highlighted that they preferred recruiting MJSGEs who have at least intermediate level of Japanese language proficiency with a solid and expertise knowledge in at least one discipline. It is very clear that the demand for Japanese language speakers in Malaysia is great. However, most of the universities in Malaysia can only offer elementary level Japanese language courses except for a few universities such as Universiti Malaya and USM, and the proficiency level that is achieved by the learners before they start work at Japanese companies is limited. Therefore, it is suggested that more opportunities for learning the Japanese language be given to learners, and it would be even better if they are afforded the opportunity to take Business Japanese courses before graduation so that their Japanese language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing and Business Japanese Competencies (BJC) can be fostered before they start working for Japanese companies.

It is important to highlight that the current study has discovered beneficial findings regarding the requirements of JCM, the use of Japanese by MJSGEs and the
challenges they faced at the workplace in JCM. This study is the first ever study conducted in Malaysia focusing on obtaining an objective view of the reality in the Japanese workplace as well as the readiness of MJSGEs to join the workforce. In order to help our Japanese language learners successfully attain the working level in their Japanese language, which is expected in the JCM, the urgent issues that must be tackled now is how the Japanese language learners can attain the expected intermediate/advanced level of Japanese language proficiency by the time they graduate. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that the issues of how to design a comprehensive curriculum and syllabus to accelerate students’ learning can be achieved by conducting longitudinal research on the process of students’ acquisition of the Japanese language. Consequently, future studies will have the potential of addressing an issue that is less popular among researchers in Malaysian higher education institutions at present.

Secondly, in addition to improving the proficiency in the four Japanese language skills, many MJSGEs suggested some issues related to the complexity of the Japanese culture that require researchers’ attention. Some MJSGEs revealed that the Japanese culture is embedded in and intertwined with the Japanese language. These Japanese culture aspects include knowing the background of businesses in JCM, business practices, correct manners, and differences in communication style. The findings of the current study revealed that many MJSGEs have both linguistic and socio-cultural difficulties, such as use of honorific expressions, reading social cues behind words, hierarchical issues and so on. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that extensive studies be conducted to provide input on how to overcome the socio-cultural difficulties faced by the MJSGEs working in JCM.
Thirdly, in order to get a better perspective of the Japanese language requirements that are determined by the JCM and the challenges faced by MJSGEs in JCM in their Japanese Language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing, the results of this mixed-methods study could be verified through a follow-up parallel research study in other regions such as the southern region (e.g., Johor), eastern region (e.g., Terengganu) and even in East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak).

At the same time, given the small sample size of this study, it is difficult to extrapolate the results to a bigger population. Thus, it is recommended that a large scale cross-sectional study that involves a significantly larger sample size of the MJSGE from all regions of Malaysia could be taken into consideration to scaffold and add-on to the findings of the present study.

This study has emphasised MJSGEs’ voice and the generated results from a bigger population of MJSGE participants and participants from JCM. Therefore, another study that can yield different results by drawing upon a bigger sample of JCM with multiple data collection instruments is recommended.

Fourthly, extensive studies should also be conducted to provide input on closing the gap between the requirements of Japanese language proficiency as set by JCM and the level of importance of Japanese language skills revealed by the MJSGEs. Gaining knowledge from both parties especially employers in JCM can provide useful insights to the Malaysian higher education institutions to improve the curriculum and syllabus of their Japanese language programmes. This in turn can enhance Japanese language learners’ learning, teaching practices of academicians and the Japanese language curriculum. It is hoped that it will help the Japanese language learners to prepare themselves for the workplace in JCM.
Finally, as this study has focused on the requirements and the level of importance of Japanese language skills, the challenges faced by MJSGEs and measures taken by them to overcome the challenges in terms of language use in JCM, extensive studies should also be conducted to gain insights on other challenges especially from the sociocultural perspective. In order to understand the Japanese employers’ thought, cultural values, and norms, MJSGEs have to understand the Japanese communication style and to know their preferred modes of interaction. It is hoped that the insights gained and input from the sociocultural perspective will help the MJSGEs to be equipped with an understanding of the Japanese culture and knowledge of Japanese business practices to help them overcome difficulties that may arise in JCM.

6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study revealed the expectations of JCM of the MJSGEs’ Japanese language skills’ proficiency requirement, and the level of importance of the Japanese language skills' proficiency in JCM. At the same time, this study also highlighted the challenges faced by the MJSGEs in JCM in their Japanese language Proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing and the measures employed by the MJSGE to overcome the challenges they faced. As such, the Malaysian higher education institutions, are on a serious quest to upgrade their Japanese language education curriculum to be among top providers of tertiary education, especially that of Japanese language teaching and learning, in the world. In the era of globalisation, Malaysian higher education institutions cannot ignore the importance of keeping abreast with the needs of modern societies and should take cognisance of the recommendations arising from the detailed study and findings of this research to
ensure a positive learning experience for the Japanese language learners to equip and upgrade their Japanese language proficiency from time to time and to help them to be better prepared and better equipped for the job market, especially JCM. Implementing the recommendations will raise and advance the standard the Japanese language education and curriculum to prepare the graduates to meet the requirements of Japanese language proficiency to gain employment in JCM.
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APPENDIX
APPENDIX A


Dear Chairperson,

I am a PhD student in the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia. I am currently undertaking a research project as part of the PhD programme. The objective of the research is to investigate the Japanese language proficiency requirements in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing by the Japanese companies in Malaysia and the challenges faced by the Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees.

As my research involves Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees at the Japanese language proficiency intermediate level (JLPT N3 and above), I humbly request that you provide me with Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees on intermediate level who are studying at your Japanese Language Society/Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur. I really need those learner statistics for the research I am currently working on.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Yeoh Lee Su
PhD candidate
School of Languages, Literacies and Translation
Universiti Sains Malaysia
E-mail: yeohleesu2000@yahoo.co.jp
APPENDIX B

Sample Letter of Application to Conduct Research in the Japanese Language Societies at Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Penang and Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur

Dear Chairperson,

I am a PhD student in the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia. I am currently undertaking a research project as part of the PhD programme. The objective of the research is to investigate the Japanese language proficiency requirements in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing by the Japanese companies in Malaysia and the challenges faced by the Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees.

I would like to ask for approval to conduct the data collection in your society/department. Data collection will involve questionnaire and a series of interviews. With the participants’ permission, the interview will be audio-taped.

The research will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for the participants involved in the study. I would very much appreciate the participants of your society/department in my research. However, the participation is completely voluntary.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Yeoh Lee Su
PhD candidate
School of Languages, Literacies and Translation
Universiti Sains Malaysia
E-mail: yeohleesu2000@yahoo.co.jp
APPENDIX C

Consent Form for Employees (MJSGEs) to Participate in this Research

Title of Project: Japanese Language proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees: A Study in Japanese Companies in Malaysia

Project Supervisor: Prof. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi and Dr. Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh – School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM

Researcher: Yeoh Lee Su

Explanation of the Questionnaire: The questionnaire includes four sections. While the purpose of Section I in the questionnaire is to investigate the personal information, Section II focuses on obtaining information on participants’ academic achievement including the level of Japanese language proficiency. Items in Section III focus on obtaining the percentage of using Japanese language for work-related matters. Section IV is to investigate the level of importance of Japanese language proficiency skills used by participants working in Japanese companies in Malaysia. Although the last question in this section is a closed-ended questions, open-ended questions will also given for the participants to provide their experience related to the challenges they faced while working in Japanese Companies in Malaysia in their Japanese language proficiency.

Withdrawal from the Study: The questionnaire is given to you to complete which takes approximately 15-20 minutes and your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Assurance of Confidentiality: The information collect from you in this research will be coded by a number, not your name. Your identity will not be revealed or connected with the results.

Consent statement: By signing this form, you are stating that you have read and understood this form and the research project and freely agree to be a part of this study. If you have any question please do not hesitate and ask during this research.

I agree to take part in this research.

Participant’s signature …………………………

Participant’s name …………………………

Date ……………………………
APPENDIX D

Invitation Letter to Employers to Participate in Semi-Structured Interview

Title of Project: Japanese Language proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees: A Study in Japanese Companies in Malaysia

My name is YEOH LEE SU (lsyeoh@usm.my, H/P 019-4805524) and I am a full time academic staff at School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM and currently I am a part-time candidate pursue my doctoral study with Prof. Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi, of School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM as my main supervisor and Dr. Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh, of School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM, as my co-supervisor.

I am currently collecting data for my dissertation, using mixed method research methodology, I have spent the past three months collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the employees. I am also gathering perspectives of some employers who are involved in guiding and supervising the MJSGEs. As you are one of the employers who have contact with the MJSGEs, I would very much like to invite you to participate in the research by allowing me to interview you regarding your guiding and supervising experience with them. The interview will be audio-taped and will take about 40 minutes. It will consist of open-ended questions.

Any information provided by the research participants will remain anonymous and confidential to the research and her supervisors. When writing up the research results, any reference to research participants will use pseudonyms; no identifying details will be included or disclosed in any published document. A report of the study may be submitted for publication or presentation at conferences, but as noted above, individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Results from this research as well as personal data collected will be made available to the research participants upon request.

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors, Prof. Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi and Dr. Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh. I would very much appreciate any assistance that you can give me and I look forward of receiving a positive response so that I can make the necessary arrangement to conduct the interview.

Thank you for your time,

Yeoh Lee Su
付録 D: 1 対 1 インタビューに参加するための雇用主への手紙

リサーチトピック：マレーシアの日系企業（JCM）におけるマレーシアの高等教育機関を卒業した日本語学習者（MJSGEs）の日本語能力のニーズと習熟度の調査

私は YEOH LEE SU（lsyeoh@usm.my、携帯電話 019-4805524）です。マレーシア科学大学、言語・リテラシー・翻訳学部の専任教員で、同時に現在、同学部の Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi 教授のもとで博士課程の勉強をしています。Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh 博士は共同監督です。

私は現在、マレーシアの日系企業（JCM）におけるマレーシアの高等教育機関を卒業した日本語学習者（MJSGEs）の日本語能力の習熟度を調査し、論文のデータを収集しております。

ミックス・メソッド・リサーチの方法論を使用して、私は過去 3 ヶ月間、従業員（マレーシアの高等教育機関を卒業した日本語学習者（MJSGEs）から定量的および定性的データを収集しました。私は MJSGE の指導と監督に携わる雇用者（JCM）の視点からのデータも集めています。インタビューにご参加いただける方は MJSGEs と接触され、Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi 教授のご意見をお聞かせいただければありがたいです。インタビューは 1 対 1 の対面式で 40 分程度を予定しておりますが、かたくつな形でお願いできたらと思っています。

ご参加くださった個人名及び会社名の匿名性を保つため、データ収集・分析の過程を通じて、研究結果報告及び論文を含む全ての形式のデータ、研究結果において仮名を使用します。個人名及び会社名を特定できるような情報は全ての出版物及び研究概要等から除外させていただきます。研究者がインタビューを書き起こす時に個人及び会社名を含む全てのデータは仮名に置き換えられます。

本リサーチにおける論理道徳に関する懸念事項及び参加者の権利等については、私の主任指導教官、Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi 教授と共同監督である Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh 博士にお問い合わせいただくことも可能です。

本リサーチへのご参加ご協力をよろしくお願いいたします。

Yeoh Lee Su
APPENDIX E

Consent Form for Employers to Participate in the Semi-Structured Interview

Title of Project: Japanese Language proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees: A Study in Japanese Companies in Malaysia

Project Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi and Dr. Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh – School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM

Researcher: Yeoh Lee Su

I have read and understood the information provided about this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered. I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. I understand that without being disadvantaged in any way, I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project, at any time prior to completion of data collection. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

I agree to take part in this research.

Participant’s signature …………………………

Participant’s name ……………………………

Date …………………………………
付録 E：1 対 1 インタビューに参加するための雇用主への同意書

リサーチトピック：マレーシアの日系企業（JCM）におけるマレーシアの高等教育機関を卒業した日本語学習者(MJSGEs)の日本語能力のニーズと習熟度の調査

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リサーチご協力のお願い
本リサーチへのご参加ご協力をお願いいたします。本リサーチへのご参加については皆様の任意でご協力をお願いするものです。

このリサーチへの参加に同意してくださる方にconsent form（同意書）へのサインをお願いしております。しかし、サインをされた後、またリサーチのどの段階であっても、
不利益を被ることなく、いつでも自由に参加を取り止めることができます。

ご了承いただける場合はインタビューを録音させていただきたいと思っております。

ご不明な点またご質問等ございましたら研究者までご連絡ください。どうぞよろしくお願いいたします。

本研究に参加することに同意します。
参加者の署名........................................
参加者の名前........................................
日付..............................................
I am conducting a survey of Japanese language users in the workplace. This study is a means of my data collection for the fulfillment of the requirements for the PhD programme which I am doing at Universiti Sains Malaysia. My study will be partly done through a questionnaire and I would like to invite you to participate in it.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out how people who are learning or have learned Japanese, use the language in the workplace. All findings and responses will be kept confidential. They will only be used for research purposes to contribute new ideas to the teaching of Japanese language. Only the researcher will have access to identifiable information provided by the participants. This information will not be released to anyone else.

The results of the questionnaire will be presented in a PhD thesis. No identifiable information will be used in any related publication or presentation.

Please answer all the questions in this questionnaire according to the instruction given at the beginning of every question. There is no right or wrong answers to any of the questions in this questionnaire. What is important is that you give your honest opinion to the questions asked. This survey will be treated as strictly confidential and used for the sole purpose of this study.

Your cooperation is very much appreciated. Thank you.

Researcher,
Yeoh Lee Su
SECTION I : PERSONAL DATA

1. Sex  ☐ Male  ☐ Female

2. Age  ________ years

3. Race  ☐ Malay  ☐ Chinese  ☐ Indian  ☐ Others________( Please specify)

4. E-mail address: ___________________________________

5. Name of the company that you are currently working for (e.g. Sony Penang) __________

6. Which industry does the company belong to?

   ☐ Manufacture  ☐ Service  ☐ R&D  ☐ Hotel  ☐ Others________________

7. Position Held:____________________________

8. Department:_____________________________

9. Duration attached to the company  □□ years  □□ months

SECTION II : ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

1. Highest academic qualification:

   Institution : _____________________________________

   Degree : ________________________________________ (e.g. Management / Engineering)

2. How long have you studied Japanese?

   ☐ Less than 1 year  ☐ 1–2 years  ☐ 2–3 years  ☐ More than 3 years

3. Where did you studies Japanese language?

   _______________________________________________

4. If you studied Japanese language in university, please state the type of the course:

   ☐Major in Japanese  ☐Minor  ☐As an elective paper  ☐As an option paper

   Others: ___________________________________________________________________________(please specify)

5. Have you taken the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT)? (If yes please answer question 6)

   ☐ Yes  ☐ No
6. What is the highest level of JLPT you have passed?

☐ N5/N4 (Old Level 4) ☐ N3 (Old Level 3)

☐ N2 (Old Level 2) ☐ N1 (Old Level 1)

SECTION III : JAPANESE LANGUAGE USE AT WORKPLACE

1. What is the approximate percentage of time that you use Japanese language for work-related matters?

   Activities during office hours (including casual conversation with colleagues)

   ☐ 80-100% ☐ 50-79% ☐ 20-49% ☐ Less than 20%

   Activities after office hours (e.g. attending to customers, work discussion with colleagues)

   ☐ 80-100% ☐ 50-79% ☐ 20-49% ☐ Less than 20%

SECTION IV : IDENTIFICATION OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE USE IN RELATION TO JOB DESCRIPTIONS

This section intends to determine the Japanese language use in various job positions in the workplace. Please indicate the order of importance language used in your line of job by circling a number as represented:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-very important</th>
<th>2-Important</th>
<th>3-Less important</th>
<th>4-not important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Please indicate the language used in your job and give a relative weighting to the language indicated.

   English 1 2 3 4
   Malay 1 2 3 4
   Japanese 1 2 3 4
   Mandarin 1 2 3 4
   Tamil 1 2 3 4
2. In your job, which language skill requires you to have Japanese language proficiency?

Listening  1  2  3  4
Speaking  1  2  3  4
Reading  1  2  3  4
Writing  1  2  3  4

3. Please rank the importance of the different Japanese language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) in relation to your job.

A. LISTENING SKILLS
i. answer telephone calls  1  2  3  4
ii. listen and understanding oral instructions  1  2  3  4
iii. understand discussion  1  2  3  4
iv. listen and understand the proceedings of a meeting  1  2  3  4
v. listen and understand face-to-face conversations  1  2  3  4
xiv. listen and understand formal talks or speeches  1  2  3  4

B. SPEAKING SKILLS
i. greetings  1  2  3  4
ii. conversing over the telephone  1  2  3  4
iii. conversing face-to-face  1  2  3  4
iv. receiving customers (e.g. guiding them to the meeting room)  1  2  3  4
v. communicate with customers  1  2  3  4
vi. communicate with Japanese colleagues  1  2  3  4
vii. communicate with Japanese customers and clients  1  2  3  4
viii. work conversation with Japanese colleagues  1  2  3  4
ix. discussions and negotiations with customers  1  2  3  4
x. chairing meetings  1  2  3  4
xi. oral reporting  1  2  3  4
xii. giving presentations  1  2  3  4

C. READING SKILLS
i. read memos  1  2  3  4
ii. read circulars  1  2  3  4
iii. read business reports  1  2  3  4
iv. read business letters  1  2  3  4
v. read manuals and instructions  1  2  3  4
vi. read industry regulations  1  2  3  4
vii. read email  1  2  3  4
viii. read fax  1  2  3  4
D. WRITING SKILLS
i. write report 1 2 3 4
ii. write letters 1 2 3 4
iii. write notices 1 2 3 4
iv. write memos 1 2 3 4
iv. write email 1 2 3 4
v. write fax 1 2 3 4
vi. edit written materials 1 2 3 4
vii. fill up forms 1 2 3 4
viii. write proposal 1 2 3 4
ix. translate from another language to Japanese language 1 2 3 4
x. translate from Japanese language to another language 1 2 3 4

4. Do you encounter any challenge(s) in using Japanese language at work?
☐ Yes ☐ No

5. What are the challenges faced in the Japanese language use at workplace?
   Please rank the challenges faced according to the scale as provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-strongly agree</th>
<th>2-agree</th>
<th>3-disagree</th>
<th>4-strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5.1 Listening
   (e.g. speed, colloquial spoken forms, use of dialects- Please describe in detail.)
   1 2 3 4

5.2 Speaking
   (e.g. Expressing yourself in conversations: e.g. use of inappropriate words, negotiating in Japanese- Please describe in detail.)
   1 2 3 4

5.3 Writing
   (e.g. e-mail to customers, business reports- Please describe in detail.)
   1 2 3 4

5.4 Reading
   (e.g. e-mail, reports- Please describe in detail.)
   1 2 3 4
5.5 **Japanese Language Proficiency**
(e.g. I do not know the Japanese language well enough to perform effectively at work; e.g. vocabulary, technical terms, grammar and honorifics- Please describe in detail.)

5.6 **Others** (Please describe)

6. If you have anything that you would like to share with us which is not covered in this survey, please write your comments in the below provided space.

Thank you for participating in this research.
If you have any enquiries, please email me at lsyeoh@usm.my
APPENDIX G

Letter of Application to Request the Chief Lecturers of Japan Foundation to Verify the Content of the Japanese Language Questionnaire (JLQ)

Title of Project: Japanese Language proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees: A Study in Japanese Companies in Malaysia

My name is YEOH LEE SU (lsyeoh@usm.my, H/P 019-4805524) and I am a full time academic staff at School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM and currently I am a part-time candidate pursue my doctoral study with Prof. Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi, of School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM as my main supervisor and Dr. Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh, of School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM, as my co-supervisor.

I am currently preparing the Japanese Language Questionnaire (JLQ) for my dissertation, a project Investigating Japanese Language skills’ proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) in Japanese Companies in Malaysia (JCM). The Japanese Language (JLQ) was adapted based on items in questionnaires of Shimada and Shibukawa (1999) and Tiong (2000). Due to Shimada and Shibukawa’s questionnaire was written in Japanese language, the researcher had to translate this questionnaire from Japanese language to English language. Therefore, after the translation, the questionnaire now sent to Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur to be verified the content by the Japanese language lecturers who are experts in Japanese language education and had experience in research.

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors, Prof. Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi and Dr. Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh. I would very much appreciate any assistance that you can give me and I look forward of receiving a positive response so that I can make the necessary arrangement to improve the questionnaire.

Thank you for your time,
Yeoh Lee Su
APPENDIX H

Semi-Structured Interview Questions (MJSGEs)
List of Questions for Semi-Structured Interview

The list of questions was as follow:

1. Business/Job Profile:
   a. How long have you worked at (company name)?
   b. What is your personal job description?
   c. What does your company deal with?
   d. How long has your company been in Malaysia?

2. How much interaction do you have with your Japanese colleagues? (both formally and informally)
   2.1 Do you encounter any challenges when dealing with them through email or online chat? Which interaction (email, online chat) make you encounter more challenges?
   2.2 How about face to face interaction? Do you have many Japanese colleagues in your workplace?
   2.3 Do you interact with them frequently?

3. Does your workplace demand a high level of Japanese language skills’ proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)?
   3.1 In your opinion, what is the Japanese language requirement needed by your JCM employers? What level of JLPT is required by your company?
   3.1.1 Why? What kind of task needs the high level of Japanese language skills’ proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)?
   3.2 Of the four language skills, which one(s) is (are) required to have a relatively high level of proficiency, and which one(s) a relatively low proficiency?
4. Listening

4.1 How do you find listening to your Japanese colleagues at your workplace?

4.2 What challenges do you face in the listening you do at your workplace?

4.3 What measures do you apply to help you overcome the challenges you face in listening?

5. Speaking

5.1 Do you participate in Japanese business meetings? Why or why not?

5.2 How do you feel about speaking Japanese in your workplace?

5.3 Do you encounter any challenges when doing oral presentations in Japanese in your workplace?

5.4 What are the speaking challenges you are experiencing?

5.5 How do you overcome the challenges you face in speaking?

6. Reading

6.1 How do you find the readings in Japanese for the task in your workplace?

6.2 Do you use any sources such as dictionaries, Google Translation to help you understand the material you are reading?

6.2.1 If yes, what sources do you always use?

6.3 What challenges do you face in the reading you do for your task in workplace?

6.4 What measures do you apply to help you overcome the challenges you face in reading?

7. Writing

7.1 How do you go about writing an e-mail, memos, letters and report?

7.1.1 Tell me about your writing process.

7.1.2 Where do you usually write? How do you write?
7.1.3 Do you get help from others (friends, colleagues, writing center)? How well can you do them?

7.2 How do you feel about writing in Japanese language?

7.3 Do you use any sources such as dictionaries, Google Translation to help you while writing in Japanese?

7.3.1 If Yes, what sources do you use to help you while writing?

7.4 What challenges do you face in the writing you do for your task in your workplace?

7.5 What measures do you apply to help you overcome the challenges you face in writing?

7.6 What kind of support would you have liked in completing writing task?

8. What would you like the higher education institutions to strengthen in their Japanese curriculum and teaching materials in the future?

9. How do you think your organization could improve communication between Japanese employers and MJSGEs colleagues?
APPENDIX I

Semi-Structured Interview Questions (JCM)
List of Questions for Semi-Structured Interview

1. How much talk time do you have with your Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs)? (both formally and informally)

2. Does your company demand a high level of Japanese language skills’ proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) of Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs)?

3. Of the four language skills, which one(s) is (are) required to have a relatively high level of proficiency, and which one(s) a relatively low proficiency?

4. In your opinion do the Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) in your company face challenges in their Japanese language proficiency in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing?

   Example: Understand when you speak to them.
   Understand task assignment.
   Understand and follow task instructions.
   Meaningfully participate in business discussion.
   Produce comprehensible, acceptable work in discussion, presentation and writing report.
   Give comprehensible, acceptable presentations in the business meeting.

5. In your opinion, what measures do they apply to overcome the challenges they face in their:
   5. 1 listening skill
   5. 2 speaking skill
   5. 3 reading skill
   5. 4 writing skill
6. How do you help the MJSGE overcome the challenges in their:
   6.1 listening skill
   6.2 speaking skill
   6.3 reading skill
   6.4 writing skill

7. What would you like the higher education institutions to strengthen in their Japanese curriculum and teaching materials in the future?

8. How do you think your organization could improve communication between Japanese employers and MJSGEs colleagues?
付録I：インタビューガイド

1. あなたはマレーシアの高等教育機関を卒業した日本語学習者（MJSGE）の従業員（MJSGE）との会話はどのくらいの時間とられていますか。（職務上、また仕事以外ではどうですか。）

2. 貴社は、マレーシアの高等教育機関を卒業した日本語学習者（MJSGE）の従業員（MJSGE）の日本語能力（聞き取りスキル、会話スキル、リーディング・スキル、ライティング・スキル）に関して高いレベルを求めていますか。

3. 4つの語学スキル（聞き取りスキル、会話スキル、リーディング・スキル、ライティング・スキル）のうち、どれが高いレベルの能力を必要としますか。

4. 貴社のマレーシアの高等教育機関を卒業した日本語学習者（MJSGE）の従業員は、聞き取り、会話、リーディング、ライティングの日本語能力でどんな問題に直面していますか。

例： 話された内容を理解する。
タスクの割り当てを理解する。
作業指示を理解し、それに作業指示に従う。
効率的にビジネスディスカッションに参加する。
効率的なディスカッション、プレゼンテーション、および報告書を準備する。
ビジネスミーティングでわかりやすいプレゼンテーションを行う。

5. ご意見では、彼らが直面する課題（聞き取り、会話、リーディング、ライティング）を克服するためにどのような措置を取られますか？

5.1 聞き取り・スキル
5.2 会話・スキル
5.3 リーディング・スキル
5.4 ライティング・スキル

6. MJSGEが次の課題を克服するためには、どのような支援をすることが適当だと思われますか？

6.1 聞き取り・スキル
6.2 会話・スキル
6.3 リーディング・スキル
6.4 ライティング・スキル

7. 今後の高等教育機関の日本語のカリキュラムや教材の強化はどうしてほしいですか。

8. 貴社は、日本の雇用主とマレーシアの高等教育機関を卒業した日本語学習者（MJSGE）の従業員とのコミュニケーションをどのように改善できると思われますか？
APPENDIX J

Consent to Participate in Semi-Structured Interview (Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs)

Title of Project: Japanese Language proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees: A Study in Japanese Companies in Malaysia

Project Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi – School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM and Dr. Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh – School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM.

Researcher: Yeoh Lee Su

I have read and understood the information provided about this research project.
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed.
I understand that, without being disadvantaged in any way, I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project, at any time prior to completion of data collection. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

I agree to take part in this research.

Participant’s signature ……………………………

Participant’s name ……………………………

Date ……………………………
APPENDIX K

Coding of Semi-Structured Interview Participants for MJSGEs

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Participants (n=17)</th>
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<td>Company N</td>
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<td>Company O</td>
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APPENDIX L

Coding of Semi-Structured Interview Participants for JCM

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<td>Company N</td>
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<td>Company O</td>
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APPENDIX M

Sample Transcript of Semi-Structured Interview with the MJSGEs

Yeoh: How long have you been working in this company?
Lynn: I have been working for almost 2 to 3 years.

Yeoh: What are your job description and your job position?
Lynn: My job position was an admin but now my position is a Japanese financial analysis and tasks are completely used in Japanese.

Yeoh: So, you are not working in a non-manufacturing company?
Lynn: Yes, it is a manufacturing company just that I am in financial department.

Yeoh: May I know how long has your company been in Malaysia?
Lynn: It has been in Malaysia for around 19 years.

Yeoh: If the working environment is communicating in Japanese 100%, do you have to deal with Japanese colleague, either formal or informal?
Lynn: It depends on the status of the person I am talking with. For example, if I am talking with the colleague then it is informal, while if superior then I will use honorifics. So, it is more like 50%.

Yeoh: Does your company require high proficiency in Japanese language?
Lynn: It has high requirement because the Japanese used, not only for daily basis and also business Japanese. Oral is used more compare with other basic skills.

Yeoh: In your company, listening, speaking, reading and writing, which do you think is the most important?
Lynn: I think writing will be the most important then following by speaking, listening and reading.

Yeoh: Why does speaking is not the most important but it is used the most in the job.
Lynn: For financial analysis, when the analysis is done then I have to elaborate it. Before elaboration, I need to write into a report then I will listen to the feedback and explain the report.
Yeoh: So, do you fully understand what your colleague said?

Lynn: I would say I can understand 95%, the 5% I cannot understand probably is because of the slang used.

Yeoh: So you said the 5% you cannot understand is because of the slang, how do you overcome it to understand?

Lynn: I will just skip those words during the conversations, because the interactions are rapid.

Yeoh: For speaking, does it use business term or the words for business usage?

Lynn: Yes. Besides, desu and masu form are used during reporting.

Yeoh: Usually, in what occasion you use speaking most?

Lynn: Usually, a lot of speaking happen during reporting and other daily general usage.

Yeoh: Do you have to speak Japanese during meetings?

Lynn: Our meeting is conducted 100% in Japanese, even during reporting. English is barely used unless the report is in English.

Yeoh: Do you face any problem when speak in Japanese?

Lynn: Right now, I would say there is no any problem for me in speaking Japanese.

Yeoh: During your presentation, do you face any problem?

Lynn: For reporting, there will be no problem because I can read from the report. When there is question asked, I will have the difficulty in giving feedback.

Yeoh: What actions did you take to overcome the problem in giving feedback?

Lynn: I would ask the person who has question to review the report and elaborate the specific question in the specific area.

Yeoh: Have you ever thought this problem happened because the question is asked in a more indirect way?

Lynn: No, I think the problem happens because the vocabularies used are too difficult and the slang of the Japanese.

Yeoh: Ok, now… Do you have any problem when you read any materials?
Lynn: Yes, due to the different usage of the same Kanji, the pronunciation is different too. The common usage of Kanji is not applicable in reporting.

Yeoh: When you face those problem you mentioned, what tool did you use to overcome?

Lynn: I do not use any tool. When there is a word that I cannot understand, I will ask my colleagues and they will explain the word to me.

Yeoh: So, you are saying the problem you face is because of the vocabulary but not sentence nor the grammar?

Lynn: Yes, since I am in finance field, the result is more important compare to grammar.

Yeoh: Besides, you mentioned that you write a lot in the job. What do you write?

Lynn: For 90%, I have to reply the correspondence to the international colleague in Japan and other email correspondence.

Yeoh: For those emails, how often do you write?

Lynn: I would say almost daily, for those written material, reports as many as email.

Yeoh: When you write, do you refer to any materials?

Lynn: I will refer to the reporting.

Yeoh: Do you ask for any help when you have problems in writing?

Lynn: Basically, my superior will assess the content written when I report to him or her. After several times, I will understand what method should be used to solve the problem.

Yeoh: Then, you are good in writing now?

Lynn: Yes. For your information, all written email and correspondence are in Keigo.

Yeoh: But, you say it is to colleague?

Lynn: Yes, it is for colleagues but most of the time the colleagues would be international and maybe different position. I do not know who they are.

Yeoh: In the present, do you need any help from anyone?

Lynn: Currently, I do not need any help.
Yeoh: Now, I need your opinion what should the students who study minor in Japanese, after what should strengthen for the students after learning minor in Japanese.

Lynn: I would suggest for conversational, students should improve their daily conversation and masu form and informal form.

Yeoh: Next, is there anything should the company do to support the local employees who learn Japanese in local?

Lynn: Initially, I would suggest the company provides the environment with Japanese and English, so the fresh graduates can learn and understand easily. Hence, the improvement will be significant in short time. Besides, superior should give them chances and probation period so they can learn from their mistakes.

Yeoh: Apart from those, is there anything would you like to add on?

Lynn: Company should be patient for the fresh grads to adapt to the Japanese environment.

Yeoh: Did your superior guide you when you entered to the job?

Lynn: Yes, my superior will show and change my grammar mistakes. Besides, he/she would provide me guidance.

Yeoh: Do you have other suggestion for the company?

Lynn: If the company can afford to send the fresh grads to Japan, I would suggest the company send them to Japan for on-the-job training. If the company cannot afford, the company should be patient to the fresh grads and show them the guidance.

Yeoh: Oh, I see. I think you are right. This is a good idea. Thank you for share with me your working experience with the Japanese. Beside what you mentioned just now, do you have anything else to share with me?

Lynn: I think that’s all for this moment.

Yeoh: Okay, thank you for your cooperation and your time for this interview.

Lynn: You are most welcome. You can call me anytime if you need more information in the future.

Yeoh: Sure, thank you.
APPENDIX N

Sample Transcript of Semi-Structured Interview with the JCM

Yeoh: おはようございます。SHさんのご紹介で、インタービューをさせていただき、有難うございます。お時間は何時までよろしいでしょうか。
Good morning. I am introduced by SH to have this interview with you. Thank you for accepting my interview. Until what time will it be fine to you?

Sima: 2時まで、戻らないといけないので、
Until 12 will be fine as I have to go back to work.

Yeoh: はい、はい、わかりました。
Ok. I got it.

Yeoh: 島さんはどのくらいマレーシアにいらっしゃいましたか。
Ms Sima, how long have you be in Malaysia?

Sima: ええと、一年ぐらいですね。
Uh, it is about a year.

Yeoh: 今の仕事でマレーシア人とやり取りをしていますか。
For your present job, do you have any contact with local staff?

Sima: 仕事上だけですか。
Is it only regarding job?

Yeoh: ええ、職場で現地の人と日本語でやり取りをしていますか。
Yes, at work, do you communicate with local staff in Japanese?

Sima: はい。
Yes.

Yeoh: あの、毎日ですか。
Is it every day?

Sima: そうですね。毎日喋っていますね。
Yes. We talk to each other every day.

Yeoh: あのう、話している内容は仕事のことだけですか。それとも雑談もありますか。
Well, is the content only related to work, or do you chitchat as well?
Sima: そうですね、ありますね。
Ya, we do.

Yeoh: どちらが多いですか。業務と雑談と。
Which is more? Regarding work or chitchatting?

Sima: 雑談も多いですね。どちらかというと、あ、やっぱり仕事のほうが多いですね。
We chitchat a lot too. After all, we have a lot to talk about work.

Yeoh: あ、そうですか。じゃ、今仕事のことについてお聞きしたいのですが。
I see. Well, I would like to ask something about work.

Sima: はい。
Ok.

Yeoh: あのう、仕事上で、今現地の人とコミュニケーションをするとき、会話と聞き取りとリーディングとライティングと、四技能の中では、どれが一番大切ですか。
Well, regarding work, when you communicate with local staff, among the four skills, that is speaking, listening, reading and writing, which do you think is the most important?

Sima: 大切？そうですね。
Important? Well.

Yeoh: ええ。
Yes.

Sima: 一番ですね。
You mean the most?

Yeoh: ええ。
Yes.

Sima: そうですね。Speakingですね。喋ることですね。
Well, it is speaking. Talking.

Yeoh: ああ、会話ですね。聞き取りはどうですか。
Oh, it is speaking. How about listening?

Sima: 聞き取りも大切ですね。やはり聞いておかないと、会話が成り立つですね。
Listening is important too. Anyway, you have to listen to it, understand it then only you will be able to speak.

Sima: ん、会話ですね。会話が一番大切ですね。
Ya, it is speaking, right? Speaking is the most important isn’t it?

Yeoh: じゃ、今の仕事で、現地のスタッフの日本語能力で、やはり高いレベルが要求されていますか。
Well, for the present job, do you demand that the local staff have high level of Japanese proficiency?

Sima: うん、今うちにいるみんなは日本語のレベルに問題がないけど、やはり、高いレベルのほうなんですね。
At present, although the local staff do not have problem with Japanese language, no matter how, it will be better that if they have higher level of proficiency.

Yeoh: じゃ、みんな上級ぐらいの日本語能力があるんですね。
So everyone has high level of Japanese proficiency, right?

Sima: うん、そうかもしれないですね。
Ya, may be.

Yeoh: 会話以外は、あのよく使う日本語の技能は、ライティングとリディングとはどちらが大切ですか。書く能力と読む能力と。。。
Other than speaking, the skill that you often used, writing and listening, which is more important? Ability to write and to read?

Sima: そうです。読む、やはり読むことですね。
Well, Reading, it is reading.

Yeoh: ああ、読むことですか。
Oh, you mean reading?

Sima: うん。ライティングもしますし、両方とも必要なんですが、どちらかというとライティングはこちらから助けてあげることができますが、リディングに関してはマニュアルの内容を理解したり、仕事を理解したり、資料とかマニュアルなどを読んだりするために、やはり読むほうが、ライティングより大切ですね。
Ya, they do writing as well, they require both skills however, when writing is concerned, I will be able to help them but they have to read and understand the manual, so compare to writing, reading will be more important.

Yeoh: ああ、工場内の資料ですね、読むためにリディングの能力が必要なんですね。マニュアルの他に、何か読みますか。みんなさんは、
Oh, you mean the material in the factory, do you? They must have the ability in order to read, right? Other than the manual, what else do they read?

Sima: 日本の方とのメールのやり取りとか、そういうもの、やっぱり日本語のメールを理解することも必要なんですね。メールの内容を理解すること、そうですね。For example, the mails they have with the Japan side, after all, they have to understand the content of the mail, right? Ya, to understand the content of the mails.

Yeoh: 現地のスタッフと日本語でやり取りしているとき、彼らは大体どんな問題を直面していることを感じていますか。大体、どんなことですか。例えば、日本人の話の内容とか、指示したことが理解できないことなど、ありますか。When you communicate with local staff in Japanese, what kind of problem do you think they will face? Mostly, what will it be? For example, they can’t understand the content of the Japanese’s talk, or the instruction and so on, is there this type of problem?

Sima: あ、はい。理解できますよ。Ya, they can understand.

Yeoh: じゃ、ほぼ問題はないですか。So, almost no problem, right?

Sima: そうですね。Yes.

Yeoh: じゃ、日本人の会話とか、仕事の指示とか、理解することはぜんぜん問題ないですね。That means when they talk to Japanese, listening to the instruction of work, they can understand everything, totally no problem, right?

Sima: ええ、そうですね。Yes, that’s right.

Yeoh: ビジネスマールを読んで、返事するとき、現地のスタッフは、あのう、問題に直面したことがありますか。When they reply to the business mail that they have read, do they face any problem?

Sima: まあ、ないですね。特には、まあ、例えば、尊敬語とかの使い方、そういう使い方、ちょっと違ったりすることがありますけど、基本的には問題はないですね。
Well, there is no particular problem. Well, may be the wrong used of honorific expression, basically, there is no problem.

Yeoh: あ、尊敬語の使い方ですね。
The use of honorific expression, is it?

Sima: 尊敬語とか謙譲語とか間違いないありますが、基本的には問題はないのですけど。
May be mistake for honorific and humble expression, basically, there is no problem for them.

Yeoh: はい、そして、ああ、今もうすぐ 45 分ですね。後、最後の二つの問題を質問させてください。
Ok. Well, soon 45 minutes will be over. Please allow me to ask last two questions.

Sima: はい。
Ok.

Yeoh: 今、私は大学で教えていますが、もし将来日本語専攻講座を開くとしたら、カリキュラムについて、日系企業の立場から、どんなことを強化したら学習者が仕事場に行ったら、もっと仕事の役に立つことができるか、ご意見、聞かせていただきたいですが。
I am at present teaching at university, in case we were to have Japanese Major Study, from the standing point of Japanese companies, what is the point that you think, if we strengthen it, it will be useful to learners when they join in the Japanese companies, in future. Please let me know your opinion.

Sima: そうですね。理解することですね。やっぱり喋ることと、あのう、相手の言ってることが分かることが一番大切なことですよね。
Well. To understand. Anyway speaking and to understand what the other party said is the most important thing.

Yeoh: うん、そして、あのう、日本人の会話、日本人のコミュニケーション・スタイル、日本人の特有の喋り方、ビジネスマナーなどについて、今の現地のスタッフの様子を見て、それが分からないようなことがありますか。日本人の喋り方、ビジネスマナーなど。。。
Furthermore, regarding Japanese way of conversation, Japanese way of communication, Japanese peculiar way of talking, business manner and so on, do you think that the local staff are not conscious about it? They Japanese way of talking and business manner for example.

Sima: あああ、喋りかたがすごく速かったりとか、あまり、やはり日本にもいろいろあるので、それにちょっと。。。やはり聞き返したり、繰り返
Oh ya, the Japanese speak too fast, or the accent, because there are various accent in Japan, and the local staff couldn’t get it for example, as long as they ask back or get us to repeat, there will be no problem. As for the Japanese, if he or she is fast talker, he or she will speak very fast.

Yeoh: でも、私が、感じたのは、日本人のコミュニケーション・スタイルは、やはりちょっと、ユニックですね。現地のスタッフ、理解できないことがあると思いますか。But as for me, what I felt was, the communication style of Japanese is unique. Local staff may not get understand it.

Sima: うん、例えば、言いたいことを言わないとか、そういうことですよね。Ya, for example, never say what they actually wanted to say, do you mean that?

Yeoh: はい、はい、そうです。Yes, that’s right.

Sima: 本音を言わないこととか、You mean to say that they won’t tell their real intention?

Yeoh: そうです。そうです。Yes.

Sima: うん、まあ、それは日本人のユニックなコミュニケーションの仕方ですね。Ya, that is the Japanese unique way of communication, is it?

Yeoh: それも、授業で、学生に説明したほうがいいと思いますか。Do you think that it is better to tell the student this as well?

Sima: ああ、そうですね。それはあったらいかかもしれないですね。教えてほしいですね。Yes, I think so. Maybe it well be good to have that. It will be better to teach.

Yeoh: はい、で、最後の問題、後三分で時間になりますが。最後の問題、企業は、こういう、あのう、マレーシアで、日本語を学んで、企業に入って、すぐ仕事をするのは、ちょっといろいろ大変なことがありますね。で、日系企業は、どのように、その卒業生達を支援していますか。現地で日本語を学んで、卒業してすぐ日系企業に就職する人に、仕事に就いたばかりの人に、どんなように支援していますか。Well, the last question. We have 3 more minutes and it will be time. My last question, student study Japanese in Malaysia and then join in the companies after
graduation, it will be a bit tough for them to start work immediately, right? As for Japanese companies, how do you support this type of student? To study Japanese locally, join in the Japanese companies immediately after graduation, those who just found a job, what kind of support do you give to these people?

Sima: サポートのこと？ああ、そうですね。なんだらう。
Support? Oh, well, what should it be?

Yeoh: 例えば、Training とか。
For example, training.

Sima: そうですね。例えば、会社で、日本語を使って仕事をするときのレッソ
ンとか、ガイドなどあったほうがいいですね。
Ya, for example, in the company, we have lessons when using Japanese language to do work, it is better to have guiding isn’t it?

Yeoh: はい、そういうことですね。
Yes, something like that.

Sima: そういうことあったほうがいいですね。
It is better to have something like that, isn’t it.

Yeoh: 後、日本のビジネス・マナーも教えてたら、多分、学生も仕事のやり取りが分かるじゃないかと思います。
And then, if you teach the Japanese business manner as well, I think the student might be able to understand the exchange of work.

Sima: そうですね。そうですね。
Yes, I agree.

Yeoh: はい、今日仕事中本当に申し訳ありませんでした。
So sorry to disturb while you are working.

Sima: いいえ、ごめんなさい。時間がなくて。
Not at all. I am sorry that I don’t have the time.

Yeoh: いろいろ教えてください、本当に助かりました。今日どうもありがとうございました。
Thanks for telling me so many things. Really appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Sima: 有難うございました。
Thank you.
APPENDIX O

Letter of Application to Request the Japanese Language Expert to verify the Content of the Translation for the Interview with the JCM from Japanese Language to English Language

Title of Project: Japanese Language proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees: A Study in Japanese Companies in Malaysia

My name is YEOH LEE SU (lsyeoh@usm.my, H/P 019-4805524) and I am a full time academic staff at School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM and currently I am a part-time candidate pursue my doctoral study with Prof. Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi, of School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM as my main supervisor and Dr. Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh, of School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, USM, as my co-supervisor.

I am currently collecting data for my dissertation, a project that Investigating Japanese Language skills’ proficiency among Malaysian Japanese Speaking Graduate Employees (MJSGEs) in Japanese Companies in Malaysia (JCM).

I have spent the past three months collecting qualitative data from the employers. I am gathering perspectives of some the employers who are involved in guiding and supervising the MJSGE. As you are the Japanese language expert, I would very much like to invite you to verify the content of the translation for the interview with the JCM from Japanese language to English language.

I would very much appreciate any assistance that you can give me.

Thank you for your time,

Yeoh Lee Su