

Target Situation Analysis in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Malaysia-Based Multi-National Enterprises: the Case of German

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Abstract

Purpose - The aim of this study is to examine the German language needs of employees in multinational companies in Malaysia and the expectations of employers in the teaching of German in their companies. As an additional variable, training for sustainable development (ESD) is included. The language learning needs are described and worked as a basis for the development of language programs for adults. A special main focus is on the local situation in Malaysia and the situations that may arise in Germany during the posting to the headquarters of the respective company.

Design / methodology / approach - The mixed-mode research method is chosen in order to obtain a spectrum of ideas about the teaching of German in German Companies in Malaysia

(qualitative research) and to conduct a review of the German education (quantitative research). The needs analysis addressed the employers, employees and teachers in a survey period of about four weeks using a questionnaire.

Results - The results of the needs assessment show a discrepancy between supply and demand in terms of the required skills in the German language as well as other skills that are regarded by employers as extremely important. In particular, skills that are necessary in key competencies and techniques are clearly required, but hardly included in class. Thus, the results of this needs assessment provide concrete starting points for the improvement of teaching German and with this, the improvement of communicative competence in the workplace.

Originality / Benefits - This study contributes to the current issues concerning the German mediation requirements: How can the demand for German at the workplace be detected and exactly described? What methods are available, which studies at home and abroad already exist?

Keywords: Needs analysis; business communication; employability; German as a foreign language for special purposes; Language and Culture

1. Introduction and Problem statement

A study conducted by the Project Management Institute (PMI) in 2013 revealed that “poor communication leads to project failure one third of the time” (Monterroso 2011, p.1). Effective communication of ideas and strategies can be a challenge to multinational companies (MNC) that is determined amongst others by the factors of language and culture. This applies especially to companies of non-English speaking countries in their globalization process when they need to communicate in a language that is not their mother tongue. Examples are German MNCs in Malaysia.

Job advertisements show that MNCs in Malaysia are looking for German language skills when recruiting new staff (Please refer to attachment 1 – 11). Candidates are required to possess the ability to communicate in spoken and written German; the knowledge of at least basic German is an added advantage. Some MNCs also request for working experience at a German corporation and an understanding of the German and South East Asian mentality. Additionally, being a graduate from the German Malaysian Institute/Malaysia could also have a beneficial effect on the search for a job.

The call for foreign language skills is a worldwide phenomenon. Reasons are manifold. In the United Kingdom for example, Members of Parliament launched a “manifesto for languages” due to immense worries about the nation’s economy and the international employability of Britain’s young generation as well as a compromise of the country’s security and diplomacy needs (as The Independent reported on July 14, 2014). The United States of America is promoting foreign language learning too, according to The Economist on March 11, 2014. This might appear quite inscrutable because English is widely accepted as the Lingua Franca of international business communication. Thereby, the term ‘Lingua Franca’ is defined as “any of various languages used as common or commercial tongues among peoples of diverse speech” (Merriam-Webster. Lingua Franca n.d.).

Among several studies, Ehrenreich (2010) explored the importance of English in a German multinational company using a qualitative case study approach. The researcher concluded that “there is unanimous agreement between all interviewees about the fact that English is a “must” for managers and employees in all locations and at practically all levels, all the way from top management down to regular office workers and, most importantly, secretaries in top and middle management” (Ehrenreich 2010, p.9). Although the English language is clearly a necessity to communicate effectively in the MNC, other languages are considered as “valuable strategic resources” (Ehrenreich 2010, p.16) in order to establish and maintain good customer relations that are hoped to result in signing of contracts. As a consequence, oversea branches are often run by local managing directors whereas vice versa in German headquarters, where oversea customers should be able to communicate comfortably with. The German language does not play any important role (Ehrenreich 2010, p.17), except in board meetings when the board exists out of German nationals only.

Pure German communication also takes place to ensure the highest communicative effectiveness. This strategy applies especially when very important issues have to be discussed as it will help to avoid any ambiguity or misunderstandings.

Based on Ehrenreich’s findings there is not a relevant reason to use the German language in the MNCs’ everyday communication between employers and employees. So, what triggers then the call for foreign language learning, especially for German language classes?

Other researchers are warning that a corporate language which is spoken by native and non-native speakers can cause problems on the side of the non-native speakers in expressing opinions in meetings and acting assertively in negotiations (Charles 2007, p.4ff) that will result in being the cause of misunderstandings (Bangbose 1998). On the one hand, these problems are caused by the non-native speakers’ insufficient language proficiency and the different cultural background of native speakers on the other hand as their language is closely connected to their culture (Seidlhofer 2004). Charles (2007, p.263) points out that native speakers may lack adequate communication skills too, so that they are unable to accommodate the language shortcomings professionally. This can negatively affect the business and also negatively affect the employees. Hence, the need for other languages than the corporate language becomes evident. As a consequence, “the shrewdest [companies] are not only hiring bilingual but also providing their employees language education. English certainly helps forge strong bonds across cultures, but knowledge of the local language makes a global workforce more nimble and productive, and therefore more competitive” (Schutzler 2011, p.2). The Economist (2014, p.4) supports this statement while highlighting the estimation that despite half of the world’s population might use the English language by 2050, billions of other people will still use their own languages.



Figure 1. Extrapolated language bonuses for foreign languages in the USA, *The Economist* 2014, p.2

Since foreign language skills are becoming pertinent for effective and successful business activities, Albert Saiz conducted an extrapolation for the American context. He calculated the language bonuses for various foreign languages under the assumption that the earning bonus for an American who learns a foreign language is 2%. The results shown in Figure 1 reflect the highest premium for the German language. According to *The Economist* (2014, p.3), this

outcome is grounded in the important factor ‘economic openness’. Germany is ranked number three among the world’s top ten exporting countries, and therewith, its language is economically more valuable than the language of a more closed economy. In this context, U.S. President Barack Obama made the following statement in 2008 “We should have every child speaking more than one language.” (Washington Times 2008) and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan declared in 2012 “To prosper economically and to improve relations with other countries, Americans need to read, speak and understand other languages” (Forbes 2012). Thus, language appears to gain attention not only from companies but from the governments as well.

Learning a language means also learning to understand the people’s culture, values and traditions that can help to instill mutual understanding among the business partners as well as among company communities and among different partners in diplomacy. This is crucial for successful competition in the global market place, political influence and world peace.

German companies in Malaysia are becoming more interested in conducting German language courses and intercultural workshops for their local staff being in contact with Germans who are working in the company, who are either visitors coming to their branch plant in Asia or staff visiting the headquarters overseas for a certain period of time.

Thus, The Independent reported on July 14, 2014 that schools alone are unable to solve the problem of language learning in education and employability. Here, employers and universities have to be involved to explore the communicative needs in MNCs more specifically.

Consequently, this study aims at obtaining detailed knowledge of German language and the communicative needs of employees in multinational companies in Malaysia in regard with education for sustainable development (ESD). Those language learning needs are described and their function as a basis for the development and delivery of language programmes for adult learners are elaborated. Therefore, meeting the learners’ motivation as well as the learners’ and their employers’ expectations play an important role. According to Allwright there is “a distinction between needs (the skills which a student sees as being relevant to himself or herself), wants (those needs on which students put a high priority in the available, limited time), and lacks (the difference between the students’ present competence and the desired competence).” (quoted by Songhori 2007, p.12).

In the era of globalisation, it is a fact that the teaching (nurturing) and learning of foreign languages have been influenced by politics and economics, and the need for cross-cultural understanding.

Hence, determining the importance of foreign language in business communication is one of the goals of this research.

With this research project the researchers aim to assist existing companies to globalize and to operate successfully. Therefore, the research focus on obtaining knowledge of German language needs (“linguistic resources which learners need in order successfully to cope with the forms of communication in which they are going to be involved in the short or medium

term”, Council of Europe) and communication skills that is required in MNCs in Malaysia. Indeed, communication skills are required but basic ones paired with sufficient experience are enough when the new staff demonstrates self-confidence. This is because companies will provide training programmes for the fast improvement of staff’s communication skills (Didiot-Cook, Gauthier and Scheirlinckx 2000, p.20).

In more detail, the aim of this study is to examine the German language needs of employees in multinational companies in Malaysia and the expectations of employers in the teaching of German in their companies. As an additional variable, training for sustainable development (ESD) is included. The main focus is on the local situations in German companies and with Germans cooperating companies in Malaysia

1.1 Objectives of the research

1. To identify the needs for a future relevance curriculum based on ESD for learners of the German language in MNCs in Malaysia so that they will be able to perform effectively in the local plant or in the parent company in Germany.
2. To identify the gap between the existing and the future relevance curriculum regarding teaching German-as-a-Foreign-Language in MNCs in Malaysia so that the employees will be able to communicate and interact effectively in the local plant or in the parent company in Germany.

1.2 Research questions

1. What are the employers’ views and expectations of German language skills and communicative skills in MNCs in Malaysia?
2. What are the employees’ views and wishes of German language learning in MNCs in Malaysia?
3. In which aspects/areas do the employers’ and employees’ views not jive?

1.3 Project description

The purpose of this research project was two-fold. The first aim was to obtain accurate information about the tasks that employees carry out in the German language in German companies in Malaysia and Malaysian companies cooperating with German individuals/German companies in Malaysia. The second aim was to collect information from different sources about the use of German within the company and the areas where German is required.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Needs Analysis

According to Nunan (1988, p.75), ‘needs analysis’ is “a family of procedures for gathering information about learners and about communication tasks.” Brown (1995, p.36) stated that the term ‘needs analysis’ refers to “systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum processes that

satisfy the language learning requirements of students within the context of particular institutions that influence the learning and teaching situation”. West (1994, p.1) puts it as the identification of “what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation, and how learners might best master the target language during the period of training”. Since the term ‘needs analysis’ was first introduced in India by Michael West in the 1920’s, several types of needs analysis were differentiated. A few of them are as follows : Target-situation analysis, Present-situation analysis, Learning needs analysis (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998) and Means Analysis (Holliday and Cooke 1982). Thus, the term ‘target-situation analysis’ refers to an exploration of situations in which the language will be used or – as introduced by Chambers (1980, p.29) for the first time - to “communicate in the target situation”. Needs are, according to the language-centered approach, “the ability to comprehend and/or produce the linguistic features of the target situation” (Hutchinson and Waters 1987, p.54). The researchers differentiate between Target needs (- what the learners need to know in the target situation) and Learning needs (- what the learners need to do in order to learn). Munby’s model (1978) brought the needs analysis discussion a big step forward, with his more detailed instrument of profiling learners’ needs, but it also drew criticisms because it overlooked areas such as utility, teaching methods, learning strategies and material selection. Long (2005, p.21) pointed out the lack of empirical studies that caused teaching materials to be based on outsiders’ view on “notions and functions supposedly required to satisfy various occupational language needs”. Therefore, Long suggested focusing on the insiders’ view in order to obtain more accurate information due to the fact that those are the experts of their domain, e.g. company employees in the target situation (Gilabert 2005, p. 182; Long 2005, p.21). In this context, language acquisition researchers promote triangulation of multiple sources and methods as a strategy to produce reliable information (Jabeen 2011, p.11; Al-Khatib 2005, p.5; Gilabert 2005, p.182; Long 2005, p.21; Bosher and Smalkovski 2002, p.61; Jasso-Aguilar 1999, p.27). This study builds on those previous works.

Although there have been several approaches to Needs Analysis, the majority is referring to English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The German language needs in Malaysia are not yet explored. Kärchner-Ober (2009) made the first approach in the German language as tertiary language for Malaysian learners but not on the needs. Results of this study could be a benchmark for other foreign languages in Malaysia.

2.2 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Sustainability is a paradigm for thinking about a future in which environmental, societal, and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and improved quality of life. Definitions for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are omnifold. The United Nations’ definition of ESD – or ‘learning to last’ – is as follows: “finding and using opportunities to include environmental, economic and social content or considerations in the subject you teach”. Whereas UNESCO explains ESD with general objectives, as for example “respect values and preserve the achievements of the past; assess, care for and restore the state of our planet” or “be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally”, the Sustainable Development Education Network (SDE) makes it

more concrete: “Achieving sustainability requires the development of new knowledge, skills and attitudes. The process of acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed is known as ESD”. Regarding ‘knowledge’, ESD should attend to “the value of biological, social and cultural diversity in maintaining the wellbeing of our planet and our society”. The key skills needed to gain this knowledge are capabilities to enhance critically thinking of issues that could enable individuals to think about the significant systems and products that are necessary to achieve sustainability. A respectful attitude for biological, social and cultural differences and diversity that are a fundamental part of our world is considered as a key attitude to cultivate in ESD (www.unesco.org; www.eauc.org.uk and www.sdenetwork.org).

2.3 The Position (status or significance) of the German Language in Malaysia

The German language in Malaysia has a long history. In 1961 German was taught in Ipoh for the first time. In Universiti Sains Malaysia, for example, German was introduced in 1969, two years after the establishment of the university in 1967.

Today, German is taught in each of the thirteen states of Malaysia and the three federal districts of Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya and Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan, in Residential Schools and Day Schools. According to information obtained from the Malaysian Ministry of Education in February 2015, there were 18 Boarding Schools and 26 Day Schools in 2014 which offered German to their students. In total, 44 schools with increasing tendency had German in their subject list. Compared to the year 2013 the number of schools that offered German increased by six schools. Information received by the Goethe Institut added two private primary schools (PASCH schools), one private secondary school (Miri), the Deutsche Schule Kuala Lumpur - German School Kuala Lumpur (DSKL), the International Education College (INTEC) and the German Malaysian Institute (GMI).

In each of the schools, at least one German language teacher was employed. In one of the schools in the state of Kedah, there were even two teachers for teaching German. The German language teachers were Malaysians who were trained in Malaysia and partly in Germany. At first initiated by the Goethe Institut in Kuala Lumpur in collaboration with the Malaysian Ministry of Education, the German language teacher training is now fully in Malaysian hands. After the candidates learnt the German language until the proficiency level of B1 which refers to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), they commenced their studies in a German Bachelor Program at one of the two Malaysian universities (Universiti Malaya – UM or Universiti Putra Malaysia – UPM), the only universities in Malaysia where a Bachelor Program is imposed. Most of the graduated students are working as German language teachers in Malaysian secondary schools. Other than being taught in Malaysian schools, German is also a subject in the language faculties of the Malaysian institutions of higher education. German is offered in each Malaysian university at least in the form of proficiency courses. The lecturers are mainly native speakers of the German language. Additionally, there are also private institutions like the Malaysian German Society in Penang, Language Works in Kuala Lumpur and a number of private teachers who are offering German language courses.

With respect to the proficiency level, students in schools usually reach language skills at A2 level; in academic institutions and the Goethe Institut the level is between A2 and B2. Language works' German courses are not following the syllabus recommended by CEFR and in MNCs the proficiency level reaches usually A1 niveau. According to estimations of the Goethe Institut Malaysia, there are currently 85 to 100 tutors teaching German in Malaysia.

Generally, the trend of learning German in Malaysia is on the rise. In 2014, even a kindergarden and a tuition center in Penang recognized the importance of the German language for further education in Germany and employment opportunities for the young generation which resulted in the search for a German language instructor for the children in lower secondary school age (12-14 years). This shows that the owner of the tuition center is foresighted as those learning a foreign language at a young age could reach a higher proficiency level until the moment they enter working life. Employees with a good command in a foreign language would be highly appreciated by MNCs.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

As Figure 2 displays, the interdependency between language, economy, environment and society is complex. It is therefore advisable to put the center point of the study on target needs, deficiencies and preferred learning styles. The study aims to focus on those issues in light of ESD.

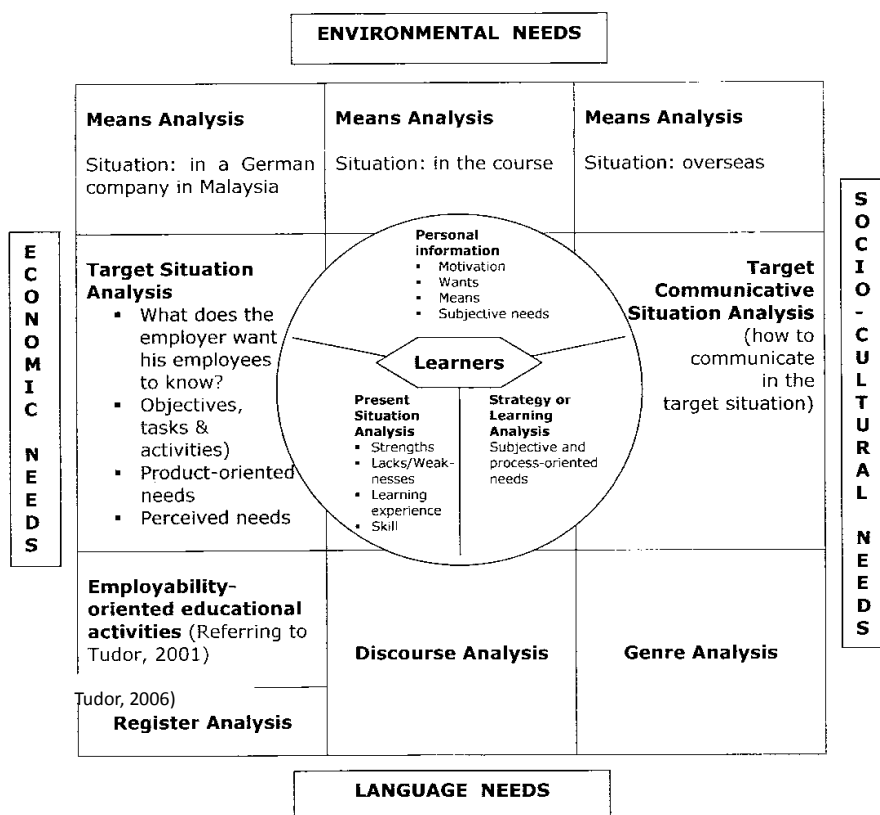


Figure 2. Interdependency between language, economic, environmental and socio-cultural needs of foreign language learners at MNCs
(Figure by Songhori 2008, p.22 modified by Mayr 2011, p.224)

3. Methodology

From five different concepts of needs analysis, those which have been distinguished by R. West in 1994, the researchers chose the target situation analysis (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998; Hutchinson and Waters 1987; West 1997) as a suitable approach for the current research project. Utilizing target situation analysis, language requirements of the target situation were identified by contemplating, questioning or observing language needs (also known as necessities or objective needs) in a particular situation of speech. In doing so, the target needs were divided into necessities (what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the particular situation), lacks (the gap between the existing proficiency and the target proficiency) and wants ('needs' from the learner's subjective perspective) (Hutchinson and Waters 1987, p.55-56) – Figure 5. The following categories were chosen which allowed differentiating between various degrees of language specifications: - Priority of used language (English, German); - Priority of language skills; - Priority of language functions (R. West 1997, p.71) – Figure 6.

Accommodating the second aim as stated above - to collect information from different sources about the use of German within the company and the areas where German is required -, triangulation was employed in this mixed-mode research. In particular it served two purposes:

1. To explore the language needs from the three stakeholders' perspectives: employer, employees, teacher (data triangulation using a variety of people – Denzin 1970) - Figure 3, 4, 5 and 6.
2. To provide a more complete set of findings through various methods of data gathering (methodological triangulation using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observations) (Denzin 1970) – Figure 7.

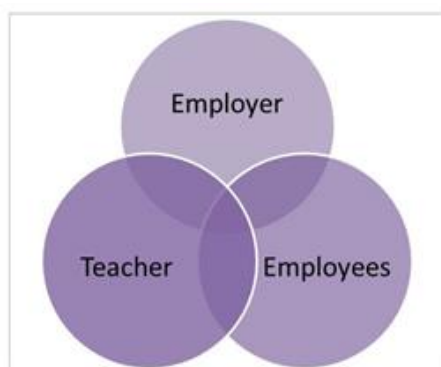


Figure 3.

Triangulation – Stakeholders' perspectives on Language Needs (Sources), based on Long (2005, p.25-30)
(Source: Authors' own creation)



Figure 4.

Triangulation – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), based on UNESCO
(Source: Authors' own creation)

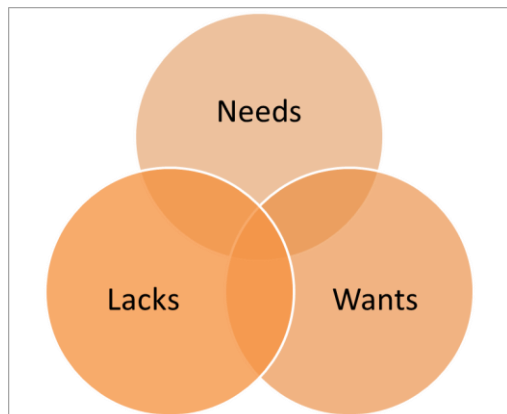


Figure 5.

Triangulation – Target Needs, based on Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.55-56)

(Source: Authors' own creation)

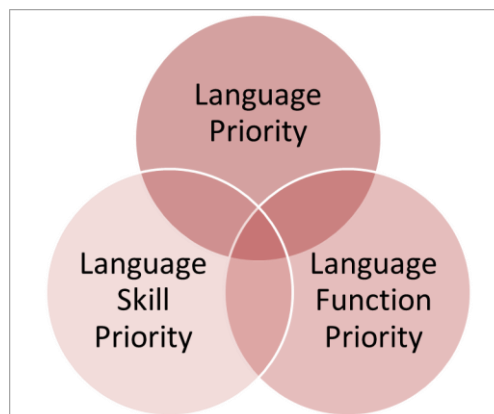


Figure 6.

Triangulation – Language Priorities, based on West (1997, p.71)

(Source: Authors' own creation)

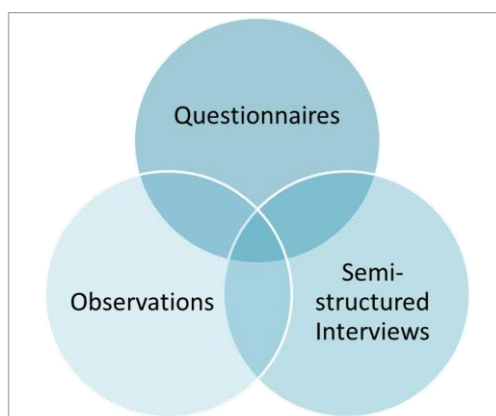


Figure 7. Triangulation – Data Collection

(Instruments), based on Long (2005, p.30-34)

(Source: Authors' own creation)

Data were then collected through a triangulation of the stakeholders' perspectives on language needs, the target needs and language priorities and ESD related information. The flow chart below (Figure 8) displays the planned research process in the project. The current report elaborates on the first part of the process only, the target situation analysis, and makes suggestions on topics and language skills necessary for the teachers to accomplish during a German language course at a Malaysia-based MNC. In the second step, the results will lead to a syllabus, especially designed for the target group. The second and third part, material development especially tailored to the needs identified in this analysis, would be the subject of a future project.

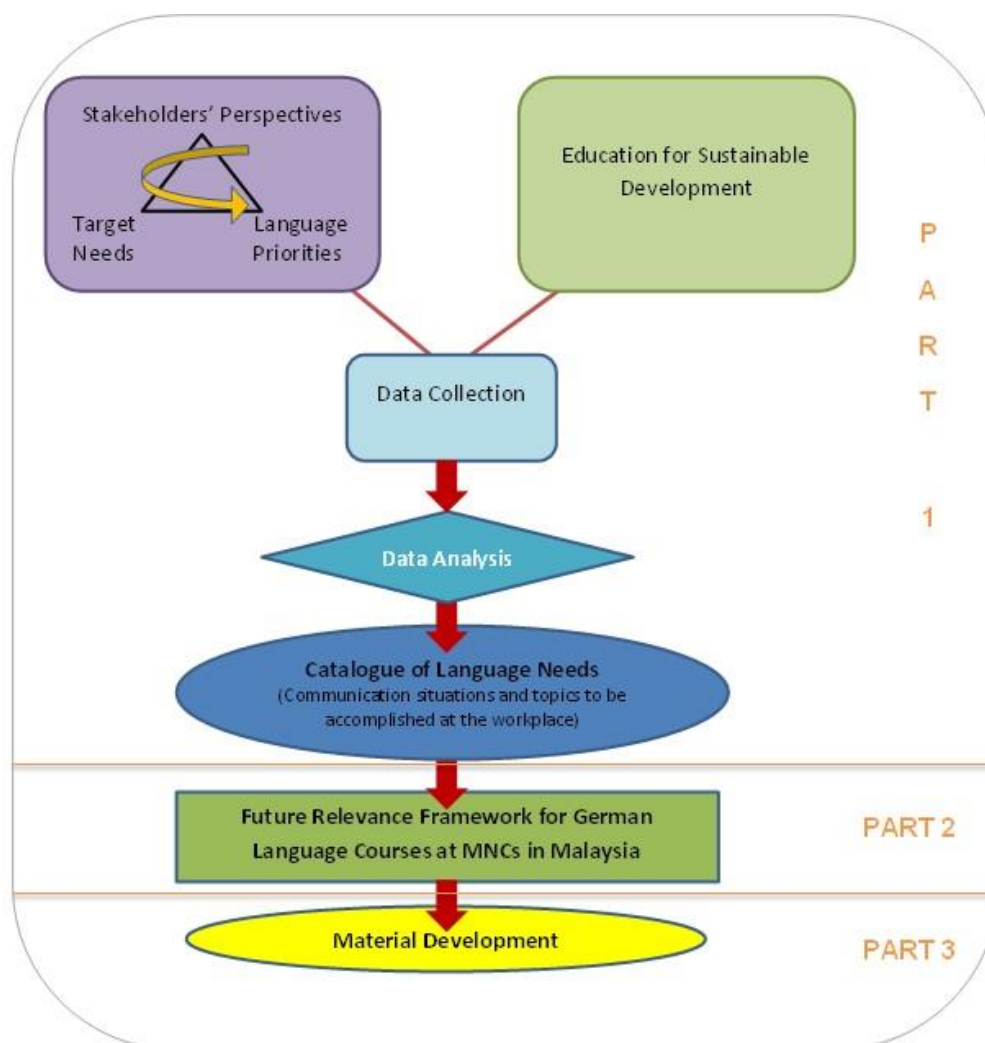


Figure 8. Triangulation – Needs Analysis (Target Situation Analysis) based on Hutchinson and Waters 1987, p.55-56; Long 2005, p.25-34; West 1997, p.71 and UNESCO website (Source: Authors' creation)

3.1 Samples

The industrial zones in Malaysia are mainly located around Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur and the Northern zone of Malaysia. Therefore, MNCs in Malaysia are mainly situated in the states of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor as well as in Penang and Kedah. Part of the sample are German MNCs, respectively companies from other German speaking countries like Austria or Switzerland, and companies that work with German clients. In the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor region, a total of 100 companies were selected according to their degree of brand awareness and accessibility ($NE1 = 100$). In the Northern region in the states of Penang and Kedah, 15 companies were ($NE2 = 15$) identified. The total number of company identified in this study comprised 115 MNCs in Malaysia ($NE\Sigma = 115$).

Four teachers who were teaching a German language course at five of the selected companies were identified. These teachers formed the source for obtaining learners of the German

language in MNCs. A total of 28 learners was identified (NL = 28).

3.2 Instruments

A set of three questionnaires was employed to gather data. One of them was designed to collect information from the employers about communication and language needs, - lacks and - wants that should be accommodated during the German language course in the companies. Another questionnaire was created to accumulate relevant data from the employees. Finally, the third questionnaire addressed the teachers, who know their learners best, about their students' preferences of language skills expected in their job environment, learning situations and learning styles. Generally, the questionnaires were largely adopted by those used in previous research (Li So-mui and Mead 2000, Perrin 2003, Alm 2003 and others). They were modified to the needs of the current research project and comprised for all three stakeholders' five sections that included the following themes: Section A (General information about the respondent), Section B (Teaching & Learning Environment), Section C (Immediate communicative needs), Section D (Language skills development) and Section E (Learning outcome) (Figure 9).

Questionnaire Design

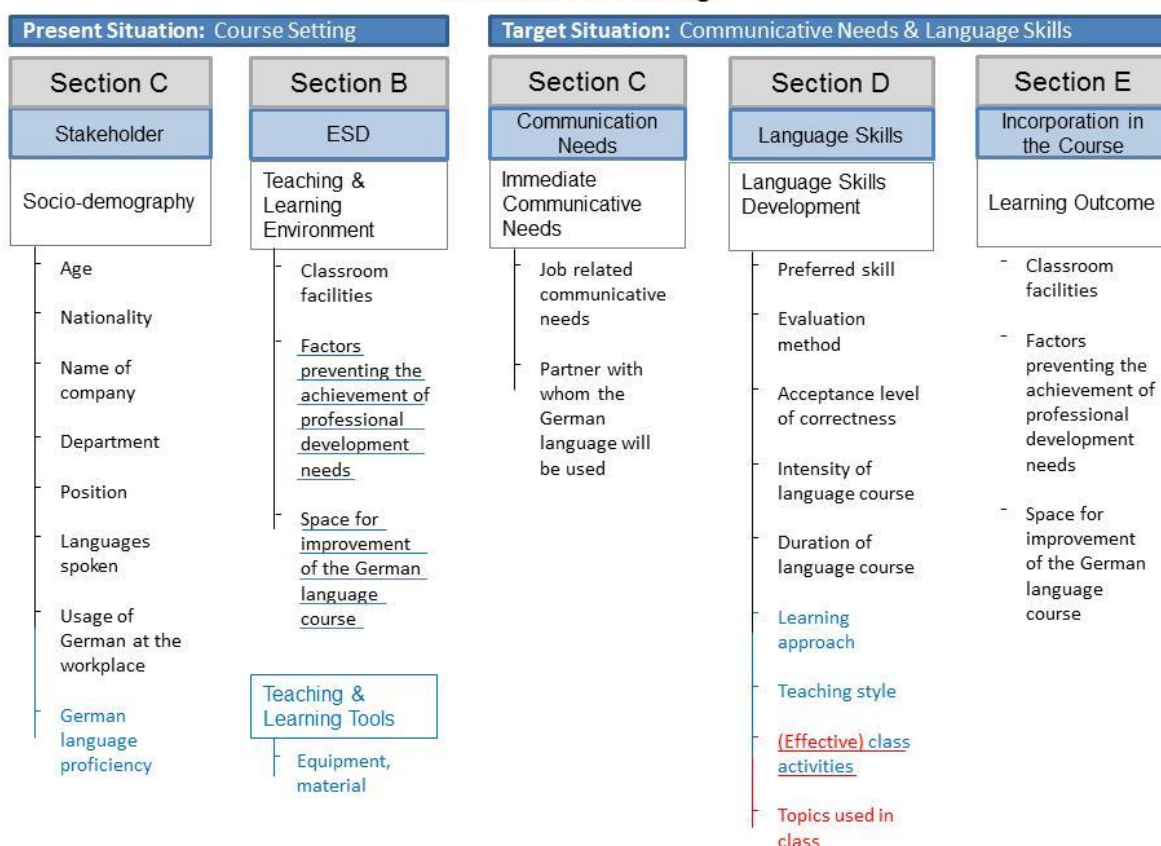


Figure 9. Questionnaire Design (Black - Employer; Blue or Blue underlined – Employees; Red or Red underlined – Teacher) – Source: Authors' own creation

In Section B the focus in the employer and teacher questionnaire lay on the teaching and learning environment whereas the learner questionnaire emphasized the teaching and learning tools although the environment was included (Table 1).

Table 1. Questionnaire designed for the three stakeholders: employer, employee and teacher (Source: Authors' own creation)

<i>Questionnaire Section</i>		<i>Employer</i>	<i>Employee (Learner)</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
<i>Section A</i>	General information about the respondent	✓	✓	✓
<i>Section B</i>	Teaching & Learning environment	✓	-	✓
	Teaching & Learning tools	-	✓	-
<i>Section C</i>	Immediate communicative needs	✓	✓	✓
<i>Section D</i>	Language skills development	✓	✓	✓
<i>Section E</i>	Learning outcome	✓	✓	✓

Most of the questions were designed in the answering modus of a six-item Likert scale question, in the following range (highly preferred – mostly preferred – somewhat preferred – somewhat not preferred – mostly not preferred – least preferred), to assess the respondents' perception/opinion.

Upon completion of the questionnaires and their analysis, some of the results were scrutinized by semi-structured interviews with a few of the respondents with the intention to gather further in-depth information. Each interview comprised ten questions and lasted one hour.

3.3 Data Collection

Initially, the distribution of the questionnaires to the employers was carried out by uploading all three surveys together with a project description on the university's website and sending the link to the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Kuala Lumpur. Beforehand, the Embassy had agreed to support the research project and forwarded the link together with recommendations to answer the questionnaires to the managing directors of the MNCs. The result was one returned questionnaire. In order to succeed in collecting data, the researchers decided to send six research assistants to the companies in the following areas: Kuala Lumpur/Selangor and Penang/Kedah. Each research assistant covered 20 companies through making appointment via phone calls and finding contact persons in the companies. The

assistants managed to receive questionnaires from 37 companies (32.17%; 100% = 115 companies) who had agreed to participate in the research project. From 37 questionnaires obtained, only 15 questionnaires were completed (13.04%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Total number and percentage of distributed and completed questionnaires (Source: Authors' own creation)

Respondents	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires obtained	No. of questionnaires completed
Employer	115 (100%)	37 (32.17%)	15 (13.04%)
Employee (Learner)	28 (100%)	28 (100%)	28 (100%)
Teacher	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)

Regarding data collection of the employees, observations were not possible because the companies did not give the permission to enter the premises and observe their employees during their work. Thus, data gathering was reduced to two sources, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data gathered through the questionnaires utilized quantitative research methods and the statistics software SPSS. At first a frequency test of the relevant variables was carried out. For this step, the descriptive analysis procedure of the SPSS program was employed. It produced the means and standard deviations of the variables of the target situation where German could be used by the employees in MNCs in Malaysia. This procedure allowed determining the as the highest and as the lowest perceived needs, lacks and wants in the described scenario.

The data based on the interviews was analyzed using qualitative research methods. The responses were categorized according to employers', employees' and teachers' responses to the variables needs, lacks and wants. A t-test was conducted to determine discrepancies between the employers' and employees' perceptions of the desired German language course content.

4. Findings

4.1 Questionnaires with the Stakeholders

4.1.1 Questionnaires with the Employers as Respondents

Although the first attempt to gather information about the employers' perception of a German language course failed, the second one resulted in 37 responses with limited information

provided. This shows that the employers appear to have little interest in the needs analysis of German language skills among their employees. Apparently they have handed over the responsibilities for the course syllabus to the teachers, as they thought they were the domain experts, but in this scenario the teachers are ‘non-experts’ (Long 2005, p.35) because they do not know the internal workplace necessities in the companies. Cowling (2007, p.430), who made similar experiences in a Japanese company, attributed this issue to cultural differences. However, in this current study, it seemed that the employers’ hesitation could be explained by the fact that English is the Lingua Franca in the in-house communication as well as the communication with the headquarters in Germany (Moreau 2013, p.6). Thus, the German language plays a minor role with regards to in-house communication.

Regarding the employees’ communicative needs in the target situation, the employers somewhat preferred the options “for conversation with German speaking visitors ($m = 2.4667$) and “for communication with German speaking counterparts” ($m = 2.5333$) which is reflected in the means of the frequencies (m). However, there does not seem to be a necessity to use the German language during presentations, writing technical documents or other forms of writing. The mean of 4.0667 for each of these three items showed a slight disfavor, whereas “correspondence via writing Email/Fax” was found to be a little bit more preferred ($m = 3.4000$). Slightly favored options are “assignments in Germany” ($m = 2.8000$), “travelling” ($m = 2.8667$) and “settling down in a German speaking country” ($m = 2.9333$) (Figure 10). The option “Taking notes during meetings” was not selected by any of the respondents which could lead to the conclusion that meetings are held mostly in English. Overall, the employers did not make a clear statement of when specifically their staff was expected to use the German language. This finding appeared to confirm the first impression that employers seemed to leave the choice for the course content to the teachers and secondly, that German is not the main medium of communication in the companies.

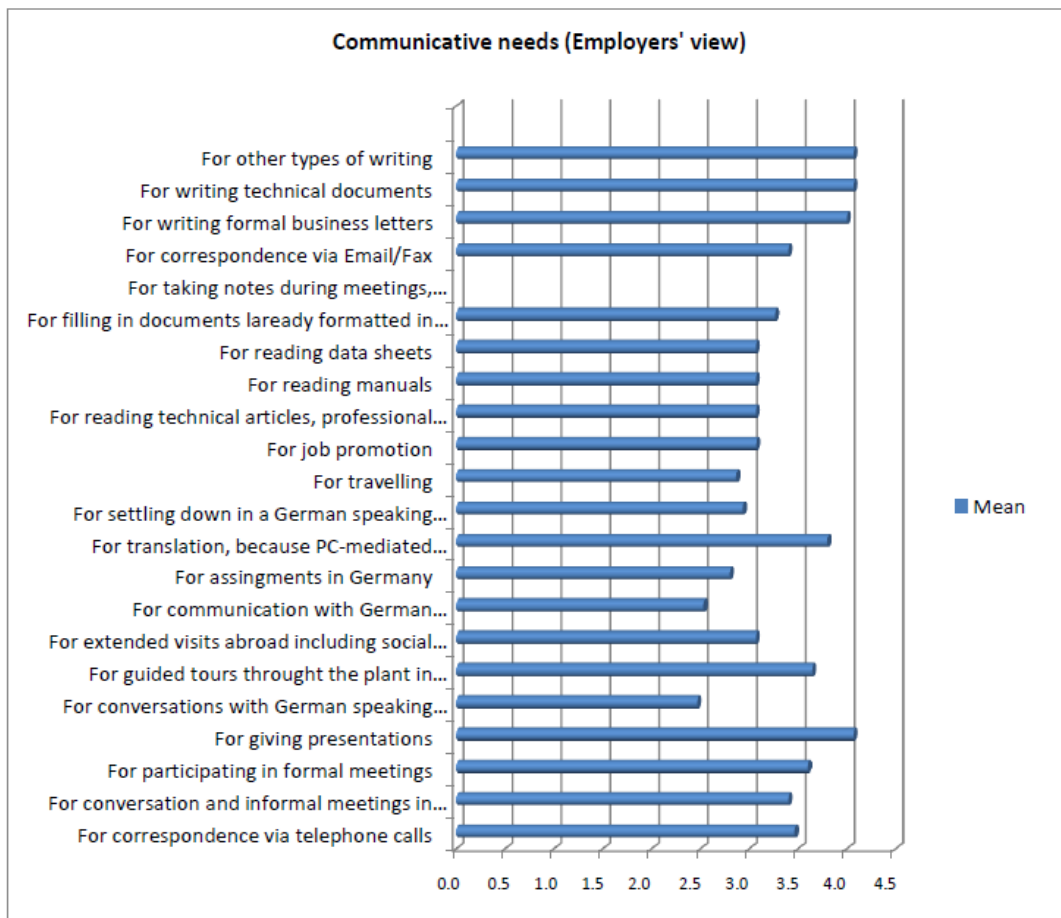


Figure 10. Communicative Needs (Employers’ View) – Source: Authors’ own creation

The employers’ preferred learning outcome comprised the development of the ability to speak effectively in real life situations ($m = 1.7143$), the development of listening skills for professional and personal purposes ($m = 1.8571$) and the improvement of vocabulary ($m = 1.9286$) (Figure 11)

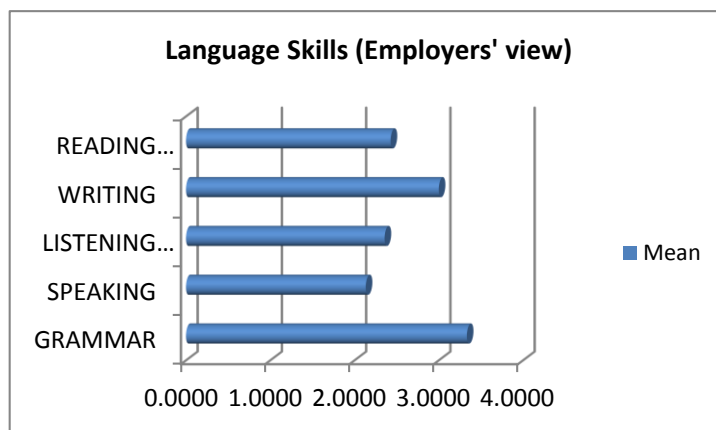


Figure 11. Language Skills (Employers’ view) – Source: Authors’ own creation

In conducting a German language course, the teacher may follow the following recommendations. The employers suggested a teaching time of four hours per week (84.6%) for the duration of 10 to 12 months (92.3%). In addition cultural topics should also be included in the syllabus, especially “similarities and differences in conversation” ($m = 2.5000$) and “idioms, proverbs and sayings” ($m = 2.5714$). The majority of the employers agreed upon a formal course evaluation ($m = 4.4615$), that involves preferably “comprehensive evaluation including a final examination” and “evaluation through peer feedback” ($m = 2.9231$ both).

Regarding general competencies that should be improved by the employees, the employers’ preferences are “Decision making” (40.54%), “Communicating and Strategic thinking” (35.14% both), “Writing skills” (32.43%) as well as “Organizing and Improving teams” (29.73% both) (Table 3).

Table 3. General competencies preferred by the employers

General competency	Frequency (N=37)	Percentage (%)
Decision making	15	40.54
Communicating	13	35.14
Strategic thinking	13	35.14
Writing skills	12	32.43
Organizing	11	29.73
Improving teams	11	29.73

Table 4. Most beneficial areas of employees’ professional development

Most beneficial areas of employees’ professional development	Frequency (N=37)	Percentage (%)
Project management	14	37.84
Effective planning	13	35.14
Time management	11	29.73

Leadership	11	29.73
How to advocate effectively	11	29.73

Areas that would be most beneficial for the employees’ professional development were rated by the employers as follows: “Project management” headed the list (37.84%), and this was followed by “Effective planning” (35.14%). “Time management”, “Leadership” and “Effective advocating” ranked three with 29.73% each (Table 4).

4.1.2 Questionnaires with the Employees as Respondents

In general, the employees have shown that they are quite satisfied with their German language course materials. The mean score for the learners was at $m = 2.7500$, indicating that the current materials meet their needs in most aspects. However, the learners also feel that there is room to improve the German language courses in terms of specific skills development. The maximum score for this is $m = 4.0000$, proving that none of the learners found the materials to be fully meeting their needs. Thus, the learners mostly prefer the improvement of speaking and listening comprehension skills ($m = 2.1786$ both), followed by pronunciation training ($m = 2.2500$) (Figure 12). As teaching tools, the employees expressed the wish for more visual teaching materials ($m = 1.8929$), videos ($m = 1.9286$) and authentic materials ($m = 2.2500$) compared with online activities ($m = 2.8214$) and grammar books ($m = 2.6429$).

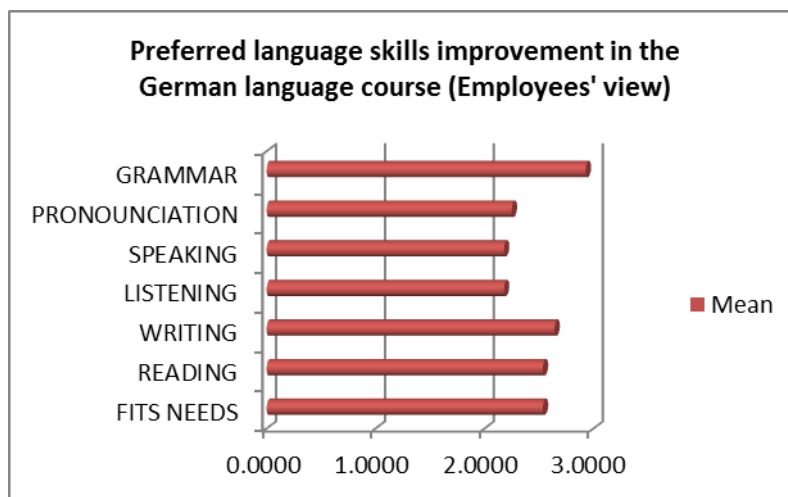


Figure 12. Language skills to be improved in the course (Employees’ view) – Source: Authors’ own creation

These results concur with the employees’ German language skills that they would like to achieve. The most preferred language skills are good listening comprehension skills, with a mean score of $m = 1.5714$ and speaking skills ($m = 1.6586$) (Figure 13). However, all skills

have a mean score of $m = 2.25$ and below, indicating that the learners highly prefer all the aspects. All the learners indicated that they would use the German language with their colleagues whereas 19 of them would be using it with their friends. Only six would use it with the company's management and three with customers.



Figure 13. Personal language skills wants (Employees' view) – Source: Authors' own creation

Regarding job related communicative needs for learning the German language, most of the needs have mean scores higher than $m = 3.0000$, except for conversation with German counterparts overseas ($m = 2.9686$), for conversations and informal meetings in small groups ($m = 2.9286$), for conversations with German speaking visitors ($m = 2.7857$), for extended visits abroad including social contacts ($m = 2.7143$), for travelling to airports hotels etc. ($m = 2.5714$), and the lowest mean score is for general travelling ($m = 2.3929$), indicating it is the highest ranking urgency. The lowest ranking need is indicated in 'giving presentations' ($m = 4.6071$) (Figure 14). The option "Taking notes during meetings" was not favored by the employees, which is similar to the employers' responses. This is another indication that meetings are held mostly in English. Compared to job related needs, the employees responded to non-job related needs in a similar way. They regard 'understanding spoken German' as the most important ability they would wish to master ($m = 1.9286$), followed by 'getting information about the country, people and culture' ($m = 2.0357$).

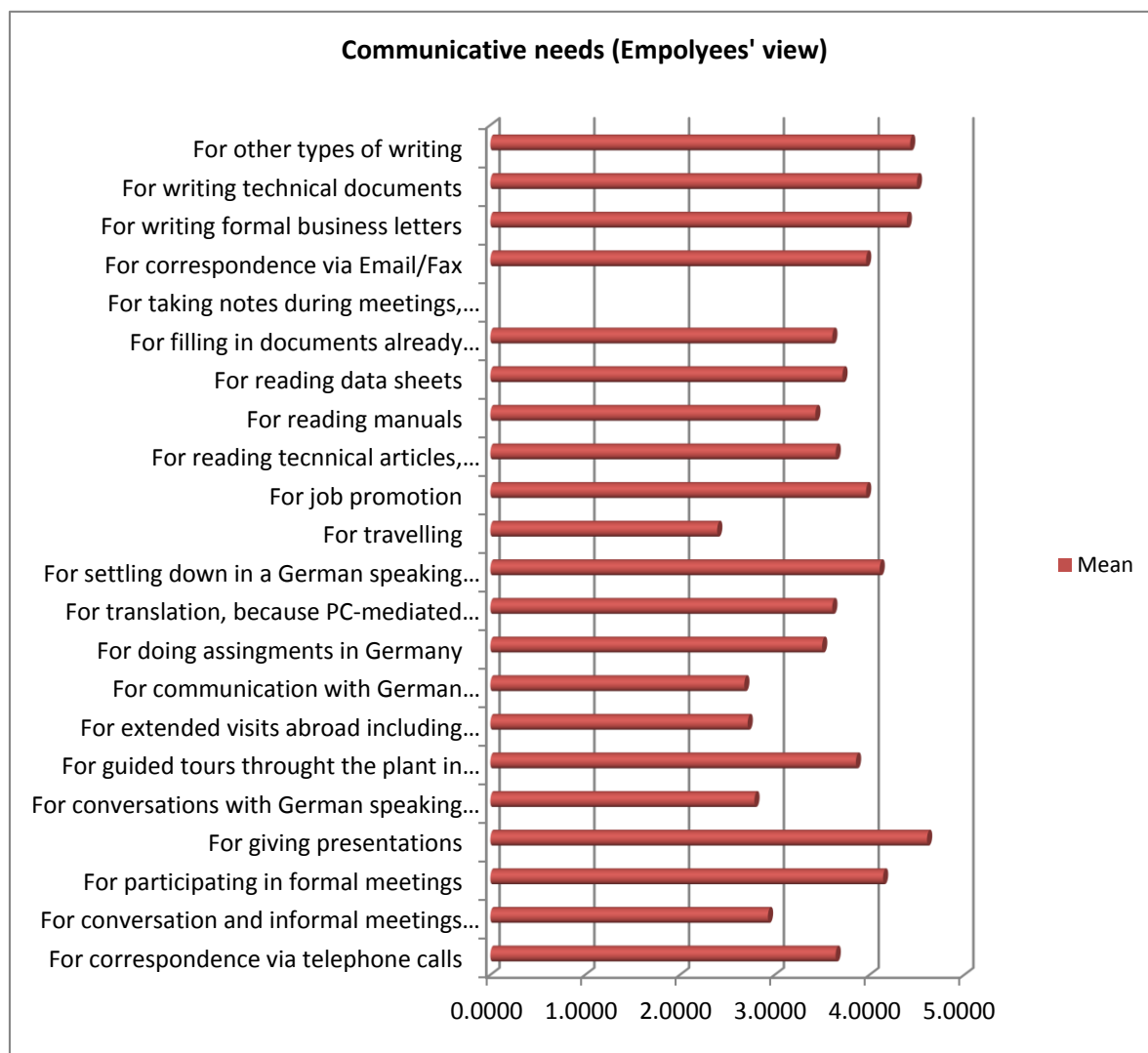


Figure 14. Communicative Needs (Employees' View) – Source: Authors' own creation

The employees' preferred learning outcome comprised the development of the ability to speak effectively in real life situations ($m = 1.7143$). This is followed by improving vocabulary and being able to use words appropriately in different context with a mean value of $m = 1.9643$ (Figure 15). The least preferred would be “developing skills for professional and personal purposes” at a mean value of $m = 2.5000$. However, all the values are below $m = 2.5000$, indicating that there is generally a strong preference for all the outcomes.

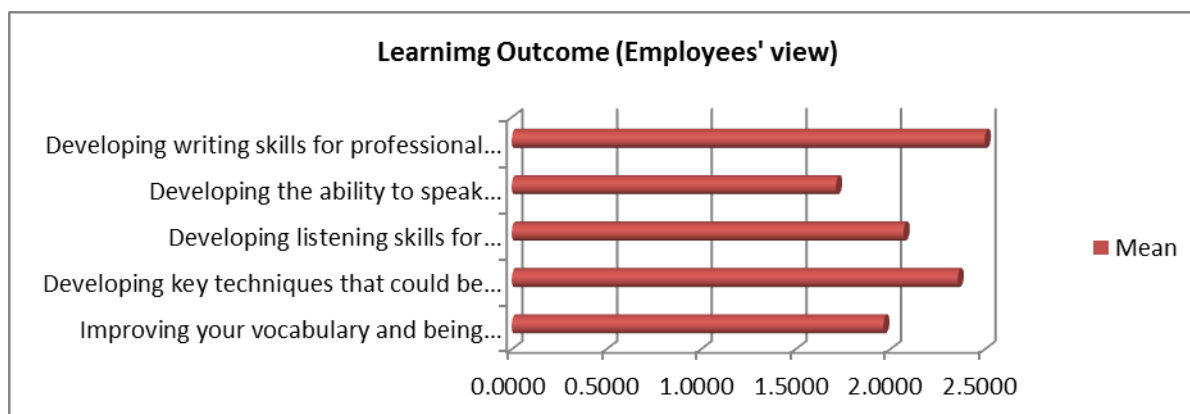


Figure 15. General expected language skills development in a German language course (Employees' view) – Source: Authors' own creation

By following regularly the German language course, the employees experienced a variety of class activities. The highest practiced activity was grammar exercises at 92.86% (n = 26). Also relatively often practiced were reading aloud and listening comprehension exercises both at 89.29% (n = 25) and reading comprehension at 82.14% (n = 23). The least practiced class activity was carrying out projects (completing imaginative and creative activities) at 10.71% (n = 3) and students' presentations at 7.14% (n = 2). The learners evaluated the class activities according to their perceived effectiveness. None of the learners found the reading comprehension practice to be ineffective. The low frequencies of ineffective activities in general indicate that most learners found the activities to be useful. The most ineffective activity at 35.57% (n = 10), was in the employees' point of view "translating Malay and English sentences into German" (Table 5).

Table 5. Experienced and Perceived ineffective classroom activities from the learner's perspective (Source: Authors' own creation)

Classroom Activities in German language courses	Experienced Activities		Perceived Ineffective Activities	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Translating	9	32.14	10	35.71
Grammar Exercises	26	92.86	2	7.14
Group Discussions	19	67.86	2	7.14
Writing a paragraph or essay	18	64.29	2	7.14
Drills	4	14.29	4	14.29
Students presentations	2	7.14	4	14.29
Role Plays	15	53.57	3	10.71
Completing imaginative and creative activities (Projects)	3	10.71	2	7.14
Reading aloud	25	89.29	1	3.57
Listening Exercises	25	89.29	2	7.14
Language games	10	35.71	1	3.57
Reading comprehension	23	82.14	0	0.00
Watching videos/movies	5	17.86	2	7.14

Regarding the learning approach, employees preferred most the communicative approach at mean value of $m = 1.8889$, and the least preferred learning approach was distance learning at $m = 3.8571$. Regarding teaching style, learners favored a teacher directed lesson ($m = 1.6429$). The least preferred was "working alone" with a mean value of $m = 3.8571$. Quite well accepted were the styles "working in small groups" ($m = 2.3929$) as well as "learner-centered learning" and "working as a class" (both $m = 2.4643$).

For the duration of the German language course, the employees suggested a teaching time of three hours per week (42.9%) or two hours per week (32.1%). Most of the learners, at 28.6%, would like to study German for 5 – 6 months, followed by 21.4% who would like to study it for more than three years. 17.9% of the employees indicated that they prefer a duration of 3 – 4 months only. Referring to cultural topics to be included in the German language course, the most preferred topic was "varieties in German" with a mean value of $m = 2.4286$, followed closely by "similarities and differences in conversations" at $m = 2.4643$ and "Body language" at $m = 2.5000$.

The mean values range from $m = 2.5714$ to $m = 4.0000$ in the responses to the preferred evaluation method indicated that all given choices were preferred by the learners. The options were 'Evaluation is given on the final exam only', 'Comprehensive evaluation including a final exam', 'Evaluation based on tests', 'Evaluation by peer feedback' and 'There should not be any formal evaluation'. Only the 'evaluation via final exam' alone was least preferred at a mean score of $m = 4.0000$. The most preferred method was 'evaluation based on tests', with a mean score of $m = 2.5714$.

The employees appeared to be motivated to study German. The indicator with the highest agreement was "My attitude towards German speaking people is favorable", with a mean value of $m = 2.1071$. This was followed by "My attitude towards learning German is favorable" with a mean value of $m = 2.1429$. The items "My interest in foreign language is high" and "My motivation to learn German in order to communicate with German Speaking people is strong" with a mean value of $m = 2.1786$ ranked as number three. The item for which learners agreed with the least preference was "I worry about speaking in my German Class", with a mean value of $m = 4.0000$.

4.1.3 Teachers' Responses in Questionnaires and Interviews

In the questionnaire, the teachers stated that the German language classes consisted out of ca. 15 participants. The course duration was five months with three teaching hours per week (60 teaching hours in total). The classrooms were equipped with all necessary facilities. Regarding the teaching approach, the teachers favored the communicative teaching and learning approach, followed by structural and project-based learning. The teaching style emphasized 'working as a class', and also in small groups or in pairs. Thus, teacher directed lessons were more likely than learner-centered lessons. All teachers agreed that the effectiveness of the language course would be higher if the duration and intensity could be extended to approximately five hours per week for two years. The teaching material used in class, commonly comprised a textbook, a workbook and an audio CD for learners of German-as-a-Foreign-Language from a commercial publisher. It was not especially altered to

the needs of learners in a MNC. However, the teachers tried to include authentic materials in their classes in order to provide more exposure to real life German language.

The teachers regarded the following situations as target situations for communicative skills development in the German language: travelling, communication with German counterparts in Germany and assignments during training programs in Germany. Furthermore, they regarded participation in a German language class to be beneficial for job promotions. In terms of speaking and writing skills in formal and informal situations, the teachers appeared undecided as the mean scores reached values of $m = 3.0000$ to $m = 4.0000$. The topics to be covered by suitable vocabulary provision were identified as related to work, country and culture and everyday situations in daily life.

The medium of instruction was the German language which was “very often” used by the teachers. However, in the interviews the teachers stated that they were increasingly using English in class to ensure that the learners understood the instructions and explanations of grammar structures and cultural aspects.

As for the learning outcome, the teachers favored the development of all the four language skills evenly, which a slight emphasis on the speaking skill, which they especially were focusing on during the interview.

The teachers’ opinion about the choice of cultural topics in class showed a discrepancy. Two teachers out of four considered “varieties of German” and “body language” as important, whereas the other two teachers emphasized “idioms, proverbs and sayings”. However, they agreed on the topic “similarities and differences in conversations (associate meanings)”.

As a suitable evaluation method, the teachers preferred a comprehensive evaluation including a final exam, projects and evaluation by peer feedback. Nonetheless, in the interview they partly feel that an evaluation by peer feedback is preferable because “the teacher’s evaluation is always subjective” (citation of one of the teachers). The teachers strongly agreed that the acceptance level of correctness was reached when the learners were able to express themselves in German with some grammatical errors included.

In the interviews, the teachers reinforced the fact that their learners in MNCs in Malaysia prefer topics about daily life and the necessary language skills to express their everyday activities in basic German language. It must not necessarily be the daily routine at the workplace.

Although the speaking skill was the first choice of teachers and learners, it was shown that the writing skill was of intermediate importance as some employees brought E-mails from the workplace to the class and tried to create suitable responses in German. A very small number of learners declared also that reading comprehension is needed for understanding manuals on troubleshooting, for example. This would require the learning of vocabulary on technical terms.

The teacher mentioned that a special course content tailored to the communicative needs of the company’s employees was not discussed with the company management. Basic German

on A1-level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was the base for the course syllabus which followed a common book published for that particular level.

Similar to the employers, teachers and employees mentioned that the course was on voluntary basis, but the management usually paid for one basic course of five months only. Continuation of the language course was treated differently among the companies. Whereas some allowed employees to proceed to higher level courses held in their companies, some other MNCs allowed their employees to attend higher proficiency courses in educational institutions outside the firm on self-paid basis. Others received the continuous language course as treats for good performance at work. Those reached at the time of this research already B1-level according to CEFR.

4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with the Employers as respondents

In the interviews, the employers verified the researchers' hypothesis that English is the "main language". "However, for direct, personal, informal communication and integration, networking, etc., German language communication would help a lot" (employer's citation, translated into the English language by the authors). In the following, the employer elaborated on this quotation more in detail.

The employer emphasized the importance of the employees' integration into conversations among Germans. Feedback from staff members, who were transferred to Germany for some time, supported this statement. It would benefit the employees if they would be able to contribute a few phrases to the conversation about football, weather or their experiences in Germany, for example. These trials of using the German language function as "an emotional door opener", lowers the barrier to initiate communication and smoothen the integration process with German nationals. This way of ice breaking works vice versa, because not only do Malaysians face inhibitions, the Germans too feel reserved to include Malaysians in a conversation. They feel more at ease when they discover that the Malaysian partner understands a little bit of German. Hence, it is crucial that the Malaysian partner be able to understand the essence of a conversation or a document/mail and to react accordingly. A reaction in the English language would then be also acceptable. The situation was compared with the employer's own experience: "It is a similar situation, when I receive a document in Bahasa Malaysia and at least I would like to know whether it is important for me so that I would need a translation or whether it would be enough to grasp the main meaning."

Regarding the Malaysian staff members, who are sent to Germany for business trips (two-three months) or for training programs (four months), the employer would appreciate if the Malaysians could participate in meetings and discussions on subject matters using the German language. The employer emphasized that in Germany the expectations of orthography and grammar proficiency in written works would be higher than in Malaysia. Therefore, the focus in Malaysian plants should be on oral communication. However, good reading comprehension skills are also necessary in order to share basic information among

colleagues intra- or inter-operationally with their counterparts in Europe. Thus, employees are expected to understand reports on error analysis, Emails, customer requests and technical topics. Hereby, it is pertinent to experience the functions of machines to be sent to Malaysia, to understand the training in the machines' functions and to build a network for knowledge exchange and best practice sharing.

In terms of facilitating employees with the necessary 'survival kit' for Germany, where the official language is only German, the employers suggest the teaching of basic German in the context of daily situations, going around in town using public transport and understanding travel guide information, etc.

Staff members should be also informed about cultural differences (dos and don'ts), e.g. eating habits and calling someone's name correctly. The employer gave as an example in the German way of addressing people: there is no "Dr. Wolfgang". The person should be addressed as "Dr. (surname)", because "Wolfgang" is a given name that is only used when the acquaintances are familiar and quite close to each other. Thus, it is impolite to combine given names with a title in a formal setting.

For in-house communication, staff members preferably have the skills to analyze the content of basic templates regarding the following questions, e.g. who was the person in charge, who is the person concerned, who is the relevant person and what is the request.

In general, the learners of German are voluntarily attending the German language courses held in the companies' premises. They consist of a mix of employees from several departments, including secretaries, IT-specialists, engineers, technicians, sales and procurement officers.

5. Results

The hesitation to provide information on the part of the employers could be interpreted as that they are not interested in providing German language courses to their staff. If this is the case, it could be concluded that firms do not need their staff to communicate in German; in other words, the lingua franca in the MNCs is English. An employer responded to an Email by the researchers that was written in German then in English. The employer's comment was: "...And as you can already see in this mail, we try to keep communication in English." (Employer's citation). Additionally, those companies that already provide German language courses did not appear to be overly concerned about the course details. Their responses reached mean scores with $m = \pm 2.5$ and above; in many responses even around $m = 3.5$ and higher. The score went below $m = 2.0$ in the question for the learning outcome. Similar reactions were received from the employees. The scores accumulated around a mean value of $m = \pm 3.5$. Similar to the employers' reaction, the scores went below $m = 2.0$ (1.7143 and 1.9643) in the answer for the preferred learning outcome. The preferences of the speaking and listening comprehension skills paired with visuals and videos as the preferred teaching tools and the selection of the item "developing skills for professional and personal purposes" as the least wanted learning outcome, led to the assumption that employees' motivation to take the German language course was for travelling and fun whereas the employers' intention

was more on the part of integration and networking with Germans. They are also more concerned of improving higher thinking skills as a beneficial attribute. The results are summarized with regard to the research objectives in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of research results retrieved from multiple sources and methods (Authors' own creation)

Criteria	Employer	Employee	Teacher
Course Duration	4 hours per week for 1 year	3 hours per week for 5-6 months or more than three years	3 hours for 5 months (Total: 60 hours)
Communicative Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conversation with German speaking visitors and counterparts in Germany ▪ Assignments during training programs in Germany ▪ Travelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travelling ▪ Extended visits abroad including social contacts ▪ Conversation with German speaking visitors and counterparts in Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travelling ▪ Conversation with German speaking visitors and counterparts in Germany ▪ Assignments during training programs in Germany
Communication Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ German nationals in the company in Malaysia and overseas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Colleagues ▪ Friends ▪ Management 	----
Language Skills Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaking ▪ Listening comprehension ▪ Vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaking ▪ Listening comprehension ▪ Pronunciation ▪ Writing ▪ Reading comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaking ▪ Listening comprehension ▪ Writing ▪ Reading comprehension
Course Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greetings ▪ Use of names ▪ Daily routine ▪ Common small talk topics (Football, weather, experiences) as emotional door opener ▪ Grasp essence of conversations (Informal/formal) and documents (formal) ▪ Travelling ▪ Error analysis ▪ Customer requests ▪ Understanding the content of basic templates Cultural aspects: - Similarities and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greetings ▪ Daily routine (Real life situations) Cultural aspects: - Information about the country, people and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work related topics ▪ Daily routine ▪ Emails Cultural aspects: - Information about the country, people and

	differences in conversation	- Varieties in German culture	
	- Idioms, proverbs and sayings	- Similarities and differences in conversation	
	- Dos & Don'ts	- Body language	
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive evaluation including a final examination ▪ Peer feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation based on tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peer feedback ▪ Comprehensive evaluation including a final examination
General Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decision making ▪ Communicating and Strategic thinking ▪ Writing Skills ▪ Organizing and improving teams 	----	----
Most beneficial for Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project management ▪ Effective planning ▪ Time management ▪ Leadership ▪ Effective advocating 	----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job promotion
Teaching Material	----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visuals ▪ Videos ▪ Authentic material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Textbook ▪ Workbook ▪ Audio CD ▪ Authentic material
Teaching & Learning Approach	----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicative ▪ Teacher-centered ▪ Working in small groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicative ▪ Structural/grammar-based ▪ Teacher-centered

Information regarding Education for Sustainable Development

Triangulation of economy, environment and society in the course of a target situation analysis was reflected in the necessity of a basic knowledge of the German language for the purpose of communicating effectively in in-house communication and with the headquarters in Germany. This ability would ensure the smooth execution of work and, with this and other factors, the success and consistency of the firm. The environmental factor is in this specific context the language course environment; which means the classroom facilities, equipment, and well-being of all involved in the teaching and learning process and the course content. Preferably, this should include factors such as a competency-based approach to learning, value-based learning that fosters critical thinking and an attitude of respect for biological, social and cultural differences. Thus, similarities and differences of the cultural aspects of both countries, Malaysia and Germany, may be an important part of the course content. Lastly, the employers' intention to integrate Malaysian staff members into conversations with Germans reflect their aim to socialize with Malaysian people and to create a pleasant work atmosphere that together with other factors – at the end– will increase allegiance among the staff towards the management which consequently will lead to economic growth.

6. Conclusion

This paper has shown the value of using triangulation of various sources and methods for identifying employees' needs of communicative skills in the German language. With respect to multiple sources, it could be stated that the employers as the domain experts were the source of the most detailed information. This was also found to apply to the results received through two different methods, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The employers answered the interview questions on task descriptions that the employees would have to carry out more accurately. It can be concluded that the research revealed that the employees' preference does not always jive with the employers' intentions. Although the tasks have to be done, the employees favored "fun classes" with videos and speaking activities in small groups. It has to be taken into consideration that people build their images of their needs on the basis of data relating to themselves and their environment. Based on this issue, the subjective point of view of the employees (e.g. Areas of German vocabulary for travelling) jeopardize their objective lacks (e.g. Areas of German vocabulary for intra- and inter-operational communication). It is understandable that learners would like to enjoy the class after a day of hard work at the firm. This tendency was also reflected in their acceptance level of accuracy in their German language use. Their tolerance of inaccurate language use was higher ($m = 2.9643$) than the employers' acceptance level ($m = 3.7692$), when both stakeholders rated the statement "When Malaysians write in German, it is alright to make grammatical errors." However, the employers were more concerned about their employees' correctness in German communication while attached to the firm in Germany. Thus, it depends on the language instructor to which extent he/she would set up the proficiency level on which learners will still feel motivated and happy in class. Thus, the balancing act between the targeted extent of proficiency level and learners' motivation and the fun factor in class had to be performed by the teacher.

However, findings unveiled that informal, oral communication in the German language is pertinent. Charles (2007, p.271) found that up to 63% of communication situations in MNCs' in-house communication have been oral communication situations. In the current research, the authors understand that the employers drew attention to understand communication as integration factor. With this aspect they confirmed Kalla's findings (Kalla 2006, cited in Charles 2007, p.272) "... this kind of informal communication is essential for networking and creating bridging and bonding relationships between employees, which in turn, contribute to knowledge sharing and the accumulation of social capital within the company." So, the emphasis should be on both formal and informal communication. This point was also stipulated by the employers during the interview.

On the other hand, employers were using English as medium of communication in the companies. This choice proved the employers' intention to avoid dichotomy between native and non-native speakers of German, an aspect that was also found by Charles (2007, p.274). An obvious reason and a necessity for this decision was that the employees had none or only a poor German language proficiency at their disposal and therefore, they were not able to communicate in German. As a consequence, the employees were offered beginner courses only. However, the employers usually provided the courses for only six months and a

continuous course was up to the management's decision. Only some companies decided to continue, perhaps due to financial matters or loss of interest on the employees' side.

Regarding the course content, the employees feel that most of their needs were met. Their personal expectations regarding communication skills were not totally the same as the general outcome that they obtained from the German language course. Hence, they felt that the teacher emphasized too much on the four language skills instead of favoring the speaking competence. Nonetheless, the employees expressed a positive attitude towards the learning of the German language. They like the classes and learn German for fun. This finding could be related to the rather general responses to the details on how they would prefer to learn German.

Beside the informal oral conversations in small talks about common everyday topics, there was also evidence to include formal and informal writing in the course. The choice of the small talk topics as well as the writing style and word choice is strictly directed by the German culture. As Jenkins (2000) mentioned, language and culture are closely interwoven and cannot be separated from each other. Therefore, the selection of small talk topics (football, weather, etc.) is firstly based on German preferences as the management consists of a majority of German nationals. Only in step 2 does it depend on the intercultural competence and the character of both interlocutors to which extent the interest of the Malaysian nature is welcome to be included in the conversation. The cultural aspect becomes an issue when meaning is supposed to be transmitted through a message to someone from a different cultural background (Robock and Simmonds 1989), for example in Emails. Misunderstanding is likely to occur. Hence, the employers recommend strongly to include cultural aspects into the language course. As the employers focus on the Do's and Don'ts, cultural exchange may also include "forms of behavior, norms, values and material objects" (Stoyko 2009, p.4). With regards to language, Stokyo listed terminology, phraseology, metaphors, concepts, body language such as gestures and symbols as cultural indicators. However, the cultural component is multifaceted and reflected in shared assumptions, core beliefs, and mindsets as well as social regulation (manners/social graces, norms and taboos), common knowledge (shared semantic understanding and how-to) and informal group routines and habits that makes up the organizational culture of a company. The authors therefore recommend including Business German into the language course because it will focus more on the communication skills compared with general German-as-a-Foreign-Language that would suit the informal oral communication (small talk) more.

In conclusion, the researchers identified the employees' needs, lacks and wants from the stakeholders' point of view as displayed in Table 7.

Table 7. Stakeholders' perception of employees' needs, lacks and wants. The black wording represents the stakeholders' priorities, the grey wording stands for lower priority. (Authors' own creation)

Needs	<p>Employer The communicative German needed for success in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small talk in informal communication with German speaking employers and staff in the plants in Malaysia and overseas. ▪ Communication in the context ‘travelling’. ▪ Understanding the meaning of templates, emails etc. for intra- and inter-operational communication. ▪ Participating in training programs and doing assignments in Germany 	<p>Employee The communicative German needed for success in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small talk in informal communication with German speaking people. ▪ Communication in the context ‘travelling’. 	<p>Teacher The communicative German needed for success in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small talk in informal communication with German speaking people. ▪ Communication in the context ‘travelling’.
Lacks	<p>Areas of German vocabulary needed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common German small talk topics ▪ Communication in the context ‘travelling’. ▪ Understanding the meaning of templates, emails etc. for intra- and inter-operational communication. ▪ Sharing basic information among colleagues intra- or inter-operationally with their counterparts in Europe. ▪ Participating in meetings and discussions on subject matters in Germany. ▪ Participating in training programs and doing assignments in Germany. 	<p>Areas of German vocabulary needed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travelling ▪ Formal and informal conversation with German speaking visitors in Malaysia and counterparts in Germany <p>Language skills, especially the speaking</p>	<p>Areas of German vocabulary needed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travelling ▪ Conversation with German speaking visitors and counterparts in Germany ▪ Assignments during training programs in Germany

- Understanding the training in a machine's functions in German.

Language skills, especially the speaking and listening comprehension skills, needed for:

- Common German small talk topics
- Communication in the context 'travelling'.
- Participating in training programs in Germany.

Language skills, the reading comprehension skill, needed for:

- Understanding the meaning of templates, emails etc. for intra- and inter-operational communication.
- Understanding technical terms in machine's manuals.

Language skills, especially the writing skill, needed for:

- Filling in templates and responding to Emails
- Doing assignments in training programs in Germany.

Wants

To succeed in:

- Small talk with German speaking people
- Carrying out comprehension tasks in order to be able to function effectively at the workplace.
- In understanding meetings and conferences
- Basic German communication during training programs in Germany

and listening comprehension skills, needed for:

- Travelling
- Formal and informal conversation with German speaking visitors in Malaysia and counterparts in Germany

Language skills, especially the reading comprehension skill, needed for:

- Understanding the meaning of templates, emails etc. for intra- and inter-operational communication.

Language skills, especially the writing skill, needed for:

- Responding to Emails

- Colleagues
- Friends
- Management

Language

- Speaking

- Speaking

- Speaking

Skills Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listening comprehension ▪ Vocabulary ▪ Writing ▪ Reading comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listening comprehension ▪ Pronunciation ▪ Writing ▪ Reading comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listening comprehension ▪ Writing ▪ Reading comprehension
Most beneficial for Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicating and Strategic thinking ▪ Effective planning ▪ Project management ▪ Time management ▪ Leadership ▪ Decision making ▪ Effective advocating 	----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ German is relevant for job promotion

Comparison of the information obtained, resulted in the following suggestion. A German language course in Germany-based MNCs in Malaysia may consider the following aspects:

- Oral informal communication (small talk) with German nationals in order to mingle with German speaking people that is hoped would help to create a familiar working atmosphere,
- Informal and formal communication in spoken and written German in intra- and inter-operational communication to work effectively and to do efficient networking,
- Reading comprehension of templates, Emails, manuals of machines' functions, troubleshooting, technical terms, etc. in order to grasp meaning of messages that is pertinent for knowledge sharing and networking in the firm,
- Cultural aspects while communicating with German nationals and
- Authentic material and language adapted from real life situations.

Finally, there are some issues that need to be addressed, the difficulty to gather suitable data and the different fields in which the companies are operating. These circumstances result in the dilemma to select a one-fit-all approach to cover various areas of vocabulary, especially regarding reading comprehension of specific texts and the oral exchange of opinions in discussions about those texts. Consequently, communication has to be tailored to different stakeholders. With regard to the data collection, it was found that information could only be obtained based on a personal basis. Thus, creating those contacts is paramount and needs a lot of time to establish a relationship between employer and researcher. Hence, the data collected in this study are mainly limited to semiconductor, engineering and medical products manufacturing companies.

However, this problem is not only apparent when collecting data from the employers. Also the information given by the employees, the learners, is challenging because the respondents answered the questions mostly in the medium range of 3 and 4 on the Likert scale. The behavior displayed on the one hand is quite undefined language needs; on the other hand, it also implied that the employees did not bother so much about the details of the language course as long as they had some fun in class. This might be due to the fact that English is the main language used for communication in the workplace. The researchers therefore suggest

that companies provide an incentive for employees to do well in the German language classes by rewarding them with special tasks or posting them to the headquarters in Germany for a specific time that would be a decisive factor for promotions. Successively, the German language proficiency would increase and the tasks that need more staff interaction in German would be easily fulfilled.

Overall, this study confirmed the general needs that employees have to fulfill when they want to succeed in the future. They are the ability to communicate well (Moreau 2013), the ability to speak and understand foreign languages (University of Kent 2013) with better conversational skills compared to correctness (Confederation of British Industry, Beyene 2012), and the ability to understand cultural aspects in the communication process (Hastings 2012). Schutzler (2011, p.1) affirmed the importance of multi-lingual fluency with the fact that, though Google translations help to convey messages, they lack the creating of meaning.

“Language is a performing art that requires practice, nuance, and personality to convey an idea. Those who master communication master their world.” (Schutzler 2011, p.2).

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