UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

WRITTEN TEXT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AMONG
JAPANESE LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN
RANCANGAN PERSEDIAAN KHAS KE JEPUN

FARAH NURZAKIAH AHMAD TAJUDDIN

FBMK 2014 47

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JAPANESE LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN
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By

FARAH NURZAKIAH AHMAD TAJUDDIN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.**

October 2014

DEDICATION

I dedicate this humble work to my loving parents, husband and children.

Thank you for your endless support and encouragement.

May Allah s.w.t bless you always. Ameen.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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October 2014

Chair: Roslina Mamat, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

Writing in a foreign language is a challenge especially for learners in the academic field. However, knowing the most facilitative Communication Strategies (CS) to employ helps learners to overcome language difficulties they face during the writing process. Being the first effort in identifying the facilitative CS in Japanese written text, this study focused on the use of written text CS among Japanese language learners in the *Rancangan Persediaan Khas ke Jepun* (RPKJ) programme in Universiti Malaya. The objectives of the study were to identify the types of CS in written text employed by the learners, to discuss the most used and moderately used CS and to analyse the differences in the CS employed by the learners in two writing activities. A total of 79 second year RPKJ learners and 72 first year RPKJ learners participated in the study with 10 RPKJ second year learners (high proficiency, HP learners) and 10 RPKJ first year leaners (low proficiency, LP learners) identified as respondents for the writing activities. Using survey questionnaire, a set of writing activities (dialogue and picture description) and a follow-up interview as research instruments, the collected data were analysed and classified according to the inventory of CS presented by Dornyei & Scott (1997).

The findings of the study revealed that both HP and LP learners adopted various CS in their written text. Having more Japanese language knowledge, HP learners were able to employ more types of CS as compared to the LP learners. Nonetheless, both groups portrayed themselves to be proactive and attentive learners through their high use of 'appeal for help' strategy and 'self-repair' strategy. Additionally, the learners used a *kanji/kana* letter form which was similar looking to the target form which the researcher has named as 'similar form' strategy. Relating to the two writing activities, both HP and LP learners utilized the same strategies most in both activities which were 'self-repair' strategy and 'appeal for help' strategy. However the moderately employed CS reflected the learners' proficiency level, eventhough the strategies

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were employed less than 'self-repair' strategy and 'appeal for help' strategy. This study has highlighted the types of written text CS used by the learners in overcoming their communication difficulties. It is hoped that this study would highlight the facilitative CS in tackling written communication difficulties thus enhancing the language teaching and learning process.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sastera.

STRATEGI KOMUNIKASI TEKS PENULISAN DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR BAHASA JEPUN DI RANCANGAN PERSEDIAAN KHAS KE JEPUN

Oleh

FARAH NURZAKIAH AHMAD TAJUDDIN

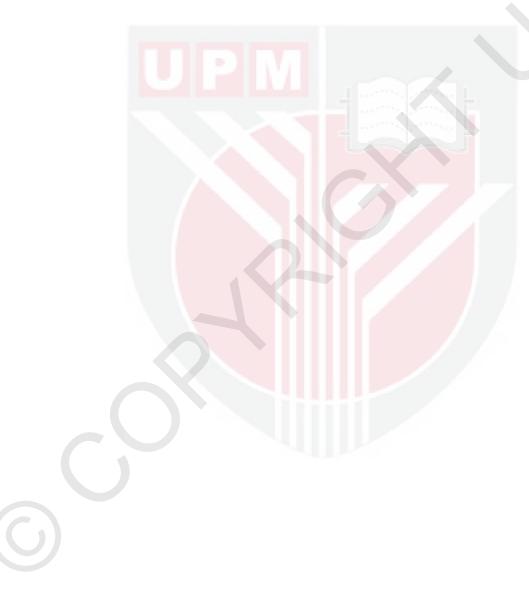**Oktober 2014**

Pengerusi: Roslina Mamat, PhD

Fakulti: Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Menulis dalam bahasa asing merupakan satu cabaran terutamanya bagi pelajar di dalam bidang akademik. Walaubagaimanapun, mengetahui Strategi Komunikasi (SK) yang paling membantu untuk digunakan dapat menolong para pelajar dalam mengatasi masalah bahasa yang mereka hadapi semasa proses penulisan. Sebagai usaha pertama dalam mengenal pasti SK yang sedemikian, kajian ini memfokuskan penggunaan SK teks penulisan dalam kalangan pelajar bahasa Jepun di program Rancangan Persediaan Khas ke Jepun (RPKJ) di Universiti Malaya. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti jenis SK yang digunakan oleh para pelajar, membincangkan SK yang kerap dan agak kerap digunakan dan menganalisis perbezaan dalam penggunaan SK oleh pelajar dalam dua aktiviti penulisan. Seramai 79 pelajar RPKJ tahun dua dan 72 pelajar RPKJ tahun satu menyertai kajian ini dimana 10 pelajar RPKJ tahun dua (pelajar kemahiran tinggi, HP) dan 10 pelajar RPKJ tahun pertama (pelajar kemahiran rendah, LP) telah dikenal pasti untuk mengambil bahagian dalam aktiviti penulisan. Menggunakan kertas soal selidik, satu set aktiviti penulisan (dialog dan deskripsi gambar) serta temu bual sebagai instrumen kajian, data yang diperolehi dianalisis dan diklasifikasikan mengikut inventori SK yang dikemukakan oleh Dornyei & Scott (1997).

Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua pelajar HP dan LP menggunakan pelbagai SK dalam teks penulisan mereka. Dengan mempunyai lebih pengetahuan bahasa Jepun, pelajar HP berkebolehan untuk menggunakan lebih banyak jenis SK berbanding pelajar LP. Bagaimanapun, kedua-dua kumpulan menggambarkan diri mereka sebagai pelajar yang proaktif dan peka melalui penggunaan strategi 'memohon bantuan' dan 'pembetulan kendiri' yang tinggi. Tambahan pula, para pelajar menggunakan bentuk huruf *kanji/kana* yang

menyerupai bentuk sebenar dalam teks penulisan mereka yang pengkaji telah menamakan sebagai strategi 'bentuk serupa'. Berhubung dengan dua aktiviti penulisan, kedua-dua pelajar HP dan LP menggunakan SK yang sama dengan kadar kerap dalam kedua-dua aktiviti iaitu strategi 'pembetulan kendiri' dan strategi 'memohon bantuan'. Akan tetapi, SK yang berikutnya mencerminkan tahap kemahiran pelajar, walaupun digunakan lebih sedikit berbanding strategi 'pembetulan kendiri' dan strategi 'memohon bantuan'. Kajian ini menunjukkan jenis-jenis SK yang digunakan oleh para pelajar dalam mengatasi masalah komunikasi mereka. Adalah diharapkan bahawa kajian ini akan menonjolkan SK yang dapat membantu mengatasai masalah komunikasi penulisan dan dapat memudahkan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 8 October 2014 to conduct the final examination of Farah Nurzakiah Ahmad Tajuddin on her thesis entitled "**Written Text Communication Strategies Among Japanese Language Learners in *Rancangan Persediaan Khas ke Jepun***" in accordance with the Universities and University College Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Arts.

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I hereby confirm that:

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Name and matric no.: Farah Nurzakiah Ahmad Tajuddin GS32539

Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:

- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) are adhered to.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CS	Communication Strategies
CC	Communicative Competence
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
JL	Japanese Language
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
RPKJ	Rancangan Persediaan Khas ke Jepun
RPKJ 2Y	RPKJ Second Year
RPKJ 1Y	RPKJ First Year
HP	High Proficiency
LP	Low Proficiency
MA	Message Abandonment
TA	Topic Avoidance
MR	Message Replacement
CL	Circumlocution
APX	Approximation
APW	All-Purpose Word
WC	Word Coinage
RS	Restructuring
LT	Literal Translation
FR	Foreignizing
CSW	Code-Switching
SSW	Similar Sounding Word
OM	Omission
RT	Retrieval

SR	Self-repair
Nling	Non-linguistic
FL	Filler
AFH	Appeal for Help
SF	Similar Form

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Language is an important tool used in communication. It allows us to convey our intentions, thoughts, emotions, give and receive information and much more. In general, the use of language in communication can be seen in the form of oral communication as well as written communication. Communication is vital in our everyday life. It is what allows us to interact with one another. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) defines communication as 'the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information'. Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2003) on the other hand, refers communication as 'a verbal or written message'. Thus, communication is the conveyance of a message or the exchange of information through speech or writing.

When communicating orally, there are times when the speaker finds difficulty in expressing his intentions, making it a challenge for him to successfully convey his ideas, especially when it is performed in a language that it learnt. Bialystok (1990) has highlighted that the ease of moving from an idea to another in the native language is 'shattered' by the lack of knowledge in the target language. When this happens, the speaker will find himself confronted with the possible 'danger' of a communication breakdown. To overcome this difficulty, the speaker undertakes certain steps to help maintain the communication flow thus achieving his communicative goal. These steps are known as Communication Strategies.

Since the introduction of Communication Strategies (CS) by Selinker in 1972, oral communication has been its main medium. However, in the year 2000 (study conducted by Chimbganda), the written medium has begun to attract interest among scholars to probe into its manifestation among non-native writers of the target language. Lexical difficulties occurs in both speaker and writer (Santos, 2011), thus non-native writers would also encounter difficulties in their written communication forcing them to take 'steps' to overcome the problem.

This study focused on the use of written text Communication Strategies (CS) among Japanese language learners in the *Rancangan Persediaan Khas ke Jepun* (RPKJ) programme in Universiti Malaya. The first aim was to identify the types of CS in written texts employed by the learners in conveying their intended message. The

second aim was to discuss the most used and moderately used CS by the learners in their written text. The third aim was to analyse the differences in the CS used by the learners in two different writing activities. The findings from this study is hoped to shed light on the knowledge of CS in the written text, focusing on Japanese language.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the global world today, it is important to have the ability to communicate in more than one language. Even in securing a job, it is an added quality if an applicant is able to communicate in different languages. The current demand for foreign language expertise in the international market has contributed to this scenario. Prompted by this demand, learning a foreign language has attracted much attention from society. Every language has its own merits and importance in various sectors. For example, Japanese language is a medium for knowledge related to science and technology (Sohaimi Abdul Aziz, 2010). Learning Mandarin would be an added value for business opportunity, knowing Arabic facilitates employment in Middle East companies investing in Malaysia and similarly Japanese, French and German are also seen to be a merit for those acquiring scientific and technical knowledge (Ainol Madziah Zubairi & Isarji Hj Sarudin, 2009). Having the ability to communicate well in various languages is highly regarded as it eases technology transfer, thus contributing to the development of a country.

> "The importance of foreign languages in a borderless world is more evident when nation building is highly dependent on the acquisition and transfer of foreign technology." (Ainol Madziah Zubairi & Isarji Hj Sarudin, 2009:75).

In Malaysia, Malay language is the medium of instruction in schools. However, English language is also given emphasis as seen through the implementation of the *Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris (MBMMBI)* policy in the year 2010 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010) which strives to uphold the Malay language and to strengthen the English language. The government sees the need to cultivate language ability in students through this policy, which aims to produce students who are fluent in both Malay and English, an ability that would assist them in their tertiary education and beyond. Meanwhile, the tertiary education institution provides foreign language courses to undergraduates to gain 'competitive edge over their peers' (Ministry of Higher Eduction, 2010:5).

This need was recently highlighted again in the Berita Harian online news (Berita Harian, 2014) on 20 January 2014, which emphasized the importance of grasping more than two languages besides one's mother tongue and English in order to succeed in the modernized world. In the article, the Deputy Education Minister added that students with the ability to use the additional language could acquire more

knowledge from books written in that particular language and also when verbally communicating with natives from that particular country.

Acknowledging this necessity, the Malaysian government has taken steps in preparing students to face the global challenge in the job market. Through the teaching of foreign languages, among the objectives of the government are; to add another language skill apart from the ability in the mother tongue which is Malay language and also English, to add knowledge about the foreign language culture that is learnt, to have the opportunity to learn the technology used in those countries, and to gain the opportunity to work with foreign companies in Malaysia (Roswati Abdul Rashid, Radhiah Ismail & Noor Halina Mohamad Akhir, 2007).

In Malaysia, the interest in Japanese language soared after Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the 'Look East Policy' in 1981. After which, Japanese language made its appearance in the higher learning institutions. A few years later, Japanese language was also introduced to secondary school in 1984. The history of Japanese language education in Malaysia is explained in section 1.2.

With the introduction of Japanese language in learning institutions, the learning process of the said language among learners was unlike how they learnt their mother tongue. As pointed out by Duran (2004), learning a second language is different from learning the mother tongue as the learning process of the second language is based on the principles of the mother tongue. She also added that learning a language does not only involve knowing the form it takes but also knowing how it functions. Bialystok (1990) highlighted that it is difficult for an individual to have perfectly full command of a language, taking example that even a native speaker of a language sometimes encounter difficulties in finding the most appropriate expression in their communication. Thus, for a non-native speaker, this task becomes more difficult as the knowledge of the target language is not as well formed as the native speaker's. This is when the non-native speaker employs certain CS to help alleviate the difficulties he encounters in the communication.

The ability of a speaker to use CS is also referred to as strategic competence, a component of communicative competence. The definition given by Canale & Swain (1980) on strategic competence is that it refers to the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies a speaker resorts to in the event of a communication breakdown due to performance variables or insufficient competence. Therefore, the speaker will rely on his strategic competence which consists of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to compensate their inadequate linguistic competence.

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When learning a language besides the mother tongue, students need to have competence in both the oral and written medium. As students, accomplishing a tremendous amount of oral presentations and report writing of various assignments is required throughout their academic years. Therefore, it is extremely important that students are competent enough with the demanded language in order to embark successfully on their academic journey.

Writing in a second language is a challenging task to perfom. The ability to compose a well-written text which is similar to a text that is written in the mother tongue deems a certain amount of threshold in second language proficiency (Kamimura, 1996). Without which, the language learner would have to struggle in accomplishing the writing task. Kohro (2009) added that without proficiency in the second language, the learner would be unable to transfer his mother tongue text structures into the second language text. Hence, language learners would face a great challenge when asked to perform a writing task in a language that is still considered 'immature'.

In this current study, the exposure of Japanese language given to the learners is limited. In actual fact, most of the learners were only exposed to Japanese language in the classroom. Therefore, the writing difficulty faced by the learners may be due to the lack of Japanese language knowledge and practice. The lack of language knowledge is referred to as a 'gap' by Bialystok (1990). Therefore, to overcome language difficulties in communication, learners will use certain CS in their attempt to fill the 'gap' between the learner's intended meaning and the learner's immediate language knowledge.

In the initial stage, works in the field of CS has mainly dealt with the definition, classification and identification of CS (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997). Research on CS began with focus in oral communication. The definition of CS varied between scholars. In general, CS are strategies that are taken by language users to overcome linguistic problems that arise in the communication. In second language (L2) context, language learners would encounter such linguistic problems as their linguistic knowledge of the target language is insufficient. In this sense, the L2 speaker would likely encounter difficulties when trying to convey his intended message due to the lack of language resources (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997).

As mentioned above, CS was primarily used in analysing strategies taken during an oral communication. Therefore over the years, CS has received much attention in studies concerning the oral medium. The works on CS in relation to language proficiency have been done by scholars such as Paribakht (1985), Wannaruk (2003), Chaing (2011), and Ting & Phan (2008) (refer to section 2.4.1). Another perspective

is the influence of task on CS, which was carried out by Binhayeearong (2009) and Kaivanpanah et al., (2012) (refer to section 2.4.1). Studies regarding the teachability of CS can also be seen in the works of Dornyei & Thurrell (1991), Dornyei (1995) and Nakatani (2005) who argued in favour of including strategy teaching in language classes, whereas Paribakht (1985) and Canale & Swain (1980) argued that CS are universal and is transferable from L1 to L2 without instructions.

Studies on CS in the local setting (Malaysia) have also received attention. To name a few, Nor Farizah Mohd. Nor (2008) (refer to section 2.4.1) and Norhakimah Khaiessa Ahmad (2006) (refer to section 2.5.2) studied CS use in English and Ang (1992) (refer to section 2.4.1) studied CS use in Malay. In addition, Roslina Mamat (1999), Suzana Ismail (2004), Sanimah Hussin (2007) (refer to section 2.4.2) and Hazlina Abdul Halim (2011) (refer to section 2.5.2) studied CS use in the foreign language context.

As noted by Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2003), communication is not just limited to speech but also in the form of writing. Studies on CS in the written medium are still rather limited as compared to the oral medium. Studies on written CS can be seen in the works of Cimbganda (2000), Aliakbari & Allvar (2009) (refer to section 2.5.1), Norhakimah Khaeissa Ahmad (2006) and Hazlina Abdul Halim (2011) (refer to section 2.5.2). In the effort to better understand the manifestation of CS in the written medium, the researcher felt that there was a need to carry out further research on CS especially in the local setting. Moreover, Xhaferi (2012) has noted that the theory of CS in writing has been well acknowledged and additionally, writing is seen to provoke the same CS use as in speaking (Santos, 2011).

The current study aimed to explore and identify the types of CS in written text employed by the Japanese language learners and also to discuss the most used and moderately used CS by them. Additionally, the study aimed to analyse the differences in the employment of CS by the learners in the two different writing activities. It is hoped that the findings will be able to add to the body of knowledge on the topic, thus assisting in the effort to further enforce the strategies that would help the learners gain better writing skills when writing in a foreign language.

1.2 Japanese Language Education in Malaysia

This section introduces the implementation of Japanese language classes in the Malaysian education scene. The process began with the higher learning institutions in 1982, followed by secondary schools in 1984 (Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Division, 2013). In recent years, the number of institutions offering Japanese language classes has increased, and is expected to continue increasing due to the demands from society.

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1.2.1 Japanese Language Education in Schools

The introduction of Japanese language in Malaysia's secondary schools began in 1984. However at that time, it was only offered to fully-residential schools, beginning with only 6 schools which were Kolej Melayu Kuala Kangsar, Kolej Tunku Kurshiah, Sekolah Tun Fatimah, Sekolah Menengah Sultan Abdul Halim, Sekolah Tunku Abdul Rahman, and Sekolah Menengah Alam Shah. Throughout the years, the interest in Japanese language increased and eventually in the year 2005, the subject was also offered to day schools. Through the years, the number of schools offering Japanese language grew and currently there are 56 fully residential schools and 78 day schools offering this subject as a third language (Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Division, 2013).

In the beginning, the subject was taught by native speakers. Then gradually, the role was taken over by local teachers who underwent the Japanese Language Education Course conducted by the Public Service Department of Malaysia (JPA) and Japanese Language In-Service Teachers Programme conducted by the International Languages Teachers Training Institute (IPBA). The first batch of teachers posted to schools from the JPA programme was in 1995 and from the IPBA programme was in 2007. Currently, there are 70 Japanese language teachers teaching in the fully residential schools and 80 Japanese language teachers in day schools. Japanese language is taught from Form 1 to Form 5. An assessment exam called Japanese Language Achievement Exam *(Peperiksaan Pencapaian Bahasa Jepun)* is carried out in Form 4. This exam is currently placed under the supervision of the Curriculum Development Division of Ministry of Education Malaysia and Japan Foundation (Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Division, 2013).

The aim of introducing Japanese language in schools was not only to prepare the students for further studies and securing a job, but also to expose the students to the excellent culture of the Japanese society (Utusan Online, 2011). The article also reported that the early introduction of Japanese language in school would assist in preparing the students should they be interested to continue their studies in the native land.

1.2.2 Japanese Language Education in Higher Learning Institutions

Japanese language also made its appearance in higher learning institutions. The first Japanese language institution was established in Universiti Malaya in the year 1982. The second institution was in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in 1992. Currently there are 18 public higher learning institutions (IPTA), 2 private higher learning institutions (IPTS) and 3 matriculation programmes offering Japanese language (Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur, 2013). Apart from these, Japanese language is also offered at several language centres across Malaysia.

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The vast spread of Japanese language education in Malaysia began in 1981. In July 1981, Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the 'Look East Policy' which has contributed to the rise in Japanese language interest among Malaysians. At that time, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad saw that the 'East' (Japan and South Korea) was trying to recover from their defeat in World War II. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad felt it was important for Malaysians to learn how Japan successfully recovered. He also saw that the secret to Japan's success laid in their work ethics, cultural values and management capability. To understand all this, Malaysia began to send their students to Japanese universities for the bachelor degree. This effort was put forth in hope that these students would be able to bring home some of the mentioned values, especially work ethics and discipline, apart from the academic and technical know-how during their stay in the native land (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.).

This point was reaffirmed by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he delivered his speech during the International Seminar 2012 – 30 Years Celebration of the Look East Policy.

> "…when yet I visited Korea and Japan after I became a minister, and then deputy prime minister, prime minister… I noticed the remarkable changes, the remarkable progress that was made by these two countries… I saw that by the time I became prime minister, these two countries had already emerged… they are competing with the western countries… obviously there was something that they have done which has propelled them so fast ahead. And I thought… perhaps if we know what it is that drove them, we too can achieve some degree of progress… maybe not as fast as them but at least we would progress much faster…"

> "What drove these two countries was their culture. Their culture was what helped them to develop fast… to recover from the disaster… and to grow at the rate they were growing. The culture… I was more interested in the value system. I believed and I still believe that value system is what makes the difference between the developments of one country from another..."

(taken from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Keynote speech, International Seminar 2012 - 30 Year Celebration of the Look East Policy, Putrajaya Marriott Hotel, 23 June 2012)

Through his keynote speech, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad clearly expressed his thoughts about the importance of continuing the effort to learn from the Japanese and the Koreans. In other words, the programme of sending students to these two countries is still relevant in his eyes. Therefore, the effort in educating learners with Japanese language (Korean language for those who will study in Korea) is still needed.

1.3 *Rancangan Persediaan Khas ke Jepun*

In 1982, *Rancangan Persediaan Khas ke Jepun* (RPKJ) was implemented under the 'Look East Policy', which aimed to look and learn from the nations in the east which are Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, not in terms of their eastern habits but their good work ethics and technological skills (Japan Foundation. 2013). The programme, conducted at *Ambang Asuhan Jepun* (AAJ) ("The Gateway to Japan") in Universiti Malaya Kuala Lumpur, is also one of the programmes under the Centre of Foundation Studies which oversees the enrolment of students who completed their secondary school education. In the same year, native Japanese language teachers were sent to AAJ followed by subject teachers in the following year.

Information on RPKJ was only obtainable through an interview with an academic staff from the programme. The researcher was able to get a brief overview of the programme from a senior lecturer (Dr. Zoraida Mustafa, senior lecturer, Ambang Asuhan Jepun, Pusat Asasi Sains, Universiti Malaya, pers. comm. 17 April 2013) who was also teaching the RPKJ first year students at the time of the study. According to her, RPKJ is a two year programme. In the first year, the students are taught Japanese language and subject courses (mathematics, chemistry, and physics). The subject courses are taught in either Malay or English only during the first semester. In the second semester of the first year, these subject courses are taught in Japanese by native speakers. In the second year, the students continue their Japanese language learning and subject courses in Japanese. The teaching of subject courses in Japanese indicates that the programme takes the initiative in preparing the learners to be competent in the target language for both daily use and academic purpose.

In the initial stage, the programme offered courses in the science stream (engineering, science, pharmacy, dentistry, medicine, etc) and social science stream (accountancy, economics, business, etc). However over the years, the programme went through many changes especially in the scope of offered courses and the entrance exam to the Japanese universities. Currently, the courses offered are only in the science stream, focussing on engineering in a number of fields.

Since the year 2006, the examination system has changed from *Monbusho* exam conducted by Japan's Ministry of Education *(Monbukagakusho)* to the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU). EJU evaluates the learners' Japanese language skills and basic academic knowledge in order to pursue their studies in their academic field and respective institution (Japan Student Services Organization, n.d.).

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Students who are accepted to enter the RPKJ programme are also granted full scholarship by the Malaysian Public Service Department (JPA) beginning from their entrance to the programme till the completion of their undergraduate studies in the Japanese university. The JPA scholarship for this programme is only allocated for *bumiputera* status students who are either from the Malay race or indigenous ethnic groups, irrespective of their religion. In order words, only *bumiputera* students are accepted into the RPKJ programme.

As mentioned, the RPKJ programme is a two year programme with each year consisting of two semesters; first semester and second semester. According to the information given by Dr. Zoraida Musatafa (Dr. Zoraida Mustafa, senior lecturer, Ambang Asuhan Jepun, Pusat Asasi Sains, Universiti Malaya, pers. comm. 17 April 2013), in the first year, the students are given 28-30 hours of Japanese language instruction per week for the first semester and 20 hours per week for the second semester. In the second year, the students are given 12 hours per week of Japanese language instruction for the first semester and second semester respectively. However, the number of hours varies depending on the student intake period. The reduced number of Japanese language learning hours in the second year is due to the subject courses being taught in Japanese.

Textbooks used in the programme have also seen changes over time. Currently, the first year students are taught Japanese language using *Minna No Nihongo (1998)* for grammar learning, *Ichi Nichi 15 Fun Kanji Renshuu (Shokyuu) (1999)* for *kanji* learning and New Approach *Chuukyuu Nihongo Kisohen (2002)* textbooks. For the second year students, New Approach *Chuukyuu Nihongo Kanseihen (2002)*, *Ichi Nichi 15 Fun Kanji Renshuu (Chuukyuu) (1999)* for *kanji* learning and other teacher-made materials are currently being used as teaching resources.

Bearing in mind that RPKJ is an intensive programme, the learners in the programme are frequently assessed on their knowledge of Japanese language. Short quizzes on *kanji* and vocabulary are given almost every day, grammar test for every 4 to 5 chapters covered and *kanji* test is given after every 60 *kanji* characters taught. The learners are also taught in small groups comprising of only 12-16 students in each Japanese language class to ensure focused attention is given to each student.

Apart from the language instruction, the learners are also exposed to various cultural activities such as interactive programmes with Japanese high school

students, *Shodou* (Japanese calligraphy), *Haiku* (Japanese poem) reciting and others.

From the above description of RPKJ, the students in the programme benefit not only in the aspect of Japanese language and technical knowledge through the teaching of subject courses in Japanese, but also in the scope of cultural input which would help the learners to understand and adapt to the Japanese society in the native land.

1.4 *Hiragana, Katakana* and *Kanji*

Japanese language is a very unique language whereby three types of writing scripts can be found in a single sentence. These scripts are *Hiragana, Katakana* and *Kanji*. Each writing script has a different form and is used for different purposes.

According to Takamizawa, H., Ito, H., Hunt, Y. K., Ikeda, Y., Nishikawa, S. & Ommura, Y. (2004), the history of the Japanese writing scripts dates back to the 3rd and 4th century. At that time, Japan did not have any writing scripts and used the Chinese characters to code their language. Over the years, the characters became attached to the Japanese language, leading to the birth of *Manyougana*, which is an early Japanese syllabary composed of Chinese characters used phonetically (Denshi Jisho Online Japanese Dictionary, n.d.). The simplification of the *Manyougana* script becomes the *Hiragana* script. While a part taken from the *Manyougana* script becomes the *Katakana* script.

Hiragana is used to write Japanese words, particles and suffix to verbs and adjectives. *Katakana* is used to write foreign and loan words, onomatopoeia and also when putting stress onto certain words. *Kanji* (derived from *Manyougana*) is the Chinese character which has two types of pronunciation; *onyomi* (Chinese pronunciation) and *kunyomi* (Japanese pronunciation). *Kanji* is also a pictographic character which consists of different parts known as 'radicals'. For example in the *kanji* 国 (*kuni* country), the *kanji* consists of the radical 口 (*kuchi* mouth) and 玉 (*tama* spherical object). The combination of these two radicals produces the *kanji* 国.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

In Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Japanese language is offered as an elective subject under the Foreign Language Department, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication (FBMK). The number of students registered in the course has been high with 271 students in year 2012 and 242 students in year 2013 (Foreign

Language Department, FBMK, 2013), indicating high interest in the language among UPM's undergraduates. The difference between the UPM students and the RPKJ students are that the UPM students learn Japanese with no immediate intention or need to use the language in their near future. On the other hand, RPKJ students are a group of students who are enrolled in a special preparatory programme where they needed to acquire an adequate knowledge of Japanese language to enable them to continue their scholarly undertakings in the Japanese universities.

National universities in Japan offer liberal arts education *(ippan kyouyou katei)* in the first and second year which aims to provide broad and in-depth foundation in education besides cultivating the sense of humanity in undergraduates (Kawaguchi, 2005; Kyouyoukatei to senmonkatei, 2014 February 15). The courses offered under the liberal arts education are regardless of any major. In other words, these courses may or may not be related to the undergraduate's major, depending on the availability of the offered course.

In the RPKJ programme, students are taught the related science subjects (mathematics, chemistry, physics, etc.) in Japanese to enable them to know the Japanese technical terms for the related subjects. For such students, taking a course under the liberal arts education which is unrelated to their major would also mean that they would most likely not know the appropriate terms for that particular course. Therefore, when asked to prepare a written assignment, it becomes very difficult to produce a 'good' write-up, which in turn affects their grades.

This fact was also pointed out by Chimbganda (2000) who mentioned that biology students who did not use the correct 'register' in their biology answers ended up with lower grades because of the lack of scientific information, which is crucial in the academic discipline. Although it is difficult for these students to grasp all technical terms, especially those which are unrelated to their major, knowing how to effectively write in order to successfully communicate their message could assist the students in their written assignments for that particular course.

Unlike speaking where there is a 'shared meaning' between interlocutors, writing on the other hand does not provide immediate feedback from the reader. Furthermore, in oral communication, interruptions may occur if the speaker pauses too long when trying to recall or find the most suitable lexical for his intended meaning (Santos, 2011). The fear of interruption such as this is not likely to happen in writing. In this sense, writing is considered to be more 'error-free' as writers are able to take their time in selecting the most appropriate word needed without interruption from the reader regarding ambuity in the written text. Therefore, learners will have to depend

on their current linguistic resources and find the most facilitative strategy that would help them convey their intended message as accurately as possible (Chimbganda, 2000).

Chimbganda's (2000) study on CS and performance in writing has indicated that students' performance in the academic field depended on their ability to fully utilize their immediate knowledge on the language through the most facilitative CS coupled with the use of the correct 'registers'. Chimbganda (2000) also mentioned that depending on the type of task, the facilitative CS would also differ. In this light, knowing which CS would help the students in tackling a certain task becomes important. This would also assist them to convey their message thus achieving good grades.

The researcher felt that this point could assist the RPKJ students as they would have to produce written assignments in Japanese when they begin their academic journey in the Japanese university. For them to fully perform in the language would be a challenge as they had only begun to learn the language in the RPKJ programme. Therefore, for the RPKJ students to know the CS that would help them in their written assignment would be an added strength.

As written text CS has yet to be explored in the Japanese language, it would be difficult to assume Chimbganda's (2000) finding would have the same or similar effect on Japanese language learners. This point became the gap in the literature which triggered the current study. Being a pioneer attempt, it is important to begin by identifying the types of strategies that can be found in Japanese language learners' written text. This would also assist the instructors to know the types of strategies that are employed by the learners in conveying their message in written text. Knowing the types of strategies would also reflect how the language is used in executing a particular strategy. This point has led to the first objective of this study which was to identify the types of CS in Japanese written text.

Upon identifying the CS, knowing the commonly employed strategies by the learners would also help the language instructors to further understand how learners manage communication difficulties. Should the commonly employed strategies be an achievement strategy (strategies which facilitate in achieving the communication goal), language instructors can therefore coach the learners to build-up their skill in utilizing the strategy effectively. However, should the commonly employed strategies be a reduction strategy (strategies which does not facilitate in achieving the communication goal), the language instructors could then demonstrate the use of achievement strategies which would be a better option for the learners in coping with

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communication difficulties. Hence, identifying the commonly employed CS in Japanese written text became the second objective of this study.

Another point taken into consideration was the influence of task type on CS choice. In the Japanese CS oral communication studies (Roslina Mamat, 1999; Suzana Ismail, 2004; Sanimah Hussin, 2007), it was found that the employment of CS was influenced by the type of oral task performed by the Japanese language learners. Relating to this, Chimbganda (2000) also mentioned that the type of questions posed (in the biology test) resulted in the employment of different CS by the ESL learners. As the Japanese CS oral studies did not have a written component, the researcher felt that it would be beneficial to investigate the same issue in written communication. This is because, the probability of a speaker or writer to encounter 'problems' in using or choosing the right word is still unavoidable especially for L2 or foreign language learners. This point was also highlighted by Santos (2011), where he mentioned that the lexical difficulties would still rise in both the speaker's and writer's attention. Hence, this has led to the third objective of this study which was to examine if the Japanese language learners' choice of CS was influenced by the type of writing task.

As the literature on CS in written text is still rather limited, the researcher felt that there was a need to carry out a study to further explore CS in the mentioned area, especially in the scope of Japanese language learning in Malaysia.

The researcher hopes this study would encourage other researchers to carry out more studies on written text CS in Japanese language and add to the current body of knowledge, thus promoting Japanese language education. It is also hoped that the findings from this study could facilitate language instructors in helping the learners gain better writing skills in Japanese language.

1.6 Research Objectives

Overall, this study investigates the employment of CS among Japanese language learners in their Japanese written text in order to convey their intended meaning. Specifically, this study aims;

1. To identify the types of CS in written texts among high and low proficiency Japanese language learners.

2. To discuss the use of CS in written texts among high and low proficiency Japanese language learners.

3. To analyse the differences of CS in two writing activities among high and low proficiency Japanese language learners.

1.7 Research Questions

In responding to the research objectives, this study attempts to explore and answer the following questions;

1. What are the types of CS in written texts employed by the high and low proficiency learners?

2. What are the CS in written texts that were most employed and moderately employed by the high and low proficiency learners?

3. What are the differences of CS in two writing activities employed by the high and low proficiency learners?

To answer the research questions, data obtained from the study was analysed using Dornyei & Scott (1997) CS taxonomy with some modification in categorization criteria suggested by Hazlina Abdul Halim (2011). The theoretical framework for this study is explained in detail in section 3.2.

1.8 Significance of the Research

The findings of this study is hoped to disclose the strategies employed by the learners in their written text, thus contributing to the field of research which focuses on Japanese language text as its main topic. The findings would also highlight how a certain syllabus is reflected in the learners' language performance. The researcher hopes that this study would be able to provide valuable insights into the Japanese language education which would help enhance the learners' skill in the language, particularly in writing.

From the findings of this study, Japanese language instructors would be able to gain better understanding of the difficulties faced by the learners and be aware of the strategies that could help the learners overcome communication difficulties thus becoming better writers. Instructors could therefore organize their teaching plan and improvise their teaching techniques in order to achieve the optimum result in educating the learners about utilizing CS in their learning especially in writing activities.

Simultaneously, this could also help raise the awareness of CS use among the students, enhancing the flow of ideas and producing better written text. Knowing how to execute a certain strategy effectively and having the option to choose which strategy would best facilitate the learners would be an added strength to their language skills.

Moreover, through this study, academic researchers could also probe into more research areas pertaining CS thus adding on to the existing knowledge in the field. This would also assist the education ministry to recognize the areas which needs to be given emphasis in Japanese language education. The development of teaching resources which integrates the teaching of CS is hoped to increase the quality of Japanese language teaching and learning, a situation that would benefit Japanese language education in Malaysia. Additionally, the researcher hopes to see new emerging features in CS in written text which focuses on Japanese language.

1.9 Limitations of the Research

In the category of Japanese university preparatory course, RPKJ is the pioneer programme of its kind. To date, this is the 32nd year since its implementation, which also meant that the programme has sent 30 batches of students to Japan (keeping in mind that the duration of the programme is two years). Over the years, other Japanese preparatory programmes have been developed in the country, implementing different syllabus depending on the type of specialization the students are being prepared for. As such, the students from those programmes may be given different Japanese language instructions.

The researcher chose the RPKJ students as sample for this study because the programme has been the most long-lasting Japanese university preparatory course with an impressive number of successful graduates. In relation to this, the findings from this study may not reflect the CS in written text produced by learners from other programmes, thus cannot be generalized to represent the population. Moreover, the samples in this study were only from Malay learners ranging from the age of 17 to 19 years old. Hence, learners from different ethnic group or from different age group may present findings which could be different from the findings of this study. Nevertheless, the current study looked at CS in general and not just focusing on the influence of certain elements (such as L1 influence) which also meant that other language mistakes unless related to the focus of the study was not accounted for.

Looking at the data collection procedure, the researcher would also like to emphasize the restriction to the data collection period. During the data collection period, the learners were only three months into their respective new semester. As the learners

in the RPKJ programme receive Japanese language instruction at a relatively fast pace, the findings from a similar study conducted at a later period would probably be different as the learners may exert different amounts and types of CS in their Japanese written text.

The analysis of CS in this study was based on Dornyei & Scott (1997) which looked at the mechanism in managing L2 communication problem. Therefore CS that was employed to facilitate the effort of managing language related communication problem was taken into consideration. Additionally, the calculation method used in obtaining the results was based on the overall percentage of each CS found in the learner's text. In other words, the percentage of each CS does not reflect the total amount of CS occurance among each proficiency group. This is further explained in section 3.7.

With regards to the CS results obtained in the second research question, this study only aimed to focus on the most used and moderately used CS employed by the Japanese language learners in their written text. The subsequent strategies was not analysed as it was not within the scope of the current study. Moreover, the amount of employment of the subsequent strategies was also found to be very minimal.

1.10 Operational Definition

This section introduces the operational definitions of certain terms used in this study.

1.10.1 Second Language (L2) and Foreign Language (FL)

In the current study, it is important to make clear distinction between second language (L2) and foreign language (FL). Oxford (2003) in her overview of learning styles and strategies mentioned that FL is a language that is learnt but not used in everyday communication in the society.

> "A foreign language is a language studied in an environment where it is not the primary vehicle for daily interaction and where input in that language is restricted." (Oxford, 2003:1)

Based on this definition, FL in this study refers to Japanese language. Whereas L2 is the language that is used other than the first language (L1) and is also used in everyday communication, in this case English.

1.10.2 High Proficiency (HP) Learners and Low Proficiency (LP) Learners

In this study, the Japanese language learners were from the RPKJ programme, a special preparatory course that prepares learners with not only Japanese language knowledge but also foundation courses for their respective undergraduate course in the Japanese language.

The learners were divided into two categories; high proficiency (HP) learners and low proficiency (LP) learners. High proficiency learners were the second year first semester RPKJ students (RPKJ 2Y). At the time of study, the HP learners have been given Japanese language instructions for about one year three months. From the information provided by a senior lecturer who teaches the programme (Dr. Zoraida Mustafa, senior lecturer, Ambang Asuhan Jepun, Pusat Asasi Sains, Universiti Malaya, pers. comm. 17 April 2013), the HP learners were taught using a syllabus that could cater the N3-N2 level of Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). JLPT is an international Japanese language examination conducted by Japan Foundation and Japan Educational and Exchanges which evaluates and certifies the proficiency level of non-native speakers of Japanese language (Japanese Proficiency Language Test, n.d.). JLPT begins with the lowest level N5, N4, N3, N2 up to the highest level N1. HP learners in the RPKJ programme are encouraged to sit for the JLPT exam (however it is not an obligation) level N2.

On the other hand, low proficiency (LP) learners were the first year first semester RPKJ students (RPKJ 1Y). At the time of study, the LP learners have only been given Japanese language instruction for three months. At the time of sampling, the learners were still in the midst of learning the basic Japanese grammar using the *Minna No Nihongo* textbook, having completed chapter 40 of the textbook. To be able to sit for the JLPT exam N4 level, learners would have to complete chapter 50 of *Minna No Nihongo* textbook. Therefore, the LP learners' proficiency level did not exceed JLPT exam N4 level.

1.10.3 Communication Strategies (CS) in Written Text

As mentioned, Communication Strategies (CS) are 'steps' taken by a language user in order to get his message across. In this study, the language users were Japanese language learners, who were still developing their competency in the target language. Therefore, these mentioned 'steps' were how they overcome language difficulties due to the limited knowledge of Japanese language in their Japanese language communication.

The communication medium in this study was the written communication. In the works of Dornyei & Scott (1997), it was mentioned that Dornyei & Scott (1995) saw CS as L2 problem management in general. As this study adopted their framework, the identification of CS was based on strategies employed by the Japanese language learners in managing and overcoming the difficulties that was due to the lack of Japanese language knowledge in written text.

1.11 Conclusion

The first chapter has discussed in general, the Japanese language learning scenario in Malaysia which began with the introduction of foreign language teaching to equip students with extra language knowledge to face the global challenge. The extra knowledge is only a merit if it can be used successfully in communication. Therefore, it is important to know the challenges the students encounter in using the learnt language in actual communication. The next chapter will discuss previous literatures and works done by named scholars in the field, discussing issues relating to the empirical studies conducted on various learners of different target languages.

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