SOCIO-CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON INTERPRETATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR JAPANESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A CASE OF KENYA UTALII COLLEGE, NAIROBI

BY

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NOVEMBER, 2016
DECLARATION

I confirm that this research thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other university/institution for certification. The thesis has been complemented by referenced works duly acknowledged. Where text, data, graphics, pictures or tables have been borrowed from other works including the internet, the sources are specifically accredited through referencing in accordance with anti-plagiarism regulations.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband Bernard W. Ikua, our daughters, Njeri & Wangari and our sons, Ikua & Mirugi.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the almighty God whose favour has rested upon me throughout the entire process of this course as is written in His word in Psalm 90:17. *May the favour of the Lord our God rest upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.* I am very grateful to my supervisors, Dr. Adelheid M. Bwire and Dr. Sophia M. Ndethiu for their invaluable guidance and professional advice throughout my study. Thanks to all the lecturers who taught me various units during my course work: Prof. J. Kimemia, Dr. H. Babusa, Prof. S. Ondigi, Dr. H. Amunga, and Dr. D. Khatete. I am also grateful to Dr. V. Were of the Department of Foreign Languages for guiding me through the thesis corrections. I am most thankful to my dear husband, Wamutĩ, who provided total support and encouragement throughout this entire course and kept assuring and reassuring me that I will eventually accomplish the task. I cannot count the number of times he has said to me “it is possible”. Also, my gratitude goes to our children Njeri, Wangarĩ, Ikua and Mĩrũgĩ for their prayers, patience and understanding all the way through. The four have surely been a constant source of inspiration and joy. I am also indebted to all my family members, friends and colleagues whose prayers and encouragement continually motivated and propelled me in this endeavor.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ESL:   English as a Second Language

JICC: Japanese Information and Culture Centre

JFL:  Japanese as a Foreign Language

JLIM: Japanese Language Instructional Material

JLPT: Japanese Language Proficiency Test

KUC: Kenya Utalii College

L1: First language

L2: Second language
ABSTRACT

Foreign language instruction is most effective when it takes place through meaningful, motivating, and interactive activities of cognitive and socio-cultural nature. Foreign languages instructional materials are generally produced by the native speakers of the language guided by their own culture, without consideration of the culture of any other users of the materials. Many learners of Japanese language have been found to have difficulties in mastering the language. This study sought to determine the influence of socio-cultural differences in the interpretation of Japanese language instructional materials (JLIM) by Kenyan students. An investigation on the teaching methods and materials used and the interpretation of the JLIM by the students was carried out. The influence of the learner’s attitude towards the language was also studied. The study was done at Kenya Utalii College (KUC) through classroom observations, questionnaires and interviews. The feasibility of these instruments was tested through a pilot study. In the main study, the study group comprised 86 students, 3 classes and 2 language instructors from a total population of 170 students, 6 classes and 2 instructors. A comparison was made between the expected observations from the instructor’s point of view and the actual interpretation by the students. The data collected was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively using Microsoft Excel® software package. The information derived from the questionnaires was based on frequencies for particular responses which were then used to determine the attitude of the students towards the language. Statistical tools which included frequencies and percentages were used to describe learners’ attitude towards the language. Analyzed data was presented in narrative form, tables and charts. The study found that the Japanese language instructors in KUC used interactive methods to deliver the Japanese course content by employing a wide variety of Japanese language instructional materials. The results also revealed that the Japanese language instructional materials used in Kenya contain some elements of Japanese culture, which are unfamiliar to the Kenyan learners and that some of these culturally unfamiliar items cause misinterpretation of the information therein. The research further revealed that the learners of Japanese language at KUC generally have a positive attitude towards the language. It was concluded that there are adequate Japanese language instructional materials at KUC but they contain culturally unfamiliar elements for the Kenyan learners. Further, the Japanese language learners at KUC are exposed to interactive learning through a variety of standard instructional approaches. Moreover, the instructors are competent to teach the language but do not have sufficient knowledge on Japanese culture. In addition, culturally unfamiliar items interfere with the interpretation of information contained in the instructional material. It was recommended that the introductory topics in the Japanese language curriculum emphasize more on teaching of the Japanese culture. Also, efforts should be made to localize the learning resources for a more effective teaching of the language.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction
This chapter gives a detailed background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the study objectives and research questions, justification, significance of the study, scope, limitations, assumptions, theoretical and conceptual framework, and lastly, operational definition of terms used in the study.

1.2 Background to the study
Kenya is a multilingual nation with over 40 languages and dialects spoken in various parts of the country and English and Kiswahili are the official and national languages (Appel & Mysken, 1987). There are various foreign languages taught in Kenya, which include French, German, Japanese, Italian and Chinese, among others. Japanese language is spoken mainly by the people of Japan as their native language. The language is also widely spoken in Eastern Asia and in some parts of South America, where there are many immigrants from Japan (Masayoshi, 1990).

There is a growing bilateral trade between Kenya and Japan, with Kenya exporting mainly agricultural produce while importing manufactured goods such as automobiles, electronics and other machineries from Japan (European commission, 2014). In addition, the tourism industry is experiencing an upsurge of Japanese tourists annually. Further, the Kenya government is redirecting its focus from
western countries to the east for development partners, Japan being one of the countries of interest. With these developments, Japanese language is gradually gaining popularity in Kenya and in Africa. For effective communication to enhance these political and socio-economic activities, learning and mastery of Japanese language by Kenyans is essential. This study focuses on the interpretation of the Japanese language instructional materials (JLIM) by the Kenyan students.

In an attempt to upgrade competence of Japanese language instructors, occasional training is given to a few of the language instructors by Japan Foundations, where they get fully immersed in the language, its culture and its people for a period ranging from two to six months. Even so, as Chastain (1988) notes, culture is so complex that one cannot readily absorb all values and habits of the target language people within a short period of time.

Language teachers are responsible for providing the cultural information that underlies the language, and therefore should be quite knowledgeable in the culture under the study (Singhal, 1998; Zaid, 1999; Byram & Risagar, 1999).

1.2.1 Status of Japanese language teaching in Kenya

Kenya is currently one of the leading centres for the development of Japanese-language education in sub-Saharan Africa with approximately 1,000 students studying the language. In Kenya, Japanese language is taken as a foreign language to some of the learners, and a second foreign language to others who have already acquired some proficiency in some other foreign languages such as French, Italian, German and Chinese. The language is taught in some universities and in many
middle level colleges, mainly to serve in the tourism and hospitality industry. The main institutions currently offering the language are those dealing with tourism and hospitality courses such as the Kenya Utalii College (KUC), Kenya Wildlife Services Training Institute (KWSTI), United States International University (USIU) and Kenyatta University (KU), among others. However, for many years, Japanese-language education has remained in the developmental stage with majority of learners terminating only at the beginners’ level. Table 1.1 presents the number of students that were taking Japanese language at different levels in the various institutions in Kenya in 2014. It can be seen in this table that KUC had the largest number of students, followed by Strathmore University and KWSTI. It can also be seen that the majority of the learners were at basic level.

**Table 1.1 Number of students taking Japanese Language in Kenya (September 2014)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/no.</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Japanese Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kenyatta University (KU)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kenya Utalii College (KUC)</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>United States International University (USIU)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strathmore University</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kenya Wildlife Training Institute</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Foreign language Departments in respective institutions*
Just like for all other languages, there are challenges inherent in the teaching and learning of Japanese language. One of the challenges is the interference with the learner’s first language, which is an inevitable aspect in foreign language learning (McLaughlin, 2012). Such interference is especially evident when the structure and systems for the first and target languages are different. It has been reported that first language interference in learning a second language is greatest when the languages involved are distinct in structure and system (Ho, 1986; Houmafal et al., 2005). Japanese and English languages are very different in many aspects. The students tend to use their knowledge and experience of English language to interpret and to learn the Japanese language. Thus, their knowledge and experience of the English language influences the way they learn and use the Japanese language. Some of the sentences which they construct are a clear indication of a situation where one is thinking in English while speaking in Japanese language. For example, a student will translate a Japanese statement *I am going home* to say *I home going*, which is a direct translation from Japanese to English. Tang (1999) argues that to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language.

The difference in the sentence structures for the first and target languages also slows down the learning process since the students tend to base their learning of Japanese language on their knowledge of English language. For example, Japanese language has a Subject-Object-Verb word order, such that the *subject* comes first; the *verb* last, and if the verb takes an *object*, it comes in the middle. English and Kiswahili languages, on the other hand, are Subject-Verb-Object languages. Therefore,
mistakes in the construction of a correct Japanese language sentence are very common.

Failure to understand the cultural meaning of the context within which a word, a phrase, a sentence, a drawing, or even a picture occurs may result in misinterpretation of the message. For example, Japanese greet each other by bowing down their heads and not by shaking their hands. On the other hand, in Kenya, greeting style vary from one community to another. For example, the Maasai elderly men greet ladies by placing hands on their head. The Kikuyu greetings are elaborate, whereby age-mates greet by alternate grasping the palm and the thumb for a number of times as they exchange pleasantries.

If Kenyan students are presented with a picture of people bowing down, they will not interpret the action to be greetings for they do not relate such a schema with greetings. In such a situation where the students do not have the cultural meanings, they may attach the wrong meanings to the symbols of communication.

The number of students taking Japanese language at advanced levels in Kenya has been very low, compared to those who take the language at the basic level. Some students learn Japanese language out of personal interest, meaning that the language is not a course requirement for the main course they are taking in their respective colleges. Such students are intrinsically motivated and easy to instruct. However, some students learn the language because the course they are majoring in requires a foreign language. Such students are excited about the Japanese language during
the initial stages but as the learning progresses, the content becomes more demanding and the interest goes down.

Most of the Japanese language students in Kenya hardly use Japanese language outside the classroom, because the language is not widely spoken within their environment. Therefore, the retention rate of the language is quite low, making it difficult for the students to achieve adequate communicative and linguistic competencies. Krashen & Terrell (1992) argue that the purpose of language instruction is to allow the learner to understand language outside the classroom, so that ultimately he or she can utilize it in the real world, as well as in the classroom for progress. Thorndike (1999) states that for maximum learning, the principle of frequency should be applied in instructions. This principle states that those things most often repeated are best remembered and that human mind can rarely retain, evaluate, and apply new concepts or practices after only a single exposure.

Rapid absorption of the Japanese language, like for any other foreign language can be hindered by the socio-cultural differences between the learner’s language and the target language. Culture in language learning is an essential element, attached to the teaching of the four language skills viz speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Kramsch, 1993). Kramsch argues that culture is ever present in a language class unsettling learners when they least expect it and limiting their competence. An example of such a situation in a Japanese language classroom may be illustrated by a case where students struggle to remember a phrase such as *wakarimashita* which means, *I have understood*. After sometime the instructor then tells them that because they are training to work in the tourism and hospitality industry, they
should not use the phrase *wakarimashita* to respond to the guests but instead should say *kashikomarimashita* since the former is plain and the latter is more polite (own experience). Other such examples include addition of “o” on nouns to make them sound more polite, such as *obento* for *bento* (lunch box), *omatsuri* for *matsuri* (festival), and “go” to make 2\(^{nd}\) person possessive noun more polite such as in the case of *gokazoku* for *kazoku* (your family), and so on. The influence of culture on effectiveness of language learning is supported by Byram (1994), who argues that the language rooted in the context can be thoroughly comprehensible only when the cultural context is understood.

One other difficulty faced by learners of Japanese Language is the complicated writing system for the language. Japanese language uses different scripts unlike the alphabets which are familiar to the learners. Evidently, this causes the learning progress and the classroom communication to become difficult. The writing system uses three different scripts namely, Kanji, Hiragana and Katakana (Terry, 2004; Nakajima, 2002).

Kanji are logographs of Chinese origin which represent the word roots. For example, the word *student* in Japanese is *gakusei* which is written in Kanji as 学生. Hiragana are a set of symbols that represent sounds. For example, the syllables for the word *gakusei* above are がくせい. Katakana are syllables used mainly to transcribe foreign or borrowed words. For example, the word *necktie* is written as ネクタイ which is pronounced as *nekutai*. The word *gakusei* can also be written in Katakana as ガクセイ. Thus, the word *student* can be written in all
the 3 styles as がくせい (Hiragana), 学生 (Kanji) or ガクセイ (Katakana), which can be quite confusing for the learner of the language. This could be what discourages some students, resulting in their dropping of the language course after the basic level.

The Japanese language syllabus in many Kenyan colleges are organized in such a way that by the end of the first two semesters of the language learning, the learner should be able to participate in simple conversations including greetings, introducing one self, asking the way, counting, stating likes and dislikes, reading, simple comprehension as well as writing in Hiragana, Katakana and at least 150 basic Kanji. They should also have an understanding of some basic Japanese cultural aspects. This level could be equated to that of a primary level grade 3 for a Japanese native speaker and it is the most basic level examined internationally as N5 in the Japanese Language Proficiency Tests (JLPT) administered by the Japan Foundation. Higher levels are taught in subsequent semesters.

This study has investigated the influence of the different writing systems on the attitude of the learners towards the Japanese language.

1.2.2 Participation of students in Japanese language learning in Kenyan colleges

In institutions where Japanese language is taught, just like for any other language, the learners attend the language classes where they are taught vocabulary and sentence structures right from basics through intermediate to advanced levels, in accordance to the curriculum structure. The activities in the class setup include reading, writing and conversations.
Besides the class activities, the students studying Japanese are encouraged to engage in cultural activities which promote and enrich their understanding of the language. These include enrolling and participating in Japanese language clubs where they engage in various cultural activities such as karate, karaoke, origami, cultural dances, drama and watching movies. In addition the Kenyan Japanese Information and Culture Centre (JICC) organizes cultural activities at national level where Japanese language students participate. One of the activities organized by JICC that has a major impact in Japanese learning is the annual national speech contest, where learners and instructors participate, and prizes awarded to the best performers. During these events, the participants are also introduced to other cultural aspects including sampling of Japanese cuisine and trying out Japanese traditional attire.

Participation in Japanese language examination is another activity which promotes language learning. Ambitious students who wish to advance in the language often register for JLPT, which is offered at five different levels, the highest being level N1 and the lowest level N5. Many students drop out at level N5. For example in 2013, out of the 88 Japanese language candidates, 70 of them were for level N5, representing 79.5%, while only 2 were registered for level N1, representing a mere 2.2% (Japan Educational Exchange Services, 2013). The N1 level is equivalent to a university graduate level. Motivating the entire group of students and sustaining that motivation throughout the course is therefore a major challenge the instructors have to deal with. The distribution of participation for all levels is summarized in Table 1.2.
Table 1.2: Participation in Japanese Language Proficiency Test in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Level (Level N1 is the highest and N5 lowest)</th>
<th>N5</th>
<th>N4</th>
<th>N3</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of participants</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>79.55</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Japan Educational Exchange Services*

It can be seen in Table 1.2 that there is a sharp decrease of numbers as the proficiency levels rise.

1.2.3 Role of instructional materials in language teaching

Instructional materials play a major role in motivating the learner (Broussard & Garrison, 2004). It is therefore important to identify suitable instructional materials if the instructor is to effectively deliver the language content. The design of the instructional materials should take into consideration the socio-cultural background of the learner.

Learners of a given language make use of their home culture-specific schemata in relating new information to what they already know and, consequently, interpret the intended meaning for given instructional materials (Anderson, 1984). For the Japanese language students in Kenya, sometimes the information in the instruction materials does not relate to what exists in their culture, causing difficulties in decoding, which results to unachieved goals. In cases where the information in the instructional material is deeply rooted on the Japanese culture, the students misunderstand and misinterpret the information which may result to decline in the interest in studying the language.
Maley (1986) asserts that when a teacher introduces language teaching materials, such as books or handouts, they must understand that these will be viewed differently by students depending on their cultural views. Thus, people from different cultures are likely to have different views and interpretations of instructional materials designed within a different cultural context. The design of language instructional materials must therefore take into consideration the socio-cultural background of the intended users if they are to be of value to learners.

1.2.4 Instructor related issues

Like any other foreign language instructors, Kenyan Japanese language instructors are not only required to explain the linguistic meanings of the language forms but also the cultural context in which the language forms are used. Some Japanese language phrases are so deeply rooted in the culture that there are no phrases in English with an equivalent meaning. The instructor sometimes lacks suitable schema to interpret the new and foreign concepts appropriately and consequently the real meaning is sometimes lost in the process. For example, when Japanese people meet for the first time, they say hajimemashite whose literal meaning is something close to it is a beginning. This term hajimemashite has no equivalent word in English. Some authors translate it as nice to meet you but this is not its literal meaning. Learners usually expect that every word of the target language has an equivalent word in English. When this does not happen, the learners sometimes develop a mind-set that the language is difficult. Such an attitude raises the affective filter of the learners resulting in little or no learning. Other phrases which
do not have equivalent phrases in our culture and appear in Japanese language beginners level include, *doozo yoroshiku onegai shimasu* and *hon no kimochi desu*.

Generally, though Japanese language instructors in Kenya have a positive attitude towards the teaching of the language, they too lack sufficient knowledge about the Japanese culture. Therefore, the problem of material interpretation does not only affect the language learners but it also affects the language instructors who are not of Japanese origin. There is therefore a need to empower teachers with cultural knowledge and also with adequate information on teaching materials and teaching methods that would cater for the diverse needs of the language learners. Williams (1983) notes that in situations where there is a shortage of trained teachers, language teaching is very closely tied to the textbook. In such a case, teachers who have no background of exploiting and modifying the course materials feel insecure and become reluctant to alter or modify any single item in the course book.

In an attempt to empower the instructors, several seminars and conferences on effective teaching of the language have been organized at the JICC in Kenya, where Japanese language teaching experts are invited as resource persons. For example, in August, 2014 an international conference on teaching Japanese to beginners was held. Such seminars and conferences are very useful as far as teaching methods and theories are concerned but the socio-cultural gap remains un-bridged. However, in an attempt to bridge this gap, the language instructors are offered training in Japan every 5 years by the Japan Foundations where they upgrade their teaching methodology, grammar and other skills. Nevertheless, some of the practicing teachers have not had an opportunity to attend this training and others
have attended only once which is not sufficient for the acquisition of the competence required. Other issues of concern in the instructions of the language include difficulties completing the syllabus because the learning progress is slow due to socio-cultural elements in the instructional material and demotivated learners among other reasons, and the lack of teaching materials suitable for the beginner’s levels, e.g. simplified dictionaries. Further, there is lack of interest among learners, and many are unwilling to progress from Roman alphabets (Romaji) to Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji. Beginners are introduced to writing the Japanese syllables in Romaji. After about one month of study, they are required to have mastered the hiragana and katakana syllables after which they are introduced to the kanji writing systems. Therefore, in the second month of the learning of the language, students are expected to stop writing in Romaji but normally, there is some resistance.

It can be seen from the foregoing that Japanese language is important in Kenya for political and socio-economic activities. A number of institutions in Kenya are engaged in teaching of the language. It is also seen that there are some challenges in teaching and learning of the language that need to be addressed.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Though there are many institutions in Kenya offering Japanese language course, the level of mastery of the language is very low, with only a few students managing to get beyond the basic level of proficiency in the language. A report by Japan Educational Exchange Services (2013) indicates a high participation in Japanese Proficiency Tests for the basic level, and extremely low participation for the advanced levels. The low participation at higher levels could be as a result of poor
past performances, which may be attributed to socio-cultural differences, as culture forms the background of every language classroom activity (Kramsch, 1993).

Choices made in designing the instructional materials are based on the material designers’ perception on how the language should be taught. Japanese language instructional materials (JLIM) for example, are produced in Japan by experts for the purpose of teaching the language to non-Japanese all over the world. However, learners may have difficulties in the interpretation of the concepts in these materials as a result of socio-cultural differences.

In addition, non-Japanese instructors may not be well conversant with the Japanese culture and therefore the problem of the interpretation of information in the JLIM affects them as well. There are incidences when the instructors have been found to be unable to handle questions arising from the students and also when the instructors lack relevant examples to give in order to reinforce learning.

The socio-cultural differences between the Japanese and the Kenyans may have some negative impact on effectiveness of the Japanese language instructors in teaching the syllabus and this may be a contributing factor to the poor mastery of the language. The question could be whether students perform poorly because of cultural differences or whether there are other factors that can be attributed to socio-cultural differences between Japanese and Kenyans. There was therefore, a need to establish the extent to which culture influences the interpretation of the Japanese language instructional materials. This study therefore, assessed the socio-cultural
elements in the JLIM with a view to determine the extent to which they influence the interpretations and the attitude of the learners.

1.4 Purpose of the study
The purpose of this study was to establish the extent to which culture influences the interpretation of Japanese language instructional materials by the Kenyan students.

1.5 Objectives of the study
The study objectives were to:

i) Establish the instructional materials used in teaching Japanese language in Kenya Utalii College.

ii) Determine methods used in teaching Japanese language.


iv) Establish the attitude of students towards Japanese language.

1.6 Research questions
This study was guided by the following research questions:

i) What are the instructional materials used to teach Japanese language in Kenya Utalii College?

ii) What instructional methods are used to teach Japanese language in the College?

iii) How do socio-cultural factors affect Kenyan Japanese language learners in the interpretation of the meanings in Japanese language instructional materials?
iv) What is the attitude of the Kenyan Japanese language students towards the language?

1.7 Assumptions

The following are the assumptions that were made in this research.

i) The accuracy of interpretation of JLIM has an effect on the mastery of the Japanese language.

ii) All the Japanese language classes at KUC use the same teaching and learning resources.

iii) The learners come from a variety of Kenyan backgrounds and have gone through the secondary level of education.

iv) Though the learners come from a variety of Kenyan backgrounds, they can be considered as of one culture, referred to as Kenyan culture from a global perspective.

1.8 Justification of the study

As was seen in the background, the level of Japanese proficiency for many Japanese language students in Kenya is still low despite the efforts made by institutions to offer quality instructions. Of the many students who enroll for JLPT, only a small proportion gets to the higher levels (levels 1 to 3), with majority dropping out after the most basic level (level 5). Moreover, instructors face difficulties in preparing students for the JLPT, perhaps owing to the inappropriate instructional materials available. The findings of this study will help to identify the gap created by the
socio-cultural differences, and explore ways to narrow or bridge this gap for enhanced understanding of the language.

1.9 Significance of the study
The findings of this research have provided an understanding of the cultural conflict in the interpretation of Japanese language instructional materials which affects the mastery of the Japanese language in Kenya. The results will give teachers and curriculum developers insights into which instructional materials are best for Kenyan culture, an aspect that is often overlooked or given little emphasis. This will result in a more relevant and meaningful curriculum hence better mastery of the Japanese language in Kenya. The main beneficiaries of the study are therefore the Japanese language learners, teachers as well as the developers of the curricula. The knowledge gained can also promote quality instructions in other foreign languages since cultural aspects in target language instructional materials are a universal phenomenon.

1.10 Scope of the study
This study was limited to the socio-cultural influence on the interpretation of instructional materials used in the teaching of Japanese language in Kenya. The intention of the study was to find out how the socio-cultural differences between the Japanese and the Kenyan culture affect the process of teaching and learning the Japanese language in Kenya. At KUC, Japanese language is taught at different levels, namely diploma and certificate levels. In order to give focus to the study, only one level, that is, the certificate level was considered. For this purpose the students taking certificate courses were sampled.
1.11 Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study included inadequacy of the much resources needed for the collection of data in terms of manpower, finances and time. Further, determining the attitude of learners towards the Japanese language posed a challenge as the perceived attitude may have depended on the mood of the subject which may have been affected by the prevailing conditions at the time. Also, different behaviour may be expected when the students are aware that they are being observed. These challenges were delimited by creating conducive atmosphere by explaining the purpose of the visit and reassuring of confidentiality in advance, for all subjects. Further, the researcher visited the target classrooms a number of times prior to the carrying out of the observations. Also, there was difficulty in capturing all observations in a natural classroom set up without interfering with the running of the class. To overcome this, the proceedings of the class were video-recorded for further review when necessary.

1.12 Theoretical and conceptual framework

1.12.1 Theoretical framework

Studies have shown that there is no significant difference between the way the first language and subsequent languages are acquired or learned. For example, Pattern (2003), states that the basic principles of language mastery, whether they are for L₁, L₂ or foreign-language mastery, share many similarities. Similar findings have been reported by Schmidt & Lee, (2005), in the language processing hypothesis and Ellis (2005) in the associative learning theory.

In this study, the schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1977) has been adopted.
The theory describes the process by which individuals refer to their own background knowledge in order to comprehend new information. The theory is based on the belief that every act of comprehension involves one’s knowledge of the world and that accurate decoding of information depends on how much related schema the decoder possess while decoding the information. Tse et al., (2007) note that an existing schema facilitates learning enabling fast integration of new associations, even when learning opportunities are relatively limited in number. Further, from the viewpoint of Hudson (1982), comprehension of a message entails drawing information from both the message and the internal schemata until sets are reconciled as a single schema or message. Failure to understand a text may be caused by lack of appropriate schemata that can easily fit with the content of the text. Therefore, where learners have had different life experiences with the writer, the writer’s intention may differ from the learners’ comprehension and interpretation of information.

The schema theory is supported by the linguistic relativity principle or Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Schlenker, 2004), which explores issues pertaining to language, culture and thought, indicating certain correlations between the terms. Whorf and Sapir noted that the human mind is determined by the classification system of the particular language used by humans. The hypothesis states that the structure of a language determines or influences the modes of thought and behavior characteristic of the culture in which it is spoken. According to this hypothesis, people perceive concepts and objects in accordance to the words used to describe them. The hypothesis has two different versions, namely the strong version, and the weak
version. The strong version suggests that people's thoughts are determined by the resources made available by their language, and the weaker version, suggests that thoughts are influenced by resources made available by the language.

In this study, we postulate that the designers of the JLIM are influenced by their language and that encoding and decoding of the information in the instructional material may differ due to cultural differences. This is in agreement with Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as noted by Littlejohn (2002) who states that Sapir-Whorf hypothesis shows that the language which one is taught and socially exposed to, influences that person’s thoughts and perception of the world. We see, hear and experience as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

According to the hypothesis, two different speech communities do not experience the world in the same way and as a result, their thoughts are different making it unlikely for them to interpret ideas in a similar way. Further the hypothesis postulates that people who talk differently, form correspondingly different mental representations. Littlejohn (2002) further observes that according to Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, users of different grammars are positioned by their grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent as observers, but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world.

According to the ideas and concepts of the Schema theory, the designers of the instructional materials base their designs on their culture, while the learners use
their own culture to decode the information. The difference in culture may interfere with the interpretation of the information. This study therefore investigated the extent to which the cultural differences influence the interpretation of instructional materials used in teaching Japanese as a foreign language in Kenya.

**Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework**
(Modified from - Brown (2006))

12.2.2 Conceptual framework
The variables for the study thus include, instructional materials and ability to interpret and understand the content. The instructional materials generally carry with them the culture of the designers of the materials while the interpretation of the information in these materials is dependent on the learners understanding of the target language culture. The cultural differences may also influence the attitude of the learners which may in turn affect the accuracy of interpretation and consequently the mastery of the language. The ability to interpret may also be influenced by the level of intelligence of the learner as well as environment, among other factors.
In this case, the instructional materials and the instructional methods are the independent variables while the ability to interpret is the dependent variable. The learner’s attitude, intelligence, cultural background and environment are some of the intervening variables. The variables are shown in the conceptual framework in Figure. 1.1.
1.13 Operational definition of terms

Achievement - Successfully acquiring competence in reading, writing, listening and speaking a foreign language.

Culture – The customs, arts, social institutions and achievements of a particular nation, people or other social group.

Effective learning - A process that produces a desired outcome in learners pursuing a foreign language.

Effective teaching - A process that produces the desired result in the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

First Language (L1) - The language a person learns from birth. It is also referred to as native language or mother tongue.

Foreign Language - A language that is not indigenous in the learners’ country.

Hiragana- A form of kana (syllabic writing) used in Japanese, especially used for function words and inflections. Hiragana represents every sound in Japanese language.

Instructional methods - Activities, tasks and learning experiences used by instructors during the process of teaching a foreign language.

Japanese as a second language - The Japanese language learned by students to whom the language is a foreign language in the students’ country.
Japanese Language Instructional Materials (JLIM) – Teaching aids used in the instructions of Japanese language in classroom. They include print and non-print media.


**Karaoke** - Singing without a live orchestra or band. It is a form of entertainment in which people take turn in singing popular songs into a microphone over prerecorded backing tracks.

**Karate** - A Japanese sport of unarmed combat using the hand and feet to deliver and block blows.

**Katakana** - A form of kana (syllabic writing) used in Japanese. Katakana is primarily used for words of foreign origin. The characters are angular in form.

**Kimono** – Japanese traditional garment.

**Mastery of a language** – Competence in both linguistic and communicative aspects of a language.

**Origami** - Japanese art of folding papers into decorative shapes and figures.

**Romaji** - Romanized alphabets used in instructions of Japanese language before the learners acquire competence in hiragana, katakana and kanji.

**Schema** – A conception of what is common to all members of a class or society
Second Language (L2) – Any language learned or acquired in addition to a person’s first language.

Socio-cultural issues – Matters related to a society and its culture which has some effect in the language used.

Target language – A language in which competence is desired or intended.

A detailed review of the literature related to this work is presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, various studies carried out on socio-cultural dimensions and quality instructions of foreign languages are reviewed. The literature review focuses on the socio-cultural elements of the target language inherent in the instructional materials used to teach languages and the effect these elements have on the mastery of the target language. The chapter discusses cultural elements in Japanese language instructional material, effect of cultural elements on the interpretation of instructional materials, interdependence between language, and thought and culture, and finally gives a summary of the gaps in the existing literature.

2.2 Instructional methods

Instructional methods are the activities used in the classroom for the realization of the lesson objectives. A good instructional method involving a variety of teaching techniques helps to sustain the learner’s interest in the subject (Asher, 2009).

In education today, there is a growing trend towards "learner-centered" or "active learning" where learners are made to interact with their peers and think together as they solve problems, analyze arguments and even generate hypothesis. Learning-centered approach, which employs a variety of teaching methods and techniques
involves the shifting of the role of the teacher from that of the giver of information to that of a facilitator of students’ learning.

As Larsen-Freeman (2000) notes, awareness and use of a wide range of techniques help teachers to exploit materials better and manage unexpected situations. Further, Arends (1998), states that effective teachers who are more experienced and expert have a large and diverse range of best practices, which helps them deal more effectively, with the unique qualities and characteristics of their students.

In language learning, the methods widely used include question and answer practice, substitution drill, dictation, listen and repeat drills, and read the passage and fill in the blanks, and, conversation exercises. Particular problems can be tackled equally successfully by the use of different methods, and the emphasis should be for the learners to communicate through interaction in the target language.

2.3 Cultural elements in Japanese language instructional materials

Classroom practices always seek to draw on whatever intrinsically motivates learners to reach their fullest potential. As a result, the instructors use variety of instructional materials in order to communicate useful information to the learners. In Kenya, instructional materials for Japanese Language that reflect authentic natural patterns of grammar and speech and fit the goals of a sequential Japanese language program are difficult to design locally and there are virtually no such resources available locally. Therefore, the Japanese language teachers rely heavily on instructional materials imported from Japan. The materials include the vital
components to teach the language and its culture and they are mostly in form of print media, visual, audio and audio-visual media. These instructional materials are professionally designed and are mass-produced for the purpose of teaching the language to the foreigners all over the world. Choices made in designing these materials are based on the material designers’ perception of what language is and how it should be taught.

Most textbook writers are native speakers who consciously or unconsciously transmit the views, values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of their own culture (Alptekin, 1991). Accordingly, we can say that culture influences the instructional material designers and developer’s views, values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas such that what we see in their production is a reflection of their culture. Hence, the words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, pictures, drawings and all the language forms which are used in the teaching of foreign languages are subjects not just of linguistic consideration but of cultural discussion and debate as well.

Since language and culture are closely intertwined, we can also say that the instructional materials used to teach a foreign language and the culture of that language are also similarly intertwined. From the point of view of Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet (1992), textbooks and other materials used in language learning generally present a certain way of looking at the world, that is, through the cultural lens of the author. Littlejohn & Windeatt (1988) have also stated that, instructional materials have a hidden curriculum that includes values, attitudes toward knowledge, attitude toward teaching and learning and also attitudes related to gender, society, et cetera.
Moreover, Byram (1989) reported that classroom instruction is dominated by the textbooks, which are used extensively to determine the topics as well as the sequence of instruction. The study also revealed that there is an emerging awareness of culture in the curriculum. In addition, Shimako, 2000, (in McKay, 2004) reported that many of the English textbooks adopted in Japan do include Western characters and values although Japanese culture was predominant. Shimako noted that this was despite misgivings about the inclusion of Western culture in English language teaching.

Therefore, it can be deduced that the instructional materials used to teach Japanese language have Japanese language cultural elements. The difference between the learners’ culture and the culture in the instructional material may interfere with the learners’ encoding of the information resulting to poor mastery of the Japanese language.

The most significant part of culture is unconscious and includes values and thought patterns which often find their way into the instructional materials, including textbooks. Textbooks and other instructional materials can be biased towards a particular culture as was observed by Norrizan (1993) in her survey where she also concluded that the culturally familiar items do facilitate second language learning. She carried out a comparative research to find out the impact of various cultural elements in textbooks used to teach English as a second language (ESL) to two sets of students in two different schools in Malaysia. She compared a school attended by upper middle class students, (which she named Community A), and an urban village with low income families (which she named Community B). She used a
matrix which included culturally suggestive topical items such as types of houses, overseas studies, business loans, travels, air travels and local festivals, among others. These items were selected from a survey of six form four ESL textbooks commonly used by the teachers in the classroom instructions. Classroom observations and interviews were carried out to determine whether the topical items are culturally familiar or unfamiliar to the students. She found out that many of the topical items were culturally relevant to students who came from upper middle class families in Community A. She concluded that the textbooks were biased towards middle-class values and lifestyles. Thus, meaningful interactions were achieved in these classrooms. Conversely, students in Community B were very distracted and restless during these lessons. She proposed that teachers should be more selective in choosing appropriate items according to the learners’ culture. She concluded that culturally familiar items do facilitate second language learning. From Norrizan’s findings, it can be argued that unfamiliar culture negatively interferes with classroom instructions hindering effective mastery of the content.

Kramsch (1987) carried out a comparative research where she compared eight first-year German textbooks to examine how German culture was taught to US learners through the pictures, dialogues, and exercises contained in those textbooks. In order to gain insight into the way cultural facts are conceptualized, presented and validated, she examined chapters on sports in textbooks widely used. She found out that the authors taught culture through the dialogues, readings and language exercises presented. According to her findings, instructional materials contain the home culture of the authors.
Textbooks across the world are of different cultural orientations which may either be based on source cultures, target culture or international target cultures. They can be a major source of cultural elements besides providing linguistic and topical contents which necessarily reflect the ideology inherent in the language context of a particular circle (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Arikan (2008) argues that course books, have the power of altering students’ opinions and beliefs on many socio-cultural matters ranging from gender and popular culture to religion and social class, since the majority of classroom teaching is carried out by their use. Therefore, foreign language teaching materials contain elements of the target language culture.

Further, Moore (1991) conducted a survey of the cultural content in six most commonly-used Spanish textbooks for first-year college-level students. After thoroughly analyzing the cultural readings and their related comprehension questions, she arrived at a similar conclusion to those by Kramsch (1987) and Norrizan (1993). She found out that 92% of the selections contained some cultural information and that this information generally comprised ‘factual fragments’ or highly generalized information intended to indicate the norms of behavior in the Spanish-speaking world. Likewise, the Japanese language instructors teach Japanese culture through the available instructional materials.

Lado (1975) notes that, in its widest sense, cultural meaning is vital as it is the one to which a language attaches words and expressions. Likewise, Hall, (1976) states that culture is the context without which a word has no meaning. This confirms that instructional materials are a cultural product of the author and that words used in
the instructions of Japanese language, together with their meanings are linked to Japanese language cultural context.

Further, we can say that the producers of Japanese language instructional material generally work with information available within their culture and not within the culture of the prospective users of the materials. They mostly write about their own culture and in synch with that culture’s formal representation as this is what is pragmatic, realistic and easy. The designers of the materials operate in terms of schemata shaped by the social context within their society. They assemble mental representations of their socially acquired knowledge which is reflected in some of the print and non-print media used in the instructions.

An example to show that the designers of Japanese instructional material, like all other designers, think and compose materials mainly through culture-specific schemata is a case whereby the adjective ‘beautiful’ is usually shown with a pictorial representation of the cherry blossom which is known as sakura in Japanese language. When the sakura picture is presented to the Kenyan learners, they associate it with the learning of the noun tree and not the adjective beautiful. Therefore the designers design according to the view of their own culture and in harmony with that culture’s formal schemata.

From the foregoing, we can conclude that designers of JLIM consciously or unconsciously transmit the views, values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of their own culture, and consequently put culture in the background of every classroom activity. However, there is a concern as to whether the learners and in some cases,
even the non-Japanese teachers encounter difficulties in the interpretation of the concepts in these instructional materials that may result in inappropriate language instructions and hence poor mastery of the language. Therefore, it is important to establish the extent to which JLIM are misinterpreted by Kenyan learners, and this is one of the objectives of this research.

2.4 Learner’s attitude towards a language

Norrizan (1993) notes that, the culturally unfamiliar items in the instructional materials may cause distractions and restlessness in the language learners, affecting their attitude towards the language and thus affecting negatively, the mastery of the language.

Attitude as a concept is concerned by an individual way of thinking, acting and behaving. Norrizan (1993) notes that attitude is an essential factor influencing language learning and this is in agreement with the views of many other scholars. For instance, Fakeye (2010) acknowledges learner’s attitude as one of the most important factors that impact on language learning. Ellis (1994) notes that learners’ attitude is a variable of major importance in learning as positive attitude enhance learning while negative attitudes, on the other hand, may impede learning.

Kara (2009) also notes that besides opinions and beliefs, attitude towards learning has an obvious influence on students’ behaviors and consequently on their performance. Further, investigation by Kiptui & Mbugua (2009), revealed that negative attitude towards English is the most affective and psychological factor that
results in the students’ poor performance in English among the secondary school learners in Kenya (Kiptui & Mbugua, 2009; Tella et al., 2010).

Besides, according to Visser (2008), achievement in a target language relies not only on intellectual capacity of the learner, but also on the learner’s attitudes towards language learning. This means that learning a language and especially a second or a foreign language should be viewed basically as a social and psychological phenomenon rather than as a purely academic one. In addition, a positive attitude towards the speakers of the target language may also enhance learning, since the learners’ will have a desire to communicate with them. This is to say that if the learners are interested in the countries where the target languages are spoken, they may be more motivated to learn the language (Noel et al., 2003). This study therefore also sought to examine the KUC students’ attitude towards the Japanese language.

In view of the aforementioned, we can say that the learners’ ability to master a foreign language is influenced by their attitudes and perceptions towards the target language and its speakers.

2.5 Effect of cultural elements on interpretation of instructional materials

Culture can be defined as a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols (Geertz, 1973), or the total communication framework which includes words, actions, postures, gestures, tones of voice, facial expressions, the handling of time, space and materials, and the way one works, plays, makes love, and defends
self (Hall, 1976). All these things and more are complete communication systems with meaning that can be read correctly only if one is familiar with the behavior in its historical, social and cultural context (Seelye, 1984).

According to Geertz (1973), culture is like a text, something that needs to be interpreted through the investigation of symbols. From these definitions we can say that learners need to be familiar with the culture of a language in order to accurately interpret the language forms. Further, Byram (1994) argues that the language rooted in the context can be thoroughly comprehensible only when the cultural context is understood while Porter (1987) states that misunderstandings in language education often evolve because of such differing cultural roots, ideologies, and cultural boundaries which limit expression. This study investigated the extent to which the cultural differences affect the understanding of the target language.

When a learner communicates in a foreign language for the first time, he/she discovers that there are overtones of meaning that are not related to skills, grammar or lexicon (Brooks, 1989). Thus learning the grammatical structure of a foreign language and learning how to form grammatically correct sentences and phrases is not the same as learning to use a language in social interaction. This is because meanings in a language are not fixed but depend on the situation and interpretation. Knowing the actual meaning of a word requires one to know the cultural meaning of the context within which the word occurs. In reality, language has no function independent of the context in which it is used, and thus language always refers to something beyond itself which is the cultural context. This cultural context defines
the language patterns being used when particular persons come together under certain circumstances at a particular time and place. Some of the Japanese language students in Kenya today still perform poorly in the JLPT examination despite the fact that they understand the grammatical rules and language structure. This is because they lack the cultural knowledge of the language. Therefore, the cultural context has to be understood if the learner of the language is to attach the right meanings to the words.

Culture in language learning is an essential element, attached to the teaching of the four language skills which include speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background of the language instruction, ready to unsettle the language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their communicative competence and challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them (Kramsch, 1993). From this observation, it can be concluded that culturally unfamiliar items may adversely affect the effectiveness of language learning. Thus, socio-cultural factors determine the outcome of foreign language instructions.

When teachers introduce language teaching materials, such as books or handouts, they should understand that these will be viewed differently by students depending on their cultural views (Maley, 1986). It can be implied that viewing differently results to interpreting differently, thus bringing one to a conclusion that culturally familiar items facilitate foreign language learning. In addition, McKay (2004) states that instructional materials and methods used have differing and important impacts in language acquisition. We can, therefore, say that students’ competence
in a language has a direct relationship with the instructional material employed during the teaching-learning process and that if the materials are not well interpreted, the mastery of the language will be negatively affected.

Cultural mismatch between the learners’ culture and the culture in the instructional resources can interfere with the learners’ decoding of the messages resulting to non-achievement of the instructional goals (Samovar et al., 1981). According to these authors, culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, but it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Culture is thus the foundation of communication.

Further, culture helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted (Samovar, Porter & Jain 1981). Moreover, Robinson (1988) commenting on difficulties in understanding other peoples culture indicated that as we pursue intercultural competence it is important to recognize that we can never see through other people’s eyes but we must see through our own. It can thus be said that Japanese language forms are best understood in their cultural settings and that in a different cultural setting, the language forms may be misunderstood and misinterpreted, thus affecting the mastery of the language. Nevertheless, efforts can be made to integrate the study
of the Japanese culture with the study of the language for more effective learning of the language.

The complexity of understanding a language in terms of its culture is also mentioned by Fries (1963) who states that when reading a foreign language text, we find three levels of meaning: lexical meaning, grammatical meaning, and socio-cultural meaning. The lexical and structural meanings can be looked up in a dictionary by the students, but the socio cultural meanings are difficult for the foreign or second language learners to penetrate as it implies the values, beliefs and attitudes of the speakers of the target language. Understanding a language in terms of its culture is complex with many different characteristics. Therefore, language students should understand which variant language forms are appropriate within which context in order to do an accurate interpretation.

Cultural differences may also cause miscommunication because in situations where students do not have the cultural meaning of the message, they attach the wrong meaning to the symbols of the language. Woo (1995) conducted a study to explore the aspects of speech patterns and speech functions in addressing, arguing, complementing, offering, requesting and thanking in Asian communities. The study relates aspects of sociolinguistic cross-cultural communication and teaching English as a second language. The findings revealed that since Asian ESL learners carry out speech acts according to their cultural norms, miscommunication frequently occurs. This is also confirmed by Irving (1986) who states that cultural knowledge is essential for nonnative performance to carry out successful communication. He states that good communication skill depends on becoming
familiar with the cultural context to which a language naturally belongs. Besides, he argues that the act of communication goes beyond the formal knowledge to include the socio-cultural factors.

According to Samovar et al., (1981), cultural mismatch between the learners’ culture and the culture in the instructional resources can interfere with the learners’ decoding of the messages resulting to non-achievement of the instructional goals. These authors further argue that, culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, but it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Culture is thus the foundation of communication. Hence, when learners are familiar with the culture used in the design of the instructional material, they are likely to make a better interpretation of the information, resulting to a better learning outcome. This study investigated the extent to which the difference in the two broad cultures affects the understanding of the instructional materials.

Learners of a given language make use of their home cultural schemata in relating new information to what they already know and consequently, interpret the intended meaning for given instructional materials. When some key concepts are absent in their cultural schemata, they may misinterpret the information. Steffensen et al., (1979) noted that when students are familiar with cultural norms, they make a better interpretation of the text than when they are not. In addition, Alptekin (2006) reported positive effects in reading comprehension where the content is
culturally familiar. Further, Carrell (1987) argues that information with familiar rhetorical organization is easier to comprehend than that with unfamiliar rhetorical organization. Moreover, Brown et al., (1977) argue that, when the relevant cultural background assumptions and constructs are missing, reading tends to turn into a time consuming, laborious and frustrating experience and the writer’s intended meaning may be distorted. Again, we note that when learners’ culture and the culture contained in the instructional materials are far apart, it is difficult for the learners to understand some of the meanings and as a result, maximum learning may not be achieved.

2.6 Interdependence between language, thought and culture

Language, thought and culture are three parts of the whole and cannot operate independently regardless of which one most influence the other two. There can be no real learning of a language without understanding something of the patterns and values of the culture of which it is a part (Valdes, 1986). Going by this point of view, thoughts are influenced by culture and therefore culture plays a major role in cognition which in turn significantly affects comprehension and interpretation.

People brought up under similar behavioural backgrounds or cultural situations but speak different languages tend to think differently and may have different world view (Emmitt & Pollock, 1997). Therefore, we can say that the thoughts of the designers of the JLIM are different from the thoughts of the Kenyans and that the difference in thinking is likely to be reflected in the content of the instructional materials designed.
Further, Hall (1976) observes that the meanings in a language emerge from shared interpretation of some symbols in the minds of the sender and receiver. Shared interpretation takes place when there is a shared context. For language, the context is the culture shared by those who understand that language. Therefore without clear understanding of the Japanese culture, wrong meanings may be attached to the information in the instructional materials used to teach Japanese language. Moreover, according to Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language and thoughts are connected (Littlejohn, 2002). Different thoughts are brought about by the use of different forms of language and one is limited by the language used to express one’s ideas. Among many observations about language, thinking and culture, Whorf formulated what is referred to as the “principle of linguistic relativity”. According to this principle, users of different grammars are positioned by their grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent as observers, but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world. In view of that, we can say that language shapes the way one sees the world and that if the Kenyan Japanese language learners are to accurately interpret the information in the instructional materials originated in Japan, they must see the world the way the Japanese see it. This study attempted to get the Kenyan students views on this.

According to Hantrais (1989), culture is the beliefs and practices governing the life of a society for which a particular language is the vehicle of expression. Therefore, everyone’s thoughts and views are dependent on the culture which influences them. The thoughts and the views are described using the language which has been shaped
by that culture. The understanding of a culture and its people can be enhanced by the knowledge of their language. Therefore, language is necessary for thinking and the Japanese language learners must learn to think the way Japanese people think so that they can effectively encode meanings in the instructional materials used for learning. Hence we can say that culture plays a major role in cognition and thus, comprehension and interpretation of the Japanese language instructional material by Kenyan students is likely to be distorted because the culture is unfamiliar, resulting to ineffective instruction of the language.

This brings us to a conclusion that there is a possibility that in a Japanese language classroom situation in Kenya, the socio-cultural barriers could be interfering with the students’ ability to decode the meanings in the instructional materials. This may hindering the achievement of the language lesson objectives resulting to poor mastery of the Japanese Language. This could be the reason for failure of students to achieve high levels of excellence in the language despite the efforts by both the teachers and the students. This is an aspect that study investigated.

2.7 Summary of the gap in existing literature

The findings from the literature review show that instructional materials used to teach a foreign language and the culture of the foreign language are intertwined. Therefore, foreign language students need to understand the target language culture well in order to accurately decode information in the instructional materials employed, failure to which may result in poor mastery of the language.
The research findings and assertions by scholars presented in this chapter could be supportive in providing evidence that instructional materials contain cultural elements and that cultural knowledge is necessary for effective communication, intelligent interpretation and perception of the social processes underlying interaction in a foreign language.

From the literature, it is not clear as to what extent cultural elements contained in the Japanese language instructional materials are misinterpreted. Furthermore, there is no published literature on the teaching aspects of Japanese language in Kenya. In addition, there are no other related studies carried out in Kenya or in Africa that can be used for comparative purposes. This study therefore attempted to address these gaps.

The following chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in this study.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the materials used and methods adopted in carrying out the study. The chapter begins by discussing the research design, research variables, sampling techniques and research instruments. Details on pilot study and data collection procedures are then presented. Finally, the data analysis is discussed.

The study involved collection of data through questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews, which were administered to students and lecturers at Kenya Utalii College (KUC).

3.2 Research design

In order to achieve the objectives, the research employed qualitative research methods using 3 different instruments, namely a questionnaire, observational schedule and an interview schedule. An observational design was adopted for establishing the instructional methods and materials used in teaching of Japanese language, as well as for determining how the information in the instructional materials are interpreted. The research entailed a descriptive study which is qualitative as it is the most suitable design to describe how JLIM are interpreted by Kenyan learners. Descriptive study is also the most appropriate for analyzing the
instructional materials and methods used in Japanese language instructions. It is also the most suitable for gathering information about learner’s attitude towards the Japanese language and culture. A descriptive research attempts to describe characteristics of subject’s phenomena, opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of persons of interest to the researcher (Bell, 1983). The descriptive design is subjective by nature since it almost invariably, depends on personal opinion and evaluation but it is nevertheless acceptable in research (Krippendorff, 1980).

3.3 Research variables

In this research, the instructional materials and the instructional methods are the independent variables while the ability to interpret and understand the content in the JLIM is the dependent variable. The intervening variables include the learner’s attitude, motivation, intelligence, cultural background and the environment.

3.4 Study location

This study was carried out at Kenya Utalii College (KUC), which is a public institution focusing on training for tourism and hospitality industry. KUC is situated about 3 km to the North East of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. It offers a number of courses at certificate and diploma levels, including Travel and Tourism Management, Hotel Management, Travel Operations, Tour Guiding & Administration, Front Office, Food Production, Housekeeping & Laundry and food & Beverages services. All students taking these courses at KUC are required to take at least one foreign language and on average, about 200 students take Japanese language per year, of which 170 are at certificate level. The Kenya Utalii College
is the college with the highest number of students studying Japanese language in Kenya. In addition, since the language curriculum offered at KUC is geared towards a particular purpose, it is not generic and the language instruction focuses mainly on applications. It is thus more communicative than linguistic. These facts made KUC a preferred study area for this research.

3.5 Target population

It is not possible to carry out a research of all the students learning Japanese in all the institutions in Kenya. The target population was all the 170 students taking Japanese language in KUC at Certificate level. Kenya Utalii College had the highest population of such students and was thus chosen for ease of data collection. In addition, the representation of diverse sub-cultural backgrounds of the students was preferred. For this reason, KUC which admits students on quota system with representation from all counties was selected as a representative of the study population.

3.6 Sampling techniques and sample size

3.6.1 Sampling

This section deals with procedures which were used to sample classrooms for observation and other respondents for the study. The sampling technique was purposive and aimed at capturing students who are introduced to more functional Japanese language. The Kenya Utalii College was selected because its curriculum lays much emphasis on functional language.
3.6.2 Sample size
The study involved a sample size of 86 students, 3 classes 2 Japanese language lecturers. There are only 3 lecturers of Japanese language in KUC, one of whom is the researcher. The target populations and respective sample sizes are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Sampling grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target population</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Percentage of sample (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7 Instruments
In this research, three instruments were used, namely classroom observation schedule, questionnaire and an interview schedule. The classroom observation schedule was used to examine the instructional materials and methods used in teaching the language and how the instructional materials are interpreted. The questionnaire was used to determine the attitude of the Japanese language learners towards the language and the culture. The interview schedule was used to establish the instructors’ training and experience, and also to determine their attitude, opinion and recommendations in regard to teaching of Japanese language. The following sections describe each of these instruments.
3.7.1 Classroom observations

The KUC students are grouped according to the major courses that they take. There are eight (8) courses offered, namely; Travel and Tourism Management, Hotel Management, Travel Operations, Tour Guiding and Administration, Front Office, Food Production, Housekeeping and Laundry, and Food and Beverages services. Travel and Tourism Management and Hotel Management courses are offered at Diploma level, while the rest are offered at certificate level. The research focused on those taking certificate courses. Going by these courses as subgroups, we can say that there are 6 subgroups in the population. These subgroups can be considered as a stratified random sample, with the criterion or variable used for stratification being the course taken by the student. For greater accuracy, the number in each stratum was based on the relative variability of the characteristics under study rather than proportionate to the relative size of each subgroup in the population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

A simple random sampling was used to select 3 subgroups from the 6 subgroups, which constituted 50% of the target population. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), sample size for a descriptive research should be at least 10% of the accessible population. A summary of the sampling is given in the sampling grid in Table 3.1.

The three randomly selected subgroups where classroom observations were done were from the 2014 groups. These were: Front Office (FO) 25, Housekeeping & Laundry (HL) 19, and Food & Beverages Services (SB) 20, subgroups. Some of the materials used during instructions include flashcards bearing some information
relevant to the topics being taught. The HL subgroup was studying verbs in lesson 7 of the course book (*minna no nihongo*), where eight (8) flashcards observations were made. The FO and the SB subgroups were studying adjectives in lesson 8 of the same course book. From each of these two subgroups, six (6) flashcard were observed. Thus, a total of 20 cases were observed.

Language instructors usually use various print and non-print media during the classroom instructions. Flashcards bearing some information relevant to the topics being taught are usually presented to the learners during the lesson with the purpose of reinforcing the content being delivered.

The instructor normally gives the students an opportunity to decode the information in the flashcards in order to encourage interactive learning. Usually, the lecturer probes the learners in order to get maximum information from them.

It is during such sessions in a normal classroom setup that the researcher observed and recorded the classroom proceedings in order to establish the instructional methods and materials, as well as the interpretation of the information in the instructional materials. All the interpretations made by the students in the class were recorded in the classroom observation schedule, a sample of which is given in Appendix 1. These interpretations were then compared with the expected ones from the instructors’ perspective. The correct interpretations, the misinterpretations and the unnoted aspects were identified and recorded in tabular form.
3.7.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to a total of 86 students taking certificate courses which was the entire population of the certificate student in session. Out of the 86 students polled, 75 responded representing 87% of the total population in session and 44% of the entire population.

The main goal of this instrument was to investigate the attitude of KUC students towards the learning of Japanese language. Compared to other methods used to obtain data, a questionnaire is a faster and easier instrument to administer. A questionnaire gives the researcher a comprehensive data on a wide range of factors (Borg & Gall, 1989).

In this research, the questionnaire contained both structured and unstructured questions. According to Stacey (1969) structured questions should be used only where alternative replies are known, limited in number or are definite. In part A of the questionnaire, unstructured questions were used in order to give the respondents complete freedom to respond in their own way using words of own choice. In part B, structured questions and a Likert scale were used so as to enable further clarification about the attitude the learners have towards the language. The questionnaire is given in Appendix 2.

3.7.3 Interview

The two Japanese language instructors (Kenyans) in KUC were interviewed to establish their opinion on the effect of culture on the language teaching. Their level of training and experience was also established.
The interviews were done through a semi-structured interview schedule, so as to give the respondents greater freedom of expressions, views, thoughts and opinion which were crucial for extraction of the data required to address cultural and non-cultural problems encountered during teaching. Interviews are advantageous in that they provide in-depth data which is not possible to get using questionnaires, as they enable interviewers to clarify the questions and thus help the respondents to give relevant responses. They are also more flexible for they enable the researcher to adapt to the situation and get as much information as possible. The interview schedule for this purpose is given in Appendix 3.

3.8 Pilot study

A pilot study is important it helps in improving the research instruments and also establishing the feasibility of the study. In this research, a pilot study was undertaken in October 2014 at KUC, involving final year certificate students following the research design already outlined above, in which the instruments of the study were pre-tested before the main study. According to Haralambos and Holborn (2000), a pilot study is usually carried out on members of relevant population, but not on those who will form part of the final sample. In this study therefore, a pilot study was done on a different group, Front Office (FO) 2013 subgroup of 23 students. The exercise involved carrying out a classroom observation, interviewing the lecturer and requesting the students to fill in a questionnaire forms. These respondents did not take part in the main study and had graduated from the College during the main study. The data collected from the pilot study was used to improve the appropriateness of the methods used to collect
data in the main study. The pilot study helped to identify any wrong phrasing of questions and statements. Where necessary, adjustments were done in order to improve the instrument.

3.8.1 Validity

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) define validity as the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomena under study, while Orodho (2005) defines it as the degree to which empirical measure or several measures of a concept, accurately measures the concept. From these definitions and for the purpose of this study, we refer to validity as the degree to which the results of the study accurately reflect or assess the influence of culture in the interpretation of JLIM.

The validity of the instruments in this study was assured through the use of expert opinion from the University supervisors while developing the instruments. Questions and statements in the instruments found to be ambiguous or irrelevant were reframed and others reconstructed.

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results of data after repeated trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). It is concerned with the accuracy of the actual measuring instruments or procedure. One way to ensure that an instrument is reliable is to pre-test the instrument through pilot studies. In this respect, the researcher carried out a classroom observation, interviewed the instructor and requested the students to fill in a questionnaire. The
procedure was repeated and the data collected. The results of these tests were compared for consistency, and hence reliability of the instruments.

### 3.9 Data collection procedure

Approvals were sought from the Graduate School of Kenyatta University, KUC and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) before embarking on the research. The following procedures were used to implement the research instruments.

#### 3.9.1 Data from classroom observation

In carrying out the study, the researcher obtained information from the KUC Japanese language instructors, on the lesson which was to be taught, prior to the day of the lesson. The researcher then had the opportunity to study and analyze beforehand, all the flashcards that are designed for use in the specific lessons. The expected observations for each of the cards were recorded prior to the lesson. Any culturally unfamiliar items from the researcher’s perspective were also identified and recorded prior to the commencement of the lesson.

Since the interpretation of the information in the flashcards was to be observed and recorded as it occurs naturally in the classroom, the researcher made prior arrangements with the instructors to visit their language classrooms. The learners were informed about the planned observation exercise by their instructors in advance and were encouraged to take it as a normal lecture.

The instructors proceeded with the normal classroom activities which included presentation of a flashcard which contained some information to be interpreted by
the learners. The researcher attended the lessons as an observer and did not participate or interfere in the running of the lesson. Naturalistic observation helps to capture and study behaviour as it naturally occurs (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). A classroom is a formal unique situation and classroom processes should be studied taking into account the values, beliefs and expectations of the teachers and learners (Gascoigne & Veleba, 2000).

It was during the classroom observations that the instructional materials used and the instructional methods adopted by the instructors were noted and recorded.

During the lesson, once a flashcard was picked by the instructor, the researcher noted the flashcard and got ready to enter the necessary information at the section corresponding to that flashcard in the observation schedule. Each observation was entered in real time, and all responses by the students were entered in the schedule. The observations given by the students were noted and checked against the expected and pre-recorded observations in the schedule. From the observations made, the correct interpretations, the misinterpretations and the unnoted aspects were identified.

The observations given by the learners but were not expected were entered under the “other observations” section in the schedule (see Appendix 1). The classroom observations were video recorded in order to capture as much details as possible and to enable reviewing of the proceedings, if necessary.
3.9.2 Data from the questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered to all the 86 students in session, studying Japanese language at the certificate level at KUC. These students were issued with printed copies of the questionnaire and were requested to fill in and return the following day.

3.9.3 Data from the interview

The researcher asked the two Japanese language instructors at KUC the questions written in the interview guide. The answers that the respondents gave were recorded exactly as expressed, without summarizing or paraphrasing. Audio recording was done in order to capture as much details as possible during the interview and to enable reviewing of the proceedings when necessary. Recording information as the interview progresses is advantageous as no information may be left out owing to forgetfulness or any other kind of omission (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

The instructor’s suggestions on possible ways of improving the mastery of the language were also sought in these interviews. In addition the instructors experience and training was sought in order to determine their competence in the Japanese language instructions.

3.10 Data analysis and presentation

The number of observations made by the learners for a given flashcard was noted and recorded. This was then compared with the expected number of observations from the researcher’s point of view. The difference between the number of
correctly interpreted information, and that of the information misinterpreted was worked out. This difference reflected the extent of misinterpretation of instructional materials with culturally unfamiliar elements. From this difference, the influence of culture in the interpretation of the instructional materials was deduced.

The data was analyzed in terms of percentages and presented in graphical form. A sample of the observation schedule is given in Appendix 1. Classroom observation information was also used to determine the instructional material and methods used in the teaching of the language. Analyzed data were presented in form of narrative, tables and charts.

Data obtained from the questionnaire and interview schedules was also analyzed. The information derived from the questionnaire was based on frequencies for particular responses which were then used to determine the attitude of the students towards the language. Basic statistics which included frequencies and percentages were used to describe learners’ attitude towards the language. The information obtained from interviews conducted on the Japanese language lecturers was used to determine their competence in employing effective pedagogical methods. Some other information obtained from the language lecturers was infused to the study by way of discussing it under relevant topics of the study.

### 3.11 Logistical and ethical considerations

Before conducting the research, permission was sought from the graduate school of Kenyatta University and from the KUC authority as well as NACOSTI. The
respondents were assured of anonymity and that the information obtained from them would be treated with confidentiality and would only be used for the purpose of the study. The researcher has adhered to the research ethics by ensuring that the names of participants remain anonymous.

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology for the study. The next chapter presents the results of the research and a detailed discussion of the results.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSES, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to examine the influence of culture on the interpretation of JLIM by Kenyan learners. Learners’ attitude towards the Japanese language and methods and materials used in instructions were also investigated.

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the results of the study. The chapter is organized into five sections. The first section of the chapter presents demographic information of the respondents. The second section presents the findings on the instructional materials used in teaching the Japanese language. The third section presents the results on the instructional methods used and the fourth section presents the results on the social cultural factors influencing the interpretation of JLIM by Kenyan learners. The last section presents results on the attitude of the learners towards the Japanese language. Under this section, the reasons for students’ choice to take Japanese language course, their likes and dislikes, their views of the culture depicted in the instructional materials and, similarities and differences between the Japanese culture and students’ own culture are analysed and presented.

4.2 General and demographic information

In order to understand the nature of the respondents taking part in the research, general and demographic information of the respondents was sought. There were 86 students in session taking Japanese language as one of the subjects.
Questionnaires were administered to all these students, out of which, 75 responded, representing 87.2% of the total number of students in session. The information that was sought from the students included gender, nationality, ethnic background and the main course each individual student was majoring in at KUC. The study also sought to determine the Japanese language instructors’ age, level of formal education, level of training details and teaching experience.

All the learners polled were found to be Kenyan citizens aged between 18 and 24 years and were taking certificate courses in Front Office, Food Production, Housekeeping & Laundry, Food & Beverage Services, Tour Guide or Travel Operations. The distribution of students per course is given in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Polled students per course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/no.</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Total No. of students</th>
<th>No. of students polled</th>
<th>% Polled</th>
<th>% of the total Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Front office</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage Services</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Housekeeping &amp; laundry</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Food production</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tour guide</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Travel operations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4.1, it can be seen that from every class, the students polled represented 75% and above, and on the overall 87% of the students were polled.
The gender of the learners’ was checked to confirm if both males and females participated in the study. Of the 75 students polled the number of female respondent was 49 and for the males was 26. Thus the number of the female respondents was almost double that of the male respondents, with 34.6% being males and 65.3% female. This gender disparity is expected as courses in the tourism and hospitality industry generally attract more females than males.

The Japanese language instructors at KUC were both Kenyans from different ethnic backgrounds, and were aged 42 and 44 years. They both had over ten years of Japanese language teaching experience and had attended foreign language teachers training in Japan for at least 6 months. However, both instructors stated that they occasionally encountered challenges related to socio-cultural issues while teaching the language and that they felt that they needed further training especially on Japanese culture.

4.3 Instructional materials used in teaching Japanese language
One of the tasks of this study was to establish the instructional materials used in teaching Japanese language. The purpose was to determine if the materials used are adequate to take care of the needs of the different kinds of learners in class. This was done by observing classroom procedures in three of the certificate course programmes, namely; Front Office (FO) 2014, Housekeeping & Laundry (HL) 2014 and Food & Beverages Services (SB) 2014 subgroups representing 50% of the total number of subgroups.
The instructional materials used by the various groups are summarized in Table 4.2. It can be seen in this table that for all the three subgroups, a variety of instructional materials in the form of print and non-print media was used to deliver the content and also to stimulate students’ interest in the Japanese language and culture. The main instructional materials included a set of *Minna no Nihongo* course package comprising of a textbook, complementary grammatical notes, audio & audiovisual materials such as, video tapes, cassette tapes, CDs and DVDs, and flashcards.
It is also seen in Table 4.2 that the instructors made use of available resources to present the Japanese language with its authentic use. From the wide variety of instructional materials used, the learners had an opportunity to utilize various senses in learning. The use of varieties of materials and appropriate instructional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Lesson no.</th>
<th>Aspect taught</th>
<th>Materials used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| HL 2014| 7          | Verbs         | • Course Textbook (Minna no Nihongo, 3rd Ed.)  
• Grammatical notes text  
• Audio cassette tape  
• Video tape  
• Flashcards (8) |
| FO 2014| 8(a)       | Adjectives    | • Course Textbook (Minna no Nihongo, 3rd Ed.)  
• Grammatical notes text  
• Audio cassette tape  
• Video tape  
• Flashcards (6)  
• CD (JAL Academy, Japanese for Hotel Staff) |
| SB 2014| 8(b)       | Adjectives    | • Course Textbook (Minna no Nihongo, 3rd Ed.)  
• Grammatical notes text  
• Audio cassette tape  
• Video tape  
• Flashcards (6)  
• CD (JAL Academy, Japanese for Hotel Staff) |
methods is emphasized by McKay (2004) who also states that instructional materials and methods used have a major impact in language acquisition.

4.4 Instructional methods used in teaching Japanese language

Instructional methods are the activities that can be used across curricular areas to support the learning of students (Herrell & Jordan, 2004). This study examined the methods used in teaching Japanese language through classroom observation procedures in the three certificate course programmes mentioned above.

At the time of study, the HL 2014 subgroup was learning Verbs in Lesson 7 and FO 2014 and SB 2014 subgroups were learning Adjectives in lesson 8 of the course book. In all the subgroups, the lesson began by the instructor reviewing the main contents of the previous lessons after which the instructor introduced the new topic and explained the various grammatical points in English. A tape containing the vocabularies’ was played in Japanese language and the learners were asked to repeat the new words. The sentence patterns and sentence examples for the new topic were presented to the learners in Japanese language and chances for asking questions and making own sentences using the sentence pattern already taught, were given. The various learning activities observed are given in Table 4.3.
Table 4.3: Learning activities in Japanese language class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Learning activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HL 2014</td>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>Lecture, reading aloud, use of flashcards, demonstrations, recitations, writing (workbooks), class discussions, listening (video tapes and CDs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FO 2014</td>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB 2014</td>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen in this table that during the instructional process, the instructor implemented a variety of interactive activities by making use of a variety of instructional materials. In this way, the learners interact with their peers and think together as they solve problems resulting in a better learning outcome. Employing a wide variety of learning activities encourages creativity and motivates the development of cognitive and other skills (Willis, 2006).

One of the strategies used involved showing flashcards containing some information relevant to the topic and seeking the learners’ interpretation on the information. Chances to respond were given to one learner at a time, after which the instructor invited volunteers from among the learners to add more information. The instructor asked the learners more questions in order to get maximum information from them. The learners freely responded and the instructor noted their responses. Sometimes the views of the learners varied resulting to opportunities for the class to discuss and reason together in order to come up with an appropriate answer. Thus, there was cooperative learning as the learners actively participated by talking, and listening to one another’s point of view.
The researcher noted that some of the information in the flashcards contained some Japanese cultural elements. This observation concurs with the views of Alptekin (1991), Kramsch & McMconnell-Ginet (1992) and Littlejohn & Windeatt (1988) who noted that culture influences the instructional material designers and developer’s views, values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas such that what one sees in their production is a reflection of their culture. By the end of a lesson, most of the students had had the opportunity to participate in various ways including giving their responses for the flashcards that were showed to them.

As is discussed later in this chapter, flashcards containing culturally unfamiliar items were not clear to the learners, which resulted to confusion and misinterpretations. After covering the topic content, the instructors provided the learners with a feedback on the flashcards interpretations. The instructors complimented the learners for the correct interpretations given and corrected the wrongly interpreted information in the flashcards. Further, they explained to the learners the possible causes of misinterpretations. Most of the misinterpretations seemed to have been resulted from the socio-cultural differences between Japanese and Kenyans. Towards the end of the lesson, the lecturer, played a video tape containing some conversations where the lessons verbs/adjectives are used in the authentic form.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the Japanese language instructors at KUC provide the learners with an interesting and persuasive platform for conveying information resulting to interactive learning.
4.5 Influence of socio-cultural factors in the interpretation of information in the JLIM

This study also sought to determine the influence of socio-cultural factors in the interpretation of information in the JLIM through classroom observations. Three classes were observed for this purpose, namely HL 2014, FO 2014 and SB 2014. The breakdown of the observation details is given in Table 4.4. A total of 20 flashcards of which 8 were on verbs and 12 on adjectives, were used by the instructors for the three groups.

Table 4.4: Breakdown of the observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/no.</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Lesson no.</th>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>No. of flashcards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HL 2014</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>FO 2014</td>
<td>8(a)</td>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SB 2014</td>
<td>8(b)</td>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pictures in flashcards used during the classroom observations are shown in Figures A1 – A4 in Appendix 5, while the details of the flashcards used and the observations are shown in Tables 4.3 – 4.5. It can be seen in Table 4.3 that out of the 8 flashcards presented to learners, the verbs illustrated in 6 of the flashcards were correctly identified while those illustrated in 2 flashcards were not correctly identified.
Table 4.5: Details of Lesson 7 flashcards on verbs and observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card Number</th>
<th>Description of the card</th>
<th>Vocabulary being taught</th>
<th>Information culturally familiar?</th>
<th>No. of expected observations</th>
<th>Illustrated verb identified?</th>
<th>No. of observations made</th>
<th>No. correctly interpreted</th>
<th>No. misinterpreted</th>
<th>% misinterpreted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V-1.</td>
<td>A person receiving a present</td>
<td>The verb <em>receive</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-2.</td>
<td>A man borrowing money from his colleague</td>
<td>The verb <em>borrow</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-3.</td>
<td>A man lending money to his colleague</td>
<td>The verb <em>lend</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-4.</td>
<td>A man giving a present</td>
<td>The verb <em>give</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-5.</td>
<td>A man at post office sending a parcel</td>
<td>The verb <em>send</em></td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-6.</td>
<td>An apple being cut</td>
<td>The verb <em>cut</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-7.</td>
<td>A teacher teaching in a class</td>
<td>The verb <em>teach</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-8.</td>
<td>Students learning in class</td>
<td>The verb <em>learn</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Post office sign unfamiliar to the learners but illustrated verb correctly identified

The researcher identified 3 flashcards (V-2, V-3 and V-5) with culturally unfamiliar items out of the 8 presented. Out of these three flashcards, learners were able to
identify the illustrated verb in one of the flashcard (V-5) despite the fact that it contained a culturally unfamiliar item (see Table 4.5). The illustrated verbs in all the flashcards with no culturally unfamiliar items were correctly identified.

The two flashcards whose illustrated verbs were not identified by the learners in this session were the ones depicting the verbs *borrowing* and *lending* (cards nos. V-2 and V-3). These cards are presented in Fig. 4.1 to serve as an illustrative example.

![Flashcards](image)

(a) V-2  (b) V-3

**Figure 4.1 Photographs of flashcards depicting the verbs *borrowing* and *lending***

The culturally unfamiliar item in the flashcard depicting *borrowing* (card no. V-2) is the scratching of head when seeking favour. The card has an arrow pointing towards the borrower from the lender, but the learners did not seem to notice the arrow. The learners interpreted the illustration as showing somebody being unhappy for giving out money and mistook the giver to be the receiver. They therefore interpreted the illustrated verb as *give*. 
Likewise, the culturally unfamiliar item in the flashcard depicting *lending* (card no. V-3) is also the scratching of head when receiving favour. Similarly, despite this flashcard having an arrow pointing towards the borrower from the lender, the learners did not notice the arrow. The learners interpreted the illustration as showing somebody being unhappy for giving out money and again mistook the giver to be the receiver, interpreting the illustrated verb also as *give*. To the learners, it seemed that the unhappy man in both flashcards is the one parting with the money yet he is the one receiving the money. This aspect confirms Fries (1963) assertion that understanding a language in terms of its culture is complex with many different characteristics.

The flashcard whose illustrated verb was correctly identified despite having a culturally unfamiliar item is the one depicting the post office, the illustrated verb being *send* (card no.V-5). The culturally unfamiliar item in this flashcard is the symbol for post office (〒). The learners were able to identify correctly the activity of sending a parcel perhaps because the illustration was clear and adequate to the learners, even without understanding the unfamiliar post office symbol.

Table 4.6 shows the results on identification of adjectives. It can be seen from this table that out of the 12 flashcards exposed to learners, the adjectives illustrated in 7 of the flashcards were correctly identified by the learners. The learners failed to identify the adjectives in 5 of the flashcards.
Table 4.6: Details of flashcards and observations for adjectives (lessons 8(a) and 8(b))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card Number</th>
<th>Description of the card</th>
<th>Vocabulary being taught</th>
<th>Information culturally familiar?</th>
<th>No. of expected observations</th>
<th>Illustrated adjective correctly identified?</th>
<th>No. of observations made</th>
<th>No. correctly interpreted</th>
<th>No. misinterpreted</th>
<th>% misinterpreted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-1.</td>
<td>A young man offering an elderly lady a seat in a train</td>
<td>The adjective <em>kind</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-2.</td>
<td>A good looking man</td>
<td>The adjective <em>handsome</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-3.</td>
<td>A beautiful lady and a clean table</td>
<td>The adjective <em>beautiful</em> (or clean)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-4.</td>
<td>On one side a deserted street and on the other side, a crowded street</td>
<td>The adjectives <em>quiet</em> and <em>lively</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-5.</td>
<td>On one side a man tackling a simple mathematical problem and on the other side, one tackling a harder mathematical problem</td>
<td>The adjectives <em>easy</em> and <em>difficult</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-6.</td>
<td>A mountain, a bullet train and a cherry tree</td>
<td>The adjective <em>famous</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A lightly-dressed man running in cold weather

The adjective *healthy*

No 8 No 8 6 2 25

A couple in a dining room. Husband eating and wife asking husband a question.

How to ask *how is it?*

No 6 No 6 2 4 66.7

Two books, one old and one new

The adjectives *old and new*

Yes 4 Yes 4 4 0 0

Two bags, one small and the other one large

The adjectives *small and big*

Yes 4 Yes 4 4 0 0

Two shirts, with price tags

The adjectives *cheap and expensive*

Yes 5 Yes 5 5 0 0

On one side, a man in office working with a pile of papers, while on another, the man in the office doing nothing

The adjectives *busy and idle*

Yes 3 Yes 3 3 0 0

*Information was culturally familiar but the learners did not identify illustrated adjective*

It can also be seen from the table that all the 5 flashcards whose adjectives were not correctly identified (Cards nos. A-1, A-3, A-6, A-7 and A-8) had culturally unfamiliar items, while 6 of the 7 flashcards whose illustrated adjectives were correctly identified had no culturally unfamiliar items (Cards Nos. A-2, A-5, A-9, A-10, A-11 and A-12). Card No. A-4 had no culturally unfamiliar items, yet the illustrated adjectives were not identified correctly. The designers of this card had intended to illustrate the adjectives *quiet and lively* by depicting a deserted street
on one side of the card, and a crowded street on the other side. The students however, identified the adjectives as *few* and *many* which is still correct when one focuses only on people in the streets.

The above findings agree with Steffensen et al., (1979) who noted that when students are familiar with cultural norms, they make a better interpretation of the text than when they are not. The findings also agree with Byram (1994) who argues that the language rooted in the context can be thoroughly comprehensible only when the cultural context is understood.

Let us now focus on the details of the cards with culturally unfamiliar items, and whose adjectives were not correctly identified. These are cards Nos. A-1, A-3, A-6, A-7 and A-8. Card A-1 depicted a young man offering an elderly lady a seat in a train. The illustrated adjective for this flashcard is *kind*. Some learners interpreted the illustration to be that of a man welcoming a guest in his house. Others suggested that the guest being welcome in the house is his mother. They therefore interpreted the illustrated adjective as *welcome*. The culturally unfamiliar item in this flashcard could perhaps be the inside of a spacious train. The learners may have failed to identify the illustrated setup of the inside of a train and confused it for a living room.

Card A-3 showed a beautiful lady and a clean table, intended to illustrate the adjective *beautiful* or *clean* which, in Japanese language is one adjective *kirei*. All the learners were not able to identify any common adjective describing the lady and the table. They did not give any adjective for the lady, but indicated *empty* as the
adjective to describe the table. Kenyan learners would ordinarily expect each of the two adjectives *beautiful* and *clean* to have distinct adjectives in Japanese language, and this may have caused this linguistic error which may have impeded the interpretation of the information in the card. Failure to identify a common adjective for beautiful and clean may also be understood from the viewpoint of Hudson (1982), who stated that comprehension of a message entails drawing information from both the message and the internal schemata until sets are reconciled as a single schema or message.

Card A-6 showed a mountain, a bullet train and a cherry tree, and was intended to illustrate the adjective *famous*. The learners attached a distinct adjective to describe each of the three objects but could not identify a common adjective for all. The mountain in the flashcard is Mt. Fuji whose shape is distinct and is the tallest mountain in Japan. Kenyan students are not familiar with bullet trains and cherry trees, but these are common in Japan. The cherry tree is regarded as the national tree in Japan. Thus in Japan, the three objects are very famous, and that could be the reason the designers of the flashcard, who based the information in the flashcards according to their culture, illustrated the adjective *famous* with them.

Card A-7 showed a lightly dressed man running in cold weather and was intended to illustrate the adjective *healthy*. The card also shows a heavily dressed man standing at a distance. The learners interpreted the illustration to depict the adjective *big* because the man running is strongly built. Others suggested that the adjective in question is *fast* because the man in the illustration appeared to be running fast. The learners were not able to relate the situation of the two men to
state of health. Besides, the usage of the adjective *healthy* by the Japanese people can mean active, strong, or medically fit, whereas Kenyans use the word mostly in relation to medical status. As pointed out by Porter (1987), misunderstandings in language education often evolve because of such differing cultural roots, ideologies, and cultural boundaries which limit expression.

Card A-8 showed a couple in a dining room. The man is taking a meal and the woman seems to be inquiring something from him. The flashcard was intended to illustrate the question, *how is the meal?* The learners interpreted the illustration to be that of a male guest and a female waiter in a restaurant. The learners further misinterpreted question mark in the illustration to mean *do you need another item?* Perhaps the wearing of the apron by the lady caused this misinterpretation as most Kenyan ladies in a domestic set up do not wear an apron but rather wrap a traditional piece of cloth (*kanga*) around their waist when preparing and serving meals in the house.

Of all the 20 flashcards used in all the sessions, 8 had culturally unfamiliar items. This represents 40% of the flashcards. Out of the 8 flashcards with culturally unfamiliar items, only one of them was correctly interpreted, representing 12.5%. Thus 87.5% of the flashcards with culturally unfamiliar items were misinterpreted. On the other hand, out of the 12 flashcards that had no culturally unfamiliar items, only one of them was misinterpreted, representing 8.3%. Thus 91.7% of the flashcards with culturally familiar items were correctly interpreted. These results are diagrammatically shown in Fig. 4.2.
From the results in Fig. 4.2, it can be deduced that when there is cultural mismatch between the learner’s culture and the culture ingrained in the instructional materials, misinterpretation is highly likely to occur. Thus, the difference in the learner’s culture and that of the target language influences negatively the interpretation of the information in the instructional materials.

**Figure 4.2: Flashcard characteristics and interpretation of results**
These findings compare well with those of Norrizen (1993) who found that textbooks and other instructional materials are biased towards a particular culture and concluded that the culturally familiar items do facilitate second language learning. The results also agree with a previous study on Asian communities conducted by Woo (1995) who reported that learners carry out speech acts according to their cultural norms, and therefore when the culture is different from their own, miscommunication frequently occurs. The results also concur with those of Samovar et al., (1981) who noted that cultural mismatch between the learners’ culture and the culture in the instructional resources can interfere with the learners’ decoding of the messages as culture helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted.

These findings confirm the Sapir Whorf hypothesis which states that people’s thoughts are influenced by their language. The language we speak is central to our experience for it shapes the way we think, and the way we see the world. In this case, the thoughts of the designers, which are influenced by their language and culture, are different from those of the Kenyan learners.

The results also confirm the Schema theory which states that the schemata a person already possesses are a principal determiner of how they will understand and interpret new information. Kenyan learners understand and interpret information depending on their schema which is different from that of the designers of the JLIM. When some key concepts are absent in the students cultural schemata, they may
misinterpret the information as has been corroborated in the findings of this study. It is therefore clear that foreign language learners are more likely to be accurate in the comprehension of information when exposed to familiar instructional material than when exposed to unfamiliar material.

4.6 Attitude of learners towards Japanese language

Learners’ attitude towards the target language and its culture plays an essential role in the instructional process and is one of the most important factors that impact on language learning. (Richards, 1990, Fakeye, 2010). Further, Visser, (2008) notes that achievement in a target language relies not only on intellectual capacity of the learner, but also on the learner’s attitudes towards language learning.

In order to determine the attitude of the learners towards Japanese language, a questionnaire was administered, in which the students were asked a number of questions relating to their reasons for choosing to study the language, and their experience in studying the language, among other aspects. Both structured and unstructured questions were used for this purpose. This section presents and discusses the findings relating to the learner’s attitude towards the language.
4.6.1 Reasons for studying Japanese language

The reasons for studying a particular subject can greatly influence how the learners react to a task in that subject (Lamb, 2004). The reasons for studying the Japanese language by the learners was investigated. The reasons the respondents gave included that it is interesting, it is unique, desire to travel to Japan, it is marketable, out of curiosity, and because it is a course requirement, and desire to learn culture.

![Figure 4.3: Reasons for studying Japanese language](image)

Two respondents indicated that they chose to study the language just at random and did not have any specific reasons. The frequencies for each of the reasons cited are shown in Fig. 4.3.

It can be seen in this figure that the reasons given by majority of the respondents are: It is interesting (33.3%); the language is marketable (20.0%); the language is unique (16.0%) and the desire to travel to Japan (16.0%). These 4 reasons indicate a positive attitude towards the language and were given by 85.3% of the
respondents. Majority of the learners, thus view the Japanese language as tool of
communication rather than just as an academic subject. We may not be able to
view curiosity as either positive or negative, and we may regard the 6.7% who gave
curiosity as a reason as indifferent. The other 8.1% (2.7+2.7+2.7) can be regarded
as having a negative attitude. The actual numbers regarding the reasons for
studying the language are given in Table A1 in Appendix 4.

4.6.2 What learners like about the language

The learners’ likes and dislikes of a language or any other subject can affect their
motivation and attitude towards the subject, and this has a bearing on their
performance in the subject. In order to gauge the attitude of the learners towards
Japanese language, this study sought to determine what the learners liked or
disliked about the language.

Regarding the question as to what the students like about the language, the majority
indicated that the pronunciation is simple (30.7%), the writing system is interesting
(16.3%), the language sounds friendly (12.0%), and Japanese culture is interesting
(10.7%). These and other reasons are summarized in Fig. 4.4. The actual numbers
regarding the aspects liked in the studying of the language are given in Table A2 in
Appendix 4.
What learners dislike about the language

On the question about the particular aspects that they disliked about the Japanese language, 32.0% of the respondents said that it is difficult to master the three different writing systems. Another 20.0% stated that the particles are difficult to
learn, while 17.3% indicated that the language has very long phrases, which are difficult to memorize. A few (8.0%) stated that the sentence patterns are difficult to comprehend, as the verb comes at the end of a sentence. The various responses are shown in Fig. 4.5. The actual numbers regarding the disliked aspects about the language are given in Table A3 in Appendix 4.

4.6.4 Learners’ specific difficulties and ease in the studying of the language

Knowledge of the specific difficulties encountered by the learners in learning of the language can help in guiding the design of the instructional materials to be used as well as in working out an appropriate instructional approach. This study thus sought to determine the specific difficulties the learners experienced in learning the Japanese language.

The responses on the question on specific difficulties encountered in learning the language were largely similar to the responses given on the question on aspects disliked by the learners, except for a few who indicated difficulties in verb conjugations, describing events, and giving directions.

Similarly, the responses on the question on what the learners found simple were similar to the responses given on what the learners liked about the language except for an addition by a few that they found the counting system to be easy.

4.6.5 Learners’ view of the culture depicted in the instructional materials

The learner’s opinion about the culture depicted in pictures and other graphics found in Japanese text books and other instructional materials can to some extent,
reveal their attitude towards Japanese language and culture. This study sought to assess the learners’ opinion on the culture depicted in the instructional materials.

The question on students view on the culture depicted in the instructional materials was an open one and the respondents gave widely varying descriptions of the culture. The various descriptions given by most of the respondents included rich, interesting, informative, respectful, unique, captivating and difficult to forget which in the researcher’s opinion reflects a positive attitude. There were however, a few respondents (5) who described the culture as confusing and difficult to understand which in the researcher’s opinion reflects a negative attitude. The frequencies for the various descriptions are given in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Details of learners’ attitude towards culture depicted in the JLIM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners’ opinion about the culture depicted in pictures and other graphics in Japanese text books and flash cards</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>9.34</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.34</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.06</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unforgettable</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captivating</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusing</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to understand</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.6 Similarities and differences between Japanese culture and students’ own culture

When students are familiar with cultural norms, they make a better interpretation of the text than when they are not (Steffensen et al., 1979). The difference between the learner’s culture and the Japanese culture from the learner’s perspective was investigated in this study.

Only 29 out of the 86 (33.7%) responded to the question on similarities and differences between the two cultures. The low response rate could be due to the fact that their understanding of Japanese culture was still not sufficient to enable them to compare the two cultures effectively. Nevertheless, twelve respondents gave a total of three similarities and seventeen respondents gave a total of four differences. Four respondents stated that both cultures respect the elderly members of the society and two respondents stated that both cultures have a belief in a supreme God. Six respondents cited similarities in the pronunciation of the Japanese and Kiswahili syllables.

On the question on the cultural differences, eight learners were of the opinion that Japanese are more polite and kinder than Kenyans. Two respondents stated that Japanese appreciate nature more than Kenyans do, and four respondents stated that Japanese preserved their culture more than Kenyans do, as observed in their dressing code during ceremonies and way of eating among others. Another cultural difference (given by three respondents) was that Japanese language is characterized by many distinct words denoting various levels of respect unlike Kenyan languages.
4.6.7 Learners’ attitude towards the Japanese Language

Structured questions on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5 were also administered to the learners in order to further clarify about the attitude the learners have towards the language. For every statement, the respondents were required to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement. Some of the statements were framed in such a way that agreeing with the statement would reflect a positive attitude. These are herein referred to as “positive statements”. Some other statements were framed in such a way that disagreeing with the statement would still reflect a positive attitude. Such statements are herein referred to as “negative statements”.

The statements that the respondents were subjected to and the data on their responses are given in Table 4.8. It can be seen in this table that the responses varied widely. These responses are further analyzed in Table 4.9, in order to clearly understand the leaner’s attitude.
Table 4.8: Learners’ attitude towards culture depicted in the Japanese Language Instructional Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1 (SD) %</th>
<th>2 (D) %</th>
<th>3 (N) %</th>
<th>4 (A) %</th>
<th>5 (SA) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Studying Japanese language will make me more marketable after I complete my course.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Being a student of Japanese language gives me a sense of importance.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I usually communicate in Japanese language outside the Japanese language classroom.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Studying Japanese equips me with new information about the Japanese people, their country and their culture.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>After completing my course in KUC, I will continue studying Japanese Language.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>When I hear a student in my class speaking Japanese language fluently, I like to practice speaking with him or her.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I enjoy doing my Japanese homework.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I study Japanese language only because it is a requirement for my course.</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I am not relaxed whenever I am required to speak in Japanese language.</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I wish I could be more fluent in Japanese language.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I wish I could have many Japanese language speaking friends.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>In my opinion, Japanese language is difficult to learn.</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I always look forward to the next Japanese language lecture.</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Studying Japanese culture is enjoyable.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Japanese culture is difficult to study.</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Japanese culture is very different from my own culture. | 4.7 | 4.7 | 14.1 | 28.1 | 48.4 |
17. Japanese culture is difficult to understand before one gets explanation from the lecturer. | 3.1 | 7.8 | 12.7 | 40.6 | 35.9 |
18. Japanese culture is difficult to understand even after one gets explanation from the lecturer. | 57.8 | 25.0 | 9.4 | 3.1 | 4.7 |

**Key:** SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral, A = Agree and SA = Strongly agree

Table 4.9: Cumulative attitude of learners towards the language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement\Attitude</th>
<th>Negative %</th>
<th>(N) %</th>
<th>Positive %</th>
<th>Overall attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Studying Japanese language will make me more marketable after I complete my course.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Being a student of Japanese language gives me a sense of importance.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I usually communicate in Japanese language outside the Japanese language classroom.</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Studying Japanese equips me with new information about the Japanese people, their country and their culture.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>After completing my course in KUC, I will continue studying Japanese language.</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>When I hear a student in my class speaking Japanese language fluently, I like to practice speaking with him or her.</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I enjoy doing my Japanese homework.</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I study Japanese language only because it is a requirement for my course.</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I am not relaxed whenever I am required to speak in Japanese language.</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I wish I could be more fluent in Japanese language.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I wish I could have many Japanese language speaking friends.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>In my opinion, Japanese language is difficult to learn.</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I always look forward to the next Japanese language lecture.</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Studying Japanese culture is enjoyable.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Japanese culture is difficult to study.</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Japanese culture is very different from my own culture.</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Japanese culture is difficult to understand before one gets explanation from the lecturer.</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Japanese culture is difficult to understand even after one gets explanation from the lecturer.</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>72.7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the analysis, we consider the respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with positive statements, and those who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with negative statements, as the ones with positive attitude towards the language. Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed with positive statements and those who agreed or strongly agreed with negative statements are the ones with negative attitude.
towards the language. For the purpose of this study, we can conveniently disregard “neutral” responses since they neither indicate a positive nor a negative attitude towards the language.

It is seen in Table 4.9 that the responses for 16 out of the 18 statements explored reflect a positive attitude of the respondents, and only two suggested a negative attitude. We can therefore infer from this observation that the students at KUC generally have a positive attitude towards the language.

The two statements in which the respondents showed a negative attitude are “I study Japanese language only because it is a requirement for my course” and “I am not relaxed whenever I am required to speak in Japanese language”. The response for the first statement contradicts the response from the unstructured question in which only 3.1% had indicated that they studied the language because it is a course requirement. This inconsistency may have resulted from the respondents not clearly understanding the statement. The response for the second statement is understandable considering the fact that the students have not yet mastered the language sufficiently to enable them speak it with confidence.

We also note that only 57.8% of the respondents agreed with the statement “I usually communicate in Japanese language outside the Japanese language classroom”. This is the lowest in the rank for responses reflecting a positive attitude. This too may be due to the fact that the learners are still studying the basics of the language, and also that the students associate with others, who do not understand the language. It would be interesting to see how the response would be if the learners were asked the same question towards the end of their courses.
The respondents’ strongest positive attitude is reflected in the statements “Studying Japanese equips me with new information about the Japanese people, their country and their culture” and “I wish I could be more fluent in Japanese language”, which had 95.3% and 92.2%, respectively. This indicates that majority of the learners appreciate the language and have a strong desire to master it.

It can also be seen in Table 4.9 that on average, 72.70% of the learners have positive attitude towards Japanese language, while 11.7% have negative attitude and 15.6% are neutral.

From both the structured and unstructured questions administered, it can be concluded that the learners have a positive attitude towards the Japanese language and culture, in spite of the socio-cultural differences.

### 4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings and discussion of the study on the socio-cultural influence on the teaching and learning of Japanese as a foreign language in Kenya. The findings on the instructional materials and the instructional methods used in teaching the Japanese language were presented. The results on the social cultural factors influencing the interpretation of JLIM by Kenyan learners, and the attitude of the learners towards the Japanese language were also presented and discussed.

The findings revealed that the instructional materials used contain some culturally unfamiliar elements which impede the interpretations of the information. The study also revealed that the instructions are delivered by competent instructors who utilize
a wide variety of instructional materials to cater for all types of learners. It was also established that despite the socio-cultural differences between the Japanese culture and the learners’ culture, the Japanese language learners are generally positive about the language and view it as a tool of communication.

In the next chapter, the summary of the research, conclusions and recommendations for further research are presented,
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study was carried out to examine the socio-cultural influences on interpretation of instructional materials used in teaching Japanese as a foreign language in Kenya. The Kenya Utalii College was used for a case study. This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations of the study and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of the major findings of the study

The main objective of this study was to establish the influence of culture on the interpretation of the Japanese language instructional materials by Kenyan learners. In order to achieve this objective, instructional methods and material used in the instructions of the language were examined. In addition, the learners’ attitude towards the Japanese language was investigated. The study was carried out in KUC which is a public institution focusing on training for tourism and hospitality industry.

On the instructional materials used in teaching Japanese language, it was established that a wide variety of instructional materials are used which include textbooks, audio cassettes, video tapes, CDs, DVDs, flashcards and complementary grammatical notes. It was also found that the contents in some of the flashcards used have some cultural elements that are unfamiliar to the learners.
Concerning the instructional methods used in teaching of Japanese language, it was found that a variety of interactive instructional methods were applied, which included lecture, reading aloud, flashcards, demonstrations, recitations, writing exercises, class discussions and listening (tapes and CDs). These methods cater for all types of learners as they can use different senses to learn. It was also found that the learners at KUC are well exposed to interactive learning.

Regarding how socio-cultural factors influence the interpretation of information in the Japanese language instructional materials, it was found that the difference between the learners’ culture and the culture in the instructional material interferes with the learners’ interpretations of the information contained in these instructional materials. It was also found that the Japanese language instructors have undergone Japanese language teachers training in Japan, but they do not have sufficient knowledge of Japanese culture.

Concerning the attitude of learners towards the Japanese language, it was found that most language students find it interesting. It was also established that some of the students study the language because they believe it is marketable. Some students studied the language with intention of travelling to Japan while a few others studied it just out of curiosity. Most of the students were found to have a positive attitude towards the Japanese language.

5.3 Conclusions

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there are adequate Japanese language instructional materials at KUC but they contain culturally unfamiliar
elements for the Kenyan learners. Further, the Japanese language learners at KUC are exposed to interactive learning through a variety of standard instructional approaches. The instructors are competent in the Japanese language instructions but do not have sufficient knowledge of Japanese culture.

In addition, many language instructional materials carry with them cultural elements that are unfamiliar to the learners. The culturally unfamiliar items interfere with the interpretation of information contained in the instructional material. It can also be concluded that students at KUC generally have a positive attitude towards the Japanese language.

5.4 Recommendations

In view of the above findings, the following recommendations were made:

i) Textbook writers and developers of foreign language learning materials should take into consideration the cultural differences between the target language culture and that of the learner, which might affect learning negatively.

ii) Foreign language instructors should be equipped with sufficient knowledge of the target language culture in order to enhance learning process.

iii) Institutions offering Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) should take cognizance of the underlying factors in low acquisition by Kenyan students of JFL and design instructional materials that are culturally relevant.

iv) Foundational or introductory topics in the Japanese language curriculum could emphasize more on the Kenyan learners’ understanding of the
Japanese culture. It is also important that the JFL curriculum used in colleges is reviewed with the above in mind.

v) The Japanese Culture and Information Center and colleges/universities offering JFL should strengthen capacity building of teachers of Japanese in Kenya in the light of localizing approaches and resources in the teaching of the language.

vi) Authorities responsible for promoting Japanese language and culture should consider in-service training to equip Japanese language teachers with the latest trends in teaching of the languages.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

In order to gain deeper insights on effect of instructional material interpretation and other factors on the mastery of a foreign language, it is recommended that the following studies be carried out:

i) A study on the impact of interpretation of JLIM on student’s overall performance in the language.

ii) A study to investigate the socio-cultural influence on the learning of Japanese language for specific ethnic groups in Kenya.

iii) A study to investigate other foreign languages, such as Spanish, Italian, Chinese and French to compare the results in this study.

iv) A study on the application of Japanese language in the field, especially in the tourism and hospitality sector.

v) To carry out a research on the linguistic vitality of the Japanese language in Kenya.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Classroom observation schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card No.</th>
<th>Description of the card</th>
<th>Expected responses</th>
<th>Observed (√)</th>
<th>Other observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total observed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total correctly interpreted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total unobserved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total misinterpreted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Students’ questionnaire

Dear respondent,

I am carrying out some study on social cultural effects in Japanese language learning. As one of the students taking Japanese language course, you have been identified as a suitable respondent for some aspects of this study. I would therefore be grateful if you could fill in the following questionnaire. Kindly be as candid as you can in answering the questions.

The information you give will be used for the purposes of this only, and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you for accepting to participate.

Part A:

General Information
1. Name (Optional): ________________________________________________
2. Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )
3. Nationality: _________________________________________________
4. What is your cultural background? ________________________________
5. What course are you taking at KUC? ______________________________
6. Why did you choose to study Japanese language?
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
7. What do you like about the language?
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
8. What do you dislike about the language?
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
9. What do you find difficult in the learning of the language?
_______________________________________________________________

10. What do you find simple in the learning of the language?
_______________________________________________________________

11. (a) How do you find the culture depicted in pictures and other graphics found in Japanese text books and flashcards?
_______________________________________________________________

(b) What are the similarities and differences between this culture and your own?
_______________________________________________________________

Part B Attitude Towards Japanese Language

On a scale of 1-5 where
1- indicates strongly disagree (SD),
2- indicates disagree (D),
3- indicates Neutral (N),
4- indicates agree (A) and
5 - indicates strongly agree (SA), rate the items in the following statements.
(Tick (✓) only one option for each item)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1 (SD)</th>
<th>2 (D)</th>
<th>3 (N)</th>
<th>4 (A)</th>
<th>5 (SA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Studying Japanese language will make me more marketable after I complete my course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Being a student of Japanese language gives me a sense of importance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Studying Japanese equips me with new information about the Japanese people, their country and their culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>After completing my course in KUC, I will continue studying Japanese Language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>When I hear a student in my class speaking Japanese language fluently, I like to practice speaking with him or her.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I study Japanese language only because it is a requirement for my course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I am not relaxed whenever I am required to speak in Japanese language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I wish I could be more fluent in Japanese language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>I wish I could have many Japanese language speaking friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>In my opinion, Japanese language is difficult to learn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I always look forward to the next Japanese language lecture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Studying Japanese culture is enjoyable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Japanese culture is difficult to study.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Japanese culture is very different from my own culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Japanese culture is difficult to understand before one gets explanation from the lecturer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Japanese culture is difficult to understand even after one gets explanation from the lecturer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for taking your time.
Appendix 3: Lecturer’s interview schedule

Part A: Personal Information
1. Name (optional): ______________________________
2. Age (Optional): ________________________________
3. Level of formal education (may tick more than one):
   - Certificate ______
   - Diploma ______
   - Degree ______
   - Other (Specify) _______________________________
4. Have you had any training in teaching Japanese language _____
5. If so, Where? _________________ How long ____________
6. Any other training _________________________________
7. Years of teaching experience ______________________

Part B: Language Teaching Information
1. What are some of the socio-cultural difficulties that you encounter during your teaching?
2. Are you sometimes challenged by questions on culture asked by the students?
3. If the answer to (3) above is yes, briefly explain.
4. In your opinion, do you think socio-cultural issues affect the mastery of the Japanese language?
   If so, how?
5. As a lecturer of Japanese language, do you feel that you need further training?
   If so, in which areas?
6. There are many students studying Japanese language at the basic level and very few studying the language at the advanced level. In your opinion, why is this so?
7. Give your suggestion as to how the instruction of the Japanese language can be improved, owing to the differences in the Japanese culture and the students’ culture.
Appendix 4: Data relating to learners’ attitude towards Japanese language

Table A1: Reasons for studying Japanese Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Reasons for studying Japanese language</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It is interesting</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is unique</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To travel to Japan in future</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It is marketable</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Out of curiosity</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Because it is a course requirement</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>To learn the Japanese culture</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No specific reason</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A2: Aspects liked about the language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects liked about the language</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple Pronunciation</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique writing system</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft intonation</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of unique instructional materials</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has many ways of expressing respect</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about Japanese culture</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching interesting movies</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words have no plurals</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A3: Aspects disliked about the language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects disliked about the language</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having to master three different writing systems</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particles are difficult to learn</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having to memorize long phrases</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence pattern difficult to comprehend</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native speakers speak too fast</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much content in a lesson</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to acquire the native speakers accent</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing in particular</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Photographs of flashcards used

(a) receive  
(b) borrow  
(c) lend  
(d) give  
(e) send  
(f) cut

Figure A1: Photographs of flashcards illustrating various verbs
Figure A2: Photographs of flashcards illustrating various verbs and adjectives
Figure A3: Photographs of flashcards illustrating various adjectives

(a) easy/difficult
(b) famous
(c) healthy
(d) How is it?
(e) new/old
(f) big/small
Figure A4: Photographs of flashcards illustrating various adjectives
Appendix 6: Research Authorization by Kenyatta University

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: kubps@yahoo.com
dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 020-8704150

Our Ref: E55/CE/25543/13
Date: 22nd June, 2015

The Principal Secretary,
Higher Education, Science & Technology,
P.O. Box 30040,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION
MS. WAMUTI LYDIA WANGU - REG. NO. E55/CE/25543/13

I write to introduce Ms. Wamuti Lydia Wangu who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. She is registered for a M.Ed. degree programme in the Department of Educational Communication & Technology in the School of Education.


Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

22 JUNE 2015

MRS. AUGYN M. MAAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

Kenyatta University...ISO 9001: 2008 Certified
Appendix 7: Research Authorization by NACOSTI

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-3213471, 2243149, 310571, 22194220
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: secretary@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

Ref: No.

Date:

2nd July, 2015

NACOSTI/P/15/9641/6889

Lydia Wangu Wamuti
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Socio-culturals influences on the teaching and learning of Japanese as a foreign language: A case of Kenya Utalii College,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Nairobi County for a period ending 30th September, 2015.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Nairobi County before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

Said Hussein
For: Director-General/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Nairobi County.

The County Director of Education
Nairobi County.
Appendix 8: Research Permit

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MS. LYDIA WANGU WAMUTI
of KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, 0-1000
Kaimosi, has been permitted to conduct
research in Nairobi County

on the topic: SOCIO-CULTURAL
INFLUENCES ON THE TEACHING AND
LEARNING OF JAPANESE AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE: A CASE OF KENYA UTALII
COLLEGE

for the period ending:
30th September, 2015

Applicant's
Signature

Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation