

Perspectives on Intercultural Contact and Japanese Learning by Indonesian Trainees in Japan

Perspektif Kontak Lintas Budaya Pembelajaran Bahasa Jepang oleh Pemegang Indonesia di Jepang

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Direview: 26 Oktober 2022 | Direvisi: 29 Oktober 2022 | Diterima: 1 November 2022

ABSTRACT

Intercultural Contact (Hereafter IC) is when two or more people from different cultural backgrounds carry out socio-economic or political exchanges in one contact zone. Intercultural contact is possible to appear everywhere and by one. Intercultural contact concerning immigrants either as students or workers abroad. This study aims to investigate the intercultural contact of Indonesian workers, focusing on trainees (Jjishusei) in Japan. International workers face cross-cultural communication with co-workers or domestic workers. The trainees as respondents in this study are sent to Japan as a form of on-the-job training in collaboration between the Indonesian government and the Japanese. The trainees were exposed to the Japanese language, culture, society, and economy. Therefore, their cultural competence is essential. This study examines intercultural communication in the trainee's community, mainly focusing on how intercultural contact occurs between trainees and Japanese residents. The result showed that apart from the trainees' understanding of the importance of learning Japanese, they still lack experience in communicating with Japanese locals besides their co-workers. This study contributes to second language learning in intercultural understanding and L2 learners' identity.

Keywords: *Intercultural contact, Indonesian trainees, Intercultural communication, intercultural understanding*

INTISARI

Kontak lintas budaya adalah ketika dua orang atau lebih dari latar belakang budaya yang berbeda melakukan pertukaran sosial ekonomi atau politik dalam satu zona kontak. Kontak ini dimungkinkan untuk muncul di mana-mana dan satu per satu. Kontak antar-budaya terkait dengan imigran (pendatang) di suatu negara, baik sebagai pelajar maupun pekerja. Peneliti ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki kontak antar-budaya pekerja Indonesia, dengan fokus pada peserta pelatihan (*Jisshusei*) di Jepang. Pekerja migran internasional menghadapi komunikasi lintas budaya dengan rekan kerja atau pekerja lokal. Para peserta pelatihan yang menjadi responden dalam penelitian ini dikirim ke Jepang mengikuti 'on-the-job-training' sebagai bentuk kerjasama antara pemerintah Indonesia dan Jepang. Para peserta pelatihan berhadapan dengan perbedaan bahasa, budaya, masyarakat, dan ekonomi Jepang. Oleh karena itu, kompetensi budaya mereka sangat penting. Studi ini mengkaji komunikasi antar budaya dalam komunitas peserta pelatihan terutama berfokus pada bagaimana kontak antar-budaya terjadi antara peserta pelatihan dan penduduk Jepang. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa terlepas dari pemahaman peserta pelatihan tentang pentingnya belajar bahasa Jepang, mereka memiliki pengalaman yang terbatas dalam hal menjalin komunikasi dengan penduduk lokal Jepang selain rekan kerja mereka. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pembelajaran bahasa kedua dalam pemahaman antar-budaya dan identitas pembelajar L2.

Kata kunci: kontak lintas-budaya, pemegang Indonesia, komunikasi antar-budaya, pemahaman antar-budaya

Saran sitasi:

Nurjaleka, L. (2022). Perspectives on Intercultural Contact and Japanese Learning by Indonesian Trainees in Japan. *JLA (Jurnal Lingua Applicata)*, 5(2), 131-144. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jla.77583>

INTRODUCTION

The number of Indonesian migrants in Japan, although relatively small compared to the dominant group of other countries, such as China, Philippines, Vietnam and Nepal. Nevertheless, the number of Indonesian migrant workers continues to increase. Based on the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (2020), in 2020, Japan reported that international workers were registered at approximately 1.724.328 people. Moreover, one of the countries which over the year growth significant is Indonesia. The total Indonesian migrant workers come in sixth place with 53.395 people in Japan, and 62.3% of the total workers with technical intern trainee visas or *ginou jisshusei*.

As migrant workers in Japan, the trainees face intercultural contact (IC) daily. They also have to communicate with the Japanese in their workplace and social activities. Problems of different cultures might occur, especially in the workplace. Dewi (2015), in her study of intercultural communication among migrant workers in Korea, found that Indonesian migrant workers experience language barriers such as vocabulary misunderstandings and others. She suggested that migrant workers should increase cultural awareness and build exemplary communication with different cultures.

Moreover, Maemura et al. (2009) investigated the adjustment of trainees from Indonesia in Japan and analysed the changes in their attitudes towards Japan. The results of this study stated that Indonesian trainees had difficulties in language communication, especially in their first two years. However, their communication with local Japanese colleagues enhanced as their Japanese skills improved. They suggest that the trainees can interact with local Japanese in their community to communicate intimately.

Meanwhile, many studies have focused on the difficulties of international students, especially in terms of intercultural communication with local Japanese (Andrade, 2006; Gebhard, 2012; E. Marui & Lee, 1995; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Roy, 2013; Lee, 2017). These findings indicate that most students need more social adjustment and cultural challenges. Knowledge of culture, language fluency, and intercultural competence are essential for daily communication with the residents.

The previous studies show that investigation focusing on intercultural contact with international workers or trainees is considered unexplored. Our study aims to fill this gap by exploring intercultural contact, not from the perspectives of international students but international workers, focusing on Indonesian trainees. This study focuses on intercultural communication in Japan between Indonesian trainees and the residents or other co-workers. The environment where the two meet to interact in intercultural contact is the 'third place'. The 'third place' is where we can meet people from different cultures and relate to them (Kramsch, 1993).

Furthermore, in terms of the technical trainees gain intercultural communication, one of them is their workplace. However, many places besides the workplace could categorize as their 'third place. Here in this study, we identify what kind of 'third place' they encounter during their stay in Japan. Within that interaction with local workers, there are possibilities that they encounter difficulties between two people with different nationalities, languages, and cultural backgrounds. The incidence of misunderstanding between people of different cultures is relatively high. Therefore, the intercultural contact of the trainees in Japan results in intercultural communication competence. This contact is crucial to be prepared by the Indonesian trainees in the future.

The research problems of this study on intercultural contact of Indonesian trainees in Japan are as follows:

1. What is the perspective on the experience of intercultural contact of *Jisshusei*/trainees in Japan?

2. What are the characteristic of trainees' work culture and their perspective on Japanese learning?

Theoretical Background

Contact Zone and Intercultural Competency

In early 1991, Pratt introduced the 'contact zone' concept. The term refers to the social space where cultures meet and people interact. Often in highly asymmetric power relationships. Contact zone also can be an intercultural contact space where two or more people of different cultural, social, and economic exchanges. Kramsch & Uryu (2012) show that intercultural contact is often driven by harmful elements such as power struggles between ethnic groups or cultures. Intercultural contacts bring cross-cultural relationships and often lead to miscommunication between interlocutors of different socio-cultural backgrounds.

Morita (2012) studied intercultural interactions at a Japanese university and surveyed 250 international student respondents. The findings are that Japanese language proficiency is a necessity in Japan. The study suggests that international students need solid Japanese language skills to adapt to the environment. Yoshida et al. (2013) investigated intercultural communication skills in Japanese businesses. An important finding of their work is that to succeed in intercultural communication in the workplace requires a combination of the traditional 'Japanese mind' and the 'western way'. Japanese people tend to find out the needs of others and adapt to certain situations. On the other hand, Westerners frequently express themselves and take the initiative. Both studies are concerned with intercultural interactions in many settings, including academia and the workplace. However, the same finding indicates that we need to improve to achieve intercultural competence and integrate knowledge from both cultures. Second language learners require intercultural competency to communicate with people from various social and cultural backgrounds. According to Leung et al., (2014), intercultural competence is the ability to function effectively across cultures, think and act correctly, and interact and work with people from various cultural backgrounds. The concept of intercultural competence is "the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures we recognise as different from our own" (Guilherme, 2000).

Based on his study on Japanese students studying abroad, Hanada (2019) investigates the program and the characteristics that promote intercultural competence. His findings reveal that intercultural competency is influenced by the student program, previous local language skills, and pre-departure orientation. Intercultural competency can be gained by Japanese students participating in group works programs with people from various cultures. By interacting with people from different cultures and experiencing difficulties, they can overcome hardships. Our participants are international workers in Japan, especially Indonesian immigrants in this study. Our primary focus is on Indonesian trainees enrolled in on-the-job training programs. Workers from various socio-cultural backgrounds must be motivated to learn a second language and have intercultural competency.

The 'Third Place'

The 'third place' is where we can meet people from different cultures and relate to them (Kramsch, 1993). Kramsch uses 'third place' to refer to the intercultural space that language learners can reach when developing intercultural competence. The 'third place' concept was coined to describe the sense of being on the border between native speakers and non-native speakers. According to Kramsch & Uryu (2012), language learners must develop an intercultural perspective in which they understand both their own culture and language context ('first place') and the target culture and language context ('second place').

The 'third place' is where the cultures of the home country and the host country collide and converse with one another. Consider a Japanese anime fan club at an American university,

ethnic food festivals in Japan, or Hawaiian dance gatherings. This study investigates Indonesian trainees interacting with local Japanese and co-workers in language course communities, workplaces, and international gathering activities. The third place is a dynamic hybrid place within the language learner (Kramersch, 1996). When people acquire a foreign language and a foreign culture, they need to create a third place to join a new community of practice (Kramersch, 1993).

Intercultural Contact

Brislin (2001) emphasizes the need for intercultural contact and communication between individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds and the demands of the world's citizens to connect in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, Maurais & Morris (2003) suggest that the impact of globalisation on every element of our social lives exposes every human being to significant intercultural contact, particularly in terms of views between persons of different ethnicities. Carbaugh (1990) explains that investigating intercultural contact might bring some cultural patterns forward. He mentions focusing them inward in his study on cultural communication and intercultural contact viewpoints. So that it can connect the dots between various theories, emphasizing what needs to be regarded both theoretically and practically in intercultural situations. For example, interactional structures such as speaking turns; speech exchange patterns; the length of the pause when it is a turn to say; the communication process such as greeting and leaving the place; the use of nonverbal. The amount of sign language gestures, prosody, intentions, and communication processes such as greeting and leaving the site. Moreover, there are a variety of other culturally significant items.

According to Carbaugh (2013), communication in a cultural context has different meanings for different people, such as the local forms used and the moral order formed when people engage socially. When dealing with other individuals in one community, intercultural contact sees a dynamic connection between community members of different cultures by looking at the human aspect. Some elements to consider in intercultural communication, according to Carbaugh, include the sharing of identity and the same aims and meaning with other community members.

Communication between cultures is the relationship between patterns and social situations, which is generally significant because all cases support some statements while restricting others. Knowledge of these relationships and the communication patterns that fit within them has become central to communication theory and practice. There are situations and modes of communication in which cultural identities are displayed in some cases. As well as on the roadside, in churches, classrooms, homes, and talk shows, among other places. Culture is represented by a person who represents a common identity. On the other hand, each setting and group conveys something about itself through its distinctive patterns, situations, and modes of communication, displaying its co-called cultural identity (Carbaugh, 2013).

According to Dörnyei & Csizér (2005), intercultural contact is also essential in the problem of second language learning. The primary purpose of traditional second language learning in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is to develop significant cross-cultural contacts, as L2 competency is defined as creating a medium of communication between members of different ethnolinguistic communities. On the other hand, interethnic contact provides opportunities to improve language abilities and significantly impact students' attitudes and motivational dispositions, boosting motivated learning behaviour. Intercultural communication is thus both a means and an end in studying a second language, or L2.

This study suggests that we live in a globally interconnected and culturally varied society, with significant challenges and possibilities to live and work in other nations. As a result, it is essential to fully understand the target country's language and social and cultural aspects. Intercultural communication challenges immigrant workers, who must learn the target

language and understand cultural variety. In ‘third place’, Intercultural Contact (IC) will help with second language learning and L2 socialization.

METHOD

Research Design

This study is a comprehensive study and analysis of the relationship between Japanese learning and intercultural contact of Indonesian trainees in Japan. This study uses a mixed-method combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data the author collects through a google form questionnaire be distributed to trainees for a period of approximately one year and above in Japan. In addition, the authors use qualitative methods to strengthen the data found in the questionnaires that have been distributed through follow-up interviews in some cases to find out more about the intercultural contact process carried out by intercultural workers with domestic workers or with Japanese society in general.

This questionnaire was distributed over two weeks, from August 20th, 2021, until September 4th, 2021, via an online questionnaire in a google form. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with online zoom.

Research Participant

The participants in this study are Indonesian trainees who have lived in Japan for more than one year and are scattered throughout Japan. The subject of this study is determined through random sampling to ensure sufficient data is available. In this study, the total number of persons was 128, including 71 women (55,5%) and 57 males (44.5%).

Age ranges from 17 to 45 years old. According to the survey results, 93 people (72.7 %) were between 17 and 25. In comparison, 32% of participants (or 25% of those who completed the survey) were between 26 and 35. Only two people (1.6%) are over the age of 36. According to the data provided by the respondents, 81.3% are high school graduates or equivalents, while just 18% are undergraduate/diploma students.

The job training program participants cover various fields, including food manufacturing, machinery, metalworking, construction, health (*kaigo* and nurses), assembly, fisheries, etc.

Because the length of their stay might also impact their communication mentally, it has become one of the variables examined in this study to determine the intercultural competency of Indonesian trainees. The following are the respondents' responses regarding the length of stay in Japan.

Length of stay	Percentage
Less than one year	22,7%
1-3 year	57%
More than 3 years	20,3 %

Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected and submitted with a questionnaire with open-ended and close-ended questions. A follow-up interview was conducted to examine the trainees' intercultural contact (IC) choices. The trainees' detailed biographies are discussed in four sections of the questionnaire. The trainees' perspective on the experience of intercultural contact with native Japanese speakers and other co-workers is offered in the second half. What are the different types of third places where trainees congregate? The final section of the questionnaire delves into learning a second language, focusing on Japanese and how trainees interact with the Japanese community.

According to Csizér & Kormos (2009), four factors underpin persons establishing contact in the experience of intercultural interaction: verbal contact, written contact, media contact, and understanding the importance of those contacts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Intercultural Contact

Verbal Contact

We asked about the general character of the form of intercultural contact or the third place utilized by Indonesian trainees in Japan in the original articulation of the problem. The criteria for this questionnaire are based on intercultural communication experience, which comprises four aspects: verbal contact, written contact, media contact, and the importance of interpreting these encounters. Csizér & Kormos (2008) investigated the role of intercultural contact in the community of foreign language learners. We intended to see what kind of intercultural encounters trainees in Japan created in this study. The questionnaire revealed that the trainees made verbal contacts, such as interacting directly with local workers and outside work. Trainees connect with and understand direct orders from their Japanese superiors and make direct contact through participation in social activities.

The following table contains statements regarding the forms of verbal contact of trainees concerning intercultural communication and third place. Statements 1, 2, 3, and 4 were picked as the most closely matched the respondents' opinions. The smaller number indicates that the respondent agrees with the left-hand statement more, while the higher number shows that the respondent agrees with the right-hand statement more.

Table 2 Form of verbal contact of Indonesian Trainees in Japan

Left Statement	1	2	3	4	Right Statement
I rarely communicate in Japanese at work	4.7%	15.6%	33.6%	46.1%	I often communicate in Japanese at work
Aside from my co-workers and supervisor, I don't know any Japanese people	30.5%	32%	16.4%	21.1%	If there is something I don't understand, I frequently ask my co-workers or my employer
If there are issues at work, I tend to be silent	0.8%	5.5%	19.5%	74.2%	If there are issues at work, I frequently ask my boss or co-workers if there is anything I am unaware of
After work, I self-taught Japanese at home	53.1%	29.7%	10.9%	6.3%	I frequently attend courses offered by the city where I live.
I rarely participate in social activities outside work	48.4%	25.8%	14.1%	11.7%	I often participate in activities outside work, such as <i>nomikai</i> , picnics or others.
I often don't understand the instructions of my Japanese supervisor	6.3%	14.1%	54.7%	25%	I mostly understand the instructions given by my Japanese supervisor

Indonesian trainees often communicate in Japanese in the workplace as many as 59 people (46.1%). It was also discovered that among trainees, 20 people (15.6%) did not speak in Japanese at work and that as many as six persons were classified as infrequently communicating in Japanese (4.7%). Verbal contacts made by trainees outside of the scope of work, such as attempting to become acquainted with Japanese people other than co-workers, are categorized as relatively poor. As evidenced by the following questionnaire results in a row, it is assumed that trainees do not know Japanese people other than their friends or supervisors. We can see on the results of the questionnaire, show that as many as 41 people (32%) and as many as 39 people (30.5%) do not know Japanese people. Forty-eight respondents (37.5%) said they had

Japanese acquaintances outside the workplace. From the two statements, it is clear that few trainees engage with Japanese outside of work. However, they are aware of the need to communicate in Japanese in the workplace.

According to the respondents' interactions and contact with local workers, as many as 95 people (74.2%) and 25 people (19.5%) are pretty active in asking their coworkers or supervisors if there is something they don't know. This result is a very high response rate, given that workers at work are aware of the communication route in the event of a crisis. Only eight people (1.3%) tend to remain mute when there are problems at work and do not interact with their supervisors or coworkers. A total of 102 trainees responded positively to the statement that they mostly understood the directions given by Japanese supervisors (79.7%). And as many as 26 people (7.7%) responded that they did not understand the Japanese supervisor's instructions. Frequent interaction with local workers could bring a positive attitudinal change and promote acculturation and socialization. (e.g., Cohen et al., 2005; Stangor et al., 1996). This result also underscores the importance of frequently interacting with local workers so their intercultural communication could increase.

Table 2 shows additional contact zones, such as courses, which are typically provided free of charge by the respondents' city. According to the survey, only about 24 people participate in learning and socializing outside of work (17.2%). Meanwhile, the number of trainees who choose to practice self-taught Japanese at home after work is relatively high, at 106 people (82.8%). Other contact zones such as social activities such as company picnics, *nomikai*, and others that are social activities outside work, we can assume that the respondents' involvement is relatively low, as evidenced by the results of the questionnaire, which show that they rarely participate in social activities outside of work as many as 95 people (74.2%), and only about 33 people (25.8%) stated that they frequently participate in activities outside of work.

The contact zone that is carried out verbally can be classified as reasonably minimal because the interaction is solely limited to work and not outside of work, based on numerous remarks supplied to respondents regarding the verbal contact of the trainees. Socializing and participating in social events are crucial for developing intercultural communication skills.

Written Contact & Media Contact

Written and media contact are the other factors considered in the questionnaire regarding intercultural contact and third place. This is also an issue, as Csizér & Kormos (2008), in their study, found that intercultural interaction can be achieved indirectly through writing and media contact.

Table 3 Form of written contact and media contact by Indonesian trainees in Japanese

Left Statement	1	2	3	4	Right Statement
I rarely watch television or other YouTube channel in Japanese	15.6%	25.8%	36.7%	21.9%	I often watch television and other broadcasts in Japanese
I rarely read magazines or newspapers in Japanese	60.2%	24.2%	14.1%	1.6%	I often read magazines or newspapers in Japanese
When it comes to Japanese administration, I often ask Kumiai to help me understand it	33.6%	39.1%	23.4%	3.9%	I try myself to do all the administrative matters in Japanese
I am not a member of any community related to Japanese	60.2%	21.9%	13.3%	4.7%	I like to join groups or communities related to Japanese
There is no WhatsApp or Line group at my work	41.4%	13.3%	15.6%	29.7%	I follow several WhatsApp or Line groups at my work
I rarely open Japanese letters that go into my apartment mailbox	24.2%	26.6%	23.4%	25.8%	I often open Japanese letters that go into my apartment mailbox

According to the survey results, 28 respondents (21.9%) frequently watch Japanese television and other broadcasts, while 47 people (36.7%) watch Japanese television. However, less than 15.6% or 20 respondents stated that they rarely watch Japanese television, followed by 33 people (25.8%) who also watched Japanese tv less. From their statement, it can be seen that more than 58% of trainees are pretty active in interacting through television media contact in Japanese. However, other forms of written contact such as magazines or newspapers get the opposite result. Only 20 people (15.7%) claimed that they made written contact, such as reading Japanese magazines and newspapers, whereas 108 people (84.4%) stated that they rarely read magazines or newspapers in Japanese.

The discrepancies in the results of the written and media contact forms from the two statements above suggest that trainees still find the Japanese language in written form, such as magazines and newspapers, challenging to grasp because they are still unable to read and understand kanji.

One of the indicators in this study is other written contacts, such as administrative arrangements in Japanese. According to the questionnaire results, 93 people (72.7%) stated that trainees relied on distributing companies or *Kumiai* to handle their Japanese-speaking administration. In comparison, only 30 people (23.4%) felt able to manage their administration, and only a few respondents (3.9%) stated that they attempted to independently handle all administrative matters in Japanese.

Table 3 shows the results of the questionnaire for the written and media contact, which that the majority of respondents chose the statement, "I have not become a member of any community related to the Japanese language," with 105 people (82.1%) selecting this option, and approximately 23 people (18%) stating that they like and follow groups or communities related to the Japanese language. The respondents made diverse statements depending on the written contact and media contact format.

According to the survey's findings, 58 respondents (45.3%) said they were a part of many WhatsApp groups or Line groups at work. While 53 people (41.4%) said there was no WhatsApp or Line group at work, 17 people (13.3%) said they had joined a WhatsApp or Line group.

In terms of intercultural interaction, mailing in Japan is another type of written contact. In general, correspondence in Japan is primarily written, whether it be for the administration of residence, job, or life in Japan. According to the survey results, 63 persons (49.2%) reported that they frequently open their Japanese letters in their apartment mailboxes. In addition, more than 50.8% of respondents (65 people) said they rarely open Japanese letters that come in their mailboxes. Starting with significant matters or notifications such as housing communication, electric power, water, and other pamphlets, they are still carried out in the form of mailing in Japan. In Japan, this has become a way of life. The response to the previous statement suggests that some trainees are still unaware of the significance of this social form.

Intercultural Contact

Studying Japanese, work culture, and pragmatic characteristics of the Japanese language, according to Csizér & Kormos (2008), is also one of the requirements for trainees to enhance intercultural contact. The respondents' assessments of things that facilitate the formation of intercultural contact between trainees and local Japanese people are shown in table 4.

The questionnaire results shown in table 4 above must have the trainees' perceptions about the Japanese language, work culture, and sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies. According to the survey results, 61 people (47.7%) agreed with the statement about often asking Japanese friends about grammar or unfamiliar vocabulary, and 42 people agreed with the statement but assumed it was not done frequently (32.8%). While just about 25 people responded to the survey, the results showed that they rarely inquired about Japanese with their

Japanese acquaintances (19.5%). It might conclude that they are aware of the significance of the need for the Japanese language in their lives while in Japan.

Table 4 Form of intercultural contact of Indonesian trainees in Japanese

Left statement	1	2	3	4	Right statement
I rarely ask Japanese friends about Japanese	15.6%	25.8%	36.7%	21.9%	I often ask my Japanese friends about unknown grammar or vocabulary
I don't understand the work culture in my workplace	7%	12.5%	32.8%	47.7%	I really understand the work culture in my workplace
I'm more concerned with getting work done than trying to learn Japanese	1.6%	21.9%	37.5%	25.8%	I am very interested in Japanese and want to learn Japanese
I never try JLPT (<i>nihongo noryoku shiken</i>)	27.3%	14.1%	31.3%	27.3%	I always take JLPT (<i>nihongo noryoku shiken</i>)
I have a hard time understanding what Japanese people says (ambiguous expression)	6.3%	21.9%	47.7%	24.2%	I quite understand what Japanese people says (ambiguous expression)
It's more important to work well than interact with Japanese people	9.4%	14.1%	26.6%	50%	It's more important to be working and making friends with Japanese people
I'd rather over time if there is an offer	50.8%	24.2%	15.6%	9.4%	I'd rather enjoy life in Japan and play when I'm off.

This statement was supported by the results of a questionnaire which revealed that 81 people (63.3%). As many as 47, several respondents claimed that doing just work was more important than learning Japanese (36.7%). This statement indicates that many respondents understand and are interested in learning Japanese.

Language proficiency is also required to complement their capacity to speak Japanese. Competency exams are also a statement item that respondents were asked about. The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), held twice a year worldwide, is the general competency test taken by Japanese language learners. According to the data in table 4, 75 trainees (58.6%) reported that they always attempted the JLPT test. This JLPT exam is a timed and location-limited exam that serves as the foundation for competency assessment of Japanese language learners worldwide. Meanwhile, 53 persons (41.4%) acknowledged that they had never attended or competed in the JLPT while in Japan. These findings show that, while 58.6% of respondents were enthusiastic enough to continue attempting the JLPT exam, the percentage was not excessively high.

The perception of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence also comes up in this discussion. While language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and Kanji are not enough to live and work in Japan, understanding the meaning and intent behind native speakers' expressions is also a challenge for Japanese language learners. As a result, we attempted to inquire about the trainees' grasp of the meaning and intent (*aimai hyougen* or ambiguous expression) of Japanese terms frequently hidden in this study.

We also presented several comments about work culture to understand their motivation in social life and job in Japan. The survey results show that the vast majority of Indonesian trainees, 103 in total, are aware of the work culture in which they work (88.3%). This large amount necessitates a follow-up interview to elucidate why they need to grasp the work culture at each location. Only 15% (11.8%) said they didn't get the work culture at their workplace.

The trainee’s response to the statement about the importance of working with Japanese co-workers and establishing friendships strengthens the previous statement regarding work culture. This remark is backed up by 98 respondents (76.6%) who voted. Only 30 respondents (23.5%) said that socializing with Japanese people was more important than working.

In terms of employment and work culture, most respondents (98 people) think they are better off working overtime if there is an offer (75%). Only a few, as many as 13 people, believe that they are better off enjoying life in Japan and playing when they are on vacation (25%). This statement demonstrates that the main reason trainees work and living in other countries is for economic reasons, as evidenced by respondents' responses to the questionnaire on these topics.

The importance of comprehending and knowing Japanese by Indonesian trainees living in Japan is one conclusion that can be drawn from this section. They recognize the value of learning about Japanese work culture and interacting with Japanese coworkers. However, the value of the Japanese language is still seen as a means of survival as just 41.4% of respondents believe the Japanese language proficiency test is not very significant. This is aided by economic pressure, so they would be better off working overtime than learning more about Japanese social life. According to Kormos et al. (2014), who studied students in a study-abroad environment, some students who did not initiate contact with the locals tend to lack the basic condition necessary for successful contact. This result is similar to our study, in which Indonesian trainees only use the Japanese language for survival.

Work Culture and Japanese Learning

Intercultural contact is inextricably linked to how a person communicates across cultures. Intercultural communication is closely related to any culture that trainees comprehend, study, and practice. As a result, we examine the respondent’s social understanding, conduct, and work culture in this section. This is to see how involved the trainees are in the Japanese community’s culture and social events.

Table 5 Forms of work culture and Japanese language

Left statement	1	2	3	4	Right statement
I only greet my neighbors or co-worker	20.3%	18%	34.4%	27.3%	I always try to talk to my Japanese neighbor or co-workers
Taking the time to learn Japanese language is not important	2.3%	2.3%	49.2%	46.1%	It is important to make time to learn Japanese
Saving money for fun is not important	16.4%	18.8%	34.4%	30.5%	I set aside money for fun
I know a few about my company’s language term (in Japanese)	10.2%	19.5%	48.4%	21.9%	I already understand about my company’s language term (in Japanese)
I tend to be less adaptable in a work environment of a different culture and language	3.9%	53.1%	53.1%	27.3%	I tend to adapt quickly in a work environment of different cultures and languages.
I feel more negative things at work	4.7%	13.3%	42.2%	39.8%	I feel more positive things at work

The trainees’ environmental involvement may be seen in the first statement, which refers to the activities of greetings forms with Japanese people. Table 5 shows that 49 people (38.3%) just greeted their neighbours and co-workers, whereas 79 people (61.7%) attempted to converse in Japanese with their neighbours and co-workers. In Japanese culture, greeting co-workers is a work ethic, whereas greeting neighbours or talking with them is a positive socialising endeavour as part of society.

The significance of knowing and interpreting Japanese is discussed in table 5 above. The statement that the respondents took the time to study Japanese and believed that it was significant for their work was then bolstered by the fact that 122 persons (95.3%) strongly agreed with this statement. Only six people (4.6%) believe it is unimportant to learn Japanese. According to the follow-up interview, this could be prompted by workplace unhappiness or a disparity in the working environment.

Because social activities might facilitate cross-cultural communication, we make various statements, such as the third statement in table 5. According to the result of table 5, 83 people (64.9%) agree with the assertion that they put money away for leisure. Meanwhile, only 45 people (35.2%) believe that saving money for leisure is unimportant. This comment shows that many trainees attempt to enjoy their time in Japan rather than focusing solely on their work. However, because the percentage is slightly more significant, putting money aside for leisure here is not in the sense of enjoying life in Japan by traveling.

Table 5 summarises the results of the questionnaire, which explains various claims about Japanese work culture and how trainees reacted to it. As can be seen from the statement about work culture and company terminology, as many as 90 people (70.3%) are familiar with the phrases used by the organisation. Meanwhile, only 38 people (29.7%) said that they had little or no grasp of the terms used at their workplace. The trainees' program has an average working contract term of one to three years. Under the new policy relating to "special skilled workers" or *tokutei ginou*, they can extend the contract after three years of training through test procedures and other means.

As a result, we add some points regarding how trainees in Japan can adjust. A total of 103 respondents (80.4%) agreed that they could adapt to various cultural and linguistic work situations. Meanwhile, 25 people (19.5%) said they are less adaptive in their workplace because of the diversity of cultures and languages. We may deduce from these findings that they are already prepared to live in Japan; only about 20% believe they would struggle to adapt. Clarity on this subject must be researched further, especially since mental preparation is necessary when working overseas. The last statement in table 5 states that there are many positive things that trainees can take away from their training in Japan, as evidenced by the 105 people (82%) who agreed with it. On the other hand, 23 people (18%) disagreed that they are still experiencing bad feelings at work, even though most rated their relationship with the organisation as favourable. However, 18% of respondents were dissatisfied with their jobs.

We can conclude from the questionnaire results on the work culture and Japanese language that respondents had a good awareness of the value of knowing the Japanese language, learning work culture, and recognising environmental adaptation, especially in terms of work. However, as evidenced by various comments not substantiated by respondents, the trainees' breadth of interaction zones has not expanded.

CONCLUSION

Intercultural communication with co-workers or domestic workers is a challenge for international workers. Trainees, also known as *Jisshusei*, are overseas 'employees' in Japan who were initially training program participants who came to Japan to be prepared. Trainees have been exposed to the Japanese language, culture, and social life. As a result, intercultural competency is critical for them to comprehend. One hundred twenty-eight respondents returned the questionnaire based on the data collected in the survey. Respondents filled out questionnaires from a diverse field of trainee programs.

Furthermore, from Hokkaido prefecture to Kyushu prefecture, the variance of domicile is highly different, and respondents stated that there were more than 30 cities. Based on the findings, it can be assumed that 60% of the trainees' verbal contacts were limited to Japanese

co-workers and supervisors. This is supported by a statement claiming that respondents rarely engage in social activities outside of work, which more than 70% of respondents indicated.

Another characteristic of intercultural contact is written and media contact. We conclude that more than half of trainees actively communicate in Japanese through television, but media contact such as magazines or newspapers is hardly read; only about 20% of trainees enjoy reading magazines or newspapers in Japanese. It can be stated that the trainees still consider Japanese written and media contact problematic. It is also essential to determine their average Japanese competence and whether or not this has improved over their time in Japan. Trainees' participation in social media groups, such as WhatsApp or Line groups, is another interaction zone. As a result, less than 15% of respondents said they had an indirect contact zone as intercultural contact.

Another point of view that we observe from the trainees is how the trainees and local Japanese people interact culturally. The findings evidenced that the trainees acknowledged the value of the Japanese language for their life while in Japan. And a large number of people are interested in learning Japanese. It also encourages them to take the JLPT test, administered regularly. As can be seen, language capabilities and sociolinguistic and pragmatic abilities are required. It has been established that more than 70% of pre-holders grasp the meaning and intent of Japanese expressions that are often misunderstood (pragmatic competence).

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