PATTERNS IN CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN JAPANESE STUDENTS AND NEW ZEALAND HOMESTAY PARENTS

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Abstract

This thesis is a descriptive, qualitative analysis that involves 17-18 year old Japanese students on a study abroad programme.

The study begins by reviewing the literature on study abroad, particularly on homestays, which has indicated some of the challenges facing those involved in study abroad. It then examines cultural and social factors by considering Hall’s work on high-context and low-context cultures, Hofstede’s work on cultural dimensions, and Schumann’s work on social distance. The influence of cultural and social factors on language use is then explored within a framework that includes an analysis of conversational maxims and politeness principles, as well as the Japanese educational setting and Japanese psyche.

Data was collected in the New Zealand homestay situations of 17 Japanese students, all from similar backgrounds, from May, 2007 to March, 2008. By combining various methodological approaches, conversations were specifically categorised into either major or minor communication issues and then coded for how particular sentences and words functioned. The influences of cultural and social factors were identified through features such as implicature, conversational rules (maxims), and politeness strategies (through direct and indirect face-threatening acts).

One particular conversational style, termed the IRF (Initiation, Response, Follow-up) or triadic dialogue, commonly found in the EFL classroom, was discovered to be common in the homestay environment. Other findings showed that many students’ backchannel moves were misinterpreted by their hosts as agreement, that students rarely initiated conversations, that hosts often gave unsolicited corrective feedback and advice, and that hosts often dominated the conversations with their students. Other
communication themes that emerged included the loss of students’ conversational turns, the failure of students to recognise phatic communion, misinterpretation of implicatures, and “negative” transfer of particular Japanese cultural characteristics.

These findings are discussed in light of asymmetrical relationships and how English is taught in the Japanese/English classroom. Both these factors influenced and maintained the roles and rights of the interlocutors and contributed to a particular conversational style. This thesis illustrates that the social and cultural assumptions of both host parents and students influenced their relationships and furthermore reinforced stereotypes that further perpetuated a particular communicative style. In short, a vicious circle was initiated, which was difficult to escape from.

This thesis concludes by suggesting that if communication issues are documented, and analysed, then action can be taken to attempt to improve homestay programme curriculums so that people can become more inter-culturally and cross-culturally aware of how they are communicating, which may contribute to producing more positive homestay experiences.
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List of Abbreviations

A = Acknowledgement

Adv = Advice

B = Backchannelling

CCSARP = Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project

CEE = Certificate in English and Engineering

Cmp C = Comprehension Check

Cnf C = Confirmation checks

Com = Comment

E = Evaluation

E- = Negative Evaluation

E+ = Positive Evaluation

ECJ = Engineering College Japan

ECNZ = Engineering College New Zealand

ESL = English as a Second Language

ESOL = English for Speakers of Other Languages

ESP = English for Specific Purposes

Exp = Expansion

F = Follow-up

F2 = Second Follow-up

FE = Functional English

FTA = Face Threatening Act

FT = Foreigner Talk

H = Listener

HB = Homestay Brother

HC = High Culture

HF = Homestay Father
HM  =  Homestay Mother
IRF  =  Initiation, Response, Follow-up
IS  =  Interactional Sociolinguistics
K1  =  Primary Knower
K2  =  Secondary Knower
L2  =  Second Language (group)
LC  =  Low Culture
MEXT  =  Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
NNS  =  Non-Native Speaker
NS  =  Native Speaker
OR  =  Other Repetition
PDI  =  Power Distance Index
R2  =  Second Response
Rec  =  Recast
Ref  =  Reformulation
Req Cl  =  Requests for Clarification
S  =  Speaker
S  =  Student
SLA  =  Second Language Acquisition
SR  =  Self-Repetition
TL  =  Target Language
TOEIC  =  Test Of English for International Communication
UAI  =  Uncertainty Avoidance Index
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

New Zealand homestay parent: Hi [student’s name], how was your day?

Japanese student: So-so.

New Zealand homestay parent: Oh, right.

(End of the conversation)

(Conversation recorded in September, 2007)

The homestay parent and student involved in the above conversation both complained that communication between them had reached an uncomfortable level, which resulted in the student shifting to another homestay. Why did communication become uncomfortable? This thesis assumes that communication is strongly influenced by culture (Ford, Fox & Thompson 2003) and is socially constructed (Jackson, 2008b; Halliday, 1984). It will focus on the context or discourse community in which the first language (L1) homestay providers and second language (L2) students participate in informal conversations, that is, the homestay environment.

1.1.1 The programme and the problems

In 2004, a pilot programme between a Japanese tertiary institution and a New Zealand tertiary institution began. The purpose of the programme was for Japanese students to be immersed in a homestay and to study engineering-related subjects in English for
eleven months. It was hoped that the students would become more proficient in their English ability and that they would also experience, first hand, another culture. However, since the programme began, there have been many instances of communication issues, such as the one outlined above.

1.1.2 Definitions

Many of the following sections will illustrate concepts framed within culture. We must be careful, however, not to oversimplify culture, which risks stereotypical associations. The term culture in this thesis is used generally, but can be positioned within Holliday’s (1999) description of it as “…prescribed ethnic, national and international entities” (p. 237). As a cautionary explanation, Goodenough (1994) explains that culture can be thought of in terms of human activity related to groups, instead of related solely to societies. Furthermore, Goodenough, says that:

The cultural makeup of a society is thus to be seen not as a monolithic entity determining the behaviour of its members, but a melange of understandings and expectations regarding a variety of activities that serve as guides to their conduct and interpretation (p. 226-227).

The term intercultural communication is frequently used to refer to all aspects of the study of culture and communication. Lustig and Koester (1993) define intercultural communication as:

…a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings (p.51).

Gudykunst (2003) adds that intercultural communication occurs in “face-to-face” communication (p. vii) (see also Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 2007, p. 10).
Intercultural communication can also be seen in light of what Janney and Arndt (1992) term intercultural sensitivity, that is, “being tactful” (p. 14), or in light of what Ting-Toomey (1999) terms “transcultural competence” (p. 261), which communicators acquire when they learn to:

…mutually adapt to each other’s behaviours appropriately and flexibly by respectfully observing and reacting to others’ communication process (p. 261).

A closely-related term, to be used synonymously with intercultural communication in this thesis, is “cross-cultural communication.” Cross-cultural communication generally focuses on the role of communication “in the creation and negotiation of shared identities” (Gudykunst, 2003, p. vii). A cross-cultural analysis looks at communication from an “insider’s” perspective (Gudykunst, 2003, p. viii). For example, Tannen (1984) identifies general stylistic preferences and conventions for communication, similar to Lakoff’s (1979) “rules of rapport” or Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle (discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.6), in order to identify alternative strategies used in creating particular kinds of relationships.

The example at the beginning of this chapter illustrates a common intercultural communication problem. The characteristics of this kind of conversation in the homestay are that it is short and usually initiated and closed by the host parent with no further communication from the student unless they are specifically asked a question, in which case the student responds in much the same way, that is, with a short one- or two-word answer. This particular conversational style of the students frustrates the host parents and results in negative stereotypes and, in some cases, an uncomfortable environment in which the parties mutually agree to end the homestay.
Before proceeding further and in order to avoid confusion later on, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the term “communication issue.” A communication issue in this thesis is a general term used to label various communicative scenarios. This term is used throughout this thesis in order to draw attention to a particular part of a conversation that could be construed as having a potentially negative connotation by at least one of its participants. Other research projects may categorise what these communication issues specifically refer to; however, this thesis will not be as specific because it has wider aims of exploring a range of social and cultural factors influencing conversation issues in a specific context. However, where necessary, the particular reason as to why the communication issue arose will be more narrowly categorised, i.e., limited communication, silence, miscommunication, lack of understanding, etc.

Many studies have illustrated that misunderstandings are possible in every intercultural, or cross-cultural, encounter (Neuliep, 2003; Samovar et al; Scollon, 1985). Despite all the cross-cultural misunderstandings that occur, however, much communication between different cultures does succeed. Halliday (1984) suggests that, instead of looking at the failures which occur in communication, one should try to explain why there is so much successful communication (p. 9). After all, many people all over the world share similar values and beliefs (Aoki & Okamoto, 1988).

Goffman (1967) claims that, in order for communication to work, people need to make inferences about the intention of each speaker’s utterances (p. 2). However, inferences can be interpreted differently. In order to comprehend how people understand what is not actually being stated, but what is meant, it is useful to examine what is termed “implicature.” Implicature is an implicit meaning that is suggested, but not directly stated, either by the utterance itself, the context of the situation, the
conventions at hand, or the interlocutors (see generalised and particularised implicature in relation to Grice, 1975, in Chapter 2, section 2.6). According to Grice (1975), successful communication is possible because people have an underlying assumption that everyone will cooperatively engage in conversation by using what he terms a “cooperative principle” in conjunction with four maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner), as well as implicature. Grice proposes that the four maxims and implicature guide how interlocutors attach meaning to utterances. However, sometimes cultural differences make it difficult to infer what the correct implicature might be. The communicative issue becomes even more problematic when it is compounded with a requirement to respond (or not) in a culturally appropriate style. Throughout the communicative process, people’s intentions might be miscalculated and, as a result, communication may become an issue. When conversational maxims are flouted, the hearer is forced to look for meaning behind what has been stated. Interpreting implicature in cross-cultural communication usually requires more than just a passing knowledge of how both cultures operate, including knowledge of conventions and norms specific to particular cultures. One reason communication breaks down is that the intention of one (or both) of the speakers is not fully understood in an utterance, usually due to differences in cultural and pragmatic conventions (Bouton, 1994, p. 159).

Spencer-Oatey and Ng (2001) illustrate a cross-cultural misunderstanding in relation to particular ritualised responses to compliments used between two similar cultures: Chinese people living in mainland China and Chinese people living in Hong Kong. In Spencer-Oatey and Ng’s study, the Chinese people living in Hong Kong were viewed by mainland Chinese as being too conceited. This finding illustrates a difference in pragmalinguistic conventions which caused misunderstandings and affected
interpersonal relations between the two groups of people. The study demonstrates that cultural factors can function to “distance” the interlocutors’ original intentions from one another (Schumann, 1978). The intention of interlocutors may be to avoid violating politeness conventions (Brown & Levinson, 1987); however, what may be considered polite in one culture may be considered impolite in another.

In order to uncover the speaker’s intention or original desire to communicate something, it is useful to examine broadly cultural factors (what I term “macro” factors, after Halliday, 1973, p. 99), such as the traditions and customs that one has been brought up with, together with social factors (what I term “micro” factors), which refer to the relationship that exists between the interlocutors at that particular time and place. In speaking of terms, such as macro and micro, it is important to recognise the influential work of Halliday’s (1961; 1985) systemic-functional linguistic theories in relation to the cultural and situational context (see section 2.3, for a fuller discussion).

Both cultural and social factors may be interpreted and realised by the linguistic coding in the utterance. The linguistic coding can further be realised through implicature (discussed in section 2.6), as well as Grice’s (1975) conversational maxims (discussed in section 2.6.1). The study of macro and micro factors together with linguistic coding, including implicature and conversational maxims, is generally termed an intercultural or cross-cultural analysis. Simply stated, this thesis addresses the same question that Haberland and Mey (1977) ask, “Not: What does an utterance mean? But: How did this utterance come to be produced?” (p. 8). Some of the answers to this question can be determined by looking at particular cultural factors. For example, Hofstede’s (2001) Power-Distance Index (PDI) and Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) provide illustrative and practical reasons for how culture determines particular
communicative styles and affects interpersonal relations between interlocutors. Cultural factors can go some way to explaining why communication may become problematic between interlocutors, especially when the first language of the speakers is not the same. In this thesis, cultural factors will be used as starting points for the analysis of how interlocutors may distance themselves from one another.

In order to understand how cultural factors operate, it is useful to provide some background as to the situation that the interlocutors in this study are positioned in. Section 2.2 discusses the homestay environment in relation to study abroad programmes in general and then, more specifically, in relation to the programme that the interlocutors in this research project are associated with. This background information will be useful in the sections that follow from this, which discuss cultural factors in more detail in relation to Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model.

Finally, mention is given to the Japanese folk term, “nemawashi.” This is a difficult term to translate into English (Fetters, 1995), but is used generally to refer to background negotiations, or secret, behind-the-scenes talk that takes place before confirmation of decisions is made public (O’Gorman, 2012). (Literally speaking, ne means “roots” and nemawashi means “to go around,” so “digging around the roots” [in order to maintain harmony and reach a consensus] would be a literal translation.) Reference will be made to this term throughout this thesis, and is framed within the meanings mentioned here, as well as “other participants’ voices” as a data gathering tool (see section 3.4.4 and 6.3.3.2).
1.1.3 Aim of the study

The overall aim of this thesis is to contribute to research into study abroad programmes, specifically for Japanese students staying in New Zealand homestays, with the purpose of producing positive study abroad communication experiences for all participants involved. Another aim is to identify and analyse why sometimes unsuccessful communication and negative stereotypes often occur when a high context culture (a culture that interprets meaning implicitly) is positioned next to a low context culture (a culture that interprets meaning more literally) – in this case, Japan and New Zealand – over a period of time (Hall, 1976; see Chapter 2, section 2.3.1).

This thesis is a descriptive, qualitative analysis which uses a “layered approach” (Hatch, 1992, p. 292) to provide a “thick” description (Geertz, 1973) of seemingly invisible cultural conventions (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) in order to understand conversations between New Zealand homestay parents and their Japanese study abroad students.

In order to address the aims of this research project, two specific sets of research questions are addressed:

1. How are conversations structured in the homestay environment?
   a. What influences do social and cultural factors have on them?
   b. What effects do they have on communication in the homestay environment?

2. How are conversational maxims and politeness principles followed in homestay conversations?
   a. What influences do social and cultural factors have on them?
b. What effects do they have on communication in the homestay environment?

These research questions are responded to, firstly, in terms of a cultural or macro approach, and, secondly, in terms of a social or micro approach. However, as will be discussed in the following chapter (see section 2.1), it is difficult to definitively separate out cultural and social factors.

1.1.4 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 has set the basis for why this research project was undertaken. Chapter 2 discusses the literature on study abroad programmes with specific reference to cultural and societal dimensions from both a New Zealand and Japanese perspective. The second chapter ends with an analysis of how the Japanese English classroom functions to socialise students into a typical conversational pattern (Initiation, Response, Follow-up [IRF]), which is predominantly used in the homestay environment, often with negative results. Chapter 3 describes the specific approaches used in this study, which, when combined, produce a “layered approach” (Hatch, 1992, p. 292), which is the overriding framework used to analyse the conversations. Chapter 3 also outlines the design of the project. This includes a description of the participants, the instruments used, the procedures used for data collection, the coding of the major and minor communication issues, as well as a separate section which describes how the IRF data was coded and analysed. The chapter ends with an explanation as to the reliability and justification of this study. Chapters 4 and 5 present the results of the study. Chapter 4 illustrates a total of twenty-three IRF
samples collected during the periods May and September, 2007 and January and March, 2008. It also summarises the main findings from these IRF samples. Chapter 5 analyses three major communication issues that occurred during the homestay programme. It also analyses conversations that include humour, no negotiation of meaning, and one uncomfortable interaction. Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the responses to both sets of research questions outlined above. The answers to both sets of research questions are first discussed separately, and then cumulatively, in order to illustrate the overall affect of the cultural, situational, and sociocultural factors purportedly transferred into the homestay conversations by both the students and their homestay parents. Finally, Chapter 7 indicates the theoretical and pedagogical significance of this research project and explains both the theoretical and practical applications for improving communication within the homestay environment. The limitations of this study are also listed, which provides stimulus to carry out future research in study abroad programmes.
Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the literature related to the aims of the study. Section 2.2 reviews the literature on study abroad and on how the homestay environment affects students’ overall well-being during study. Section 2.3 discusses cultural or macro factors using Hall’s (1976) high and low context cultures and Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions. Section 2.4 discusses social or micro factors using Schumann’s (1976, 1978, 1986) Acculturation Model, and section 2.5 discusses his work on integration. Section 2.6 discusses the conversational principles using mainly Grice (1975), section 2.7 discusses politeness principles using mainly Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and section 2.8 discusses a conversational structure or pattern using Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Section 2.9 discusses the Japanese educational setting. Section 2.9 concludes the literature review and, for ease of reference, again outlines the research questions for this study.

Some terminological clarification is necessary concerning “cultural” and “social,” which are terms used in this chapter and throughout this thesis. In this thesis “cultural” will be used to label factors which refer to traditions and customs which influence peoples’ actions and which are usually specific to their background, typically passed on from one generation to the next, and often (but not always) associated with their country and community. “Social” will be used to refer to:

“…variables which involve the relationship between social groups who are in a contact situation, but who speak different languages” (Schumann, 1986, p. 380).
These factors are specifically related to Schumann’s Acculturation Model and second language acquisition.

Because of the difference in scope between Hall’s and Hofstede’s focus on culture and Schumann’s focus on relationships between social groups, I refer to Hall and Hofstede’s concepts as “macro” generalisations and to Schumann’s concepts as “micro” generalisations. Although this may appear somewhat arbitrary, since it would be difficult to categorically state that culture is larger (or, for that matter, smaller) than society, I have adopted this terminology for two reasons. First of all, many of the examples Schumann (1986) uses refer to contact between speakers of different languages at a particular time and place, for example, “French colonists in Tunisia” (p. 381), which suggests that a range of local contextual factors may be at work. Schumann clearly identifies culture as one (but not the only) influence on social factors. Second, it highlights the role that contextual factors played in this study, where individual homestay situations are “smaller” than the Japanese and New Zealand cultures. Individuals in the homestay environment were influenced not only by their respective cultures, a factor which was present in all of the homestays, but also by a range of other factors (e.g., age, parental status, employment status), which varied among different individuals in different homestays. For this reason, varying influences make Schumann’s social factors appear to be “micro” in comparison to the common “macro” influence of culture. The terms “macro” and “micro” can also be viewed as what Holliday (1999) loosely categorises as “large” and “small.” According to Holliday, and simply stated, “large” culture signifies ethnic, national, or international groupings, whereas “small” signifies cohesive social groupings. “Large” should not be thought of as being better or more important than “small;” instead “small” refers to behaviours
associated with group cohesion, which can be seen as horizontal associations or commonalities between people that come together, perhaps briefly, in order to “solve problems” (Crane, 1994, p. 11) that arise. Small culture groups are usually dynamic and have rules and regulations based on people’s backgrounds, both spoken and unspoken that constantly change to suit different circumstances.

It should be noted that Schumann (1976) claims that macro and micro factors interact in various ways, sometimes “produc[ing] contradictions” (p. 142). This suggests the complexity of the issue and the need for terminological clarity (see also Kinginger, 2011).

Related to this, in section 2.9 of this chapter, as well as in Chapter 6, I will discuss how reference to a third factor, which Holliday (1999) terms “mezzo” (p.38) could be needed in order to account for the institutional patterns that appear to be at work in homestay conversations between students and their homestay parents, and for the way in which these patterns mirror other institutional conventions, that is, a particular classroom conversational style. This conversational pattern is influenced by conventions that individuals follow in institutions. However, institutions are not identical to cultures; they are both smaller than cultures, but also larger in the sense that they may be features that cut across cultural borders. This factor will be more fully discussed in Chapter 6.

2.2 Study abroad programmes

Section 2.2.1 will discuss the current trends of study abroad programmes, which have evolved as a result of recent globalisation, and outline the measures that have been created to assess and prepare students for a study abroad experience. Section 2.2.2 will
provide a fuller account of study abroad with regard to the homestay environment and of the cross-cultural communication problems that often arise. Section 2.2.3 will outline some of the cross-cultural communication problems identified in previous New Zealand studies.

2.2.1 Recent trends in study abroad research

During the past twenty years, study abroad programmes have been identified as major components of internationalisation worldwide (Ludwig, 2000). In 2004, it was estimated that there were about two million post-secondary students studying in countries other than their own, a figure which is expected to increase to more than seven million by 2025 (Campbell & Xu, 2004). The ever-increasing trend towards what is commonly referred to as “globalisation” inevitably means that relationships between Asian and non-Asian countries will become increasingly important for economic, political, technological, and social reasons. This also means that New Zealand institutions are attempting to provide study abroad programmes that capitalise on this market. For example, in March, 2008, there was an increase in New Zealand’s English Language Students (ELS) by 5.1% over the previous year (“More Foreign Students”, 2008). In March, 2006, a total of 22.6% of all students at private language schools were Japanese (Tanaka, 2007, p. 37).

As the workplace and society become more diverse, and as globalisation of business intensifies, an individual’s sensitivity to cultural differences, combined with the ability to adapt his or her behaviour in response to those differences, becomes increasingly valuable. Suzuki (2006) claims that, due to increasing globalisation and “Japan’s burgeoning multi-culturalism,” there is a greater need for education and
research into the social functions of conversation (p. 43). It seems that the more study abroad is researched, the more it is realised that study abroad is a complex and wide area of study in need of further research.

There has been considerable research conducted on study abroad programmes and students’ ethnographic awareness of second language acquisition, acculturation, intercultural competence, as well as students’ awareness of their development and learning perspectives (Coleman, 1997; Culhane, 2004; Saville-Troike, 2003). Previous studies have also examined factors such as stress, emotional resilience with regard to face failures, and successful communicative interactions. These studies make use of social-psychological models (Kim, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 2000; Turnbull, 2003; Williams, 2005) and have culminated in various models and indices, such as the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelley & Meyers, 1995; D. Matsumoto et al., 2001), the Global Competency and Inter-cultural Sensitivity Index (ISI) (Olson & Kroger, 2001), and the Intercultural Interaction Competence (IIC) model (Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989).

These models attempt to predict the skills that students will need for their cultural adjustment into the host country (especially useful for institutions wanting to send students on study abroad programmes). For example, Anderson et al. (2006) used the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to assess the extent to which a short-term study abroad programme might affect the cross-cultural sensitivity of student learners. Such findings help guide institutional directors, managers, and curriculum designers of study abroad programmes to focus on the skills students need to engage effectively with others. These skills include empathy, cross-cultural awareness, intercultural relations, and cultural mediation, to name a few.
The results of pre-programme questionnaires administered to students are useful predictors for assessing eligibility for homestay programmes, but fall short in assessing what actually occurs on study abroad programmes in terms of real-time interactions. There is little research in relation to how students converse in the target language outside of the classroom, in a homestay environment, and in real time with their homestay parents. This thesis will consider how students converse with their homestay parents in their homestay in real time.

Past research on study abroad programmes has suggested there is a lack of concrete, quantifiable data upon which to base recruitment and programme design strategies and, thereby, to maximise student learning outcomes, so that students get the maximum benefit from the programmes (Frazier, 2007; Freed, 1995; DeKeyser, 2010; Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008; McLeod & Wainwright, 2010; Vande Berg, 2001, 2009). Gillespie (2002) also makes the point that, while there may be some formulaic assessment of academic competencies in the usual form of assignments, tests and exams (including both summative and formative assessment), “…the intercultural goals of study abroad programs remain ill-defined and unmeasured” (p. 20). Gillespie argues for improved assessment of these programmes, including the establishment of minimum standards for every programme and both qualitative and quantitative measurements.

Study abroad experiences enhance students’ international experience and cross-cultural understanding (see Freed, 1995; Gila, 2009; Kinginger, 2009; Iwasaki, 2010). For example, Mori (2008) suggests that study abroad programmes produce young Japanese people who can contribute in research, the economy, and diplomacy (p. 2). Dolby (2007) and Engle and Engle (2003) claim that study abroad programmes are an effective marketing tool, used to promote Japanese universities and institutions onto the
global stage. Indeed, research has confirmed hypotheses that students on study abroad programmes exhibit a greater change in intercultural communication skills than students who do not study abroad (Anderson, et al., 2006; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Williams, 2005). Jackson (2008a) asserts that “intercultural sensitivity” is beneficial for enabling people to live and work with others from different cultural backgrounds, but adds that “residence in the host culture does not automatically produce interculturality” (p. 357).

The belief that study abroad will help students to successfully acquire the cultural norms and conventions needed to communicate effectively in the target language (TL) is not new. However, this belief assumes two things; firstly, that students desire to communicate effectively in the TL, and, secondly, that students have the opportunities to do so.

Indeed, managing how and when to communicate effectively is dependent upon many factors. One major factor is the beliefs that are held by language learners. These beliefs are complex and multifaceted (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005); however, there is general agreement that these beliefs stem from prior learning experiences usually associated with the country’s educational system (Trinder, 2013; Peacock, 2001; see section 2.9 for further discussion of the Japanese educational system and its influence). Other factors that account for student language learning are concepts such as tolerance of ambiguity, which Ellis (1994) explains as “…the ability to deal with ambiguous new stimuli without frustration and without appeals to authority” (p. 518). This is particularly relevant to this project’s homestay environment, where it was found that the students had incorrect pre-suppositions, such as interpreting their homestay parent’s silence as either an opening for them to speak or as an end to the conversation. Other factors that shape student oral output include such things as risk-taking and attitudes
towards making mistakes in speech, anxiety, willingness to communicate (WTC), learning strategies, and communicative competence. These will be more fully discussed in relation to the asymmetric homestay environment illustrated through Schumann’s (1986) micro factor of dominance, in section 2.4.2.1., as well as section 2.9 in relation to the Japanese education system.

There are many study abroad projects that report successful interaction and experiences from both the students’ and homestay parents’ perspectives. However, there are also an increasing number of studies that have isolated particular factors that have contributed to many challenges and unpleasant experiences for both the students and the host parents. These challenges have brought cultural differences, rather than similarities, between the interlocutors into greater focus. The following section reviews research findings related more specifically to the homestay environment which illustrate some of the challenges and problems of cross-cultural communication.

2.2.2 The homestay environment and the issues it raises

This section will focus on several studies to illustrate the kinds of issues that arise in relation to the homestay environment. The studies by Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2002, 2004) involved American students learning Spanish in Spain and Mexico. The studies by Wilkinson (1998) and Freed, Segalowitz and Dewey (2004) involved American students studying in France.

One finding common to both Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight’s (2002, 2004) studies and Wilkinson’s (1998) study was the tendency for students to band together as a group whenever problems arose. Participants in both studies remarked that they felt safe when they were with one another because they could express shared beliefs and
opinions, something they could not do with their host families because of the cultural distance that was perceived to exist. Freed, Segalowitz and Dewey (2004) discovered similar patterns in their study. The participants, American homestay students studying in France, commented that they preferred to spend time with their friends rather than with their host families. They felt more comfortable speaking in their first language, in which they were more confident that their messages were being correctly interpreted. De Ley (1975) explains that people tend to group together for cultural reassurance, especially when there are so many cultural unknowns that surround them in a new environment, and terms this “stranger theory.” (Cultural differences such as social distance will be discussed in section 2.3.)

A particular conversational pattern was another possible cause for the cross-cultural communication issue observed in Wilkinson’s (1998) study. The parents would often initiate a question, expect a response, and then provide follow-up. The students in Wilkinson’s study complained about this conversational pattern because they felt that they were always less important in conversations, that they were “being treated like ... young child[ren]” (p. 27), and that their homestay parents were “condescending” to them (p. 27). However, the students in Wilkinson’s study used the same conversational pattern as a viable communication strategy for use in the TL environment outside the classroom. In one instance, two American students wanted to buy a student-discounted ticket in a French travel agency. The students perceived themselves to be the dominant interlocutors and felt that they were in control of the conversation because they initiated the first question and then provided the follow-up move after the travel agent’s response (p. 26). However, as Wilkinson (1998) points out, even though the students initiated the first question, they also used a classroom conversational structure, “relying on its
discourse norms as a viable communication strategy” (p. 26). This conversational pattern, along with conversational principles relevant to this study, will be discussed in section 2.4.

Both studies also found a number of specific issues concerning expectations about behaviour in the homestay environment. Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2002, 2004) found many cross-cultural communication problems in relation to topics ranging from appropriate clothing, interaction with the opposite sex, concepts of time, food, mealtimes and hours, cultural attitudes towards drinking, and entertaining at home. In Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight’s study, the homestay parents thought that their student(s) were untidy, snacked all the time, used too many towels and treated them as mere servants rather than as their host parents.

Another problem that Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight isolated was the issue of students communicating with the staff of the institution rather than their homestay parents regarding any problems. The students would directly complain to the staff or indirectly write their complaints on evaluation forms given to them periodically throughout their semester stay. The problem was that the homestay parents did not like hearing of their student’s complaints through a third party, and often felt that the student’s and host’s trust had been breached. The host parents expressed their desire for their student to directly confront them.

Wilkinson’s (1998) qualitative investigation into the challenges faced by seven American students in homestays in France for an eight month period found that the students were largely disappointed with the lack of native-speaker interaction that they encountered. Other cross-cultural problems that surfaced were associated with the use
of the telephone, the relationship/status of the customer and shop assistant while shopping, and even with the use of simple greetings.

In both Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight’s (2002, 2004) study and Wilkinson’s (1998) study, misunderstandings were seen to be influenced by cross-cultural communication problems that involved expectations about everyday behaviour in social situations. Specific topics related to this area are covered in section 2.5.

The next section will examine homestays from a specifically New Zealand perspective, but includes similar findings to those in the studies mentioned above.

2.2.3 New Zealand homestays

Researchers have commented that, while there is considerable research on Anglo-American interaction in homestay conversations (cf. Freed, 1998), there is a lack of research in other contexts. Tanaka (2007, p. 37) claims that there is little research relating to Japanese students’ out-of-class experiences, particularly with regard to homestay accommodation. Recently, however, an increasing number of New Zealand studies have begun to explore some of the challenges that foreign students face during their homestay experiences. Although not all of these are about Japanese students, they indicate that the challenges usually associated with cultural factors affect the degree of interaction between interlocutors.

Tanaka (2007) found that twenty-nine Japanese homestay students studying for twelve weeks in Auckland, New Zealand, had little interaction with their homestay families because they preferred to spend more time with their Japanese friends. The students in this study admitted that they avoided interacting with their host parents due to being shy and insecure about their language ability (p. 50).
In Welsh’s (2001) study, 58% of the thirty-six participants (ESL students from mainly Asian ethnic backgrounds staying in homestays in Auckland, New Zealand) reported having less than one hour of interaction in the TL each day, despite being in the same house as their homestay family. The students in Welsh’s study usually arrived home late in the evening, when their homestay parents were in bed. Conversations were typically formulaic, consisting mainly of greetings, and tended to occur in the morning, when the students briefly interacted with their host families before going to school.

Campbell and Xu (2004) questioned forty Chinese students and thirty-three host parents about their homestay experiences in New Zealand. Their study revealed three major themes, all closely related to the cultural background of the participants. These were disappointment and homesickness, coping in the homestay, and language barriers. Specifically, the students were disappointed with the inconveniences associated with what they considered to be relatively rural life in New Zealand, compared with the readily accessible and convenient urban milieux of the large Chinese cities that they were used to. Furthermore, their inability to communicate effectively, especially when they wanted to discuss sensitive topics such as dietary requirements, “… made the students feel helpless and lonely and exacerbated the homesickness they felt” (Campbell & Xu, 2004, p. 12).

Campbell and Xu (2004, p. 10) thought the Chinese students were experiencing “a kind of culture shock,” which functioned to distance them from their hosts. For example, the Chinese students would often distinguish between “insiders and outsiders” and considered that the term “home” in homestay did not really imply being treated as “inside” a family, but, rather, as “a stranger to the family” (p. 6). This stranger/host dichotomy (cf. De Ley, 1975) resulted in the Chinese students being unwilling to
communicate their real feelings in situations which required it (Campbell & Xu, 2004, p. 20).

These studies show how culture and culturally-influenced expectations of social behaviour manifest themselves in homestays in New Zealand and affect communication between students and homestay families. This study, like the studies described above, will also discuss homestay students in New Zealand. It will focus specifically on communication in the homestay environment. The studies described above show how difficult it can be for students in study abroad programmes to communicate because of both cultural and social factors. They not only have to produce speech appropriate to the wider cultural context, but also appropriate to the specific social situation (Schauer, 2009). In other words, interlocutors need to be interculturally, or cross-culturally, competent. Problems may arise, however, when students presuppose that appropriacy in their first language will automatically transfer positively into their new environment (see Omar, 2006 and Woodfield, 2008 for transference stemming from one’s L1). Students run the risk of using inappropriate linguistic forms that, in conjunction with other factors, may lead to communication issues, the specific focus of this study.

2.2.4 Conclusion

This section has outlined some of the research associated with current trends in study abroad. The aim of this section has been to provide a background of other study abroad research studies against which the study undertaken in this project will be reported in the following chapters. It has also touched on some of the challenges that face both host parents and students in the homestay environment as a result of differences in culture. It
has mentioned that cultural factors function to distance interlocutors from one another, the topic of the next section.

2.3 Cultural factors

This section will examine cultural aspects associated with students’ integration into the homestay. It will discuss Hall’s (1976) high and low context cultures and Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) cultural dimensions. Macro factors involving culture will first be discussed in terms of Halliday’s (1984) theory regarding context of culture and situation, and then branch into Hall’s (1976) high context (HC) and low context (LC) cultures. The characteristics associated with HC/LC cultures will then be illustrated on the basis of Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) pioneering empirical research, involving results correlated from over 88,000 employees from the IBM company’s subsidiaries. Hofstede identifies particular cultural trends, referred to collectively as dominance patterns, which include power/distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and short/long term orientation variables. Hall’s cultural dimensions are related to those of Hofstede.

2.3.1 Macro factors: Halliday’s contexts

Based on a Malinowskian perspective and similar to conclusions drawn by Levi-Strauss’s research related to culture, meaning is defined by the context of culture, or in other words, the range of possibilities that are open within a particular context. Halliday, (1984) devised three concepts in order to interpret meaning: the field, tenor, and mode of discourse. The field of discourse refers to what is happening while the interaction is taking place. The field functions to indicate specific social acts and the topic of
exchange. The tenor of discourse refers to who is involved in the interaction and the inter-relationships that they share. The mode of discourse refers to the medium of communication, e.g., is it spoken or written or a combination of both. Taken together, field, tenor and mode combine to construct meaning, commonly referred to as the “meaning potential.” The meaning potential represents culturally-constructed behavioural patterns. These behavioural patterns are divided into “social” and “situational.” According to Halliday (1979), the social aspects refer to the development and maintenance of an individual’s particular social role that they perform, as well as the familiarity and distance between the interlocutors and how these are recognised in terms of conventionalised politeness strategies and personal interaction. The social aspects are largely independent of the setting, but relate to generalised contexts.

2.3.2 Hall’s high/low context cultures

In order to position the theories which follow, it is important to discuss more specifically what the term “culture” implies.

Hall (1976) classifies cultures as high context or low context according to the degree of contextual information inferable from the setting in which communication occurs. People in high context (HC) cultures tend to interpret meaning implicitly through environmental, sociocultural, or individually-conventionalised norms. Individuals in low context (LC) cultures, on the other hand, tend to interpret meaning more literally based on what is explicitly stated (p. 113). Examples of meaning implicitly contextualised in an HC culture can be seen in how Japanese business meetings are conducted. In these meetings, silence can quite often represent reflection and should not be interrupted. It is also the case that expressions are often vague and
without any substantial opinion. This way of communicating is preferred in order to maintain harmony throughout the business meeting. As Hall (1976) explains, communication in such cases involves “more of the information in the physical context or internalized in the person” (p. 79). Individuals in HC cultures rely more heavily on non-verbal cues to convey meaning than do individuals in LC cultures.

Gudykunst et al. (1996) claim that individuals in HC cultures are generally indirect, reserved, understated, often ambiguous, and tend to avoid conflict. Neulip (2003, p. 42) asserts that highly-contextualised communication uses “restricted codes” contrasted with the “elaborated codes” (Bernstein, 1962, p. 221) found in LC cultures. Briefly, restricted codes use few words and expressions in order to communicate something because the interlocutors have a shared background of knowledge and so explicit communication is not needed. Elaborated codes are used when the interlocutors do not have a shared background and so more explicit language is needed in order to explain things clearly. In a highly-contextualised situation, communication is fast and proficient (Hall & Hall, 1990). Fast messages (e.g., TV commercials, newspaper headlines, or images) are easily decoded and are understood almost instantly, whereas slow messages (e.g., books, TV documentaries) require more effort to interpret explicit meaning.

Hall and Hall (1990, p. 4) assert that misunderstandings can occur if utterances are given in a format unfamiliar to the receiver. The prescribed routines commonly associated with HC cultures (as illustrated above in relation to Japanese business meetings and culture) are considered by Koike and Tanaka (1995) to contribute significantly to the perceived difficulty Japanese people have when meeting outsiders for the first time. In other words, the subtle or internalised HC communicative style
clashes with the more verbose style associated with an LC culture. Koike and Tanaka suggest that this difficulty arises from a different educational background coupled with a different situational context. However, it is not just formal education which causes difficulties to arise for Japanese people when meeting other people for the first time. Difficulties are usually associated with general acculturation in any society and even so-called “uneducated” individuals will use low or high contextual conventions. Such cultural and societal differences do, however, contribute to communication issues, including those that might occur in a study abroad programme.

Due to globalization, the context of how, when, where, and why people communicate has recently changed dramatically. This therefore calls into question whether Hall’s indices are still valid. Hall’s concepts of high and low contextual cultures have been critiqued for being vague (Hermeking, 2006), overgeneralized (Kittler, 2006), lacking solid methodological approaches (Patton, 2002), and being “unsubstantiated” (Cardon, 2008, p. 399). Thomas (1998) even found that Hall’s indices produced quite different results in his comparison of high and low cultures between Koreans and Americans (see also Trompenaars, 1994; Koeszegi et al, 2004; Cardon, 2008). Several researchers have attributed different findings to recent globalization and the consequential tendency, especially in business, to adopt LC communicative techniques even in HC cultures (Goby, 1999a, 1999b; Thatcher, 2006). Despite these criticisms, Hall’s concepts can be viewed as what Kittler (2006) explains as “…a doorway to enter the room of intercultural understanding” (p. 3), or as Thomas (1998) states “…useful at a macro level” (p. 21). Several researchers have suggested instruments to measure Hall’s concepts more substantively as well as more quantitatively, namely, Gudykunst et al. (1996), Ohashi (2000), and more recently
Richardson and Smith (2007) and Cardon (2008). Although this study does not use instruments, it does use Hall’s concepts as a doorway to intercultural understanding.

2.3.3 Hofstede’s cultural measurements

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter (section 2.1), the characteristics associated with Hall’s (1976) HC/LC classification can be best illustrated through Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) model of the dimensions of national culture, which are measured through indices. The cultural dimensions are:

1. power distance
2. uncertainty avoidance
3. individualism-collectivism,
4. masculinity-femininity, and

Although all of these dimensions provide a useful perspective, I have decided to focus on the first three dimensions only in this section for three reasons. First, it would require considerable detail to explain and discuss all of the dimensions involved. Second, this thesis does not take gender into consideration as a variable because of space and time restrictions. Third, long and short-term orientations are considered in section 2.4 with regard to Schumann’s (1976) micro factors in terms of length of stay.

The first feature that Hofstede (1980, 2001) discusses is the power distance index (PDI). Hofstede explains that cultures with a low PDI value have small power distances. This means that individuals do not place much importance on social hierarchies. Individuals within a low PDI culture tend to value characteristics such as
independence and the questioning of authority. A high PDI culture, however, is characterised by dependence and conformity to authority, and, in such a society, individuals value social hierarchies. From an educational perspective, Cortazzi and Jin (1997) claim that students in a high PDI culture rarely question, or voluntarily engage in conversation with, teachers, for fear of threatening the teacher’s face in front of the rest of the class.

Hofstede (2001) measured power distance relationships between different cultures and claims that in cultures with a high PDI there are strict hierarchical relationships between people (p. 83). Power distance rankings for fifty-three countries included a ranking for Japan at thirty-three and for New Zealand at fifty (p. 87). Thus, Japan has a higher PDI than New Zealand does. In other words, Japanese society is more hierarchically structured, with greater power differentials and greater power distances between the members of the society, than New Zealand society. What these power factors involve and how they are relevant to communication within the homestay environment will be further discussed throughout this thesis and particularly in section 6.2.8.

Hofstede’s second dimension is represented by the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) Value. Hofstede (1980) states that New Zealand (with a low UAI) ranks in fortieth place out of fifty-three countries and regions, while Japan ranks in seventh place with a high UAI (p.113). A low UAI culture has few rules and laws to govern social conduct. Disputes are often resolved through forceful negotiation that sometimes involves conflict. Conversely, in a culture with a high UAI, individual behaviour is governed by many rules and rituals to limit uncertainty and prevent conflict. In high content cultures, individuals avoid conflict by using indirect or vague language rather
than by pinpointing exactly what a problem might be. As a result of such indirect strategies, listeners have to infer what a source of conflict might be. Choe (2001, cited in Wurtz, 2005, p. 278) provides the following example to illustrate how differently messages can be conveyed depending on the degree of uncertainty avoidance in the culture:

If a North American supervisor is unsatisfied with a subordinate’s sales proposal the response will probably be explicit and direct: “I can’t accept this proposal as submitted, so come up with some better ideas.” A Korean supervisor, in the same situation, might say: “While I have the highest regard for your abilities, I regret to inform you that I am not completely satisfied with this proposal. I must ask that you reflect further and submit additional ideas on how to develop this sales program” (p. 5).

The above example contrasts the circularity and indirectness characteristic of communication in a HC culture and the linear and direct progression of conversational communication in a LC culture. Hall (1976) suggests that this circularity is evocative of the perception of time in both HC/LC cultures. Hall defines HC cultures as “polychronic,” meaning that HC cultures view time as something that comes naturally and assumes that things happen when it is necessary for them to do so. Simply put, polychronic time is not as planned or chronologically organised as monochronic time. This perception of time differs from that in LC cultures in which time is carefully planned and schedules are coordinated in advance for maximum efficiency.

The third dimension in Hofstede’s (1980) model is individualism versus collectivism. Hofstede asserts that this is “related to the integration of individuals into primary groups” (p. 29). The power distance variable tends to be correlated with this variable. An individualistic culture means that individuals in the culture favour independence and an assertion of one’s self. Students are encouraged to express their
own opinions. They are also taught to be assertive and engage openly in verbal communication in the classroom (Holmes, 2005).

Conversely, individuals in collectivistic cultures tend to favour interdependence and group assertiveness. New Zealand ranks in seventh place out of fifty-three countries and regions and Japan ranks twenty-second, equal to Argentina (Hofstede, 1980). New Zealanders, therefore, have more individualistic characteristics than do Japanese people. (Collectivistic/interdependent cultures will be further discussed in terms of conversational style in section 6.3.1.1.)

Wurtz’s (2006) research illustrates how Hall’s (1976) and Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) classifications of cultural variables are important factors to consider when designing web pages. In Wurtz’s project, web designers were given two tasks. The first task was to research cultural conventions in order to understand how websites could be made more appealing to a target audience. The second task was to translate pre-existing company websites into web pages that reflected these cultural variables. Hall’s and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions were used to analyse the strategies and patterns that designers from HC/LC cultures use in existing advertisements. Wurtz concluded that Hall’s and Hofstede’s cultural assumptions were significant to HC/LC characteristics in the design of current websites. For example, websites visited mainly by individuals from HC cultures, tended to rely on imagery and animated effects, as opposed to websites which were visited mainly by individuals from LC cultures, which made greater use of written text. Websites designed to be read by individuals from LC cultures used logical and often repetitive cues for readers to navigate the websites (p. 295). This research shows how HC/LC cultural factors are relevant to successful communication.
Although Hofstede’s cultural dimensions shed light on how communication might be construed in the homestay conversations in this thesis, there are also numerous criticisms of it. For example, Kim (2003) and Ng, Lee, and Soutar (2007) argue that Hofstede’s cultural dimensions function to present culture as being easily defined and measured when in fact it is complex and broad (see also Holden, 2004). McSweeney (2002) criticizes the use of Hofstede’s dimensions for being out of date and lacking generalisability. Baskerville (2003) calls for a shift away from using Hofstede’s dimensions due to their lack of convincing theoretical methodology and validity. Vauclair (2009) maintains that “…what applies to cultural groups does not necessarily apply in the same way to individuals” (p. 65). Vauclair (2009) even quotes Hofstede (1980) himself as acknowledging that his country-level dimensions, i.e., collectivism and individualism, fail to replicate themselves at the individual level (see also, Minkov & Hofstede, 2011, p. 12). This is propounded in a recent article by Brewer and Venaik (2012), who call for a “revision of current practices” (p. 673) as well as caution (p. 681) in research that makes use of Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions.

Of course, it would not be appropriate not to include a detailed reply from Hofstede to the criticism that his dimensions have received. In short, Hofstede (2003) acknowledges that nations are not the best units for studying culture, but points out that this does not render any conclusions as invalid (p. 812). Furthermore, Hofstede (2003) claims that his work is “exploratory research” (p. 813) and is not a finished theory.

There has been support for Hofstede, even from his critics. Ng, Lee, and Soutar (2006) point out that Hofstede’s cultural distance scores have been validated as useful in many research projects. (For example, in finance see, Luo, 2001; Tahir and Larimo, 2004; and in facework strategies see Merkin, 2006; Brew and Cairns, 2004.)
Furthermore, Ng, et al., suggest that if researchers do utilize such cultural dimensions they should be used as only indicators and not prescribed rigidly. They recommend combining other dimensions for further validation, for example, Schwartz’s (1994) cultural values framework, Parsons and Shil’s (1951) dimensions of affectivity and collectivity, Kluckhon and Strodbeck’s (1961) human nature dimensions, Hall’s (1976) high and low contextual cultures, Krippendorff’s (1986) information theory, or more recently, cultural dimensions based on GLOBE characteristics (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Vipin, 2004). This thesis has followed this recommendation by combining the approaches of Hofstede and Hall.

The following section moves from a macro perspective to a micro perspective and discusses social factors in terms of Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model.

2.4 Schumann’s Acculturation Model

This section will examine social distance within the framework of Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model. Schumann’s model provides a basic framework of social-cognitive and functional-linguistic analyses, and, more specifically, illustrates social distance factors in relation to communication.

2.4.1 Acculturation

Schumann (1976) examined six social and four affective factors, which he proposed clustered into a single causal variable in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). He termed this variable “acculturation” (p. 29). Acculturation refers to the changes which occur when two (or more) individuals from different cultures come into contact with one another for an extended period of time. Schumann (1978) defines these
changes as an individual’s social and psychological distance from speakers of the TL (p. 29). Schumann explains that learners will only acquire the second language to the degree that they acculturate to it. Schumann asserts that social factors are relevant to language learning by groups of people, but that affective factors are relevant to language learning by individuals (p. 31). This thesis is concerned with variables which:

...involve the relationship between two social groups who are in a contact situation, but who speak different languages (Schumann, 1978, p. 29).

In this thesis, Schumann’s Acculturation Model will be used to illustrate how particular factors associated with second language acquisition might also be closely aligned to how the students’ and homestay parents’ communication might sometimes become problematic. If Schumann’s acculturation factors impact upon L2 development, then they might also influence the students’ identities (Menard-Warwick, 2005; Kelly, 2010; Norton, 2010), language competence (Kanno, 2000) and ability to interact with their homestay parents. In other words, the sociocultural context that Schumann positions his Acculturation Model within can also function to inform how the students’ language learning processes interrelate with the power, identity and other social factors of their homestay parents.

2.4.2 Micro factors

In this section, micro factors will be discussed in terms of Schumann’s (1976) “social distance” factors. Schumann (1986) distinguishes between nine factors (p. 380) that influence second-language acquisition and maintains that both the social and affective factors combine into a single variable called “acculturation” (p. 379). In this thesis I will focus on the six social factors, which Schumann lists in his Acculturation Model. In a
more recent research project, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) draws upon Spencer-Oatey’s (1996) summary of the components which are involved in social distance, and groups them all into the category “familiarity” (p. 2266). Schumann’s social factors are as follows:

1. the degree of dominance, or sub-ordination of either the TL or L2 group,
2. the enclosure of the TL or L2 group to each other,
3. the cohesion (size) of the TL or L2 group to each other,
4. the congruency between the L2 and the TL,
5. the attitudes that the TL and L2 group share with each other, and
6. the length of stay of the L2 group (Schumann, 1976, p. 136).

The following sections will address each of these factors in more detail. Examples will be given of each factor, using the homestay environment as background. I will then describe how these factors relate specifically to “integration” in the homestay environment in terms of Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model. Again, it must be noted that although Schumann’s Acculturation Model explains second language acquisition, as previously mentioned, it can also be used to explain how social factors distance and therefore influence how students may or may not integrate with their host parents, which in turn might cause communicative issues.

2.4.2.1 Dominance patterns

Schumann (1976) claims that the dominance patterns of the TL group relate to factors such as “modal status” (p. 136). These include such things as standard of living, level of education, degree of technical development, and political power, but these must be
viewed from the perspective of both the TL group and the L2 group (p. 136). Berry (1997) contends that non-dominant individuals from the groups can only successfully integrate into another culture when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity. Berry (2001) maintains that individuals in language groups can be dominant, non-dominant, or subordinate, and that this is dependent on “an individual’s background context in a language contact situation” (p. 617). Studies in multiculturalism support Berry’s assertions (Ward, 2004; Horenczyk, 2008).

Dominance patterns involve particular connotations of power (Tannen, 1994). The term “power” is used in this thesis in accordance with Fukushima’s (2000) definition. Fukushima explains that power exists when somebody can control, or exert influence on, the behaviour of someone else (p. 85). For power to exist, there needs to be an asymmetrical relationship between the participants. In the present research project, the students are accommodated by their homestay families. There is an inherent inequality between the participants. Schumann (1976) asserts that, in the case of one group having dominance over another, the social distance between the two will be wide and “a class of interpreters will usually evolve to mediate communication between the two” (p. 136). There are two Japanese liaison officers on the programme described in this project who have the responsibility of acting as intermediaries between the homestay families and the students, as well as of reporting to both the Japanese and New Zealand tertiary institutions. Schumann maintains that the presence of interpreters may decrease the desire for the L2 group to negotiate with the TL group over communication issues that may arise and, consequently, may increase the level of social distance between the two groups.
As was mentioned briefly in section 2.2.1, there are many factors which contribute to students’ language learning. From an asymmetric perspective in the homestay environment, the students may find themselves so overwhelmed they are unable to communicate effectively even though they may have the proficiency to be able to do so. In a study conducted by Trinder (2013), findings indicated that tertiary business students’ beliefs about how to learn English were difficult to change or adapt if students are in an uncomfortable or unsympathetic learning environment. Trinder’s study involved surveying and interviewing 156 first year university students enrolled in a business studies course in Vienna in order to find out what motivated their particular learning styles, and what realisations the students could make about how they could improve their learning environment. Findings indicated that factors such as willingness to communicate, individual personality traits (self-esteem, self-perceived communication competence, see MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), level of anxiety, and/or risk-taking greatly influence students’ perceived or actual level of success (also see MacIntyre, 2007). Furthermore, these factors are interrelated in various and complex ways, or as Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) claim, are “…byproducts of a number of internal as well as external factors” (p.2).

2.4.2.2 Enclosure

Enclosure refers to whether or not the members of the L2 group and the members of the TL group belong to other groups in common. For example, if the members of the two language groups belong to the same family, university, school, clubs, church, and/or recreational facilities, then the level of enclosure is low. However, if the members of the two language groups do not belong to many other common groups, the level of
enclosure is high. Schumann (1976) maintains that high enclosure results in a greater social distance and is unfavourable for successful language acquisition, whereas low enclosure is favourable for successful second language acquisition.

There are no studies that specifically address enclosure in any great detail in the homestay setting (except see Kinginger, 2009 for the effect of situations on homestay expectations). However, it appears from the homestay studies mentioned in section 2.2 that homestay families and students seldom belong to the same groups. This may reflect the fact that many study abroad experiences are short-term programmes of one semester or less, unlike this one where it lasted for eleven months. However, there still is some enclosure that might be considered at least temporary. For example, the students often came home and spent time with their homestay families before meals, and many, at least in the first few months, spent time with them during weekdays, weekends and holiday times. For many of the students, though, during the last few months of the stay, the enclosure became greater, as students decided to spend more time with their friends away from their homestay families.

2.4.2.3 Cohesion (size)

Cohesion can relate to two things. Firstly, as the name suggests, cohesion can relate to how closely connected the L2 group is. If there is a strong connection, then the L2 group will tend to stay together rather than spend time with the TL group. Secondly, cohesion also relates to the ratio of learners to native speakers. The group size determines whether or not the ratio of the TL group to the L2 group is conducive to interaction. The effects of cohesion on interaction are illustrated in Freed’s (1990) comparison of American students living in France in homestays with those living in
university dormitories. It was assumed that the students studying in the homestay environment had greater opportunities for informal contact and, hence, that they would become more proficient at French. However, it was found that this was not necessarily the case.

In reality, some homestay families were hosting as many as twelve foreign students, so the opportunities for personal interaction with TL speakers were not necessarily greater (p. 462).

Schumann (1976) maintains that, if the L2 group is few in number, there is more opportunity for individuals to communicate with the TL group. However, if the L2 group is large in number, then there is less chance to communicate.

Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2004) found that American students on study abroad programmes in Mexico preferred to have other students in the homestay, especially at the beginning because it eased their feelings of loneliness. However, the institution objected to more than one student being placed in one homestay because they believed that it limited the amount of Spanish spoken and the opportunity for communication with native Spanish speakers. The institution also thought that more proficient Spanish L2 speakers would dominate the conversations.

2.4.2.4 Congruence

Congruence refers to the similarities between the culture of the TL group and that of the L2 group. Schumann (1986) asserts that congruence is a relative term, but that generally cultures which have similar languages, religions, histories, and so forth, are deemed to be more congruent and, therefore, have less social distance between them (p. 371).

Campbell and Xu’s (2004) study of Chinese students in New Zealand homestays (see section 2.2.3) indicates that different perceptions of how food should be
presented creates a cultural gap between the students and their homestay parents. Food in China is considered to be not only nutritious, but also symbolic and an integral and important part of breaking up the day. Campbell and Xu claim that, from a Chinese perspective, meal times should be filled with enjoyment, and that the food should be savoured and discussed at length in relation to the season, time of day, and so on. This cultural association was found to be incongruent with the New Zealand style of eating food quickly, or spending time relaxing away from the dinner table. These associations go well beyond personal food preferences (although Campbell & Xu’s study showed that was also an issue with some homestay students). It may be possible that deeply held cultural assumptions about the social role of food actually underlie what is presented as a matter of food preferences.

2.4.2.5 Attitudes of the two groups toward each other

Attitudinal orientations affect how groups envisage each other. Attitudes can also depend on individual reactions as well as individual attitudes to other individuals. There could be unconscious stereotypes or preconceptions about how one acts (or reacts) in particular situations and these preconceptions may act to distance groups. Schumann (1976) maintains that favourable views lead to an “enhancement” of language acquisition (p. 138). Furthermore, if the TL group feels that the L2 group does not wish, or desire, to acquire the language then social distance will increase.

In Campbell and Xu’s study (2004), the Chinese students thought that their New Zealand hosts perceived them as boarders instead of family members. They felt that their stay was merely for economic reasons. On the other hand, the host families
perceived their homestay students to be too dependent and demanding, sometimes treating their home as if it was a hotel and the parents were merely housekeepers.

2.4.2.6 Intended length of residence

If the intended length of residence is for a prolonged period of time, it is more likely that the L2 group will establish more relations with various people. Schumann (1976) maintains that this is conducive to language acquisition (see Sasaki, 2011). The length of the stay also depends on the individuals involved. However, it must be remembered that the intended length of residence of the students in this research project was institutionally determined.

One major theme emerging from Campbell and Xu’s (2004) study of Chinese students staying in New Zealand homestays was the feeling of initial isolation and anxiety, particularly at the beginning of the homestay, but a gradual feeling of acceptance in relation to their surroundings over time:

I didn’t feel like I was on holiday. Instead I felt very nervous. I didn’t know what was going on. After living here for some time, I gradually felt relieved (p. 17).

In this quote, the students’ intention to stay in their homestay was influenced by their experience of the length of stay. The students in Campbell and Xu’s study may have been suffering from culture shock in the early stages of their study abroad, but developed particular coping strategies to manage this later on. Even if the students in this research project had learned to cope over time, they still might have had issues that developed over time.
2.4.3 Conclusion

This section has outlined how some social and cultural factors can affect the degree of social distance between interlocutors. The degree of social distance will influence the degree to which the L2 group will “integrate” into the TL group (Schumann, 1986, p. 379), and influence second language acquisition, which could furthermore influence communication issues in the homestay. Schumann (1986) has proposed that three integration strategies determine the degree of distance between interlocutors. The next section will explain the term “integration” in more detail in relation to Schumann’s Acculturation Model as well as provide possible reasons for communication issues to arise.

2.5 Schumann’s integration strategies

Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model distinguishes three different integration strategies. Schumann maintains that these three integration strategies are not necessary for acquisition of the TL, but can restrict opportunities for interaction with the TL group and, therefore, the degree of language acquisition.

This section will briefly explain Schumann’s three integration strategies and then describe how they relate specifically to the homestay environment. The three integration strategies are:

1. assimilation,
2. adaptation (integration) and
3. preservation (p. 381).
Schumann (1986, p. 381) explains these terms as follows. If individuals in the second language (L2) group adopt an assimilationist strategy, then they will attempt to give up their own life-style and values and adopt those of the TL group. If individuals choose to acculturate, then they adapt to the life-style and values of the TL group, but at the same time maintain their own cultural patterns for use in any intra-group relations. Schumann (1986) continues by explaining a preservationist strategy. Preservation, as explained by Schumann, is a strategy in which the L2 group completely rejects the life-style and values of the TL group and attempts to maintain its own cultural pattern as much as possible.

It should be noted that other terms have also been used for these strategies. These include integration, assimilation, separation/segregation and marginalisation (Berry et al., 1989; Berry 1992, 1997). Although these terms expand the categorisation of the learner’s degree of acculturation into new domains, they are, for the most part, synonymous with Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation model.

Schumann maintains that opportunities to interact with the TL affect a learner’s proficiency in that language. Research has supported Schumann’s social distance hypothesis by illustrating that interaction with the TL outside of the formal language classroom seems to improve second language proficiency and ease the acculturation process (Bialystok, 1990; Kim, 1977; Seliger, 1977; Stern, 1983). The following section will provide some examples of how interaction with the TL operates within the homestay.
2.5.1 Integration in the homestay

Keating (1994) found that American homestay students studying Spanish in Mexico were constantly provided with opportunities to “notice the gap” (Schmidt & Frota, 1986, p. 239) between what should be said and their actual linguistic ability. Tanaka’s (2007) study also found that a Japanese student’s interaction with her host mother in a homestay in New Zealand made her realise the gap between what she wanted to say and what she could say. The realisation of this perceived gap motivated the student to learn more. Similarly, Wilkinson (1998) reported that one American homestay student in France was so motivated to learn French by his host family that he wanted to change his major to French and to return to France to study for one more academic year.

Homestays have often been considered a rich ground for experiencing culture and language first hand (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002). Although Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2002) claimed that the homestay experience was an advantage for American students in Mexico and Spain “linguistically, culturally, and psychologically” (p. 259), both their own study and a number of other studies suggest that there are often limited opportunities to use the TL in homestays.

In Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight’s study, although the students were very appreciative of their homestay parents’ efforts to make their stay as comfortable as possible, they were not as positive about other aspects of their experiences. The homestay parents perceived their role as similar to that of actual parents, in that they treated their students “just like we do our own kids” (p. 259). They helped with homework and encouraged their students at all times to interact with them, especially at meal times and in the evening when everybody was at home. However, some students said that their opportunity to interact in the TL was limited due to the television always
being on and the domination of conversations by the host parents. Other students felt that they were left out of family activities that might have provided them opportunities to interact in the TL.

Frank (1997, cited in Rivers, 1998) found that American students staying in Russian homestays were “restricted to only quotidian dialogue and television-watching” (p. 496). In Frank’s study, the Russian hosts and the American students assessed each other in negative terms because of poor family interaction. Since interaction was not favourable in this situation, students retreated to their rooms and spent time reading in the Russian language. Consequently, their reading proficiency increased, but their overall speaking and listening gain remained constant.

Yager (1998) measured the oral proficiency of students learning Spanish during a summer study-abroad programme in Mexico. Even though the students had opportunities to interact with their host families, they chose to spend their time watching television, reading, listening to music, or the radio (in Spanish) rather than conversing in the TL.

2.5.2 Conclusion

This section has illustrated that acculturational factors specifically relate to the degree of “social distance” (Schumann, 1986) between interlocutors, which could influence communication in the homestay. These factors were earlier discussed in terms of Hall’s (1976) high and low context cultures and Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions. All of these factors affect the intentions communicated by interlocutors in a specific context. If the social distance is close (i.e., the interlocutors share a common understanding of cultural norms and conventions), the meaning expressed during conversations is likely
to be understood and responded to appropriately. However, if the social distance is large, then the interlocutors may misunderstand each other’s underlying intentions. In other words, cultural and social differences of interpretation may lead to communication issues (Bouton, 1994, p. 159).

Intentions are conveyed through implicature. The next section discusses the concept of implicature from a more specific linguistic perspective, with reference to Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle and maxims.

2.6 Grice and implicature

Section 2.5 outlined some of the cultural and social factors that might distance interlocutors from each other. Although the intention of the interlocutors may be to communicate sincerity and politeness in order to solidify friendly interpersonal relations, different perceptions of how to convey or interpret these feelings may mean that the intention of the speaker is not communicated successfully. In other words, communication may become an issue due to interlocutors not realising the intention of the speaker or implied meaning behind what is said.

2.6.1 The cooperative principle

Grice (1975) proposes that maxims and implicature guide how interlocutors attach meaning to utterances. This section first discusses implicature in relation to Grice’s cooperative principle and maxims.

According to Grice (1975), people assume that they and others will engage cooperatively in conversation, using what he terms “the cooperative principle” in conjunction with four maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner) or conventions.
Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (p. 45).

Grice further proposes that the four maxims have sub-maxims (a total of nine).

The maxim of quantity assumes that you:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required (p. 26).

The maxim of quality assumes that you:

1. Try to make your contribution one that is true [which Grice refers to as the “supermaxim” of quality].
2. Do not say what you believe to be false.
3. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (p. 27).

The maxim of relevance has only one sub-maxim, “be relevant”.

Finally, Grice’s (1975) fourth maxim refers to the manner in which something is said. The maxim of manner assumes that you:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly (p. 27).

Grice’s (1975) conversational principle and associated maxims are considered to be guides that are to be rationally followed (Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Fraser, 1990).

Grice (1989) explains that if speakers assume that the cooperative principle is being adhered to, then they can deduce not only the explicit meaning, but also the implied meaning or “implicature” (p. 24). When the conventions are broken, or maxims are flouted, more inferencing is needed in order to understand the actual intention of the speaker. Grice explains that in order to decipher implicit intentions, interlocutors must
draw a distinction between generalised implicature and particularised implicature (p. 37). However, as Grice (1989) concludes, what may seem general to one interlocutor may be quite particular to another (p. 217). Implicature is dependent upon cultural conventions. Thus, what may be understood in one culture may not be understood in another culture.

2.6.2 Issues with implicatures

Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle implies that interlocutors try to cooperate “as equals” (Fairclough, 1985, p. 740; Eggins & Slade, 1997), but, as has already been pointed out in section 2.3.2, individual relationships often involve degrees of power vested in the interlocutors. According to Sarangi and Slembrouck (1992), Grice’s theory (1975) assumes that cooperation between the interlocutors will “cut across social barriers and divisions, across social purpose and interest … as long as one stays within what is ‘normal’” (p. 123). The interlocutors in Grice’s (1975) theory are assumed to be operating at a “normal” level of language proficiency. It has even been asserted that the “ideal speaker/hearer” is the “norm” necessary for Grice’s theory to work (Hurvitz & Schlesinger, 2009, p. 740). However, what is considered “normal” is subject to variation according to cultural as well as individual differences (see section 7.5.2) and changing social identities (see section 2.9).

Bouton (1994) suggests that various implicatures can be derived in cross-cultural interactions, and that these are “potential barrier[s] to effective communication” (p. 159). Levinson (2000) claims that particularised implicatures (also termed conversational implicatures) are based on “specific contextual assumptions” or, in other words, meanings assumed to exist within specific situational contexts and that
generalised implicatures (also termed conventional implicatures) more specific to a person’s culture make use of the cooperative principle (p. 16). Fraser (1990) describes interlocutors’ shared contextual knowledge as a “conversational contract,” in which each party has an understanding of the boundaries between particular and general implicatures (p. 221). Bouton (1994), Levinson (2000) and Fraser (1990) all illustrate that shared contextual inference is a major factor in determining whether implicature will be communicated successfully or not, especially in cases where the interlocutors are from different cultural backgrounds.

Another potential issue in cross-cultural interactions is indirectness. An indirect speech act within the framework of a social context is an act that on the surface is seen to perform one goal, but actually aims to achieve another, usually outside the specific linguistic code (Searle, 1979). In other words, as was mentioned in relation to Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle, conventions might be purposefully flouted in order to foreground a particular meaning in a speaker’s utterance. The speaker then relies on the hearer to correctly infer what the implicit intention of the utterance was.

According to Frajzyngier and Jirsa (2006), indirectness is “deployed for the expression of a given functional domain, but [that] grammatically or lexically [is the] direct means of some other domain” (p. 518). Frajzyngier and Jirsa (2006) point out that indirectness is a characteristic of the culture, but not of the language itself. For example, asking questions that pertain to an interlocutor’s personal life is often done more or less indirectly, depending on the culture. With the “Principle of Indirect Means,” Frajzyngier and Jirsa (2006) propose indirect speech is used whenever the goals of speech involve crossing into an interlocutor’s personal domain, claiming that it underlies language use by adults (p. 514). They further claim that, although indirectness
in the personal domain may result in the appearance of politeness, politeness is not always intended. It can be assumed that in cultural contact situations, different assumptions about the implicatures involved in indirectness may lead to communication issues.

There is, therefore, more than one way in which determining the intentionality of a speaker may be difficult for an interlocutor. It is undoubtedly even more challenging for someone communicating in another language within a different culture. In particular, the influence of “distance” due to different cultural norms may contribute to maxims being unintentionally flouted and speaker intentions being unintentionally misunderstood. If the speaker’s intention has not been understood, there is a risk of either an intercultural or cross-cultural communication issue. For intercultural communication issues, implicature can still be negotiated between the interlocutors in order to arrive at a shared meaning (Sarangi & Slembrouck, 1992). However, if negotiation does not take place, then the maxims, especially the maxims of quantity (make your contribution as informative as is required) and/or manner (avoid obscurity of expression or ambiguity), could be said to be flouted.

2.6.3 Conclusion

This section has given an account of implicature in terms of Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle. I have outlined the cooperative principle and related it to the wider cultural, or macro, framework. Many factors work together to determine linguistic choices in utterances. Interlocutors use their knowledge of these features and the sociocultural, linguistic and pragmatic conventions which govern them to determine the actual
intentions of speakers. When the cooperative principle or its associated maxims are purposefully flouted, additional inferences produce additional implicatures.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will assume that both parties (host parents and homestay students) attempted to adhere to Grice’s cooperative principle. I assume this because, firstly, students hoped to improve their spoken English and, secondly, both institutions requested host families interact as much as possible with their students. If we assume that the cooperative principle is being adhered to, why does communication still sometimes become an issue, or to the worst extent, break down? I argue that these problematical issues in communication are incorrect pre-suppositions in interpretation within the socio-cultural domain that the interlocutors are positioned in. In other words, the intentions behind utterances are misinterpreted. Therefore, particular consideration will be given to the fact that in most cases a flout, or purposeful rebellion, might misrepresent what actually took place. As the researcher, this is my own subjective interpretation and others may interpret the situation differently (see section 3.11 for a discussion regarding being an insider). In the following section, I outline the specific communicative style used by the individual in order to avoid conflict. This is achieved by the individual adopting a particular “face” according to the situational context. I then discuss politeness, the means by which threats to face are addressed.

2.7 Face and politeness

In this section, I outline the concept of face, discuss politeness in general, and then discuss both face and politeness in terms of Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness model.
2.7.1 Face

According to Turnbull and Saxton (1997), face is:

…the maintenance/creation of desired images of self, other, and relationship. When face is threatened, cooperative speakers typically act to mitigate that threat by doing facework (p. 145).

Face can be discussed in terms of interactional sociolinguistic (IS) analysis in relation to turn-taking (Chevalier, 2009; Hutchby, 2008) and repair (Robinson, 2006), and in terms of pragmatics as an interactional conceptualisation between one or more people (Haugh, 2010, p. 2074). At this point, it is worthy to specifically contextualize what is meant by interactional sociolinguistics (IS). Interactional sociolinguistics was pioneered by Gumperz, (1982) who combined aspects of anthropology, linguistics, pragmatics, and conversational analysis into a framework to interpret how speakers signal specific meaning in interaction. Gumperz, proposed that these signals are “constellations of surface features of message form…” (p. 131) that occur within particular frames of discourse. These signals are termed contextualisation cues, which frame or streamline inference towards interpretation. Gumperz claims that contextualisation cues vary across cultures as well as within the broader socio-cultural context. There has also been criticism of interactional sociolinguistics. This criticism has argued that communication issues, as a result of interactional sociolinguistic analysis, has not accounted for the concept of power differentials and thus inequality (this will be discussed more fully in section 2.9.2). From an intercultural perspective, and drawing on IS analysis, face-saving can be illustrated in analyses of conversational structure and sequence-invoking specific situational context (see Grainger, Mills & Sibanda, 2010). The notion of face can thus be dealt with from various perspectives; however, there is a general consensus that face is universally relevant, culturally variable, and complex.
The concepts of face and politeness are interrelated and “entwined” and “co-constitutive of the interaction at hand” (Arundale, 2009, p. 2103). Conlan (1996) combines both Goffman’s (1967) and Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) concepts of face, namely as “… a social actor’s self-image of social membership and consequent desire to be recognised as a rational social being” (Conlan, 1996, p. 730). In terms of identity, Heritage (2001) adds that face is “a person’s immediate claim about who s/he is in an interaction” (p. 48).

2.7.2 Brown and Levinson’s politeness model

Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 67) define four general strategies of face (based on Goffman, 1967). These are:

1. ‘Positive-politeness’ directed at maintaining the hearer’s positive face, or need to be respected;

2. An indirect off-record strategy, which is used to hint at what you would like to achieve;

3. Negative-politeness, where you realise that the person you are addressing is to be respected, but that you also feel as though you are imposing something on them;

4. A bald on-record strategy, which gives no suggestion of respect or imposition at all.

Much of the research related to strategies employed to minimise the threat to face is grounded in Brown and Levinson’s politeness model, involving what they term “face threatening acts.”

If a speaker decides to perform a face-threatening act (FTA), then he/she has a choice of whether or not to go on- or off-record. If a speaker decides to go off-record, then they have decided to signal the FTA implicitly. This implicit signal (implicature) can be in the form of circumstances or situations, or verbal cues or non-verbal cues. In
section 2.6, it was shown that implicitness on the part of the speaker often requires the hearer to backtrack to try to decipher the intention of the speaker, and, furthermore, that such implicitness is often culturally specific. Off-record performance of FTAs signals the communicative intention of the speaker indirectly, whereas on-record FTAs communicate the intention of the speaker directly. Performing an FTA on-record, without redressive action (no consideration to the face of the listener), is to do so “baldly.” These are termed direct FTAs. Direct FTAs might be used in emergencies, for example, “Quick there’s a fire, ring the fire brigade!” or if an adult scolds a child, for example, “Don’t play with your food!” Performing an FTA on-record with redressive action (consideration for the listener’s face) entails using either positive or negative politeness strategies. In this case, the onus of responsibility is on the listener (H) to interpret the speaker’s (S) on-record FTA as their desire not to perform an FTA for fear of offending the listener. However, deciphering off-record FTAs often requires a competent understanding of the cultural norms and conventions associated with that culture.

2.7.3 Positive politeness strategies

Brown and Levinson (1978) refer to fifteen positive and ten negative politeness strategies used in communication in English speaking cultures. Brown and Levinson claim that positive politeness is redressive action directed to the addressee’s positive face, or the desire to be accepted by others. Negative politeness is redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face, or the desire not to be imposed upon by others. P. Austin (1990) claims that redressive actions, whether they are polite or not, “…need not be verbal, and in face attack behaviour, they may often be suprasegmental
or kinesic (intimate/warning tones; winks and leers)” (p. 281). The fifteen positive
politeness strategies are listed below. (The examples have been changed by me to suit a
New Zealand style of English, but the original strategies are from Brown & Levinson,
1978, pp. 76-77).

1. Noticing or attending to H (his/her interests, wants, needs, goods), for example, “Wow, those flowers look really nice...by the way can my friend come for dinner?”

2. Exaggerating (interest, approval, sympathy) with H, for example, “What a fantastic cook you are.”

3. Intensifying interest with H. This means increasing H’s contribution to the conversation by pulling H into the “story,” for example, “I came home yesterday from work and what do you think I saw?”

4. Using in-group identity markers, for example, “Come here, mate.”

5. Seeking agreement. This is usually done by choosing safe topics that are not controversial, for example, the weather, or by repeating part of what the speaker says:

   Speaker 1: “Oh, it’s quite cold, today.”
   Speaker 2: “Yes, it is.

6. Avoiding disagreement. This is usually achieved through token, or pseudo-agreements, such as “then” in the next example, which indicates that the speaker is cooperatively drawing a conclusion with the addressee.

   Speaker 1: “It’s a long way to walk to school”
   Speaker 2: “I’ll take the bus, then.”
In avoiding disagreement, speakers also make use of hedging devices. This involves being purposefully vague: “Oh, yeah, I don’t really know, um, yeah that’s right, I think.”

7. Presupposing/raising/asserting common ground. This involves gossip or small talk and illustrates that the person has not just come to communicate the FTA. For example, “Oh, hi, did you get caught in the traffic jam coming home, just like me?” attempts to assert common ground with the listener.

8. Humour. Humour shows shared background and values or act to minimise the FTA: “Oh, um, hige sori, I’m sorry,” is common humour often used to soften the force of an FTA in a Japanese context. Hige sori, means “to shave oneself” in Japanese, but has the same pronunciation as if somebody was saying “sorry” in English. (It must be noted that the example here is not considered to be a joke in the conventional sense of including a punchline. The example given could be classed as a play on words, which, for convenience, I have included within the broad category of humour; however, the purpose is still the same: to minimise the FTA.)

9. Asserting or presupposing S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants, for example, “Maybe this party might be a little bit boring for you, but there will be lots of delicious food.”

10. Offering or promising, for example, “I’ll meet you at Starbucks tomorrow at eleven o’clock.”

11. Being optimistic. These are often based on assumptions, for example, “I’m sure you won’t mind if I borrow your pen, will you?”

12. Including both S and H in the activity, for example, “Let’s go!”

13. Giving (or asking) for reasons, for example, “Why don’t I help you?”

14. Assuming or asserting reciprocity. This may act to soften the FTA: “Can we eat curry tomorrow for dinner?” “I can get the vegetables for the curry tomorrow and make it.”
15. Giving gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation), for example, “Happy Father’s Day, here’s a card and a cake of chocolate for you.”

Brown and Levinson explain that, if the speaker decides to go on record with positive politeness strategies, then the speaker considers him/herself to be on equal ground as the hearer (p. 77).

2.7.4 Negative politeness strategies

Following is a list of ten negative politeness strategies. Seven strategies are taken from Brown and Levinson’s (1978, p. 78) model, and the last three from Held (1992). (As for the positive politeness strategies, the examples have been changed, but the original strategies have been taken from Brown & Levinson, 1978, pp. 78, 79).

1. Be conventionally indirect. (This has already been explained in relation to Japanese culture. A simple example would be: “You wouldn’t happen to know where my washing is would you?”)

2. Question or hedge, for example:

   Host mother: “Oh, no, do you know where the phone is [student’s name]?
   Student: “um, I think, um, it’s in my room, maybe.” (Taken from a recorded homestay conversation, May, 2007)

3. Be pessimistic, for example, “Maybe you don’t want to do this, but…”

4. Minimise the imposition, for example, “It’s not really important, but, um…”

5. Show deference. This shows that the addressee is considered to be of a higher status. For example, there is an implied status presented when a student greets his professor by saying, “Good morning, Professor Smith” and is replied to by the professor using the student’s first name, “Good morning, Peter.” (Chapters 5 and 6 will indicate numerous implicit examples.)
6. Apologise. This can be done by admitting an imposition, for example, “I’m sure you must be very busy, but…” or by indicating reluctance, giving overwhelming reasons as to why one is apologising, or even begging forgiveness.

7. Impersonalise S and H (in a Japanese context, this is commonly achieved by leaving out the pronouns) for example, “many people are fashion conscious,” or, in a command, such as, “observe people” (see section 5.1.4)

Three more negative politeness strategies are proposed by Held (1992). These strategies request a particular favour from the addressee. Held observes that there can be three main stages in this process, and that each stage can be used as a separate negative politeness strategy in itself. These are the preparatory, the focal, and the final phase strategies. These three strategies have been taken directly from Held, including the examples.

8. The preparatory phase sets the scene, or leads the exchange into the favour, for example, “you see…” or “so…” The request might also make use of the English language past progressive aspect, acting to lessen the imposition of a favour, for example, “I was wondering if…, um…”

9. In the focal stage, reasons are given for the speaker’s request, for example, “I’ve tried everywhere, but I can’t get one,” or attending to H’s face by saying something like, “You’re the only person I can turn to”.

10. The final stage consists of anticipatory gratitude, such as, “I knew you would say “yes”,” or even compliments, for example, “You’re so helpful.”

Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that particular variables determine the assessment of the seriousness of an FTA in many, and perhaps all, cultures. These variables are:

1. The relative power of S and H
2. The social distance between the S (speaker) and H (hearer), and

3. The absolute ranking of impositions.

Leech (1983) configures Brown and Levinson’s (1987) relative power and social distance variables into a vertical axis for power, which Leech terms “authority” and a horizontal axis for social distance, which Leech terms “solidarity” (p. 126). The degree of imposition on the speaker is dependent on the speaker’s status, age, and degree of intimacy in relation to the hearer (Benjamin, 1997; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). According to Economidou-Kogetsidis’s (2010) definition, the degree of imposition can be measured in terms of time, effort, financial burden, psychological burden and rights and obligations in relation to the hearer. Economidou-Kogetsidis also claims that the degree of perceived imposition (which equates with the degree of loss of face) varies depending on individual, situational and cross-cultural factors (p. 2267).

Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model describes, on a macro scale, particular notions of “face,” which emphasise cultural contextuality (Blum-Kulka, 1990; Fukushima, 2003; Ide, 1989; Y. Matsumoto, 1988; Pizziconi, 2006) and the background of the individuals employing them (Conlan, 1996; Haugh, 2007). Aston (1995), however, criticises Brown and Levinson’s model, claiming that it views situational factors too rigidly (see also Ohashi, 2008, p. 2163 and Haugh, 2007, p. 659.) Watts (2003, p. 92) criticises the model for not taking into account “the discursive struggle over the social values of politeness.” O’Driscoll (2007), contends that face is determined not just on what is said, but participant reactions. Kasper (1990) criticises Brown and Levinson’s model for presupposing that interaction is “a fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavour” (p. 194), claiming that any interaction could be
construed as an FTA. Similarly, Fraser (1990) comments that people notice the absence of politeness rather than its presence (similar to how Halliday, 1984, claimed that people pay particular attention to unsuccessful communication, rather than the many times that successful communication does occur (see section 1.1.2)).

Spencer-Oatey (2005), asserts that Brown and Levinson’s model uses an “...absolute approach to politeness, by pre-identifying the types of communicative messages that require politeness and the linguistic strategies needed for conveying it” (p. 97).

Spencer-Oatey uses Brown and Levinson’s model to distinguish what she terms “rapport management,” which she claims is a better interpretation of how people manage relations between themselves. More specifically, Spencer-Oatey (2005a), explains that effective rapport management is dependent on each interlocutor finding an appropriate balance between his/her and the other’s needs. She proposes three key elements in order to measure politeness more accurately: behavioral expectations, face sensitivities, and interactional wants.

Furthermore, Locher and Watts (2005) argue that politeness is contextually constructed and that “appropriateness,” (p. 9) i.e., being neither polite nor impolite, is a better concept in order to describe how interactants negotiate and engage with each other discursively. They discuss politeness in terms of “relational work,” which “...comprises the entire continuum of verbal behavior from direct, impolite, rude or aggressive interaction through to polite interaction, encompassing both appropriate and inappropriate forms of social behavior” (p. 11).

Locher and Watts use Brown and Levinson’s model to contrast their concept of relational work. They maintain that social appropriateness is subjectively determined or judged by the different frames or roles that the participants take on during interaction, and is evaluated as appropriate, non-polite, or politic behavior. The participants’ frames
or roles are compared against what they consider to be politic from their own background, including: education, social class, gender, ethnicity, etc. These frames are what Tannen (1993) previously defined as being “structures of expectation based on past experience” (p. 53).

Locher and Watts’ study involved analyses of naturally occurring interactions and proposed that politeness must be seen in relation to other types of interpersonal meaning, not considered in Brown and Levinson’s model.


Just as how Locher and Watts (2005) as well as Spencer-Oatey (2005) use Brown and Levinson’s model to contrast and expand upon previously held assumptions and interpretations regarding politeness, this research study will also use their model to illustrate its limitations.

The next section will explain the relative power and social distance between the interlocutors more fully and will indicate the degree of imposition that a request might take. These variables will be outlined in terms of Conlan’s (1996) configuration, which specifically contextualises the Japanese concept of “face” and four politeness variables.

2.7.5 Four politeness variables and face

Conlan (1996) describes four core kinds of politeness that interlocutors make use of in interaction; namely, familiar, neutral, formal, and null politeness (p. 733). Familiar politeness includes utterances that invoke social solidarity, but familiar politeness can also include covert prestige, for example, when two work colleagues meet in a public
bar after work and engage in conversation. In terms of Brown and Levinson’s (1978) model, familiar politeness strategies are similar to positive politeness strategies. The relative power in terms of power and status is equal and the social relations are characterised as friendly and convivial. Neutral politeness is indicated by minimal politeness conventions that are neither covert nor overt. One example of neutral politeness might occur when somebody holds a door open for another person. Polite language may be exchanged by the receiver of the action, but there is limited social familiarity and the exchange may be simply limited to “thank you.” The politeness evoked in this situation by both the doer of the action and the receiver’s response may be a fixed societal expectation, commonly referred to as a “manner.” Formal politeness includes utterances that indicate that either the speaker or hearer has a certain degree of power within the context in which they are speaking. One example of formal politeness might be when an administrator asks a university lecturer for a student report. Even though the university lecturer might be expected to produce student reports, there is an underlying convention that the administrator politely requests as opposed to demands. Null politeness patterns indicate no covert or overt social relations, nor any conventional politeness formulae. An example of null politeness might occur when students are passing a teacher’s lesson handouts to each other along a line before the start of a class. Although, some students may say “Here you are,” to the next student in line, or “Thank you,” when receiving the handout from the student before them, there is no covert or overt social solidarity or indication of any relative power shown by any of the students. The students in this case are merely performing a repetitive action, which is often devoid of any politeness or social solidarity. All four of these politeness
variables can be graphed as four points. Utterances can then be plotted according to the relative power and social distance between the interlocutors.

Politeness variables are culturally dependent and are subject to change throughout the interaction. For example, interlocutors might start out using formal politeness strategies, and then later use familiar politeness strategies, or they might start out using null politeness strategies, and then later use neutral, or even formal, politeness strategies. In other words, the language and situations that evoke language are never static, but are constantly changing. The variations depend on the social-cultural context in which they occur. Consequently, what may seem appropriately polite in one culture may be quite inappropriate in another. The use of inappropriate politeness patterns may cause cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Conlan (1996) asserts that particular politeness patterns, learnt through the socialisation of power and distance variables in a Japanese family culture, transfer into “extra-familial interaction[s].” Because these politeness patterns can be transferred (see also Zamborlin, 2007), Japanese ESL speakers can use power and distance variables inappropriately when speaking the TL (Conlan, 1996, p. 734). In other words, there is negative transfer (Kasper, 1992; Thomas, 1983) related to the appropriacy of the politeness strategies used. This type of negative transfer is not limited to inexperienced speakers of English, but can also be found with experienced speakers as well (Scarcella & Brunak, 1981; see also Holtgraves & Yang, 1990, and Fukushima, 2003, for similar findings in relation to inappropriate politeness strategies used by inexperienced speakers of English with interlocutors of higher status or standing in the host culture).

Misunderstandings commonly arise when speakers attempt to perform FTAs. The difficulty associated with transferring to a second language what may be thought of
in one culture as appropriately polite for a particular context increases the risk of the hearer misunderstanding the intention of the speaker. Performing FTAs inappropriately runs the risk of widening the social distance between the interlocutors. Thus when second language speakers attempt to perform FTAs they may also increase the risk of a communication issue.

2.7.6 Requests

One type of speech act in particular, requests, is relevant to this study for two related reasons. First, it has been asserted that FTAs occur whenever requests are performed (Schauer, 2009, p. 25). Second, as the previous section has pointed out, negative transfer is particularly problematic in FTAs. This implies requests may be affected by negative transfer.

According to Blum-Kulka (1989) a request strategy is:

… the obligatory choice of the level of directness by which the request is realized. By directness is meant the degree to which the speaker’s illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution (p. 46).

Based on Blum-Kulka et al (1989) Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), Schauer (2009) codes request strategies in relation to the directness of the illocutionary act involved. The CCSARP divides a total of nine request types into three main levels of directness: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect strategies. According to Blum-Kulka (1989) direct requests include imperatives, or performatives (Austin, 1962) and hedged performatives (Fraser, 1975). Conventionally indirect requests include strategies that rely on the context in order for the request to be performed. A non-conventional indirect request includes partial
Achiba (2003) terms non-conventional indirect requests “hints” (p. 85). She claims that hints are “basically open-ended in propositional content, linguistic form, and pragmatic force” (p. 74). Like any indirect speech act, as described in section 6.2.2, indirect requests may be difficult to interpret. The inference associated with the open-endedness of hints is difficult to interpret because the illocutionary force is not explicitly expressed, that is, the degree of implicature is variable depending upon the context. Achiba (2003) gives examples of how the contextual environment provides different interpretations related to either the literal or requestive hint. For example, if the question “Where is my pen?” is uttered when a group of students are studying together, then there is a requestive hint that, if the pen is near a fellow student, it should pass to the person who has made the hint. In this case the utterance has been interpreted as a request. However, if the same question was uttered in a different context, such as in language class in which the purpose of the lesson was for the students to point to a newly-learnt vocabulary item amongst objects scattered around the classroom, then the utterance would not be interpreted as requiring something to be passed to the speaker, but rather as an instruction to indicate exactly where the object is. (This latter case is an example of an information-seeking question as opposed to a request.)

Schauer (2009) claims that hints are the most difficult indirect requests to decode and so are more likely to be misinterpreted (see Weizmann, 1993). In other words, the degree of inference that is needed in order to decipher the implicature means that the point of the request may not be understood. This can happen if the interlocutors do not share the same cultural knowledge or experience in communicating in the same
language. This suggests that requests, and particularly indirect requests, may be a possible area of difficulty in homestay situations.

2.7.7 Conclusion

This section has discussed Grice’s (1975, 1989) cooperative principle, maxims and conversational implicature as well as face and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978), including positive and negative politeness strategies. It has concluded by briefly considering requests, focusing on indirect requests made through hints as potentially prone to misinterpretation. It gave an example of the phrase “Where’s my pen?” as an indirect request in one context, implying that a pen should be passed, and an information-seeking or display question in another context, that of a second language classroom where the request was uttered by a teacher. This alludes to the misinterpretation possible when hearers familiar with the meaning that utterances have in one context transfer that meaning to another context.

In fact, if we extend this example, we can imagine a student responding correctly, and the teacher following up with “Good,” or a student responding incorrectly, and the teacher following up with, “No, that’s wrong” or “Try again.” This particular conversational pattern is strongly associated with classrooms in general and second language classrooms in particular, and is likely to be familiar to most second language learners, and is, therefore, relevant to this thesis. It is the topic of the next section.

2.8 The IRF structure

This section discusses a particular conversational pattern or structure that is relevant to this thesis. It mainly uses the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975).
2.8.1 Introduction

Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) model of classroom interaction is based on the work of many previous theoreticians (Belleck, Kliebard, Hyman & Smith, 1966; J.L. Austin, 1962). These in turn based their work on Malinowski (1935) and Firth’s (1968) approach, which involved organising language functions into linguistic units above the rank of the clause. Sinclair and Coulthard’s model attempted, among other things, to describe spoken interaction more methodically by de-emphasising conversational analysis based only at the sentential level and emphasising analysis within a discourse framework (referred to as a “structural-functional approach” by Nassaji & Wells, p. 384). Grammar starts at the level of the sentence and then methodically moves to its constituent parts, namely to the clause, group, word and morpheme. At the discourse level, Sinclair and Coulthard separated language into “units,” which they identified as lesson, transaction, exchange, move, and, finally, the smallest part, the “act.” These speech acts define the function of the utterances. When the acts combine they make up “moves,” which make up “exchanges,” then “transactions,” and finally “lessons.”

2.8.2 The IRF (E) Structure

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) discovered that there were certain patterns in the exchanges of teachers and pupils in the classroom environment. Sinclair and Coulthard recognised a three-part structure as an opening move realised as an elicitation. The elicitation required a verbal response, which was provided in the answering move termed a reply (or response). The answering move was usually followed by a follow-up move realised as an evaluation (E). Sinclair and Coulthard labelled the first move as the
“initiation,” (I) the second move as the “response” (R) and the third move as the “follow-up” (F). Lemke (1990) termed this three-part structure “triadic dialogue.”

A typical exchange in the classroom consists of an initiation by the teacher, followed by a response from the pupil, followed by follow-up to the pupil’s response from the teacher. For example:

1. T: What is it? (I)
2. P: um, a pair of scissors. (R)
3. T: a pair of scissors. Yes, good, a pair of scissors. Follow-up (F) as an evaluative (E).

The researchers found that the follow-up move (F) functioned in more ways than simply as an evaluative. These functions included acceptance, evaluation, and comment, with sub-categorisations of comment, namely, exemplification, expansion and justification. (For this reason, Sinclair and Coulthard changed their original “feedback” to “follow-up.” The term “follow-up” will also be used in this thesis.) Berry (1981) illustrated that, if the exchange within this structure is not completed to the participants’ satisfaction, then a variety of “bound” exchanges can take place until the sequence is completed. Completion is based on whether the interlocutors’ intentions have been satisfied, or, in other words, if Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle has been adhered to and none of the maxims have been flouted. For a teacher, completion of the exchange will usually be based on satisfaction that learning has occurred (see Figure 2.1 for a diagrammatic overview of the IRF structure). Nassaji and Wells (2000) make the point that it is “part of the teacher’s responsibility” (p. 378) to ensure that discussion proceeds cooperatively
and that all participants co-construct discourse. In these situations the teacher acts as a “manager” (p. 378) and controls the conversations.

Figure 2.1 The IRF discourse pattern illustrating “embedded extensions” of the follow-up move (adapted from Gourlay, 2005, p. 404 and based on Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975)

Nassaji and Wells (2000) also illustrate how the teacher’s “comment” move can act as a further question, thereby creating a further sequence that is dependent (D) on what preceded it (see Figure 2.1; see also Gourlay, 2005 for “embedded” options). However, acknowledgements and evaluatives can also function as implicit questions.
Furthermore, a question might arise out of a combination of the acknowledgment, evaluative or comment move. The follow-up move may not even be a question at all, but simply a “comment” such as a justification, an exemplification, or an expansion. Again, the interpretation of the follow-up move is determined by examining how each move is functioning around it. The sequences can also be cyclical until they are completed. Referred to as “topically related sets” by Mehan (1979, p. 65), these sequences have subsequently been renamed “episodes” (Nassaji & Wells, 2000, p. 383), and comprise the largest units of discourse. Episodes are then coded (Wells, 1996) in relation to the functions they perform, for example, organising or planning the lesson, reporting or reviewing, and so forth.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) discovered that it is almost always the teachers who initiate sequences and bound exchanges and that these initiations are often in the form of “display questions” (Berry, 2001) (also referred to as pseudo-questions). In display questions, the teacher already knows the answer, but withholds this information in order to determine the pupils’ knowledge. In this respect, the role of the teacher is one that Willis (1992) describes (following Berry, 1981) as the primary knower (K1) of information. Display questions are contrasted with referential questions (also termed “real questions”) which function to elicit information that is not known by the person asking the question. A person asking a real question is referred to as the secondary knower (K2). Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) claim that the first, or initiative move, is closely related to the topic and hence the initiator has the dominant role of directing the conversation (so-called “sequential dominance,” Itakura, 2001). The initiator of the topic also has the ability to interpret (“prospect,” Sinclair, 1992) the next utterance as being relevant, or cooperative (Grice, 1975) to the initiation posed, and so then has the
option of either maintaining or changing the topic. In other words, the teacher has power to manage conversational turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) and control not only who can speak, but how many can speak at one time, when, and what about. For example, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) refer to the teacher as the agent of a set of implicit rules whereby “the current speaker selects the next speaker,” “the next speaker self-selects,” and “the current speaker continues” (p. 704). However, as McHoul (1985) notes, these rules are challenged if the classroom is such that there are rigid speech-exchange systems in place (p. 58). For example, Markee (2004) provides examples of situations in which even though the teacher is asked a direct question by a student, the teacher’s response is in the form of a question back to the student. This particular type of situation repositions the teacher as the initiator and evaluator for the third move. In other words, the teacher acts as the dominant interlocutor who manages and controls the conversation. Evidence of the IRF in the classroom is abundant; however, evidence of the IRF structure specifically related to the classroom in Japan has not been overly documented in research (except for a few examples listed below). Takakubo (2001); for example, analysed discourse from a Japanese Junior High School English class taught by a Canadian teacher and revealed that the IRF structure was the dominant sequence in the classroom, with the teacher initiating most of the first moves. Other research revealed similar patterns (Nakamura, 2010; Fujimoto-Adamson, 2010). From these few examples, however, we can glean that the IRF is abundant in the Japanese classroom. Other factors that indirectly assume this to be the case are outlined in the following sections.

As Coulthard (1982) illustrates, exchanges that involve asymmetrical role relationships, such as parent/teacher, parent/child (Seedhouse, 1996) and doctor/patient
(Stivers, 2007), demonstrate a preponderance of evaluative moves. Nassaji and Wells (2000) assert that these differential rights to these moves in the exchange produce and perpetuate unequal behaviour and power differentials between the teacher and the student. Moreover, Nystrand (1997) suggests that the IRF structure produces poor progress in language learning. Luk (2004) claims that due to the teacher-centred classroom, the IRF structure restricts students’ negotiation of meaning and silences their true voices (p. 116) (also see Lemke, 1990; Lin, 2000; and Ohta, 1999). Furthermore, Richards (2006) claims that this teacher-controlled pattern has a significant impact on the subsequent development of talk, suggesting a focus towards considering identity in context, consequently “broadening our understanding of classroom discourse” (p. 59).

More specifically, and in the case of the third move, Waring (2008) claims that a positive evaluative move such as “very good” used in the classroom sends an implicit message that the speaker’s response is satisfactory and nothing more needs to be said. Evaluatives, therefore, can function to inhibit opportunities to expand conversation (p. 195).

Despite criticism of the IRF structure, research has also illustrated how the structure can be used to advantage. For example, Mercer (1992) noted how the third move can “monitor” and “guide students’ learning” (p. 218). Furthermore, Hellerman (2003) claims that the IRF structure has “consequences for student participation and learning” (p. 81), through what Gourlay (2005) describes as “points of permeability” (p. 403) at which “embedded extensions” (p. 403) can be initiated by students or teachers, consequently increasing student participation and aiding linguistic development. Lemke (1990) claims that even though the IRF structure may assume a formulaic pattern, sometimes the “rules” (p. 9) are not played out, which offers an “unforeseen range”
(Lee, 2007, p. 180) of possibilities open to both teachers and students. According to Lee (2007), the third move is very much dependent on the moves and specific context that surrounds it. For example, the teacher could choose to direct the students into avoiding making a grammatical mistake in their third move by use of a prompt or model. It seems that there are both merits and demerits to the structure (Wells, 1993), and that the follow-up move is very complex (Hellerman, 2003).

Lemke (1990) and Willis (1992) maintain that the IRF structure is rare outside the classroom (see also Francis & Hunston, 1992). Wilkinson (1998) claims that, although the IRF structure has been extensively documented in relation to classroom conversational style, there is little research on its impact on learner speech outside the classroom (p. 34). For these reasons the IRF structure may be relevant to this thesis. If the homestay parent/student relationship, which also seems to be characterised by asymmetrical relations, generates these three-part communicative sequences, then the interaction between the student and the host parent might accentuate the position of the host parent as the initiator and the student as the responder.

2.8.3 Conclusion

In sections 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5, cultural and social factors that can influence communication and, hence, the relationship between interlocutors, were discussed. In sections 2.6, 2.7, and 2.8, three particular areas of conversation were discussed. The following sections take a Japanese perspective and, using a “macro” framework, illustrate how Japanese sociocultural factors, and deeply-ingrained Japanese conventions and world view, can influence conversational style and the relationship between interlocutors. The discussion of the Japanese world view will draw upon many of the characteristics
associated with Hall’s (1976) high and low context cultures, Hofstede’s (1980) power distance index, Conlan’s (1996) politeness variables, Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model and finally, Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) IRF structure. First, I will discuss the Japanese educational setting and then I will discuss how the Japanese psyche can function to influence conversational style. The sections following this explanation will give possible examples of this influence.

2.9 The educational setting

2.9.1 Introduction

Japanese educational approaches to teaching English and Japanese students’ orientations to learning English will be discussed in the following sections. Although these sections may help to identify influences on the Japanese students’ conversational structure, it also runs the risk of stereotyping and uncritically assuming that cultural identities and constructions of self remain fixed in different situational contexts. This section will, therefore, firstly illustrate how students’ identities involve complex interrelationships between “diverse discourses or sites of practice” (Norton, 2011) within a post-structuralist framework in relation to the Japanese educational setting. The concepts arising from these sections will be more fully outlined in the Discussion chapter.

2.9.2 Construction of self(ves)

According to Kress (2003), different social occasions can function to shift, reaffirm, or even destabilize conceptions of language and meaning (also see Pavlenko, 2002). This has ramifications towards what, who, when, where, and how students choose to study.
For example, from a post-structuralist perspective Norton Pierce and Stein, (1995) explain how black English language learners in South Africa shifted, or re-negotiated their identities between being seemingly powerless recipients of a reading text for an English admission test into a university to knowledgeable and informed community members, who in this instance, compromised the authority and knowledge of their teacher.

In terms of language motivation, or what Norton (2010) terms “investment” (p. 3), Norton (2000) describes how a young adult immigrant woman in Toronto, Canada became discouraged with her English class due to conflicts between her language learner identity and her language learning commitment. In this case, the immigrant woman, even though very invested in learning English, became dissatisfied with the content of the class because her goals for learning did not match the teacher’s goals. In another case, Norton (2003) discusses another immigrant woman being discouraged to join an English computer course because her teacher at the time did not think that her level of English was proficient enough for the class. Norton explains that even though the woman was a respected scholar in her own country, she was being discouraged to gain greater access to her “imagined community” (p. 243) of professionals by not joining the computer class. Both of these cases illustrate conflict between the teachers’ perceptions and the women’s individual identities. In the first case, the teacher did not provide teaching that was realistic, or concerned with future difficulties or expectations in a new country. In the latter case, the woman’s perception of her social entitlements to her imagined community was being threatened (Spencer-Oatey, 2005; Kanno & Norton, 2003).
This section will be more fully discussed in relation to asymmetry in section 6.2.6.

2.9.3 Japanese approaches to learning and orientations to studying

Research has illustrated that teaching in Japan is “dialectic” (Vaish, 2008, p. 375), meaning authority centred, or what is more commonly termed “traditional” (Holmes, 2005, p. 291). Holmes (2005) adds that “[c]ompetition to succeed is intense, and education is test-oriented, resulting in a focus on memorization and rote learning” (p. 291).

For the students, this type of teaching approach encourages, for rightly or wrongly, compliance (Lustig and Koester, 1993, p. 139) and passive listening instead of vocal interaction (Cheng & Clark, 1993). Carson (1992), furthermore, states that “…language teaching encourages children to express what is socially shared rather than what is individual and personal” (p. 41-42). Teachers are under pressure to conform to the institutions’ curricula, dictated by the Ministry of Education’s policies (MEXT [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology], 2003), so that students have enough information to pass tests and exams (Luk & Lin, 2007; Ballard & Clanchy, 1991). Sakui (2004) differentiates between two forms of curriculum within the Japanese educational system in regard to teaching English. These include a documented or “idealized” (p. 155) curriculum put forward by the Japanese Ministry of Education, and stipulated as an action plan to “cultivate Japanese with English abilities” (MEXT, 2003, p. 155) and a “realized” curriculum dependent on “social” factors (Sakui, 2004, p. 162).
Institutional curricula (Seargeant, 2005) and Japanese/English teacher approaches, as well as the examples of the IRF in the Japanese classroom previously cited (see Takukubo, Nakamura, 2010; Fujimoto-Adamson, 2010), presume a reliance on the IRF structure. From a Japanese perspective, indirect evidence that the IRF structure predominates in the classroom also stems from research investigating both policy and pedagogy (Seargeant, 2008; Torikai, 2005). These social factors are mainly external in nature and include teaching to grammar-oriented entrance examinations based on tightly controlled teaching schedules. Due to these factors, bottom-up teaching approaches (starting to teach at the word level, with simple spelling, pronunciation, part of speech, etc., then progressing to the word’s meaning within the sentence, and then finally the meaning of the word in context) tend to dominate. The prescribed Japanese Ministry of Education textbooks further emphasise a bottom-up teaching approach by focusing activities on “translation and drill-focused teaching techniques” (Browne & Wada, 1998, p. 105).

Without empirical data to clearly validate the IRF being used in the Japanese classroom it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions. However, there is some research that indicates that Japanese students’ English conversational style as used in their homestays in this project is a product of their learning environment. This research, coupled with factors that influence students’ oral communicative ability (see section 2.2.1) as well as broad social-cultural factors (see section 2.3) gives strong indications that this is indeed the case. The following sections explain these concepts in more detail.
2.9.4 *Japanese English classes*

Many of the Japanese English textbooks used in schools are based on written texts, grammar and vocabulary (Eggins & Slade, 1997). In most Japanese schools that I have observed, conversation practice is provided for only about one to two hours per week, as opposed to four or five hours per week for grammar and reading. Martin (2004), reports that typically, a seventeen or eighteen Japanese student would have had, at the least, three hours of English per week for the past six years (p. 50). The English that is taught in the “main” English class concentrates largely on grammar (Matsumoto, 1994). The conversation class primarily concentrates on simple communicative functions, such as ordering a meal, leaving a message on the telephone, and greeting and introducing oneself for the first time. These interactions are generally easier to teach than casual conversation because they include relatively predictable structures and formulaic language (Martin, 2004). The written conversations used as examples are also usually quite simple. This particular teaching style reinforces English conversation as a predictable and highly constructed style, similar to the communicative style likely to be found in an HC culture (Hall, 1976), such as Japan. In other words, conversational English taught within the Japanese education system seems to be a transliteration from a Japanese communicative style into English with no regard to the sociolinguistic, strategic or discourse conventions required for conversations in cultures that have a different communicative style from Japan, such as the LC culture found in New Zealand.

2.9.5 *Japanese English classes from a language acquisition perspective*

This section more specifically cites research that provides evidence that the Japanese students’ received English education in Japan does not adequately prepare students for
study-abroad. Unprepared study-abroad students, therefore, do not have the English language ability to communicate effectively in their homestay. Ineffective communication by the students sometimes results in a particular conversational style and attitude being adopted that some students come to rely on throughout their study-abroad experience.

Saito (2000) cites Oshima-Takane and Muto (1993), who claim that Japanese students do not raise their hands as much as Canadian students in Canada. Similarly, Klopf (1997), reported that reticence displayed by Japanese students in American classrooms contributed to communicative apprehension, which Krashen (1982) claims negatively affects language acquisition. This finding indirectly points to Japanese students being passive, as well as unlikely to openly seek opportunities to express their opinions or initiate conversation. Martin (2004), notes that Japanese education prioritises student conformity and compliance in the classroom. This conflicts strongly with the English communicative approach. Furthermore, Martin acknowledges this type of educational system “poses real challenges” (p. 51) for Japanese study abroad students, as well as foreign language teachers, whose teaching approaches may not match Japanese students’ learning expectations. The social pressure for students to conform and not speak out, ask questions, or discuss material, also conveniently works in favor of teachers that already have tight teaching schedules, which do not allow time for such luxuries. Japanese education has also been accused of being one-way, in that the teacher has the task to pass on knowledge (Browne & Wada, 1998). This is opposed to what Andersen and Powell (1991) describe as more of a two-way approach taken by teachers in the United States, where teachers act as facilitators and are questioned by students. The Japanese educational system seems to direct English teachers to focus on English
exams and tests, which predominantly emphasise grammar (Kobayashi, 2001). This may also mean that students’ perceptions of English teaching might be grammatically focused instead of conversationally focused. As Martin (2004) notes, students may be reluctant to say anything without the support of a teacher, who can translate and offer grammatical support. Studies have indicated that Japanese students do not volunteer oral answers unless they are sure that what they are about to say is correct, or if they are at ease with their classmates (Nozaki, 1993; Martin, 2004). In terms of risk taking (see section 2.2.1), students may not want to speak out in their homestay in fear of making grammatical mistakes without the support of any teacher. In terms of tolerance of ambiguity, the students may feel uncomfortable in their homestay due to not being able to decide between two seemingly opposing meanings in the language used by their homestay parents. According to Budner (1962), an ambiguous situation is one which “…cannot be adequately structured or categorised by the individual because of lack of sufficient cues” (p. 30). Current language acquisition theory acknowledges that making mistakes is an important learning experience. However, Japanese students’ apprehension to say anything that may be grammatically incorrect means that Japanese students pass up opportunities to speak out, and furthermore do not benefit from learning from making mistakes. Saito (2004) cites large student numbers in Japanese classes as a hindrance to effective speaking and communicative practise (also see Hinenoya & Gabonton, 2000). This will certainly affect L2 achievement.

2.9.6 Conclusion

In this section, I have suggested that the Japanese English education system may have skewed Japanese students’ thinking, leading them to perceive that English
communication follows a particular pattern, or style, that may be quite different to the conversational style found in the host culture. Students may perceive themselves to be communicating appropriately; however, this may be construed differently by their New Zealand homestay parents.

One aspect common to the IRF section and the Educational Setting section (which will be more fully discussed in subsequent chapters) has been the predominance of research from the perspective of the classroom, within an educational framework. Van Lier (2004) suggests that language use is a reproduction of what occurs in educational contexts. If what Van Lier says is true, then we could possibly predict how the students in this study will converse outside the classroom based upon how and what they were taught in the Japanese classroom. For instance, the follow-up move in the IRF structure could very well be used to assess correctness of the students’ responses based upon correct grammar usage and word recognition in order to pass tests, just as it functions within the broader Japanese educational system. If this is the case, the follow-up move will function to restrict conversation.

The following sections explain some common Japanese cultural characteristics in comparison to New Zealand culture, in particular the communicative environment. Many of the characteristics discussed in the following sections can also be used to explain some of the problems that were outlined in section 2.2, regarding homestay problems and stereotypes of students on study abroad programmes. The characteristics can also be used to highlight the differences of communication and the potential cross-cultural communication issues that could arise. Therefore, the sections which follow will incorporate the educational factors, including the IRF structure, with Japanese social and cultural aspects. This combination will attempt to highlight how cross-
cultural communication issues can easily arise when two different cultures are brought together through conversation. The next section will outline one Japanese model that proposes how the Japanese psyche is made up. This model will function as a starting point for explaining other factors that might influence this conversational style.

2.9.7 Conclusion to Chapter 2

I have suggested that the Japanese English education system, like other education systems, frequently uses the IRF conversational structure, which may lead Japanese students to perceive that English communication follows that particular pattern. All of these factors may lead Japanese students to perceive themselves as communicating appropriately; however, this may be construed differently by their New Zealand homestay parents.

The literature in this chapter has presented an overview of some of the main factors that can help to determine why some communication issues may occur. This study investigates how these factors are at work in communication issues between New Zealand homestay parents and their Japanese students. The literature addresses the research questions, previously mentioned in 1.1.3 (for ease of reference they are again outlined below).

1. How are conversations structured in the homestay environment?
   
   a. What influences do social and cultural factors have on them?
   
   b. What effects do they have on communication in the homestay environment?

2. How are conversational maxims and politeness principles followed in homestay conversations?
a. What influences do social and cultural factors have on them?

b. What effects do they have on communication in the homestay environment?

The following chapter, the methodology of this study, provides a detailed account of how all of the cultural and social factors explained throughout this chapter are analysed using what I refer to as a “layered approach” (Hatch, 1992, p. 292).
Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology of the study. It begins with a discussion of the broad qualitative approach taken, with particular reference to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and to the pragmatic approach used to interpret the data, which incorporates aspects of both interactional sociolinguistic and discourse analysis. Section 3.2 describes the methods used to ensure the reliability and validity of the data that was collected. Section 3.3 discusses how the research was designed. The design of the research begins with a description of the actual programme that the students have come to study on in New Zealand, as well as the participants: the students, the homestay families and the Japanese liaisons. Section 3.4 outlines the six tools used in order to collect the data: recorded conversations, interviews, nemawashi (other participant voices), student journals (diaries), information sessions, and casual conversations between the students, staff and homestay families. Section 3.5 begins with an overview of the analysis. The coding used is then explained using firstly a macro approach and then in section 3.6 how the codings were arrived at for a micro analysis. Finally, the chapter ends with a description of the ethical issues and procedures involved in this project.

3.1.1 Research paradigm

This research project is within the qualitative research paradigm. It takes what has been described, in qualitative research circles in general education, as a semiotic or interpretive (Erikson, 1986) approach. It focuses on “the participant’s point of view”
(Erikson, 1986, p. 119) in order to understand the meanings constructed by groups within a specific social setting (Davies, 1995, p. 433). This approach, therefore, adopts an emic perspective, which attempts to take into account all of the relevant sociocultural influences that might influence how participants interpret a particular situation, rather than an etic perspective that attempts to be culturally neutral (Creswell, 1998). The data collection techniques in this approach make use of interviews, observations, and other forms of “insider” approaches to obtain clues as to how situations might have been interpreted by the participants involved (Creswell, 2009). In my role as a teacher and programme manager, I am an insider to the programme, and so, in addition to the contact I maintained through data collection techniques for this study, I also regularly spoke to and corresponded with the students, homestay families, Japanese liaisons, and staff with both tertiary institutions before, during, and after this research project (however, see section 3.2.2 for limitations of being an “insider.”)

Grounded theory is one interpretative qualitative approach to research that draws upon an emic perspective. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is based on the idea that theory arises from data. Its key method is iterative analysis of data, known as constant comparison. The key feature of grounded theory, then, is beginning with data and slowly building up from repeated analysis, using constant comparison in order to identify emerging concepts and develop theory. The analysis develops gradually, like a “general discovery” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 11) from within the data itself.

Although grounded theory is associated with qualitative research, it does not reject quantitative approaches, although it does reject the strict separation between quantitative and qualitative methods, as these may be “different forms of data on the same subject, which, when compared, will each generate theory” (Glaser & Strauss,
This comment also reflects another methodological point associated with qualitative research, the idea of triangulation. In triangulation, multiple data sources, multiple data collection instruments, and even multiple theoretical positions (and other techniques) offer the assurance that data analysis and the theory developed from it are reasonable (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Grounded theory provides this study with a broad, systematic approach for analysing data and for generating theory from that analysis. Triangulation offers a means of assuring readers that it is sound.

I consider this research project to be a longitudinal study. One of the purposes of a longitudinal study is, according to Johnson (2001), to better illustrate variables and their possible change over the course of time. The reasons for conducting a longitudinal study in this research project were influenced by institutional time (Ortega & Iberri-Shea, 2005) because the study abroad project extended just over 11 months, or one academic school year. The length of the research project was the duration of the students’ stay on the programme in order to produce a thick description of data and to monitor the possible change in the students’ conversational style. A further aim of the research was to provide insight into how the programme could be improved to further accommodate future students. It was hoped that the research gathered from this project would then be useful to help predict future issues, which could then be proactively acted upon. From a pedagogical perspective, the data gathered would also influence curriculum decisions in both of the institutions involved.

In the next section, the role of triangulation and other techniques for providing the “warrant” (Edge & Richards, 1998, p. 334) of this study will be addressed. Because of the design of this study, this entails a brief overview of the data analysis here, which will then be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.
3.2 Adequacy of the study

As mentioned above, triangulation plays an important role in assuring readers of the soundness of a qualitative study. Underlying its use is the need to address criteria that may be related to traditional or positivist research, alternative stances to research, or unique standards developed for a particular study or by a particular researcher (Edge & Richards, 1998). This study will rely on the concepts identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which underlie both the traditional terminology for these criteria (typically associated with quantitative research) and alternative terminology for these criteria (typically associated with qualitative research). In addition, it will also draw on the unique terminology of Edge and Richards (1998), whose discussion of this topic is situated within applied linguistics, making it directly relevant to this study. By using this range of terminology (linked by their underlying concepts), this discussion should be accessible to readers regardless of their own research background.

3.2.1 Truthfulness, credibility, internal validity

The idea of truthfulness underlies the traditional criterion of internal validity and its alternative, credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Edge and Richards (1998) maintain that truthfulness applies to both description and interpretation of data. Erikson (1986) identifies three main features of credible research findings. Firstly, they must be fully described; secondly, they must be generally described; thirdly, they must be interpreted through the perspectives of the participants. In order to make my research credible, I have used these three features to establish a clear connection between my research design and my analysis. In this section, I will describe how I have provided a full
description of my findings, a general description of my findings, and an interpretation based on the perspectives of the participants.

The unclear boundaries between description and interpretation are why research that attempts to uncover meaning from an emic perspective is called interpretive research (Erikson, 1986), as mentioned above. The term ‘description’ as it is being used here includes the use of analytical techniques in order to identify and label conversational features; description of the transcription techniques (which also necessarily involve interpretation; see Cook, 1990; Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 1991; Ochs, 1979) can be found below.

Firstly, in Chapters 4 and 5, I have used interactional sociolinguistics to provide a full description of the main data source. Chapter 4 makes specific reference to Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) IRF structure; however, Chapter 5 makes specific reference to Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle, maxims, and implicature, as well as to Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model.

Secondly, I have used interactional sociolinguistics to identify the specific language functions used by interlocutors within small segments of conversation. Although the size of the segment may constitute only one or two sentences, by identifying the functions I am able to expose conversational structure and sequence (see Gumperz, 1982 and Grainger et al., 2010) which provides a more general description. This is a foundation for extending the description to include the situational and sociocultural context. The sociocultural context is discussed using elements from a discourse analysis approach and will draw upon Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model and Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model, illustrated in Chapter 5.
Thirdly, I will investigate cultural aspects through several cultural theorists, including Hall (1976) and his distinction between high and low context cultures. This provides a basis for a description based on the perspectives of the participants.

These three levels, the sentential, conversational, and cultural, each draw on distinct yet compatible theoretical approaches that are all relevant to pragmatics. This study, therefore, can be described as theoretically triangulated (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This approach to credibility was chosen because it corresponded to two needs of this study: the need to recognise the multiplicity of the participants’ identities (Grainger et al., 2010, p. 2164) as demonstrated through their interactions at the sentential and conversational levels, and the need to show how their language use was interrelated with their cultures (Grainger et al., 2010, p. 2163) at the cultural level.

In addition, this study is triangulated in other ways. Although recordings of homestay family and Japanese student conversations were the main data method, I drew on a range of other data collection methods described below, which contributed to methodological triangulation. The three different sets of participants contributed to participant triangulation. These multiple types of triangulation contribute to the truthfulness of this study.

3.2.2 Neutrality: Legitimacy, confirmability, objectivity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify neutrality as the concept underlying the traditional criterion of objectivity and the alternative stance of confirmability. However, it is not clear that anyone can ever be completely neutral; as Edge and Richards (1998) point out, “the focus on the individual and the importance of ‘voice’ has raised new research issues” (p. 346). Edge and Richards (1998) offer the idea of “legitimacy” (p. 352) and
claim it to be of central importance to the warrant of a study. Legitimacy involves the motivations and purposes behind the interpretation of the data by the analyst. It is only when the author’s background is made transparent that a study can be evaluated by its readers. Therefore, this section will outline my personal background as it relates to my work and research.

The origins of this research project lay in my personal interest. At the beginning of this research project, I had worked for more than fifteen years as an English teacher, mainly with Japanese students. I had spent about ten years in Japan. As Davis (1995, p. 445) suggests, “prolonged engagement and persistent observation” add to a research project’s reliability (see also van de Walt, 1995). Besides my professional association with Japan, I have a personal association. I married a Japanese woman and became quite fluent in conversational Japanese language, as well as quite knowledgeable about the major (and not so major) aspects of Japanese culture. I also have an educational association relevant to this project. I completed a Masters degree in Education, specialising in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), while in Japan. This course gave me valuable insights into various similarities and differences between Japanese and New Zealand culture and language. When I returned to New Zealand, I continued to study Japanese language and culture and graduated with a Masters of Arts in it before beginning this research project.

The information for this research project was gathered while I was employed as programme manager/English teacher for the Certificate in English and Engineering (CEE) programme. In my two roles, I was in regular (daily) contact with Japanese culture and language through the Japanese institution from which the students came and
the Japanese liaison staff in New Zealand. I was also involved in the local Japanese community with my wife and two children.

I consider myself an “insider” in Japanese culture, which, according to Davis (1995, p. 437), can “guard against bias based on ethnocentric views.” Being an “insider” allowed me to recognise language and cultural patterns specific to Japanese students, and it provided me with many opportunities to discuss my findings both formally and informally with the Japanese and New Zealand people around me, providing my interpretations with what Selinker (1986) terms “a reality check” (p. 89). According to Gummesson (2000), I had a “preunderstanding,” which is knowledge, insight, and/or experience before the research was carried out (p. 57). A preunderstanding, as well as being an insider in the research project, has been criticized for not being able to attain the distance needed for objectivity (Nielsen & Repstad, 1993; Morse, 1998; Alvesson, 2003), or “non-neutrality” (Madge, Raghuram, Skelton, Willis, & Williams, 1997, p. 87) in relation to the inherent power relations involved with the participant-observer relationship. Likewise, Brannick and Coghlan (2007), comment that being an insider may provide the researcher with too much preunderstanding, or knowledge, which may lead them into a situation where the analysis and indeed the researcher’s own conceptual framework is limited and not pursued to its utmost (Anderson & Herr, 1999).

Brannick and Coghlan (2007), however, point out that through a process of methodological reflexivity, the insider needs to be aware of their preunderstanding or insider knowledge, so that it does not disadvantage or limit their analysis.

My supervisors for this research project, from different cultural backgrounds than myself and the participants (i.e., New Zealand and Japanese), could act as “outsiders” when interpreting my findings. In this sense, both an “insider” and an
“outsider” approach “triangulated” (Davis, 1995, p. 446) this study, in addition to other forms of triangulation, that is, lengthy engagement and different data collection methods. I believe that my professional, personal, and educational experience in both Japan and New Zealand add to the legitimacy of this research project.

3.2.3 Ethical procedures

Ethical approval for this research project was submitted to the institutional Ethics Committee on 8 November 2006 (see Appendix 1). The Ethics Committee wrote back to ask why only homestay families from English speaking backgrounds were chosen for this study and how emotional stress would be dealt with if it arose during the research project. I wrote a letter to the Ethics Committee and explained that, firstly, homestay families from other language backgrounds (for example, homestay families from a Maori language background) might create a variance in the analysis of the data. Secondly, two Japanese liaisons employed by both of the institutions were available at all times throughout the programme, whose job was to deal with any student-related emotional stress if it arose. The Ethics Committee wrote back on 26 November 2006 and said that they accepted these reasons and confirmed full ethical approval to proceed.

Discussion of this research project was given verbally and in writing to the principal and staff of ECJ one and a half years before the project began. Ethical Consent forms were translated into Japanese and cross-checked by the Japanese liaisons for any discrepancies and personally given to the students when I visited Japan. The students’ parents were also sent the forms by the staff of ECJ. Signed copies of the Ethical Consent forms were then sent back to me and filed. The Ethical Consent forms were also sent to the homestay parents one year before the project was to begin. The project
was firstly drawn to the homestay parents’ attention by an orientation seminar, which
the homestay parents were obliged to attend for an information session about the
Certificate in English and Engineering programme and to meet with the staff and other
homestay families involved (see Appendix 2).

One issue that did arise during the research project was the constant challenge
associated with information gathered or obtained as a participant-observer. Sometimes
the information that was collected was acted upon with the intention of proactively
preventing a problem that could have arisen if left unchecked. However, bringing this
information to the attention of the liaison officers in charge could be seen as thwarting
the ethical issues of confidentiality and providing them with information that they
would not have usually received if it had not been for the recordings. When actions
were taken, they were within the expectations and guidelines of the positions of
programme manager and liaison officer. In no part of the research project did the
information disadvantage the student or homestay family in any way, but instead
functioned to avoid any threat and hence benefit the student and homestay family. This
was an unforeseen issue that arose during the research project that did not challenge so
much as reinforce the ethical obligations made by me as both a researcher and a
programme manager. The fact remains that being a researcher as well as a participant-
observer needed to be constantly reflected upon.

3.2.4 Consistency, dependability, reliability

The alternative criterion of dependability is related to the traditional criterion of
reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), or the underlying concept of consistency of a study.
It involves being open about changes to a study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).
As this study took place over several years, it is no surprise that different approaches to the data were taken. Eventually I recognised that these different approaches met in pragmatics to form a layered approach (Hatch, 1992) to the data analysis to be described below.

My supervisors (three in total) and other academic staff who read this research project provided opportunities to iteratively describe, analyse, and interpret the data. Furthermore, working not only within the two academic environments within New Zealand (my place of employment and the university where I undertook this project), but also with the institution in Japan, provided me with access to related conferences and seminars that provided further opportunities to discuss and refine initial and subsequent steps in the data analysis. The multiple substantive revisions of this thesis for different supervisors ensured that the argumentation met differing expectations within the research community at my university.

Authenticity is an additional criterion qualitative research may seek to meet. It is related to consistency and dependability of the presentation and representation of data (Edge & Waters, 1998). This criterion is met through this description of the procedures, the presentation of extensive extracts of the analysed data in the findings chapters, and the provision of additional information in the appendices.

I also considered authenticity in my approach to the recordings. At the outset of this research project, I wanted to record language used in the homestay environments which “was not contaminated by observation” (Stubbs, 1983, p. 224). According to Wolfson (1976), there is no such thing as natural speech in any absolute sense. All language changes due to the situational context. All there is to study, then, is what people regard as appropriate in different situations. The fact that the participants in this
study knew their conversations were being monitored also means that the recorded conversations might not be “natural” (see Mori & Zuenglier, 2008, in relation to elaborate classroom recording equipment possibly influencing participants’ speech). Ochs (2001) provides a very useful discussion of the distinction between planned and unplanned discourse, and of the many formal linguistic features that characterise unplanned speech. She defines unplanned discourse as “talk which is not thought out prior to its expression” (p. 55). Although some of the conversations in this research project might appear to be contrived (for example, it may appear that homestay parents arranged to have a conversation for the express purpose of recording it), they still contain an element of what Keith and Edge (1998, p. 352) describe as “authenticity.” In other words, the recordings capture what the students and homestay families actually said. Whether the words that were spoken were a true reflection of what they usually said remains questionable; nevertheless the conversations still represent what the students or families considered to be appropriate for interaction. This, in itself, is data suitable for analysis.

3.2.5 Applicability, transferability, external validity

All three notions: applicability, transferability and external validity fall within what is commonly and traditionally termed “generalizability” (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in both a qualitative and quantitative framework. According to Maxwell, (1992) generalizability refers to:

…the extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times, or settings than those directly studied (p. 293).
More specifically, according to Duff (to appear) and based within a positivist experimental research design, applicability refers to the process of establishing the general nature of inferences, so that they can be transferred to a larger population and/or to different environmental conditions (p. 4). Duff claims that transferability gives readers the responsibility to connect or relate a field of research to another study or context of their own choosing (p. 14). Similarly, Edge and Richards (1998) explain that these readers are people with “knowledge of another situation” (Edge & Richards, 1998, p. 345). Edge and Richards (1998) also claim that the most important question to ask in relation to transferability is “where to?” In terms of the transferability of this project, the findings will first and foremost be transferred between both of the institutions within which the programme is placed. This is because both institutions have a vested interest in the outcomes of the programme and would benefit from critiquing the current curriculum and management in order to further improve the programme. Furthermore, in this thesis, applicability refers to whether this research project is transferrable to (at the least) other homestay programmes and, in particular, programmes involving Japanese students staying in New Zealand homes. (See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for further options in regards to transferability and applicability of these findings.)

External validity, or what Miles and Huberman (1994) define as “confirmability” (p. 11), is achieved when similar findings are found using comparable constructs and settings (also see LeCompte & Goetz, 1982 for a similar explanation). Cresswell and Miller (2000) also assert that external validity can be established by reviewers, as well as readers not affiliated with the project (p. 125). They also claim that external validation can be carried out by people, whom they term auditors, or people
responsible for examining the “process and product of the inquiry” (p. 128). In this case, these people will be my supervisors and indeed the examiners of this research.

3.2.6 Conclusion

This section has discussed the broad qualitative approach taken in this research project, and the criteria of adequacy it sought to meet. The following section will take a more specific approach and outline how the research was designed.

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 The programme

The Certificate in English and Engineering (CEE) programme was initiated in 2004 as a pilot programme between Engineering College New Zealand (ECNZ) and Engineering College Japan (ECJ) (names of the institutions have been changed for anonymity). It was developed on request of ECJ, who sought a programme that would give its students the opportunity to learn engineering terminology and skills in English and achieve specific English learning outcomes in an English-language environment. The Certificate in English and Engineering (CEE) programme was designed as a comprehensive programme which combines aspects of mastery and cooperative learning tasks (Stipek, 1994). It is an integrated, packaged programme which is constantly being re-evaluated and changed to suit the needs of the students each year. The programme is in line with the Japanese Ministry of Education’s efforts to establish a five-year action plan called the “Strategic Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities,” which was initiated in 2003 (Honna & Takeshita, 2005, p. 364).
The programme typically involves approximately twenty to twenty-five teenage Japanese students staying in New Zealand homestays each year. The students complete the third year of their five-year ECJ programme in a New Zealand homestay, and attend English and engineering classes from Monday to Friday for a period of approximately thirty-eight weeks. The programme runs from the beginning of April until the end of March the following year. The content of the programme is a diluted version of what the students would have studied had they stayed in ECJ for that year. The programme is made up of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Functional English (FE) classes, and engineering content-based classes. Upon completion of the programme, the students return to Japan to continue into their fourth year.

The Japanese students who arrive on the programme have a pre-intermediate level of vocabulary and grammar (based on the student’s TOEIC scores, a recognized standard examination in Japan that focuses on lexis and morphosyntax; see Lowenburg, 1993 and the website at: www.toeic.co.uk).

The engineering subjects that the students study while on the CEE programme are mathematics, mechanics and strengths, electrical engineering, materials and design, and computing engineering. In order to prepare the students for the engineering classes, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes are held before the engineering component. Content-specific vocabulary and grammatical structures directly related to the content of the engineering classes are given to the students in the English for Specific Purposes classes. This enables the students to become familiar with the English register of the engineering component.
3.3.2 The participants

The two groups of participants in the programme are described below.

3.3.2.1 The students

A total of nineteen students, all native speakers of Japanese, agreed to take part in this research project, but one homestay family did not agree, so the total number of participant groupings that were recorded was eighteen. The number of students who participated in the study decreased over the year’s programme, from eighteen participants in May, 2007 to only five in March, 2008.

All of the students were in their third year at ECJ and had all completed the first two years of their five-year programme at that institution. Therefore, the students all shared similar educational backgrounds. ECJ is a private institution, which means that the parents need to be earning at least an average family income to be able to send their child there. Therefore, the students are also from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

All of the students took a mock TOEIC test one week before arriving in New Zealand and had an average score of 332 out of a total of 990. This score represents a pre-intermediate English level. During the eleven-month programme, and starting four months into the programme, the students took a total of seven mock TOEIC tests over a period of about six months. The average score for these tests increased from the first test from 378 to 630.

All of the students arrived in New Zealand on (Friday) 20 April, 2007 and were met at the International Centre of ECNZ by their host families at about five o’clock in the afternoon. The students were taken home and came to their first classes the following Monday. The students were all seventeen years of age and turned eighteen
years of age at various times during the year that they arrived or early the following year in 2008.

3.3.2.2 The homestay families

The students are all accommodated with homestay families arranged by the institution in New Zealand. The homestay family arrangements are made approximately two months prior to the students arriving in New Zealand. First contacts are usually made via email and include an introductory letter of thanks from the students and a welcome from the homestay families. One CEE student per homestay family is allocated anywhere in the city vicinity. This means that some students live close to the institution while others may live, at the most, about twenty minutes away by bus. The students are required to pay about two hundred New Zealand dollars per week for board and are supplied with two meals per day - breakfast and dinner. The homestay families are obligated to provide their students with the necessary accommodation facilities to encourage their students to study in a relaxed and safe environment, but also to have the opportunity to be able to experience what it is like to live in a “typical” New Zealand family for almost one year. Visits to each homestay family by the homestay coordinator from the International Centre (assigned to look after the pastoral care of international students at the institution) of the New Zealand institution are carried out twice a year. This allows the coordinator to assess what kind of environment the students are living in and to give both the coordinator and homestay families an opportunity to share any concerns or issues that may have arisen.

All of the homestay families that were chosen had a police check and a visit by the international coordinator in order to establish if they would be compatible for
hosting a student. A total of thirteen families, of which two had solo female parents, had children aged between two years of age and fourteen years of age. Five families had no children. The ages of the homestay parents ranged from the early forties to the late sixties. All of the homestay parents had English as their first language. A total of thirteen families had experience at hosting Japanese students. Three families had experience at hosting other nationalities, but not Japanese. Two families did not have experience at hosting any student.

3.4 Data collection procedures

3.4.1 Introduction

The data collection procedures that were selected for this research project were guided by two main concerns. Firstly, because the students received formal education and were under the responsibility of two institutions (each responding to the rules and regulations set out by the Ministries of Education in Japan and New Zealand) documentation had to be formal and detailed. Secondly, any problem that arose between the students and the homestay families needed to be resolved quickly and effectively and follow the procedures formally set down in the “Code of Practice” issued by the Ministry of Education of New Zealand (See the “New Zealand Code of Practice” of the New Zealand Ministry of Education; frequently updated and retrievable from: http://www.minedu.govt.nz for information on guidelines and responsibilities of hosts and institutions). Therefore, the data that was collected was always circulated, in detail, to the staff involved. This resulted in clear and easily definable data that could be retraced at any time and further reflected upon.
Six data collection methods were used to gather the data throughout this research project. The main data set, conversations between the Japanese students and their homestay parents, was collected through digital recordings in the homestay environment during four periods over eleven months. The first recordings were made in May (about five weeks after the students arrived on the programme). The second recordings were made in September (five months after the students arrived). The third recordings were made in January the following year (seven months after the students arrived). The final recordings were made in March (nine months after the students arrived).

The other five data collection methods were student interviews, other voices, student journals, information sessions and casual meetings. These were drawn upon where relevant to interpret, corroborate, and query the main recorded conversations.

Because it is the main data set, the description of how the digital recordings were made is more detailed than that of the other four data collecting methods.

3.4.2 Recorded conversations

All of the homestay parents were contacted by telephone and asked if they were interested in taking part in this project. They were then sent an Ethical Consent Form (approved by the institutional Ethics Committee, November, 2006) to sign (see section 3.7 for further details on ethical procedures). Once the Ethical Consent forms were collected, the parents were then contacted by me again and told when I planned to give the voice recorder to their student. If the recording dates were convenient for the host parent, I instructed the student on how to use the recorder that same day. The student was then free to choose any time over the following two to three days to record a
conversation. I informed the student and parent that I was looking for any conversation that involved them. I suggested that a good opportunity to do this was at dinner time, but that the choice was up to them. I also said that I was looking for natural conversation and that they should try not to stage how they were speaking.

The homestay conversations were recorded by digital voice recorder. This recorder was small enough for the students or homestay parents to carry in their pockets and for them to clip the external microphone onto their clothing. Some students preferred to leave the recorder and the external microphone in a central place in a communal room in the home, such as a dining table or window ledge.

When the recorder was returned to me, I immediately transferred the data to a computer, ready for transcription at a later date. During the data transfer, I would listen to it in order to get a general idea of what the conversation was about and try to gauge if any action needed to be taken in my role as programme manager. At a later date (usually within a few days), I would transcribe the conversation into a document on the computer. The process involved repeating small segments of the recordings, so that they could be accurately transcribed. If there was a word or phrase that could not be understood, I would ask the student for clarification. If the student could not provide clarification, a space was left in the transcription and I indicated that the word or phrase could not be understood. The transcription process took approximately seventy hours.

As the matrices indicate (see Appendix 6), over the project an increasing number of students returned the recorder late or simply did not tape any conversation at all. Many of the students said that it was inconvenient to record conversations because they were involved in sporting activities and would often arrive home late, when their homestay parents would be in bed. At other times, the students would say that their
homestay parents were engaged and so they were unable to record anything that particular evening.

The fact that students were confident enough to return the digital recorder to me without any recording on it could indicate several important points, not least of which is that they did not feel any undue pressure to make recordings for the research project. Possible reasons for this will be explained in the Discussion chapter and furthermore in relation to the longitudinal methodology used in this research project (see section 7.4.2).

Eighteen samples were taken from fourteen conversations from the May, 2007 recordings and, for comparison, one conversation from March, 2008. There were twelve conversations recorded in September, eleven in the January recordings, and four in the March, 2008 recordings. The recordings varied in length from about thirty seconds to about fifty-five minutes.

Clarification is needed in relation to the matrices (see Appendix 6). The conversations that are presented in the Findings chapter are extracts taken from sometimes extended tracts of speech. The extracts are given as examples in order to illustrate a particular pattern or communication issue, but it would be incorrect to assume that what is given is the entire conversation. In fact, even though the IRF seems to be represented in many of the examples, there were some tracts of conversation (but not many) where the IRF was absent. Out of the eighteen examples given, all of the conversations contained the IRF pattern to some degree, but occurred at different places throughout the conversations. Further analysis would undoubtedly be beneficial in trying to understand why or when the IRF pattern emerged. This will be further discussed in the recommendations (see section 7.4.3.5).
3.4.3 Interviews

After I had received the recorder back from the student I would briefly ask them what they had talked about and how the conversations went. Sometimes the students would say what they had talked about, but other times they would laugh and say that they did not really converse with their family. On some occasions the students would laugh and say that for some reason they could not record any conversation. I would then take the recorder and listen to the conversation as quickly as I could to gain a general overview as to what conversation was about and to ascertain if there was any obvious conversational pattern. If I thought that there was any issue that might lead to a conversational problem in the future, I would ask the student to come into my office and would explain what that might be and give advice to the student as to what I thought they should do.

3.4.4 Nemawashi - “other participant voices”

Nemawashi (background negotiations, or “other participant voices”) was briefly mentioned in section 1.1.2. It is a Japanese term used to refer to background information, or a “behind the scenes” approach to collecting the full background and consensus of a situation. This section will describe how nemawashi was used; however, the term should be framed within what would generally be considered “other participant voices,” as a more appropriate usage.

Sometimes, a situation presents itself, on the surface, as being easily interpreted in a particular way; however, examining the background context of each situation would sometimes provide a slightly different interpretation. In regard to the pastoral care of the students, nemawashi (other participant voices) was used to negotiate sensitive issues,
usually about the students’ homestay environment. Due to my position as programme manager, and because I had spent many years in Japan, the institution in Japan and the Japanese liaisons working with me on the programme often included me in this kind of “behind-the-scenes” approach. It is important to note at this point that the Ethics application that was submitted approved that the ECJ staff, myself, and the Japanese liaisons were part of the process of managing information regarding the pastoral care and support of students and homestay participants.

*Nemawashi* operates very commonly in Japanese culture and was also discovered to operate between the Japanese students and some staff on this programme. *Nemawashi* is often used between ECJ and the Japanese liaisons at ECNZ as a way of informally posing ideas, suggestions and advice before any of the New Zealand institution’s staff are formally told of the situation. Because of the role that *nemawashi* played in this project, I will make clear what kind of background information was provided in Chapters 4 and 5 when the conversations are discussed in detail.

One discovery made through *nemawashi* was that the students preferred to talk to the Japanese liaisons about their homestay situation instead of directly negotiating with their homestay family. The decisions that were consensually agreed upon were then forwarded to the International Centre at ECNZ by the Japanese liaisons. Although reasons such as a shared first language were probably why the students spoke to the Japanese staff first, it could also be that they were associated with the *honne*, or in-group, and the International Centre (which does not have any Japanese speaking staff) was associated with the *tatemae*, or out-group. (See also sections 2.8.2 and 2.8.3 for a discussion of why students may prefer this course of action.)
One result of this was that for much of the time, homestay parents and some staff at ECNZ were unaware that their homestay student was feeling uncomfortable and only found out when discussions had already taken place over an extended period of time. In these cases it was sometimes necessary to speak to the Japanese liaisons directly to find out exactly how the situation could be reinterpreted. The Japanese liaisons came into work every day to make sure that the students were comfortable in their homestay situation and so it was easy to speak with them privately to get them to disclose any further information that was deemed important. The trust that I had built up by working closely with the two liaisons over the two previous years, and the fact that my wife was also friendly with them, meant that the liaisons could confide with me over matters that other staff members did not have knowledge of. *Nemawashi* was an invaluable source of information in that it seemed to add credence to particular student "voices" used for interpretation of the data. Although the concept of *nemawashi* may appear to work as a data analysis tool in this research project, in fact, it acted more as a corroborative than independent source of data, and therefore might perhaps be better characterized as contributing to the reliability and validity of the study. I include it to highlight the centrality of there being "other participant voices".

Over time, the Japanese students on this programme became even more accepting of the Japanese liaisons, and so private ideas and opinions seemed to surface much more readily. In fact, much of the background to the conversations was not fully transparent until "stories," were discovered through the "other participant voices" heard during the process of *nemawashi*. Almost all of the communication issues that occurred eventually surfaced in discussions with the two Japanese staff members at a later stage, corroborating these conversations being identified as having communication issues.
At all times during the data collection period I followed established procedures for dealing with pastoral care issues. If, through my research, I became aware of a potential issue that required intervention by a staff member (including me), this intervention was made. These interventions ranged from short, casual conversations, to meetings with homestay parents, students, and staff to fully discuss the dispute in order to try to reach a mutually acceptable outcome for all of the people involved. Therefore, any recorded conversations that were relevant to pastoral care became a part of the established documentation procedures for pastoral care.

3.4.5 Student journals

Student journals were gathered regularly from the students whenever they wanted me to correct their written English. According to Kasper and Roever (2005, p. 329), this kind of journal is a “commissioned” journal, which is requested by the researcher and is then analysed. The student journals also provided me with some insight into what was happening in the students’ homestay environment. Sometimes, if I thought that there was a concern, I would ask the student to explain the situation to me, or I would refer it to one of the Japanese liaisons to probe further. The journals provided me with another tool for data collection.

3.4.6 Information sessions

Early in the programme, information sessions were hosted by the International Centre at ECNZ. These information sessions had three main purposes. Firstly, they provided the homestay families with any documents that they needed in order to host a student. Secondly, it was thought that a deeper understanding of Japanese culture might provide
some clues as to why there might be communication issues and how it might be resolved. In other words, the seminars attempted to expose intercultural differences that might lead to communication issues in order to minimise negative stereotypes. Thirdly, the sessions provided an opportunity for the homestay families to raise any issues that might be causing them concern, so that they could be discussed and action taken at a later date. The first seminar was at the beginning of the programme, before the students arrived, and the second was after about three or four months of the students’ being in New Zealand.

3.4.7 Casual conversations

Casual conversations with homestay parents and the students provided me background information that enhanced my interpretation of the recorded conversations.

During the programme, I would often speak to the homestay families on a casual basis. They would either ring me at work, or sometimes at home, or meet me when they picked up their student from school, or even invite me to a special occasion with their homestay student, such as a birthday party or barbecue. These chance meetings were valuable because they gave me the opportunity to observe how the host families interacted with their students.

I also had casual conversations with the students. Throughout the entire programme, I had an open-door policy. This meant that my office door was virtually never closed, so that students could feel comfortable at coming into my office to talk about anything, if they desired. I also informed the students that, if they needed to talk to me about something that was worrying them, they could feel free to speak in Japanese. The rapport that I had with the students was warm and friendly and I tried
hard to maintain this environment throughout the programme, not only in the classroom, but also around the campus and even around the city (if I met any student coincidentally). Talking with the students gave me valuable insights into how they interpreted the conversations.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Introduction
This section will discuss the procedures used to transcribe the conversations, and the overall analyses used. The data will first be examined from a micro perspective, concentrating particularly on the IRF structure (Chapter 4), which emphasises a common conversational style used in the homestay environment. The micro-analysis will form a smooth bridge into a fuller description of the findings in relation to the macro and further micro generalisations (Chapter 5) relevant to major and minor communication issues.

3.5.2 Overview of the analysis
Coding through the process of constant comparison is the essence of data analysis in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This process involves comparing and contrasting data under different scenarios using what is termed “open coding” (Glaser, 1992, p. 30). Open coding involves breaking down data into incidents that can be easily compared for similarities and differences. From this approach, discoveries emerge. However, this approach is not without its detractors. Enfield (2002) cautions against it, claiming that it produces an abundance of categories that preclude any overall analysis. Glaser (1992) also warns against this kind of “saturation,” but explains, as Kita and Ide
(2007) do, that it produces a stepping stone to further research. When I transcribed the recorded conversations, I listened for incidents that might be relevant to answering my research questions, and I coded these, knowing that I would be analysing them further. They, therefore, formed a stepping stone to the next step in the process. This is one of the aims of this analysis, in that many of the discoveries that initially arise will be investigated further.

Discoveries at the open coding level are grouped into categories. Grounded theory relies on a small set of highly significant categories that are then used to produce a theory. This aim prompts the researcher to continually ask the question: “What category or property of a category does this incident indicate?” (Glaser, 1992, p.19). My initial analysis and open coding of many of the homestay transcripts involved too many categories to analyse in a meaningful manner in the context of this study. The categories were therefore redefined to only include the most commonly occurring patterns. For reasons outlined in section 3.1.1 related to the research paradigm, the patterns that were chosen for analysis were mostly concerned with communication that, on the first listen, could possibly cause problems. The reason for choosing these particular conversational pieces was because these communication issues were perceived to affect other aspects of the study-abroad programme: for example, the time and effort of the Japanese liaison staff to ameliorate the issues, the attitudes of the student directly involved as well as the other students on the programme, the homestay families, and sometimes even the Japanese institution. It was hoped that quickly isolating potential problem areas would also foreshadow other possible problems that might arise. If problems could be predicted then proactive approaches could be put into practice. These categories were grouped into major and minor communication issues depending on whether the
communication issues involved the intervention of the Japanese liaison staff or not. If the issue did involve the liaison staff, then it was defined as a major issue, but if it did not, then it was defined as a minor communication issue (further defined in Chapter 5, section 5.1). This description shows how I used constant comparison to reduce the data (Huberman & Miles, 1998), and how this process can lead to discoveries at any time.

In my third analysis of the data, I used a micro-approach. This was a much more detailed look at the utterances and the patterns they formed in the data. Again, I was guided by the question, “What category or property of a category does this incident indicate?” (Glaser, 1992, p.19). In this analysis, I began to apply several theoretical approaches to the data: Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) IRF pattern, Grice’s (1975) conversational maxims, and Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness theory. In one sense, by recognising points of relevance in my data to these theoretical approaches, I was ensuring that my data continued to be reduced (Huberman & Miles, 1998) to concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At the same time, in order to adequately analyse the data through these theories, I was focusing on it at a much more detailed level than I had previously, hence my characterisation of this level as a micro-level analysis. Although my recognition that the data could be usefully interpreted through these different theories inductively arose from the data itself, once I had made the connection I deductively used the categories provided by these theories. Again, my description of this process demonstrates how I used constant comparison throughout my analysis of the data. This step also heralds the final step in my analysis.

In my final analysis of the data I developed a “layered” approach (Hatch, 1992, p. 292). A layered approach starts with a basic pattern (found in Chapter 4) and then adds layer after layer of theoretical perspectives onto it (as illustrated in Chapter 5). In
other words, I integrated the micro-analysis with the macro-analysis level. This approach is similar to Duff’s (1995) investigation of immersion classrooms in Hungary. Duff analysed the macro-level or external factors associated with socio-political transformations in Hungary at the time of her research in addition to the micro-level or internal factors of classroom based oral assessment and discussion activities that the students were involved with. The approach is also similar to Schieffelin and Och’s (1986) research, which linked the micro-analyses of children’s discourse to the macro-analytic perspective of their discourse in relation to their cultural beliefs and practices. Integrating the different levels of analysis led to the findings that illustrate how communication issues occur as a result of a combination of all of these features. I then used these layers to build the theory as it is presented in the discussion of the findings in this thesis.

3.5.3 Transcription of the conversations

The key to the transcriptions is contained in Appendix 3. The coding has been based on several other coding schemes: Edmondson (1981); Psathas (1995); Tannen (1984); Atkinson and Heritage (1984); Hutchby and Woofitt (2004); and Luk (2004). In order to make the transcriptions as readable as possible, and following from Luk (2004), the line numbers and speaker(s) names have been separated out from the main utterances. The main moves, such as the initiation (I), response (R), and the follow-up (F) have not been bracketed, but the moves stemming from these moves have been; for example, the evaluative (E), acknowledgement (A), backchannelling (B), and so forth. The moves are in bold, and in general, have been left to the end of the line; however, in order to avoid confusion and keep the flow of conversation at a easily readable pace, the moves have sometimes been left within the sentence.
All of the conversations were transcribed. When the digital recorder was returned to me, I quickly listened to the content of the recording to assess whether there was any issue that needed to be immediately addressed. In doing this I was acting as both a researcher and as the programme manager. As the programme manager, I was responsible for dealing with any potentially problematic issues or concerns that I might identify. As a researcher, I was responsible for managing my data. There was some overlap between my roles. For example, if it appeared that a student might have misunderstood something in the conversation, I would casually question the student. If I then discovered that the student did not understand information (such as travel plans) that a homestay parent had given them, I would first address the situation according to established procedures. I would then act as a researcher, by labelling the communication issue in the conversation so that I could later analyse and code it. This first, rather crude, method of interpreting the data was advantageous because it quickly determined whether there was a communication issue, enabling me to act efficiently in both of my roles.

All of the recordings were transcribed using the same procedure, that is, playing the recorder for about two seconds using the computer’s basic audio software, pausing it, writing down the utterance in a computer document, and then replaying the recording once again for confirmation. Sometimes, when the utterance was difficult to hear it would be played back many times until I understood what was being said, or I would note in the transcription that the recording could not be heard. In some circumstances, I would ask the student for their interpretation of their utterance.

As previously mentioned, all transcription involves interpretation (Cook, 1990; Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 1991; Ochs, 1979). I was guided by the theoretical approaches I
had investigated and the research studies I had examined. I also had a limited amount of time available. I was also aware of the trade-off between the level of detail and reading clarity. I opted for a middle ground, coding for the features that were most salient to my interpretation of the meaning (as triangulated by the other data sources, such as information I gathered by questioning the students or attending the homestay meetings). For example, if lexical stress or an agitated or angry tone of voice appeared to be salient, it was included; elsewhere it was kept to a minimum, so as not to overshadow other features. Major turns were also numbered in the lefthand side; however, turns I considered to be relatively unimportant to the analysis were not, and were left in the same line. Because triangulation and interpretation occurred over an extended period of time, I reviewed my transcriptions multiple times, making constant comparison a feature of transcription as an interpretive process in keeping with grounded theory.

3.5.4 A macro approach

I began analysing the conversations through what I term a “macro” approach. The macro approach looked at the text from an overall perspective, especially in terms of isolating issues in the short-term to resolve any potential problems. The macro approach considers external factors, such as the person’s cultural background and traditions that may, in a general sense, influence the conversation at hand. Another example of a macro approach is what Wharton (2009) terms “vague” characteristics, which he defines as emotional or attitudinal information that “create impressions or moods” (p. 10). In this study, I look at general cultural aspects of Japanese culture, as well as the characteristics associated with high and low context cultures may influence the overall mood of the conversation.
This thesis will also use Owen’s thematic analysis in order to uncover what “form” the discourse between the homestay families and students takes. Owen (1984) interpreted one hundred and eighteen participants’ family (and other) relationships through a thematic investigation using personal reports over a one-year period. Owen defines a theme in a discourse using three criteria: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. He explains that recurrence is an explicit repeated use of the same meaning, but using different words; repetition is an implicit recurrence of meaning; forcefulness refers to the “vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pauses which serve to stress some utterances” (p. 275). Owen claims that specific current concerns can be uncovered through an analysis of these three criteria in order to make sense of relationships.

I will demonstrate how I used the macro approach through an extended example concerning homestay meetings. The homestay meetings provided the homestay families with the opportunity to discuss any issues that they were concerned with in an open and casual forum. Many of the issues that were raised concerned broad generalisations to do with culture and these helped to form the research questions for this project (outlined in Chapter 1, section 1.1.3. and Chapter 2, section 2.11). Once issues were broached in the homestay meetings, I was able to analyse the recorded conversations with these factors in mind. This is an example of constant comparison between different data sets. I was therefore able to listen to the conversations keeping in mind that a comparison might be able to be made with the cultural factors that had been discussed at the homestay meeting. In this way, I implemented the “macro” or broad perspective for an initial analysis, as illustrated in the example below.
3.5.4.1 Example 1 – Indirectness

I was able to analyse the first example following complaints from the homestay parents that their students were not direct enough when requesting something. The student involved in this conversation was not the student complained about, but the example illustrates the kind of conversation that led to frustration in some homestay families. In this example, the student wants to borrow his host mother’s (HM) ski jacket, and indirectly “hints” at it throughout the entire conversation.

64. S: I want to wear (1.5) very warm jacket.
65. HM: yes, they have, they have the jackets that you hire are real ski gear.
66. S: not real ski wear
67. HM: oh, you want a warm jacket for (2.0) now, (S: oh) or for skiing?
68. S: ah, (3.0) um, I will do I will go (2.0) um, ((Pause for seven seconds.))
69. HM: do you want to buy one?
70. S: yes
71. HM: yeah, that will cost a lot of money (2.0) yeah, um
72. S: um, where I go skiing (HM: yes) I will hire (HM: right) but I ah, ((Pause for 9 seconds.)) im
73. HM: do you want to buy a ski jacket?
74. S: im, no, no, no, no, no
75. HM: no
76. S: I want to hire, (1.0) but (1.5) I will play skiing before (HM: oh) I will get cold
77. HM: you will get all your gear before?
78. S: ah, (2.0)
79. HM: *because there is a place in [city name] that you can hire all of your gear.* (S: *ah* but it’s probably easier for you to hire in Queenstown.

80. S: *Queenstown is cold*

81. HM: yes, (1.5) *oh, so you want a warm jacket for before you go skiing*

82. S: *yeh, yeh, yeh, yeh, yeh*

83. HM: *oh, I understand. Do you, did you not bring a jacket with you? (1.0) A warm jacket?*

84. S: *ah my jacket is very thin*

85. HM: *very thin, well you you know my jacket, my Kathmandu jacket, blue one (S: *oh)*

86. S: *could you (2.0) borrow*

87. HM: *yes, I could lend it to you (S: *oh, thank you* yes you have to look after it though it’s very expensive ((The student laughs and then the host mother laughs slightly too.)) ok?*

88. S: *ah, ok, ok.*

89. HM: *but you are welcome to borrow it it is very warm*

90. S: *oh, thank you*

Once I knew that misunderstandings could arise from conversations like this, I was able to identify elements that could be explained in terms of conflicts between high context cultures and low context cultures. For example, knowing that speakers in low context cultures use indirect comments from which their interlocutors are supposed to infer the purpose of a conversation suggested to me that the student was making indirect requests in lines 64, 80, and 84. Knowing that high context culture interlocutors may have difficulty interpreting indirect requests suggested to me that this conversation became as
protracted as it is because the host mother did not understand the student’s purpose in
the conversation until he made a direct request in line 86.

3.6 A micro approach

Following the initial macro analysis, conversations were then reanalysed using a micro
(social) approach to interpret particular utterances and patterns within the conversations
and that may have influenced the relationships between the interlocutors. I achieved this
by considering Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) IRF pattern, Grice’s (1975) cooperative
principle, Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness theory and Schumann’s (1986)
Acculturation Model. This section will outline how I used these theoretical approaches
in my micro-analysis of the conversations.

3.6.1 Categorisation of the IRF moves

One pattern that was discovered through iterative micro-analysis of the conversations
was the IRF structure. The IRF will be used here to mean initiation (I), response (R),
and follow-up (F). The following sections illustrate how I categorised IRF moves in
general and then, more authentically, in relation to a conversation.

3.6.1.1 Overview

The following subsections outline how the conversations were coded. The first
explanation indicates how the I (initiation), R (response), and F (follow-up) moves are
distinguished from other codings, which are fully detailed in subsequent sections. The
sections which follow also include how Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle, Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model and Schumann’s Acculturation Model were coded and used in the findings. For ease of reference, all of the codings are brought together and indicated as an overview in Figure 3.1. The codings are then further explained using a natural conversation recorded between a student and their homestay mother (further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). This conversation is used as an example of the how the coding techniques were determined.

3.6.1.2 Initiation move

The initiation move can involve different types of questions. One common distinction is between a display question, in which the speaker already knows what the addressee’s response will (or should) be, or a referential question, an initiation in which the speaker does not know what the response will be. In order to differentiate between a display and referential question, I will follow Willis’s (1992a) coding: $K1$ represents the primary knower used in a display question, and $K2$ represents the secondary knower used for a referential question.
3.6.1.3 Response move

The response that follows an initiation can be an acknowledgement, backchannelling, or response to the initiation.

Acknowledgement is a relatively formal indication that an initiation has occurred, for example, “yes,” “right,” “I see,” as well as different forms of “yes,” such as “yeah,” and “yep.” Acknowledgement is also realised as utterances of surprise, if they occur with a rising intonation, for example, “oh,” “wow,” and so forth. Backchannelling is a weaker form of acknowledgement and includes utterances such as “mm,” “ah,” as well as “brief requests for clarification” and a “restatement in a few
words of an immediately preceding thought expressed by the speaker” (Duncan, 1972, p. 288).

The listener backchannels when the speaker is talking. Duncan (1972) claims that backchannelling is often used by the listener to avoid taking their speaking turn. He also asserts that backchannelling comprises a large and complex set of signals. In this analysis, I categorise backchannelling based on Duncan’s categorisation and, where necessary, will elaborate further.

Responses can include many of the checks that are included in the follow-up move that are discussed below.

3.6.1.4 Follow-up move

The follow-up move has many categories, which can be divided into two types. The first type includes comprehension checks (Cmp C), confirmation checks (Cnf C), requests for clarification (Req Cl), and requests for further information, or what I term expansion (Exp). The move can also consist of any combination of these. Definitions and examples that guided my coding of the data were drawn from Brulhart (1986). Unlike some early accounts of IRF, which are based on native speaker interlocutors, Brulhart examines non-native speaker interlocutors. I have used Brulhart’s (1986) categories for interactional adjustments between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS), as these are likely to mirror the interaction between the interlocutors in my study. The following examples have been taken from recorded conversations from this study.

Comprehension checks (Cmp C) occur when the native speaker (NS) attempts to check that their previous utterance has been understood. For example:
NS: “Do you understand what ‘tap’ means? Do you understand that word?”
(May, 2007)

Such checks for confirmation, it should be noted, are also conventional in communication involving native speakers only. For example, negotiation for meaning is considered to be a regular aspect of communicative competence (see Canale and Swain, 1980).

Requests for clarification (Req Cl) occur when the NS directly indicates that he/she has not understood what the non-native speaker has said. For example:

NNS: “I like watching (?) movies.”

NS: “I’m sorry, what kind of movies?”
(May, 2007)

Again, requests for clarification are common in general communication between NS interlocutors too.

Confirmation checks (Cnf C) occur when the NS directly checks that they have correctly understood what the NNS said, and once again these are common in NS-NS communication, too. For example:

NS: “Did you say that you went out at 8pm?”
(September, 2007)
Requests for further information (Exp) occur when an interlocutor (in Brulhart’s (1986) model, the NS) asks directly for more information to elucidate what was provided in the initial response. For example:

NNS: “I came to school on the train.”

NS: “Oh, was it crowded?”

(Classroom conversation, July, 2007)

One distinguishing feature of all of these questions in the follow-up move is that they have a rising intonation at the end of the utterance. The rising intonation indicates a response is required.

The second type of follow-up move includes evaluation (E), which can be either positive (E+) or negative (E-), self-repetition (SR), other repetition (OR), recast (Rec), reformulation (Ref), comment (Com), advice (Adv), acknowledgement (A) and backchannelling (B). The move can also be a combination of any of these.

Evaluative follow-up moves are the easiest patterns to categorise because, for the most part, they are based on easily identifiable words. A positive evaluative move (E+) occurs if utterances contain terms such as “good,” “great,” “well done” (based on Waring’s, 2008, p. 578, concept of “explicit positive assessment”). These terms are contrasted with simple acknowledgement in terms such as “okay,” “right,” and “I see” (Halliday, 1984). If the follow-up move performs a negative evaluation, then it is categorised as F (E-). Such words or phrases include: “that’s not right,” “no,” “I don’t agree,” and so forth. Although evaluative moves may be the easiest move to categorize,
they are sometimes difficult to determine and where appropriate I have discussed these in my analysis in more detail.

Self-repetitions include a partial or complete repetition of an interlocutor’s own utterance and can be verbatim or a semantic repetition (Brulhart, 1986). For example:

NS: “He looks quite tired doesn’t he?” “He’s tired, don’t you think?”

(September, 2007)

Other repetitions include interlocutor A repeating interlocutor B’s utterance as some kind of sign of approval. It may also involve interlocutor B repeating interlocutor A’s utterance as a means of enhancing cognitive processing of the information.

A recast is a repetition of what an interlocutor has said, but often emphasising or drawing attention to the correct form. For example, Doughty and Varela (1998) illustrate what they term a corrective recast. The following example (based on Doughty & Varela, 1998) illustrates this (the bold words indicate emphasis and “L” stands for “Learner” and “T” for “Teacher”):

L: I thinks that the worm goes under the soil.

T: I think that the worm will go under the soil?

In this example, the incorrect tense of the verbs “think” and “will” are emphasised by the teacher, or in other words attention is drawn to the words in the hope that the student will then uptake a repair.

Ellis and Sheen (2006) draw attention to the fact that recasts “can take many different forms and perform a variety of functions” (p. 575). In this thesis, I do not
intend to document all of the different functions of recasts; however, I would like to discuss, where possible, instances of how recasts may have led to any communication issue in a general sense. In the examples given in this thesis, the homestay parents sometimes take on the role of teacher themselves and purposely recast student utterances, which could be interpreted to provide corrective follow-up for their students.

A reformulation is an interlocutor’s strategy to attempt to convert a language learner’s output into more conventionally acceptable usage; however, the flow of the discourse is not interrupted. A reformulation can function to provide corrective follow-up as well as comprehensible input for second language acquisition (Cullen, 2002, p. 124) and is common between teachers and learners (a feature of classroom talk). Loewen and Philp (2006, p. 536) identify reformulations as “a frequent form of follow-up used by teachers following learners’ nontarget-like oral production.”

The difference between a recast and a reformulation is sometimes difficult to separate. Nassaji (2007) makes no clear distinction between the two, “Reformulations (or Recasts)” (p. 514). However, for this thesis, I will define a reformulation in the way I have tried to illustrate above, that is, a reformulation is something that is uttered without necessarily an intention to instruct or explicitly correct the student’s language, but with the intention of confirming the idea of what was stated. This is opposed to a recast, which often attempts to correct what the speaker said by repeating words more explicitly with the intention of teaching correct usage, and which often engages the student in stopping their flow of discourse in order to correct the utterance.

In this thesis, I have defined a comment as a short response made after the main topic. Comments are characteristically short and often function as added information, superfluous to the main information wanting to be conveyed. In the following example
(recorded in January, 2008), the host mother adds to her main topic, “but please go to school, if you have to be at school,” and then adds her comment:

Host mother: *But please go to school, if you have to be at school um, and I know the school know that I’m going.*

Advice is commonly referred to in this thesis as being when somebody, who perceives themselves to be knowledgeable, (in this case, the homestay parent) offers an opinion, to another, for the purpose of reducing anxiety or solving a problem. Advice is often unsolicited, or, in other words, given without being asked for (DeCapua & Dunham, 1993, p. 519). In the following example, taken from another recording in January, 2008, advice is given by the host mother to her student.

Host mother: *Yes, next time when you go to town, pay attention, and see what kind of clothes people are wearing.*

Acknowledgement and backchannelling have been discussed above under responses and so will not be repeated here.

In this second type of follow-up moves, utterances have falling intonation. This is possibly one of the causes of misunderstandings between the students and the homestay families. Second language speakers may not always interpret a falling intonation as something that requires a response. For example, Lyster and Ranta (1997) claim that learners might perceive recasts or reformulation as merely a literal or semantic repetition without realising its corrective follow-up function, which is often a
signal for the learner to continue to expand their response (see also Lyster, 1998). This is the kind of response that learners can expect in the classroom.

The IRF structure can be cyclical. A follow-up move can be responded to or not. If the follow-up move is responded to, then the response will move into the second stage (R2). If the second response is followed up then this will be the second follow-up (F2) and so on. The topic will close when there is no further response or follow-up move made for that episode. When a new topic is introduced, there will be a new initiation (I) and the episode structure will be repeated.

Initiations, responses, and follow-up moves can be easily categorised as the conversation progresses. Why the conversation draws to a close at particular stages will be discussed. General patterns will be seen to emerge and these will also be discussed. I am analysing the IRF structure, particularly the follow-up move, so I have concentrated on conversations that flow through these stages. However, it should be noted that, in the data, there were other exchanges that consisted of an initiation only, or just an initiation and response.

3.6.2 Challenges to coding

For reasons of space and “manageability” (Lee, Y-A, 2007, p.183), and in order to reduce the data (Huberman & Miles, 1998) and develop concepts for a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I have tried to identify general patterns in the conversations. However, patterns do not always fit exactly into these “pre-specified formats” (Gourlay, 2005, p. 404) and it is not always possible, for example, to classify a follow-up move as a repetition, evaluation, or as merely an acknowledgement of a response (what Schegloff, 2007, p. 222, terms a “sequence-closing-third,” designed to minimise any
further expansion of talk). Repetition might function to confirm a response, request confirmation, or make connections (Cullen, 2002, p. 125).

There is also difficulty in classifying the kinds of questions asked, which may occur in either the initiation or follow-up move. For example, Ellis (1994) explains that teacher questions fall into two categories: echoic and epistemic. Echoic questions function to seek repetition or confirmation, and include comprehension and confirmational checks as well as requests for clarification. Epistemic questions seek some kind of information and include referential, display, expressive and rhetorical questions (p. 588).

Furthermore, it is difficult to specify the degree of implicitness or explicitness of each move. For example, repetition might function as an implicit request for confirmation or an explicit reformulation in the form of corrective follow-up. Similarly, a comment might be an indirect request to the listener to expand on a response. The comment might also function as a rhetorical question that does not require a response.

Because of the range of micro and macro factors that contributed to my decision-making, there are no general procedures that I followed which I can readily describe here. Instead, the examples which are illustrated in Chapter 4, offer some indication of how I analysed challenging data. Where appropriate, I discuss how I arrived at my analysis of an utterance in a similar way.

3.6.3 Grice’s cooperative principle and maxims

Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle and the related maxims are not explicitly coded within the conversations themselves, but are discussed in the analysis following them. The reason for not coding them within the conversations is because it is difficult to
establish exactly where the principle or the maxims are being flouted until all of the other codings (described above) are taken into consideration in the conversation’s entirety.

In the following example (taken from January, 2008) the question in line 4, taken by itself, does not warrant the maxim of quality being flouted until we have taken all of the other conversational turns of the participants into consideration.

4. HM: *ah, we gotta be at the airport at one o’clock, ah, mm. Will you be at school?*

Only by looking at the full context in which this conversation takes place can we draw a conclusion that the host has flouted the maxim of quality (Grice, 1975) by asking (as it turns out) such a difficult question.

3.6.4 Brown and Levinson’s FTAs

Any initiation or follow-up move can be interpreted as an FTA, but disguised in another form, depending on the illocutionary force of the utterance and depending on the context in which it occurs. Advice, comments and expansions (as may be seen in the host parents’ utterances in the data) were among the most frequent types of moves to also be classified as FTAs. Because FTAs (see section 2.7.2) are based on cultural notions, they are difficult to adequately interpret solely through a micro-analysis. A fuller analysis that discusses macro features is useful in this situation and will be discussed in the analysis after the conversation is given. Therefore, where applicable, FTAs at the micro level will be discussed in relation to the IRF structure, but will also be discussed in terms of the macro features.
3.6.5 *Summary of micro-analysis coding*

In Figure 3.1, dotted arrows show that the moves after the follow-up move are optional. The IRF can progress through stages such as just IRF, or IRF (R2) (F2) (R3) (F3) (R4) (F4), etc. Various episodes can be identified, such as IRF (Cmp C) (R2, A) (F2, A), or any other combination like this. The topic of each conversation is broken into episodes. The beginning of each episode is categorised by a new initiation (I) if the topic changes.

3.6.6 *An example of how a micro-analysis was coded*

Following are two examples of interaction taken from a recording between a homestay mother and a Japanese student (June 2007 and May 2007). They are examples of some of the coding techniques used to arrive at the analysis of the conversations in the findings. “HM” stands for the host mother, “HF” the host father and “S” is for the student. This example illustrates how I coded the data in a microanalysis.

Context: The student has turned the recorder on before he has opened the door to his homestay house. The student can be heard opening the door. The host mother is present and immediately begins with:

1. HM: *What bus did you come home on today?*    I (K1)
2. S:    *ah (2.0) ah, the twenty past four*    R
3. HM:    *Yes.*    F (E)
4. S:    *mm (silence for about 4 minutes and then the recording is turned off)*    B
The first step I took in coding the conversation was to identify the IRF moves. In this case the initiation is performed by the HM, so it is coded as “I.” The response and the follow-up move are subsequently coded, but the K1 move in line 1 is inserted after the third move is coded. Since the host mother agrees with the student’s response in line 3, I then went back and labelled the initiation as a K1. There is a silence of two seconds after the student’s initial response, “ah” in line 2. The time is indicated by “2.0.” The student’s hesitation “mm” in line 4 has been coded as backchannelling (Duncan, 1972). The second step I took in coding the conversation was to code the moves for the function that they were performing. This involved using the categories outlined in Figure 3.1 and explained in section 3.6.2.

Thirdly, I performed a Gricean analysis of the conversational implicatures. I achieved this by going back through the conversation to determine at what point (if any) the cooperative principle or the maxims had been flouted. (However, see section 2.6.3 for an alternative explanation of flout where necessary.) I did this by comparing the initial utterance to the subsequent student responses (or vice versa, the student initiations and the subsequent host parent responses). If the conversation illustrated an inappropriate utterance or a strained silence (as in line 4 in the example just given), then I would relate that move to the initiation or beginning of the episode to try to determine why the initial question or conversational opener was not responded to appropriately. Since the cooperative principle (Grice, 1975) and maxims are not coded explicitly within the transcription, they are discussed after this.

Finally, I used Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model to determine whether an FTA had been uttered, as well as what particular politeness utterance may
have been implied (see Brown and Levinson’s politeness model in section 2.7.2 for categorisation). Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model and Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle and maxims are analysed by returning to the conversations many times over a period of time in order to check that the participants’ utterances coincide with the particular category of politeness or flout chosen. Of course, it is almost impossible to determine with one hundred percent accuracy whether what one has chosen is reflective of the intention of the participants; however, returning to the data and viewing it with a different perspective supports validity and the methodological approach taken in this thesis (see Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 489 for support of this approach, which they term “validity-as-reflexive-accounting”).

The following example (taken from a recording in May, 2007) illustrates further coding relating to how I arrived at the analysis (discussed in section 4.2.4). In this example, the conversation starts at line 113. It is the fourth follow-up move since the beginning of the conversation and is classified as a comment by the homestay father.

113. HF: I’m pleased you got to see your family   F4 (Com)

114. S: please↑   R5 (Req Cl)

115. HF: pleased, happy F5 (Ref)

116. S: oh   R6 (A)

117. HF: happy, yes   F6 (Cmp C)

118. S: ah   R7 (B)

119. HF: It’s very important that you see your family even only for one minute, important F7 (Com) (Adv) (SR)
As in the previous example, I first identified the IRF moves and then coded the other moves identified in Figure 3.1 according to the function that they performed. Next I carried out a Gricean analysis, as well as a politeness analysis (Brown & Levinson, 1978), in order to produce a “thick description” (Denzin, 1989, p. 83) for further discussion.

3.6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodology of this research project. The research process was explained in terms of using an emic approach, including the use of interviews, observations and “insider” information in order to interpret the conversations. Grounded theory provides a broad, systematic approach to analyse the data, which is supplemented by a pragmatic approach, which utilises aspects from both interactional sociolinguistic and discourse analysis. Together, these approaches are termed “a layered approach” (Hatch, 1992). A layered approach uses a wide, open lens to discuss many of the macro and micro characteristics and patterns that occur in the conversations. Examples were fully described in terms of the macro and micro categorisations that are used to interpret the conversations. Categorisations that relate to the language and that are close to the sentential levels of the conversations were outlined in Figure 3.1. A discussion related to the more invisible aspects of the conversations will be described in terms of the (micro) social and (macro) cultural conventions. The findings outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 will then be discussed in Chapter 6.

The following chapter will present the data using the methodology described here.

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Chapter 4

Findings: Conversation patterns - examples of the IRF structure

4.1 Introduction

The recordings indicate that the initiation, response and follow-up (IRF) structure, typically used in the classroom between the teacher and the student, is also common in the homestay conversational style. This illustrates the “ubiquity” of the triadic structure (Wells, 1993, p. 1). In other words, throughout all of the conversations, the homestay parent typically asks a question (I), the student responds (R), and the parent then provides a follow-up (F) move. The follow-up move was apparent in all of the recorded conversations, but has not been indicated in the matrices as “follow-up” per se, but rather categorised according to the types of follow-up move which occurred (May and September, 2007, and January and March, 2008 in Appendices 5a, 5b, 5c, and 5d.) It must be noted that the numbers represented in the matrices, and therefore here, are only approximations of how many times a follow-up move occurred. This is due to the fact that the moves can be interpreted in different ways according to which particular layer of analysis is used. However, particular patterns can still be seen. One type of follow-up move that emerged and was categorised was the evaluative move. It was discovered that the evaluative moves could be further categorised into positive, negative, and neutral evaluations.

Because of the ubiquity of the evaluative follow-up move, the moves that led up to it were also investigated, based on the literature on the IRF used in classrooms (see to section 2.8). This literature suggests that there are two types of initiation moves. One type of initiation move involves K1 or primary knowledge, which is already known by the person asking the question; the question is, therefore, a display question because it is
an opportunity for the interlocutor to display whether he or she has knowledge. The other type of initiation move involves K2 or secondary knowledge, which is not known by the person asking the question; the question is, therefore, a referential or real question because it is an opportunity for the interlocutor to supply knowledge (see section 2.8.2).

Each of the examples in this chapter will illustrate a particular point in relation to conversational style or patterns. The point to be illustrated is provided before the example and then discussed in more detail after the example has been presented. The overall conversational patterns and major findings related to the IRF structure are discussed in this chapter in section 4.6. These findings will also form the basis for an extended analysis of macro and micro generalisations relevant to major and minor communication issues discussed in Chapter 5.

In this chapter, I will firstly provide a brief overview in section 4.1.1 of the results as contained in the matrices. Examples of how differently the IRF can be performed are illustrated in section 4.2. This chapter concludes in section 4.3 by summarising the IRF conversational patterns found.

4.1.1 Overview of the results contained in the matrices

Throughout the year, there were a total of 45 conversations recorded. In all of the conversations, the IRF structure was present. The follow-up move was then coded to isolate the evaluative move.

Out of the total number of conversations (45), there were approximately 47 evaluative moves performed: 33 positive, 3 negative, and 10 neutral. Of all of the
conversations, 20 of the IRF(E) moves stemmed from K1 (primary, or display questions) questions and 27 stemmed from K2 questions.

The May findings recorded approximately 25 evaluative (E) moves out of 18 of the student/homestay parent conversations. This gives an average of at least one IRF(E) pattern per conversation (sometimes the IRF(E) pattern was repeated in one conversation, in particular a total of six were recorded in one conversation). Of these evaluative moves 17 were positive, 2 were negative and 5 were neutral evaluations.

The September findings recorded a total of 9 IRF(E) patterns out of a total of 12 students. There were approximately 9 positive evaluations. There were 1 K1 (display) question and 8 K2 (referential) questions used.

The January findings recorded 10 IRF(E) from a total of 11 students; however 7 of these evaluations occurred in 2 conversations. The types of evaluations were categorised into 5 positive, 4 neutral, and 1 negative. There were approximately 8 questions in the K1 (display) form and 2 questions in the K2 (referential) form.

The March findings recorded 4 IRF(E) moves out of a total of 4 students. The evaluations performed out of the 4 were all positive. All 4 evaluatives stemmed from K2 question forms.

The basic abbreviations used throughout all of the examples in this chapter and in subsequent chapters are: HM for host mother, HF for host father, and S for student (transcription symbols are described in Appendix 3). The symbols are used selectively to illustrate particular points, but do not appear throughout all of the conversations. For example, intonation rises or falls and the use of primary knowledge (K1) and secondary knowledge (K2) are only used when they are discussed in the analysis which follows each example.
4.2 IRF Examples

The following examples illustrate simple, clearly defined, triadic structures (IRF). The various ways that the IRF structure operates in these examples illustrates the ubiquity (Waring, 2009) of the sequence. However, certain patterns can be seen.

4.2.1 Example of the host initiating and closing (taken from May, 2007)

The student is helping to put away the dishes after having just washed them with his host mother after the evening meal. The host mother is directing her student to where one dish belongs.

301. HM: *that one goes in the bottom drawer*    I
302. S: ok             R (A)
303. S: here?          R (Cnf C)
304. HM: no, F (A) *very bottom, bottom drawer, (SR) just right on the end.* (SR)

*There we go,* (E+) *thank you very much.*

This example illustrates an asymmetrical power relationship between the host and student through the use of the host’s positive evaluation, “There we go” (line 304).

The student’s response in line 303 requests confirmation that he has put the dish in the correct place. His host mother follows up with a negative acknowledgement and then two self-repetitions. The host mother’s final utterance (“There we go”) functions to positively evaluate that the student has put the plate in the correct place. The final “thank you very much” functions to close the sequence. The expression “There we go” is one which would usually be used by someone in control of a situation, such as a
mother to a child. It is not difficult to imagine how inappropriate the use of the same expression would be if one of two adults with the same cultural background and status said this to the other.

4.2.2 Example of a closing move (taken from May, 2007)

In the following example, the host mother uses a positive evaluation, “good.” This response clearly shows that the host mother is happy that she has satisfied her student’s hunger. This particular pattern could also be considered a “sequence-closing-third” (Schegloff, 2007).

264. HM: you’ve had enough, [name]? I
265. S: enough R
266. HM: good F (E+)
267. S: thank you R
268. HM: you’re welcome F (A)

The student’s response in line 267 is followed up by “you’re welcome,” which functions to close the conversation. The student’s and host mother’s responses are formulaic and are not expanded upon.

4.2.3 Example of a closing sequence (taken from May, 2007)

This example illustrates the potential difficulty of differentiating an acknowledgement from a positive evaluative (line 118) and the student’s seeming lack of appreciation for his host’s offer.
116. HM: yeah, home for dinner? I

117. S: yeah R (A)

118. HM: yeah, ° oh alright, F (A) cool, ° (A) and your friends, um, they’re welcome to come here too. if they want (Com)

119. S: mm R2 (B)

In this example, the host mother uses the word “cool” (line 118) as though it was a form of acknowledgement. The word “cool” already follows an acknowledgement and is spoken in a softer voice than is used in the surrounding utterance. It is possible that the host mother has the habit of using the word “cool” in other circumstances to close conversations (Schegloff, 2007; Waring, 2009). After the host mother’s acknowledgement, she offers the student the opportunity to invite his friends to her house. He responds only with “mm.” It would have been more appropriate for him to have responded with some form of gratitude, such as “thank you,” but the student does not. It is possible that the student has not understood what his host mother has just said, or it could also be that the student does not think that he has the right to reply after the closing sequence his host mother used in line 118.

4.2.4 Example of positive evaluatives closing sequences (taken from May, 2007)

In these examples (taken from the same conversation, but illustrating different conversational sequences), the host mother was previously an ESOL teacher and is teaching her student about a grammar point in her journal. The host mother uses display questions (K1), reminiscent of classroom language (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).
8. HM: *ah, today, ok, you need a word in there because you’re talking about a specific group.* I (Com) (K1)

9. S: *oh, (B) ok, (A) is it the?* R (R Cnf)

10. HM: *good* F(E+)

In line 8, the host mother initiates the conversational sequence by commenting that her student needs to insert a word into her sentence. The student seems to understand that she needs to respond with an answer. At first, the student hesitates, then acknowledges acceptance of her host mother’s implicit request to respond with an appropriate answer (line 9). The student was probably used to the fact that her host mother checked her journal every evening and so could understand specific interactional patterns in this particular social setting, such as needing to respond after such an initiation or comment. The student requests confirmation that her reply is correct. The host mother then acknowledges her responses in the follow-up move with a positive evaluation, which closes this exchange. This particular exchange is a tightly packaged IRF conversational structure, which does not allow the student any freedom to move out and speak freely. Brulhart (1986, p. 36) claims that control of the content of a conversation corresponds to fewer opportunities for either interlocutor to expand upon the conversation.

The host mother continues to read her student’s journal. Once again, the student seems to understand that she is required to respond in line 12. The following exchange is similar to what was presented in the previous example, in that the positive evaluatives function to close and “restrict” (Lin, 2000, p. 64) the student’s options to break free from the IRF.

11. HM: *ah, this, probably also past tense.* I (Com) (K1)
12. S: *I thought.*  R

13. HM: *good, I went to Japanese club and then came home. How many Tim Tams did you eat?*  F (E+) (Rep) I (K1)

In line 12, the student replies with the correct answer. The host mother immediately praises her and then verbally repeats what the student has written in her journal. The host mother maintains her turn by quickly launching into another initiation, which does not directly point to the grammar point as explicitly as what was said in line 11, but rather prepares for what the preferred response should be. Therefore, the initiation has been interpreted as a display question in its preparatory stage.

14. S: *one*  R

15. HM: *ok, so I ea...*  F (prompt) I (K1)

16. S: *ate*

17. HM: *good, so they are very delicious, good, excellent, ok*  F(E+) (Com) (E+)

18. S: *thank you*

The student responds that she ate one Tim Tam (a common chocolate biscuit made in New Zealand), which sets up a prompt for the host mother in the follow-up move, which is dependent on the host’s initiation from line 13. The student replies correctly (line 16), which returns a further positive evaluation and comment that Tim Tams are delicious followed by a further two positive evaluatives and, finally, a closing “ok,”
which functions to close the sequence. The student recognises the close of the sequence due to her final “thank you.” The host mother does not reply, but instead changes the topic to initiate a further tightly controlled IRF structure.

In the following sequence, the host mother indicates that the student’s response is a dispreferred response (Schegloff, 2007).

19. HM: and what was the word you learnt today?  I (K1)

20. S: today? (slight pause) today nothing.  R (Cnf C)

21. HM: the little insect?  F (prompt) I (K1)

22. S: ar  (A)

The response that the student gives in line 20 is a dispreferred answer. The student first requests confirmation that her host mother is referring to today. It is unclear what happened in the slight pause. It could have been that the host mother nodded her head; however, the student repeated the word “today” and then said that she did not learn anything “today.” The host mother then seems to ignore her response by leading her student, by prompting what the preferred response should be (line 21). The student acknowledges that she has not given the correct response in line 20, but does not provide any further response. The host mother then quickly prompts again with a follow-up move dependent on her prompt from line 21.

23. HM: What’s it called?  F (prompt) I (K1)

24. S: lady bird, lady bird  R

25. HM: lady  F (prompt) I (K1)
26. S: lady bird  R (Rep)

27. HM: good, well done, ok, excellent, ah, very good. Do you want to do more taping?  F (E+) I

The student responds quickly and repeats her answer twice. However, it is as if the host mother is still not satisfied with her answer (or that she may not have heard her student’s response). The host prompts her student with the word “lady” (line 25) to which the student seems to understand to repeat her answer only once. Her response triggers a succession of positive evaluatives, which maintains the host’s turn and provides her with another opportunity to initiate further. In this example, the preferred responses that the student gives are highlighted by emphatic stress (line 27), which highlights the strict conversational control and management that the host mother directs.

4.2.5 Example of a preparatory and leading initiation (taken from January, 2008)

In this example, the host mother is looking for a preferred response which prepares her following moves for advice on how her student can improve his TOEIC mark. (The student had received the same TOEIC mark he had received in a previous test and he indicates that he is disappointed with the result.) The host mother offers strong advice which the student does not refuse. The advice functions to emphasise the role of both the host (the giver) and the student (the receiver).

74. S: yeah, same as last time.

75. HM: same as last time. So what do you need to do to get better? I (K1) (FTA)

76. S: mm, to have a conversation.  R
The initiation uses K1 because it is a leading question into a preferred response. I have interpreted the host mother’s “yes” as a positive evaluative because it functions in the same way as approval. The host mother then reformulates her student’s response, which functions to affirm and offer advice. The advice is framed in the form of a question (line 75), followed by approval of the student’s response and then a short imperative in the second person using “must.” The host mother’s advice is not evaluated or followed up by the student. Rather, the host’s advice functions to close the conversation. The student has little opportunity to expand his response. The conversation is controlled by his host mother, who initiates and closes the conversation.

4.2.6 Example of a leading initiation (taken from May, 2007)

In this example, the host mother is explaining to her five-year-old son that her student was very clever to have read two Harry Potter novels in English. The host mother probably knew that her student would have found it difficult to have read these books in English because, at the time of the recording, they had been living together for nine months and the student’s English proficiency was still at an intermediate level (as indicated by the student’s TOEIC score). This example illustrates the asymmetric relationship between the student and the host through the use of the positive evaluative.

111. HM: So was it hard reading the ones in English? I (K1)
112. S: yes, very hard. R
113. HM: wow, that’s clever isn’t it? F (A) (E+) (Exp)
It is unclear whether the host mother is directing the comment in line 113 to her son or to her student; however, there is no doubt that it is a positive evaluative and made with particular “fanfare” (Waring, 2008, p. 579) “…thereby constituting any other alternative as potentially deviant and less than competent” (Waring, 2009, p. 804). The student does not respond.

4.2.7 Example of a student responding after the follow-up move (taken from May, 2007)

In this example, the student takes the turn after his host has initiated a closed question and emphatically followed up. In this example, the host mother wants to know if the student has enough clothes because winter is getting close.

87. HM: but how many clothes have you got, have you got enough clothes? How many underpants have you got?    I
88. S: ° mm, maybe ten.°    R
89. HM: oh, hell, you’ve got enough clothes, yeah, yeah.  F (A) (Com) (SR) (FTA)
90. S: I have many socks and underwear    R2 (Ref)

In this example, the host mother asks three related questions in her first initiation. This could indicate that she is trying to ensure her student understands the meaning of her question. The student responds to the last of these, “How many underpants do you have?” which could indicate that this particular question has the highest priority for the student. His response provides his host mother with the opportunity to evaluate his response in the form of a forceful acknowledgement (line 89). The host mother uses the slang term “hell,” which could be interpreted as a firm announcement that she is not
going to shift from her view that her student has enough clothes. She also maintains her turn with the words “yeah, yeah,” as if to further emphasise that she is correct and will not be swayed from her point of view. However, in spite of his host mother’s response, the student does respond (line 90). I have interpreted the student’s final response (line 90) as a reformulation because the student replaces his host mother’s “clothes” and “underpants” with “socks and underwear.” The student’s reformulation is not acknowledged by his host mother. This could indicate that the host mother had not expected to be addressed after her self-repetition and, therefore, had not prepared to listen to any further response from the student. The student directly indicates that he also has control of the conversation, despite the fact that his host mother does not respond to his final response.

4.2.8 Example of an artificial conversation (taken from May, 2007)

Example 5 illustrates a contrived conversation, identified as such because the host father already has the (K1) knowledge he purports to request here (personal communication from the host father at a homestay parent information evening carried out during May, 2007 at ECNZ). The student is explaining the Sunday evening schedule at the Japanese church that many of the students attend. The students usually have a game of soccer, a church service which is followed by a pot-luck dinner, and an English lesson. This example is a good representation of what the host father might perceive as being a conversation that indicates a friendly interaction with close social distance between interlocutors, something which he might believe the staff of both ECNZ and ECJ would like to hear.
16. HF: and do they take you out af, afterwards and give you a meal do they? I (K1)
17. S: yes, after dinner (Cnf) (HF: yes (A)) we usually study English R
18. HF: do ya? F (Cnf C)
19. S: yes. R2 (A)
20. HF: oh, ok, F2 (A) so you have English ah, for, three hours every day at school (Com)
21. S: yes (A)
22. HF: and you have English and Japanese church too (Com)
23. S: yes (laughs slightly) R3
24. HF: oh, ok, F3 (A) so you, you get a fair, you get a fair amount then, don’t you? I (Cnf C)
25. S: yeah R4 (A)
26. HF: yeah. F4 (A) That’s good, (E+) yeah, yeah, (SR) and have you got anything you want to, you want to say, to add to the conversation? I

The student provides confirmation (in line 17) to his host father regarding being taken out by the church and given a meal, and then adds that, after dinner at church, they usually study English (line 17). The host father backchannels his student’s response in line 17 (“yes”), indicating that he is listening. This response could indicate that the conversation is possibly being staged, because the host father knows that his student goes to church on Sunday.

The first follow-up move by the host father comes in line 18 with a question, which could be a request to expand the conversation or a request for confirmation. The student responds with “yes,” which indicates that he has interpreted his host father’s
follow-up move as a request for confirmation. The conversation that follows this response consists of the host father commenting on the student’s schedule. The host father’s moves in lines 20 and 22 function to prepare for his conclusion, which comes in line 24.

Line 24 is an acknowledgement of the student’s response and then an opinion that the student gets “enough,” which refers to English exposure. In line 24, the host father maintains his conversational turn by using repetition. The self-repetition functions to sustain the conversation or to fill the silence. The self-repetition also functions to block the student from intruding into the host father’s turn (as a turn-maintaining cue, cf. Duncan, 1972). The repetition therefore provides the host father with the opportunity to segue into a confirmational check. The confirmational check, however, is being guided to confirm the host’s opinion. The host’s confirmational check is acknowledged by the student (line 25). The host father then retains his turn and control of the conversation by evaluating positively, repeating, and initiating further (line 26).

The host father controls the conversation through questioning, a confirmation check, and an evaluation. The student has little room for any expansion because the host father only seems to ask display questions as well as closed questions requiring only a “yes” or “no” response. The student might perceive his host father’s style of communication as a limitation to further expand their response. It seems as if the host father is not expecting the student to expand. This is similar to how the IRF functions within a classroom environment (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). The questions limit the student’s responses to mere acknowledgements. The conversation is dominated by
interactional modifications from the host father which might provide the student with comprehensible input, but which provide him with little opportunity to speak.

4.2.9 *Example of positive evaluative moves restricting IRF departure (taken from May, 2007)*

The following conversation is a good example of evaluating language use, which extends over quite a few moves. Due to the evaluative moves, the student is restricted to short answers and the control of the conversation is entirely in the hands of the host parents.

79. HF: *what are we having for dinner, today?* I (K1)
80. S: *meat pie* R
81. HF: *meat pie, yes* F (Rec) (E+)
82. HM: ((laughs slightly))
83. HF: *meat pie, not meet the pie, yes* (Ref) (Exp) (E+)
84. S: *mince pie* R2
85. HF: *good girl, yes, and* F2 (E+) (Exp)
86. S: *carrot* R3
87. HF: *yes* F3 (E+)
88. S: *potatoes* R4
89. HF: *and* F4 (Exp)
90. S: *broccoli* R5
91. HF: *mm* F5 (B)
92. S: *mm* R6 (B)
Positive evaluatives are explicitly expressed by both the homestay father (line 85) and the homestay mother (line 93); however, the host father’s “yes” throughout the conversation has also been interpreted as a positive evaluative because it functions as accepting that the student’s response is correct. “Yes” is also an implicit utterance requesting the student to continue with her explanation of what she is having for dinner and is a sign of approval. The host father reformulates using corrective follow-up in line 83. The student pronounced “meat” with a Japanese pronunciation, which sounded like “meato.” The student probably did not have the confidence to try to correct her Japanese pronunciation and so opted to use another term for “meat,” which was “mince.” The host father’s positive evaluative confirms that the answer she gave was good. The student continues to provide one word answers, which are followed by evaluatives from the host father. The pattern here is that the student produced only one part of the answer and then waited to be assessed before providing anything further.

The host mother’s final evaluation, “very good,” differs from the previous positive evaluatives, and could be perceived as the final evaluative and hence the close of the exchange. (This is the host mother’s only turn in the conversation except for laughing in line 82.) This example of the host’s positive evaluations and the student responses preserves the “integrity” (Waring, 2009, p. 804) of the classroom IRF.

4.2.10 Example of implicit positive evaluative moves (taken from March, 2008)

The following example compares the host parent’s follow-up moves used in the previous example to a five-year old child’s follow-up moves. This conversation takes
place in March, 2008. The student in this conversation was being asked repeatedly by her five-year-old homestay brother (HB) what was in his model farm. In this conversation there were no evaluatives made by the child. Instead the child follows up by requesting more information.

203. HB: *what’s in my farm? I*
204. S: *people*  R
205. HB: *and?*  F (Exp)
206. S: *pigs*  R2
207. HB: *and?*  F2 (Exp)
208. S: *sheep*  R3
209. HB: *and?*  F3 (Exp)
210. S: *cows*  R4
211. HB: *and?*  F4 (Exp)
212. S: *cat*  R5
213. HB: *imm*  F5

Again, the student only produces one part of the answer and then waits for the response to be followed up before providing anything further. The conversation continues like this, but there are no explicit evaluatives given by the host brother at all. It could be that because the student is getting everything correct, the host brother is implicitly providing positive evaluation by not saying anything. However, the student still responds with short responses and does not deviate from this conversational pattern.
4.2.11 Example of an implicit preferred response (taken from May, 2007)

In this example, the host mother indirectly suggests that she would like her student to catch the bus home because she is worried that he may slip on the ice while he is walking to and from school.

4. HM: *How did you get home?* I

5. S: *Um, take a bus, yes.* R

6. HM: *oh, good* F (E+)

7. S: *mm, yeah* R2 (A)

In this instance, the follow-up move functions as an evaluative with a positive element. The student uses a second response, termed (R2) which is an acknowledgement (A) of the follow-up move (line 7). In this conversation, the host mother is in control of the content. She initiates the conversation with a question and closes it with an evaluative. The conversation is completed in four turns and there is no expansion from this point on. Whether the student understood the implicit nature of the initiation and the positive evaluative is questionable.

4.2.12 Example of a student initiation (taken from September, 2007)

The following example is the only example in all of the year’s findings where the student actually initiates the question and evaluates with a positive evaluation. The student, however, uses a K2 question to initiate and not a K1 question, as was the case for many of the homestay parents.
In this case, I think that the student was going out of his way to indicate to me (as his English teacher) that he was trying to initiate conversation in the homestay family situation. Although this is indicative of a positive evaluative, it would have seemed inappropriate to have given any other response, given the situation, unless the student was trying to communicate something provocative about his host’s cooking. The student could have opted to acknowledge the response by saying something like “mm” or to have remained silent. Nevertheless, the evaluative stands as a positive evaluation, with the student initiating through a K2 question. The following example will illustrate a student that also has the opportunity to provide a positive evaluative, but decides not to carry it out.

4.2.13 Example of an “or” question and no evaluative by the student (taken from May, 2007)

The student in this example had previously asked his host mother to prepare some food that was reminiscent of her Indian culture. The host mother bought some traditional Indian dhal for him. The student initiates the conversation and (according to triadic dialogue structure) could, therefore, have access to the third move.

176. S: did you make, make or buy? I
177. HM: >it was already made and came in packet< R
178. S: mm  (B)
179. HM: >I just had to, had to deep fry< R

180. S: mm (B)

181. HM: >in the oil and when you deep fry, it becomes crispy< R

182. S: it is similar to Japanese senbei F (Com)

The student uses an or-choice question (the only or-choice question found in all of the data collected from the students). However, the student does not sustain control of the conversation (Long, 1981), but merely backchannels (lines 178, 180). In this example, it is the host who provides extra information, which functions to expand and control the conversation. The host mother was probably faced with a dilemma with the “or” question that her student uses because she bought and cooked the dish. She responds that she bought it first and then expands to ensure her response answers the “or” question completely. The student’s English proficiency is higher than that of all of the other students on the programme (as demonstrated by the student’s TOEIC score, as well as by the recorded conversation), and there is potential for the student to follow-up his host’s response, and possibly evaluate, but this does not come. Importantly, the student follows up rather than evaluates (line 182). This example illustrates the difference between the host parents’ frequent use of evaluations in the follow-up move, and the lack of evaluations produced by students in the few instances when they do have access to the follow-up move. The student does not thank his host mother for preparing something that he requested, which could be because they are both talking about cooking in which a show of gratitude could function to close the conversation. The student only comments in the follow-up move that it is similar to a Japanese rice biscuit called “senbei” (Japanese “senbei” is common in Japan). Rather than closing the
conversation (as an evaluation often does), the student’s follow-up move (line 182) potentially opens up the conversation. However, the host mother does not ask for any further information, but instead decides not to say anything. It could be that the host mother has decided to indirectly indicate that she does not want to continue the conversation, due to her student’s lack of outward appreciation. It is difficult to know if the host mother thought that the student’s follow-up move in line 182 was rude or not. However, if we consider the fact that both the host mother and the student decided that it would be in their best interests that the student find another homestay, then this conversation could be implicit evidence that there was some tension or uncomfortable interaction throughout the student’s stay. In this example, the conversation is closed by the student.

4.2.14 Example of a host “or” question to manage turn-taking (taken from May, 2007)

The initiation in line 9 involves a choice for the student to respond to. Long (1983) asserts that or-choice questions are prevalent in foreigner talk (FT) outside classrooms. Or-choice questions provide possible answers within the question, which support the question’s meaning and can help to sustain a conversation. This example illustrates an or-choice question which sustains the host’s control of the conversation and more importantly, leads the student to agree with her.

9. HM: do you like holidays or a little boring? (laughs slightly)

10. S: oh, a little boring (laughs slightly)

11. HM: maybe, yeah, F (A) (laughs slightly) tonight we will, yeah, so you and your friend need to talk about things to do (S: mm R (B)) cos <we’re going away> maybe we
will give you some ideas, maybe tonight, and then you need to talk to your friends and you need to say we will do this (laughs slightly) (Adv)

12. S: oh, yeah R2 (A)

13. HM: cos it’s not good that everybody just stays at home, and they get a little bored.

F2 (Com) ((laughs slightly then /student’s name/ laughs))

The host mother uses a leading question in an “or” form in line 9, which functions to offer the student a signal of what she would like him to do, that is, agree with her, so that she can then suggest action (as given in line 11). The first part of the question in line 9 (“do you like holidays?”) would have been sufficient to prompt a response from the student. However, the added suggestion that holidays might be “a little boring” focuses the student on making a choice. The student responds in what could be interpreted as a response that the student knows that his host mother would like to hear, that is, that the holidays are a little boring. The host mother’s follow-up move in line 11 of “maybe, yeah” functions as an indirect acknowledgement that, in fact, the holidays are “a little boring,” but also functions to soften the impact of the advice to come. In line 11, the host mother uses the expressions, “…we will…,” “you need to talk about…,” “…we will give you…,” “you need to talk to…,” and “you need to say…” throughout her response. These expressions function to offer advice for finding a solution to the boring holidays. The student’s laughter could be interpreted as a signal to the host mother that her advice has been acknowledged and even possibly accepted. The laughter from both the host mother and the student could also be a signal to both that the episode has now finished and a different topic could be initiated by either. The
advice that the host mother gives, starting from line 9, is strategically continued and managed by the host mother until the end of line 13 when they both laugh.

Giving advice has been claimed to create an asymmetrical relationship (see Hudson, 1990; Morrow, 2006). For example, line 11 prepares the student for the advice to come (“you need to talk to your friends and you need to say…”) by first involving “we” and then “you.” Morrow (2006) asserts that shifts in pronoun usage are one feature illustrating solidarity and involvement. However, the shift here seems to be from solidarity to distance, with the host mother switching to using “you” as a directive. There is then slight laughter and a justification for giving the advice (line 13). However, the host mother has a specific reason for offering advice, which is that her student will be able to occupy himself satisfactorily while they are away without him. The student acknowledges the advice, but does not offer any form of thanks. In this example, the host mother uses “embedded advice” (Locher, 2006), while attempting to express solidarity (Morrow, 2006), which the student acknowledges, but might not value, since it is advice which is not sought by the student (Jefferson & Lee, 1992; Silverman, 1997).

4.2.15 Example of an “or” question causing confusion (taken from May, 2007)
In this example the host mother indirectly signals that she is about to serve dinner. However, the host asks an “or” question, which seems to confuse the student.

4. HM: we’re going, we’re going to have dinner soon, so what would you like to do?
I (K1?, K2?)

5. S: eh R (Req Cl)

6. HM: you have a choice F (Ref)
7. S: eh? R2 (Req Cl) I want to eat dinner

8. HM: of course you do. F (A) I want to too (Com)

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the host mother’s utterance in line 4 of this example is a K1 or K2 initiation. The host mother initiates an or-choice question, which has previously been shown to sustain the control of the conversation by the person who asks it, but which fails to offer a choice (see section 4.2.14). This causes the student to request clarification in what may be construed as a rather inappropriate or even rude manner (line 5). As in the previous example (section 4.2.13), where the student did not display any form of gratitude in response to his host’s offer, the student’s response in this example could be negatively evaluated.

The host parent has the power to decide when (and what) dinner is going to be served. The initiation could be interpreted as a form of inclusion through the use of the word “we’re” or a promise that dinner will be served soon. However, the initiation is contradictory. The first part of the strategy is in its preparatory stage, “we’re going […] to have dinner soon,” followed by the actual initiation “what would you like to do?” The second part of the sentence does not accord with the first because the host mother has just said that “we” are “going to have dinner soon.” (There was nobody else in the house except the student and the host mother.) The student’s response signals that he does not understand her initiation (line 5), which moves his host mother to reformulate her intention (line 6). In line 7, the student again signals that he does not understand the full initiation, probably because the host mother has commented with an implicit question referring back to her original initiation. The host mother’s initiation in line 4 and 6 could be interpreted as an informative statement that dinner is about to be served,
a request for information to find out whether it is suitable to serve dinner now or even a hint meaning that the student is to stop what he is doing now in order to get ready to eat dinner. Out of these three possible interpretations, I have decided that it is the latter: a hint for the student to stop what he is doing. I have decided this because if we look at the host mother’s follow-up move in line 8, it suggests through the host mother’s language (“of course you do”) that it is expected that the student eat at this particular time. The student understood that he needed to respond, but, because the meaning of the initiation was ambiguous, he decided to say directly what he wanted to do. His host mother responds by saying “of course you do,” which could be interpreted as an implicit evaluation of the student’s response as to what she expected to hear. The host then concludes the conversation with the comment “I want to too.”

In this conversation, the host mother could be trying very hard to be overly polite (perhaps because she knew that she was being recorded) by offering her student choices, but not specifying what the choices were. However, despite the intention of the host mother, the student did not understand.

4.2.16 Example of the evaluative moves used as transitioning (taken from May, 2007)

In this example, the host father is talking to his student in the lounge before dinner. The follow-up moves used by the host father seem to be casually included in the conversation and function both as positive evaluations and as transitions into his subsequent initiations. The reformulations also maintain the host father’s speaking turn.

55. HF: yes, and what else will you do? I
56. S: and, ah, and I will go to ah, computer room. R
57. HF: go to the computer room.  
58. S: and (HF: yes (A)) I will send email to my family at there.  
59. HF: you’re going to send an email to your family.  
60. S: yeah  
61. HF: ok. F3 (A) That’s good, that’s very good, (E+) and I hope your family are well.(Com)  
62. S: mm R4 (B))  
63. HF: yes F4 (A) (1.5) yeah(SR) that’s good. (E+) Do you keep in touch with your family ah most weekends? (I)

In this episode, the host father reformulates (Ref) the student’s response twice (lines 57 and 59) before giving an evaluative move functioning as a positive evaluation.

The reformulations in both line 57 and 59 can be interpreted several ways in this conversation. It can be seen as an implicit request for confirmation (the host father was hard of hearing), or as a way of “making connections” between the larger units of discourse (Hellerman, 2003, p. 82; Nassaji & Wells, 2000, p. 403), or as corrective follow-up for the student by contrasting the “dispreferred [with] the preferred” (Cullen, 2002, p. 125). The reformulation could also be seen as an attempt to avoid conversational breakdown (strategies), as opposed to repairing a breakdown after it has occurred (tactics) (Long, 1983). The host father’s first follow-up move (functioning as a reformulation) in line 57 includes the article “the,” which suggests it could be an instance of corrective follow-up. Rather than just communicating, the host father may be indicating that he wants to “correct” his student. In other words, the host father may have taken on a teacher’s role. The student, however, continues his response from line
56, which may mean that the follow-up move has not been recognised by the student as corrective follow-up. The host father’s follow-up move in line 59 functions as another reformulation, but this time is responded to with “yeah” by the student. The student’s response could mean either that he is casually acknowledging his host father’s corrective follow-up or that he is confirming the meaning of what his host father has said, without recognising the correct form.

Students may mistake corrective follow-up for conversational responses similar to backchannelling or acknowledgement. Egi (2007) asserts that learners interpret reformulations as responses to content when they are long and different from the original utterance. Learners are more likely to attend to corrective follow-up when the reformulations are short and “closely [resemble] the original utterance” (p. 511). In this example the host father’s control of the first and third moves indicates that the student does not have the right to deviate from this conversational pattern. The second reformulation (line 59) closely resembles the student’s utterance, so this could be evidence that the student has acknowledged it as corrective follow-up.

This example has illustrated some important points. Firstly, the host father’s first reformulation was not taken up by the student. This could be because the student had not finished what he had started to say when the host father first reformulated. The host father’s second reformulation was acknowledged by the student. The second reformulation could have been interpreted by the student as a request for confirmation, or, due to the similarity of the reformulation, as corrective follow-up. This conversation has also illustrated that corrective follow-up need not end an exchange. For example, the comment in the follow-up move can expand upon the response rather than being interpreted as a move requiring a response. However, the student does not do this at the
next opportunity, where the host father not only performs a follow-up, but adds a positive evaluative and makes a comment that he hopes the student’s family is well. Instead the student only says “mm.” The student’s responses in this conversation might illustrate cross-cultural and/or cross-linguistic misunderstandings. The student might also have felt that he did not have the linguistic competence to continue with the conversational topic, or perhaps he was preoccupied with preparing himself for the host father’s upcoming questions (Raymond & Heritage, 2006, p. 682), and so instead chose to avoid the topic by remaining silent, or by producing non-committal sounds (e.g., backchannelling).

4.2.17 Example indicating a “warm, friendly environment” (taken from May, 2007)

In this example, the host father is enquiring how the student spent his time with his parents, who had been visiting from Japan for three days. The host father uses a variety of follow-up moves, including several positive evaluations. Waring (2008) suggests that teacher evaluations may function to encourage learner questions, if the turn-taking is such that there is enough room for the learner to “self-select” (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974, p. 704). I suggest that the recasts and positive evaluations as well as the particular places where the host father chooses to recast (line 107) appear to both support this student’s responses and create a warm and friendly environment.

101. HF: =ah, ok, (S: ah) that’s ok. Yeah, that’s ok, doesn’t matter (S: yeah) Did you see your family? I
102. S: ah, yes, yes R (A)
103. HF: how long? F (Exp)
104. S: um, four hour, um, four hour, for about four hour R2 (SR)
105. HF: for about four hour F2 (Rep) oh, good, oh, very good, (E+) you were happy to see your mum? I

106. S: yes, yes, um, yes, R (A) my family, um, (3.0) decides, comfid, confota, com

107. HF: comfortable F (Rec)

108. S: yeah R2 (A)

109. HF: yep F2 (A)

110. S: ah R3 (B)

111. HF: ah, nice F3 (E+)

112. S: ah, um, im R4 (B)

Line 105 could initially be interpreted as follow-up by recasting in an explicit request for confirmation. However, the recording presents his tone falling at the end of his utterance (indicated by the downward arrow) and there is no pause before he gives a positive evaluative and then makes a further initiation. The host father’s recast in line 105 could also be interpreted as the host father’s conversational strategy to purposefully take and maintain his speaking turn in order to provide positive evaluation as well a further initiation. In other words the host father could be using his repetition as a preparatory strategy in order to manage the conversation. In fact there is little development of the topic from the host father’s initiation in line 105, despite the student’s response in line 106, perhaps because of the student’s lack of linguistic competence. When the host father recasts the word “comfortable” in line 107 it is acknowledged by the student instead of being backchannelled, which may indicate that the host’s recast has been taken up and acknowledged as welcome support; however, without any further expansion the conversation draws to a close. The host father’s
corrective follow-up in line 107 effectively functions to end the conversation. One other interpretation could also be that the student might have realised that he did not have the linguistic competence to continue with the topic, as may be suggested by the sequence in lines 108-112. In this interpretation, line 111 could be understood to function as an acknowledgement rather than a positive evaluation because there is no expansion of the conversation following the reformulation in line 107 and nothing is being directly evaluated.

However, as the next extract shows, the conversation does continue. Because of this, line 111 could also be categorised as a preparatory evaluative move for the host father’s later utterances in lines 113 and 119. However, the student quickly responds after his host’s utterance with backchanneling. The student has not remained silent, but instead takes a turn to respond (if only backchanneling). This could indicate that the IRF structure is not as tightly bound as other examples have indicated, especially when a positive evaluation is provided by the host, and is perceived by the student as a support to enable the conversation to continue.

113. HF: I’m pleased you got to see your family  F4 (Com)
114. S: please↑  R5 (Req Cl)
115. HF: pleased, happy F5 (Rep) (Ref)
116. S: oh  R6 (A)
117. HF: happy, yes  F6 (Cmp C)
118. S: ah  R7 (B)
119. HF: it’s very important that you see your family even only for one minute, important  F7 (Com) (Adv) (SR)
The host father uses a personal pronoun, a contraction, and a conversational tone in line 113, which Biber (1988) claims to be characteristic of the high level of involvement used to express solidarity between interlocutors. Instead of responding cooperatively, the student repeats the host father’s word “please,” which prompts the host father to reformulate (line 115). The student’s repetition in line 114 is a clarification request. Rodriguez and Schlangen, (2004) explain that clarification requests function to manage the dialogue (p. 1). Rieser and Moore (2005) assert that clarification requests function to ensure that there is mutual understanding between the interlocutors (p. 239). In line 114, the clarification request by the student helps to manage and ensure this mutual understanding, which functions to create a friendly and convivial atmosphere. The request for clarification can also be interpreted as a strategy to bridge a gap in communication rather than let the conversation close (as in how the student backchannels in line 112). The host father’s response to the clarification request is firstly a repetition to the student’s trigger (line 114) and then added information in the form of a synonym (line 115). The student then says “oh,” (line 116) which acts as an acknowledgement that he has understood something. However, the student still does not respond appropriately to the question in line 113, which prompts his host father to expand in the form of a comment (line 119) on why he is pleased that his student was able see his family. The response from the student should have come in line 114, where it would have been appropriate for the student to respond with something like “thank you.” However, the student requests clarification. If the student did not understand, then a request for clarification is appropriate. Furthermore, the student might not know how to correctly request clarification and so just repeats what he thought his host father says, that is, “please.” (The student is probably not familiar with “pleased” used as an
adjective form in the middle of a sentence.) The student utters the word “please” in the hope that it will trigger a response. In this respect, the student is successful because his host father does respond with language that he understands.

4.2.18 Example of prompts to expand the conversation (taken from May, 2007)

The following example is an attempt by the host mother to find out what activities her student does throughout the day. The student responds, after some initial requests for clarification, with short answers only, which prompts the host mother to initiate expansion, but without much success at lengthening her student’s responses.

60. HM: ((sighs)) (7.0) did you use the computer today? I
61. S: today? R (Req Cl)
62. HM: computer room? F (Ref)
63. S: oh, yeah, and I played badminton. R2 (A) (Exp)
64. HM: oh, you did? F2 (A) (Exp)
65. S: yeah R3 (A)
66. HM: with [student’s name] and others? F3 (Exp)
67. S: oh yeah, and [student’s name] and other friends. R4 (A)
68. HM: oh, cool ((laughs slightly)) F4 (E+)

There is a positive evaluative move after several moves in line 68. This example illustrates how the student initiates an expansion, which is acknowledged by his host, but falls short of providing any further information except that specifically asked for by
his host. This example illustrates the host’s control of the conversation, as well as the student’s acceptance of this conversational structure.

The main initiation is in line 60. This is followed by a request for clarification by the student. This prompts a reformulation by the host mother, which is then responded to and expanded upon by the student (line 63). The student does not expand on the conversational topic about the computer, but instead expands on something else that he did “today.” The student’s response in line 63 implicitly requests a follow-up move from his host mother. The host mother provides the follow-up move with an expansion. The host mother’s question implicitly requests the student to expand on the conversational topic related to badminton. However, the student does not expand on that topic. The student interprets his host mother’s follow-up move in line 64 as a request for confirmation, and so confirms her question. The host mother then adds a further initiation in an attempt to get her student to expand (line 66); however, again the student only confirms what his host mother has said. The host mother finally follows up with a positive evaluation in line 68 and the conversation closes. The student’s responses are appropriate, but they do not function to extend the conversation very far from the immediate questions that the host mother asks. This type of conversation is reminiscent of a structured English conversation in the Japanese/English classroom in Japan.

4.2.19 Examples of loosely structured IRF exchanges (taken from May, 2007)

In the following example, the host mother is enquiring into what computer design project her student is doing. The host mother tries to get specific information regarding her student’s preferences for his design. In this example, although the student’s English
language proficiency allows him to expand his response, the conversation is still controlled by the host mother.

59. HM: *did you design anything?* I
60. S: *yes, we are designing a camera, camera.* R
61. HM: *ah, that's exciting.* F (E+)
62. S: *on, on a computer we have software solid works (HM: yeah (A)) it's quite difficult (HM: mm mm (B))* R2 (Exp)
63. HM: *are you given different projects or everyone does the same?* F2 (Exp)
64. S: *yes, everyone does the same.* R3
65. HM: *mm mm, that’s interesting.* F3 (B) (E+)

In this example, the host mother’s positive evaluative move in line 61 is slightly different from other positive evaluations in that it focuses on the project that the student is doing, and not on the student’s utterance. The student’s repetition of “camera” in line 60 suggests that the student would like to maintain his turn, which is why he overlaps his host mother’s positive evaluative in line 62, in order to expand his response. The student also expands upon his response after his host mother’s positive follow-up move (line 65). Line 65 has been categorised as backchannelling due to the slight pause before the evaluative. The host mother’s backchannelling also suggests that the IRF structure is flexible, with opportunities for the student to take the floor. However, as the following sequences of the same conversation illustrate, the student takes advantage of the opportunity to speak, as well as the fact that he has the English proficiency to do so, in order to provoke a negative reaction from his host mother.
66. S: but, I, I make an individual on my works so R4
67. HM: yeah (A)
68. S: I coloured my camera R4
69. HM: yeah (A)
70. S: with pink. R4
71. HM: so when you are designing F4 (Exp)
72. S: mm (B)
73. HM: you are just giving the form the same look ↓ F4 (Exp)
74. S: yes, not real shape R5 (A)
75. HM: mm mm (B)
76. S: yeah R5 (A)

The host mother’s expansion in line 73 has a downward intonation at the end of the utterance; however, the student still confirms (line 74). There is little expansion from this point onwards, except for the host mother’s next initiation in line 77.

77. HM: so what, what form have you given F5 (Exp)
78. S: form? R6 (Req Cl)
79. HM: yes F6 (A) what shape? (Ref)
80. S: shape ↓ R7 (OR)
81. HM: yes F7 (A)
82. S: square camera R8
83. HM: ok F (A)
There is actually a misunderstanding here. The students were all given a template with the same square on it. The students were given the task of designing a three-dimensional model which came out from this two-dimensional square, but which kept the original measurements of the square. In line 73, the host mother moves to repeat what she has understood, based on the information from line 59 through to line 70. She is implicitly requesting confirmation, to which the student responds with “yes” (line 74). However, later, the host mother asks what individual “form” the student has given his camera (line 77). The two words that cause confusion are “form” and “shape.” The shape is the square, which is the same for all of the students, but the form coming out of the shape depends on the individual. In this case, the student has coloured his form pink. The host mother equates the words “form” and “shape” with the same meaning (compare line 77 and 79). The student responds with a repetition of the word “shape” (line 80), which I have interpreted as the student cognitively processing his host mother’s recast. His host mother responds with “yes,” which indicates that she has interpreted the student’s “other repetition” (OR) as a confirmational check. The student provides a response, which is acknowledged by his host mother, and the conversation closes. Lines 71, 73 and 77 function to limit the student’s response. The student’s response from the first initiation in line 59 is quite expansive, but the host mother’s expansions and recasts limit the student’s opportunity to speak freely. The student does not add any further information after his host mother’s final follow-up move in line 83. Line 83, however, is just one utterance by the host mother. It is not a positive evaluation, but rather an acknowledgment. This acknowledgment is another example of the flexibility of the IRF and further evidence that the student has access to take the floor.
4.2.20 Example of K1 questions triggering assumptions (taken from May, 2007)

In the following example, the host mother and student are about to sit down for dinner. The host mother is asking whether her student would like gravy on his meal. It is uncertain whether the initiator, the host mother, already knows if her student likes gravy or not. It is not until the end of the conversation that we find out that the initiation is in fact a K1 in line 12. The conversation begins (from line 12) at the close of a topic concerning when the lecturer at Engineering College New Zealand (ECNZ) will explain to the students about the holiday homework.

12. HM: very good. He’s a lecture so he will, he will talk. (S: mm) Ok, um, dinner’s ready. I made some gravy. Do you like gravy? I (K1)
13. S: I don’t know. R
14. HM: you don’t know? F (Cnf C)
15. S: yeah R2
16. HM: you have had it before sometimes when [the student’s name] was here. F2 (Com)
17. S: mm mm R3 (B)
18. HM: so um, I’ll put it on top of the potato because the the juices are from the chicken F3 (Com)
19. S: yeah R4 (A)
20. HM: does your mother do that at home? F4 (Exp)
21. S: ah, no R5 (A)
22. HM: no? F5 (Cnf C) She cooks different ↓ (Ref) (Com)
23. S: mm R6 (B)
24. HM: *that doesn’t matter* ↓ F6 (E N)

(The word “lecture” in line 12 could be foreigner talk for “lecturer,” but it is unclear. However, this is what the host mother actually said.)

In line 12, the host mother says that she has made some gravy and then asks whether her student likes gravy. I interpret line 12 as an indirect offer to accept the host mother’s gravy, rather than a direct question enquiring into whether or not her student actually likes gravy. It is as if the host mother has set up the situation that she has made gravy in order for her student to enjoy his dinner, and so probably expects her student to say that he would like some gravy. Considering that the host mother and student are the only ones who are going to be eating dinner it would probably be impolite for the student to refuse this offer from his host mother and so he responds as best he can by saying, “I don’t know” (line 13). The host mother seems surprised at her student’s response in line 13 and reformulates what he says as a confirmation check, to which the student responds with agreement (line 15). The host mother then explains that he has had her gravy before, in what seems to be an attempt to remind him that he does like her gravy (line 16) and, furthermore, that he should accept her offer. In fact, the host mother does not wait for her student to remember that he had had her gravy before, or whether he would like it again, but, rather, assumes that he would like it and explains that she is going to put it on top of his potato (line 18). This time the student indirectly agrees with what his host mother has done with an acknowledgement (line 19). The host mother’s expansion in line 20 is responded to by the student (line 21). The host mother then requests confirmation by raising her voice at the end of her question, as if to suggest surprise (line 22). However, again, the host mother does not wait for confirmation, but
instead comments that “she [referring to the student’s mother] cooks different” (line 22). The host mother’s comment is backchannelled (line 23) and then finally followed up by the host mother as an evaluative move that indicates that it is indeed all right that her student’s mother does not put gravy over his potato like she does (line 24). The host mother’s final utterance in line 20 evaluates the fact that it is of no importance that the student’s mother does not cook the same way she does. I have therefore evaluated the host mother’s utterance as a neutral evaluation, because the evaluation was set up, but concluded in neither a positive or negative evaluation based on the response that the student gave. The host mother’s neutral evaluation functions to close the conversation.

In this example, it may be an overstatement to conclude that the host mother has closed the conversation. The host mother has commented in an evaluative way, but the conversation is still open for the student to say something. Indeed, it would be quite out of the ordinary for the host mother to have not said anything after the student’s response in line 23. In this example, the host mother controls the conversation (she also controls how the student has his gravy). There is not much room for the student to expand on any of the questions that are initiated because his host mother quickly gives the response. This is another example of the rigidity of the IRF structure.

4.2.21 Example of a host stealing the student’s move (taken from September, 2007)

In this example, the student initiates the interaction by greeting his host mother. Although the student initiates a common adjacency pair, it is not supported by his host mother. This example indicates two different cultural perceptions of how adjacency pairs function. The student commits to the formulaic language and indicates his
intention to follow through; however, his host breaks with the convention and attempts to expand upon her student’s response.

1. S: hello
2. HM: hello, R how are you?
3. S: I’m fine, thank you. F How about you? (Exp)
4. HM: Did you have a good day?
5. S: yeah, not, a, but very tired. R (A) (Com)

The student’s host mother responds by using a typical formulaic adjacency pair. The student responds, and then moves to expand the conversation in a manner similar to his host mother’s initiation. However, the host mother does not provide an appropriate response. This could indicate that she did not hear the student’s initiation, or that she was not in the habit of responding to initiations from her student. The host parents commented to me that they found it very difficult to get their student to initiate any kind of conversation at all (personal communication). This could, therefore, imply that the student was deliberately going out of his way to show that he was trying to converse with his host parents just for the recording. However, the response made to the student’s initiation may suggest why he might not have done this as an everyday routine.
4.2.22 Example of an unexpected host response to a student initiation (taken from September, 2007)

In this conversation the student initiates, but the response that the host father gives takes the control away from the student, which leaves the student unable to successfully close the conversation.

29. S: how’s it going? I
30. HF: it’s good R
31. S: yeah ↓ F (A)
32. HF: I’ve been busy. (2.0) mowing the lawns. R2
33. S: sorry? F2 (Req Cl)
34. HF: I mowed the lawns R3 (Ref)
35. S: yeah F3 (A)
36. HF: cut, cut the grass, (SR) hoed the garden, hoed the garden (SR) R4
37. S: yeah F4 (A)
38. HF: and now I’m tired. R5
39. S: oh F (A)
40. HF: ((laughs slightly)) R6

(End of the recording)

The host father has interpreted the student’s initiation as phatic communion (Malinowski, 1935) and (much to the surprise of the student) has continued to expand his response over many moves. In this example, the host father appears to become the dominant conversationalist, even though he did not initiate the first move. It would have
been more appropriate for the student to have positively evaluated his host father’s response, responding with “oh, good,” or so forth; however, instead, the student has a downward tone to his follow-up move, which could indicate that he expects the conversation to draw to a close. In spite of the student’s follow-up move (line 31), the host father takes the initiative and expands on his response. It is as if the student did not expect his host father to expand on his response, due to the student’s request for clarification in line 33. The host father’s response opens with an introductory comment (“I’ve been busy”), followed by a list of things that he did during the day. The student’s request for clarification in line 33 functions to make the host father reformulate “mowing the lawns” to “mowed the lawns,” following with two self-repetitions (line 36). It is as if the host father is purposely using self-repetitions in order for his student to more easily understand what he says. The student then follows up with an acknowledgement (line 37), which is concluded by his host father by saying that he is now tired (line 38). The student acknowledges this (line 39), which is finally responded to with a laugh from his host father (line 40). The laugh functions to close the conversation.

It is unclear whether the student actually understood all that his host father said. There are acknowledgements made by the student, but these could be functioning as mere backchannelling, to keep the conversation going without any real understanding taking place.

This example could indicate that the student has the ability and confidence to initiate a conversation, but not to maintain or develop it. There were also opportunities where evaluatives could have been performed by the student. The first evaluative could have been made in line 31, the second in line 35, and the third in line 37; however, the
student, for right or wrong, decides to only follow-up using acknowledgement. It might also have been appropriate for the student to have responded to his host’s final comment in line 39, but the student probably did not have the linguistic ability to do this, and so decided to acknowledge his host father with simply “oh.”

4.2.23 Example of implicit K1 knowledge by the host (taken from March, 2008)

In the following example, the student is trying to tell his host mother about the rope factory field trip that he had just been on at school. This example is similar to many of the other examples discussed in this chapter, in that the conversational structure is limited to the student responding to his host’s questions without any voluntary expansion of his own.

17. HM: oh. and how many people work there I (K1?)

18. S: ((laughs slightly)) how many↓ people, R (OR) Oh, how many people, mm (1.5) (SR) I’m not sure. R

19. HM: You’re not sure? F (Cnf C) Um, the man, the man (SR) who lives over the road works there F (Com)

The host parent indirectly indicates in line 19 that she might already know the correct response to her initiation in line 17. Line 17 could be interpreted as the host mother attempting to prompt her student into expanding on the topic. The host mother checks her student’s response, but it is not responded to by the student. This could be because the host mother does not give any time for her student to respond. The host then self-repeats “the man,” and comments that the man who lives over the road works there,
which may be a clue as to how many people work in the factory. The conversation continues below with the knowledge of the rope factory and the conversational turn residing with the host. However, we can see here that the host’s attempt at expanding the conversation, or contributing to the conversation by informing the student about something that he might not know, prompts the student to respond (although very briefly) in line 20.

20. S: *Oh, R2 (A)*

21. HM: *and I think ah, sometimes they work through the night. F2 (Com)*

22. S: *through the night*↓ R3 (OR)

23. HM: *yeah, F (A) so they work all the time making the ropes. (Com)*

It is difficult to interpret whether the host is trying to prompt her student into giving a response as to how many people work in the factory by exemplifying what the situation at the factory is, or whether she is merely expanding what she knows about the factory in the form of comments. The student’s response in line 22 is acknowledged by the host mother, but it is questionable whether the student has understood what “through the night” means. The student also echoes his host mother’s follow-up move in line 18, which could indicate that he is trying to give himself time to process what his host mother has said, (see Raymond & Heritage, 2006) as well as maintaining his conversational turn. The host mother interprets the student’s “other repetition” as a confirmation check and continues to expand on her follow-up move. The conversation closes.
The follow-up move functions to close the conversation. However, the host is, once again, trying to expand the conversation, similar to her follow up move in line 19, so why the student does not respond is something to query. The host mother is the dominant conversationalist.

### 4.3 Summary and discussion of the findings: conversational patterns

This section will present the overall findings from the analysis of the IRF structure in the May, September, January and March conversations.

Generally, the host parents initiated the first move, which consequently gave them the opportunity to perform the follow-up move. The following sections 4.3.1 - 4.3.3 describe general trends discovered in the hosts’ and students’ use of initiations. Sections 4.3.4 and 4.3.5 describe the hosts’ corrective follow-up move and their unsought advice. Section 4.3.6 describes the students’ use of follow-up moves and section 4.3.7 describes the students’ lack of connection. Section 4.3.8 describes turn-taking by both the hosts and the students and section 4.3.9 describes the effects of hosts’ use of clarification. Finally, section 4.4 concludes this chapter.

#### 4.3.1 Introduction – “it’s not all bad”

In Chapter 1, section 1.1.2, Halliday (1984), suggested that instead of looking at all of the unsuccessful communication, it is also beneficial to look at the successful or positive intercultural communication as well. Indeed, looking at all of the examples of the IRF and the findings which follow in the next sections would seem to paint a bleak picture of the communication in the homestay environment in this research project. However, this was not the case. In quite a few of the homestays, students had very
successful and positive experiences with their homestay families, and continued to maintain lasting long distance friendships. In some cases, the students even returned to visit their homestay families for a short time, and vice-versa, homestay families also took the opportunity to visit their student (or what the host parents perceived to be their son or daughter) in Japan.

The matrices indicate major, minor, and neutral communication issues; however, it must be remembered that these conversations were only analysed because on the first listening of the recording the conversations were perceived as being a potential problem area. Some of the conversations that were first listened to were subsequently categorised as neutral communication issues and even some conversations were later not included for analysis because on a second listening they did not surface as being problematic. The conversations included in this analysis, therefore, only scratch the surface of all of the conversations that were recorded. Again, attention should be drawn to the fact that a lot of the students experienced positive intercultural communication, but unfortunately, for the purposes of this thesis, these are not focused on.

4.3.1 Hosts’ use of K1 initiations

There were situations where K1 initiations were used by the host parents (i.e., the answer to the question was already known). One conversation included six instances of K1 initiations. Most research related to the IRF(E) has been based within the classroom environment, but the examples outlined above, and documented in the matrices (see Appendices 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d), have illustrated that the homestay environment is another situation where the IRF(E) structure using a K1 initiation is present, and, furthermore,
that the use of the evaluative by the host parent functions to limit any further conversational interaction by the student.

4.3.2 Hosts’ use of K2 initiations

The host parents generally used K2 initiations (i.e., the hosts did not know the answers to the questions they initiated). This could indicate that the students’ responses lacked adequate detail, which warranted further questioning from the hosts, and/or that the hosts wanted to sustain the conversational topic. Sustaining the conversational topic provides opportunities for students to interact and engage more fully with their hosts, which could influence the level of social distance between them.

4.3.3 Students’ use of K2 initiations

Even in cases where students did initiate questions, they were always in the K2 format and never in the K1 format. This indicates that students do not perceive themselves in a teacher role and, furthermore, do not perceive themselves to have the right to question or test their hosts’ knowledge. The students’ sole use of K2 initiations indicates a strict compliance in relation to perceived roles in the power/distance relationship, which has also been shown to reside in the teacher controlled classroom (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Mehan, 1979). At no time during the course of the homestay period did the students risk thwarting this particular structure.

4.3.4 Hosts’ use of corrective follow-up

The host parents displayed a pattern of commenting or providing corrective follow-up (reformulation) in the follow-up move. The hosts’ corrective follow-up has been
illustrated as functioning in various ways, which further supports the ubiquity of the IRF structure. Corrective follow-up could signal to the student to continue to expand upon their response, to emphasise the role of the host as a teacher, or provide support for the student's immediate language needs. However, from the students’ perspective, corrective follow-up might be interpreted differently according to various situations and language contexts. For example, the findings indicate that corrective follow-up can be incorrectly acknowledged by the student as a signal to end the conversation, or as an explicit confirmation that does not require any further expansion.

4.3.5 Hosts’ unsought advice

In the cases where host parents offered advice, it was not requested by the students. The advice was usually given using bald, on-record, short imperatives in the second person, but was framed in such a way as to indicate a sense of solidarity and involvement. The advice was acknowledged, but never followed up in the conversation by the students. The advice functioned to close the conversations. It is difficult to ascertain whether the students heeded the advice or not.

4.3.6 Students’ follow-up moves

Throughout the entire data collection period, only one of the students performed an evaluative move based on the response from his homestay parent within the IRF structure, but this was performed using a K2 initiation. This was explained as being unusual for that student and that it may have been the result of the student going out of his way to indicate to me, as his English teacher, that he was trying to initiate conversation in the homestay (something that I tried to encourage the students to do).
There were very few cases in which students commented on their hosts’ responses. One situation in which a student did use a comment was shown in example 4.2.13, where the student commented that the dish his host parent had prepared tasted like a Japanese rice cracker. In this situation, the student had high proficiency in English, but there was still no follow-up move provided by the student expanding on his own initiation. Usually, the students answered direct questions, and rarely commented on their homestay parents’ comments. Conversely, host parents often commented on student’s responses even when the students did not use a direct question form.

4.3.7 Students’ lack of connection

Either the students did not have the linguistic competence to join back into the main initiation and expand their response, or they were apprehensive about continuing to speak when they perceived that they might be evaluated on their English ability. In the latter case, the students would rarely speak out without knowing that what they were about to say was going to be grammatically correct. Some examples indicated that if students did risk speaking out, knowing that they would be evaluated on their response, they would do so by giving limited one or two word responses (avoiding any “dispreferred” responses (Schegloff, 2007)) and wait for their host to evaluate before expanding any further. In other cases, it seemed easier for the students to simply acknowledge their host parents through back-channelling or remaining silent.

4.3.8 Turn-taking by both the hosts and the students

When the host parent asked the student a specific question, the student would usually understand that it was their turn to provide a response. However, this was usually the
case when the initiation occurred at the beginning of a new conversational topic. In many cases the student’s moves beyond the first follow-up were limited.

4.3.9 Consequence of clarification

The students often found it difficult to return to and expand on the original initiation when the host parent requested clarification. This tended to result in the student’s responses being limited to just acknowledgement or even silence. It could also indicate that the student did not have a strategy to connect the conversation to the previous move. Again, rather than risk making a mistake, the student may have opted to stay silent and wait to respond rather than continue.

4.4 Conclusion

The IRF structure might replicate a formulaic structure that the students are used to following in their English learning environment in Japan. In the English learning environment in Japan, the student does not usually make the first move and so, consequently, does not have the opportunity to provide follow-up to the teacher. The students might have transferred these particular conversational patterns learnt in the Japanese educational setting, (see Wilkinson, 2002 for similar findings) and/or through the socialisation of power and distance variables from their Japanese family culture (Conlan, 1996), into their homestay environment. (This latter point concerning culture will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5 and 6.) Seldom did the students initiate conversation, which meant that they seldom had the opportunity to perform a follow-up move. However, there is one example in Chapter 5 which illustrates how a student strategically initiates the first move as a topic of conversation rather than an actual
question in order to take advantage of the IRF structure to perform an indirect FTA. In this example the student hints at what he would like his host mother to question him about, which causes her to request clarification and consequently narrow the focus of her questions in order for her to vocalise the FTA that her student was attempting. I term this a “reversed FTA.” This example will be illustrated in the following chapter (see section 5.1.2, example 1) and further discussed in Chapter 6.

The following chapter will move from an interactional sociolinguistic approach, with analysis at the sentential level, to a wider perspective that involves more general discourse themes. Of course, the communication issues which will be analysed in Chapter 5 can be viewed solely at the sentential level (as has already been illustrated in relation to the examples in this chapter, which focus on the IRF structure), but analysing the broad, macro and micro generalisations adds another layer to the interpretation.
Chapter 5

Minor and major communication issues

This chapter will examine communication issues using Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle and Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model to uncover patterns that may have contributed to social distance between the host parents and students within their interpersonal relationships. It shows how communication issues, when combined with other features such as the IRF structure illustrated in Chapter 4, are complex and dependent on many variables.

Section 5.1 will provide an overview of minor communication issues (a definition of both minor and major communication issues follows). It will provide examples that involve humour, no negotiation of meaning, and one uncomfortable interaction that eventually transpired into a major communication issue. A brief analysis of why each minor communication issue was categorised as such is given before each conversation as a general guide and orientation to the analysis.

Section 5.2 will give three examples of conversations involving major communication issues (sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). Section 5.2.4 will provide a summary of the overall findings and discussion for these three major communication issues.

This distinction between minor and major communication issues is partly “post-hoc,” in that issues were classified as major or minor because of action that was taken after the recording was made. I have classified a minor communication issue as one that involved some form of intervention from either me or the Japanese liaison staff, but usually did not involve any negotiation with the International Centre or the ECJ staff in Japan. There was also less documentation and time spent in the negotiation phase of a
minor communication issue because not as much formality was required as was required in the case of a major communication issue. Minor communication issues were usually discovered during casual conversation between me and the student, the Japanese staff, or the homestay parent. Quite often, I would also read about such situations in the daily journal that I asked the students to write for language learning purposes.

I have classified a major communication issue as one that resulted in a substantial amount of intervention from one of the Japanese liaison staff at a later stage. The following three examples below have been classified as “major” because they involved interventions from the two Japanese liaison staff at the request of the student(s) or staff of ECJ. Some of the ECJ staff knew about the students’ homestay problems because the students would tell their parents in Japan via email or phone call, and their parents would ring the staff at the ECJ with their concerns. The homestay issue was then passed onto me in my capacity as programme manager. It must be noted that, at the time the recordings were made, it was not always obvious to the interlocutors that there had been any communication issue. It was only because some form of expected action was not carried out by a student after the recording was made that a problem manifested itself, and a communication issue was deemed to have been the cause.

The key to the conversations follows the same pattern used in Chapter 4, with regards to the IRF structure (see also Appendix 4). The line numbering has remained the same as in the original transcripts of the conversations. In all of the conversations the participants knew that the conversation was being recorded.
5.1 **Overview of minor communication** issues

Section 5.1.1 provides examples of conversations that involve the host parent joking with their student. In these examples, the host parents are trying to create a warm, friendly atmosphere by using positive politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1978) to draw the students into the conversation. However, the humour flouts Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle and are misinterpreted by the students. These examples will also show that there is no attempt by the host to help the student understand the humour even when they become aware that the student probably does not understand.

Section 5.1.2 is an example of a conversation in which a student performs an FTA to their host parent. This particular conversation follows on from complaints from the homestay parents (in the second homestay meeting held at ECNZ in August, 2007) that in general their students were not direct enough when they wanted something. I have therefore interpreted students’ indirectness as a minor communication issue from the host parents’ perspective. I have provided one example of this (see section 5.1.2) in which the student uses indirect strategies in order to request a ski jacket. Although the student’s request is finally acknowledged and agreed to, the conversation illustrates how the student performed the FTA, the difficulty associated with performing it, and the difficulty associated with how it was interpreted.

Section 5.1.3 illustrates a conversation with little negotiation between the host parents and the student. This example demonstrates a minor communication issue, which, fortunately, did not result in any further problems. However, section 5.1.3 illustrates one of a series of minor intercultural communication issues that eventually resulted in the student moving into a different homestay. This example serves as a transition from the minor to major communication issues which follow.
5.1.1 Humour

Minor communication issues occurred when host parents made humour, particularly ironic ones. The joking that I am referring to here is conversational joking (Davies, 2003), in which there is no predetermined script or conventional routine to follow.

According to Grice (1975), the kinds of interactions that follow occur in particularised contexts (i.e., a relaxed homestay environment), but the actual utterances function in a generalised context (i.e., the host parent does not assist the student to understand the humour). In order for the student to understand that the host parent’s utterance is humour, a relatively advanced level of pragmatic/semantic knowledge and skill is required, something the student probably does not have in English. To be more specific, according to Davies, (2003) participants usually display understanding of conversational joking by:

...matching selected characteristics (e.g., lexical, syntactic, prosodic, and pragmatic) as well as interactional rhythm (Davies, 2003, p. 1368).

5.1.1.1 Example of the host purposely using a K1 initiation

In this example, (taken from January, 2008) the student has invited his friend to come during the weekend. His host mother can probably predict what her student will do this weekend and so prompts using a K1 question to then purposely flout the maxim of quality (Grice, 1975), However, the intention of the host’s use of the K1 will be shown to increase solidarity.

25. HM: um, what’s your plans for this weekend I (K1)

26. S: This weekend? Ah, um, [the student’s name] will come tomorrow. R

27. HM: and you will practise your English† F (Exp) (FTA)
The host mother’s initiative in line 25 could be interpreted as an FTA by the student because the student is already under the impression that his host mother knows that his friend will come to her house.

The student responds by requesting confirmation (line 26), but does not wait for his host mother to respond before giving hesitant responses “ah” and “um.” At first glance, the student may be apprehensive about reminding his host mother that his friend will be coming tomorrow and therefore signals using a negative politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1978). It could also be that the student is hesitating because he does not want to lose his speaking turn to reply to his host mother in a way that will fully divulge his intentions. The student’s act of honesty could be interpreted as being bald and on-record, which could furthermore be a hint as to why this whole episode has a sense of warm, friendly relations between the interlocutors.

Once again, line 27 could be interpreted as a bald on-record FTA with no redressive action; however, the host mother’s laughter with her student in lines 28 and 29 indicates that it is an FTA using positive politeness (see point 8 in Chapter 2, section 2.7.3). The host’s follow-up move in line 27 is an expansion in the form of rhetorical humour. The host mother and the student both laugh, which acts to inform the host mother that her humour has been understood. This signals to the host mother that it is appropriate to intensify her humour and to try to expand the student’s response by asking one more rhetorical question (line 29). The laughter in line 28 could be
interpreted as a negative evaluation, due to the host mother’s use of the word “no,” but this is in a question form (indicated by rising intonation), which indicates that the host mother is requesting confirmation that, in fact, the student will not speak English when his friend comes over. The student responds with laughter, indicating that he has probably understood his host mother’s intention to perform humour.

In this example, the humour has been used by the host mother to indicate a friendly interpersonal relationship (Halliday, 1984). From a Gricean perspective, the host mother has purposefully flouted the maxim of quality (Grice, 1975) in line 27 by saying something that she believes is not true. The host mother’s aim is to laugh with her student. She continues to flout the maxim of quality in line 29, as well as the maxim of quantity, by exaggerating the fact that she can pre-empt what her student is going to do when his friend comes to her house, which functions to nullify the initiation as an FTA which the host mother first initiated in line 25. The student responds with laughter.

Following are four different examples of the host parent joking which differ from the above example because there is evidence to suggest that the student does not understand. The examples were taken from data collected in May and September, 2007 and January and March, 2008. The examples in 5.1.1.2 and 5.1.1.3 are taken from the same homestay family, but occurred four months apart. The examples in 5.1.1.4 and 5.1.1.5 are taken from different homestay families.

5.1.1.2 Example of a student remaining silent after host’s humour

In this example, even though the host’s intention may have been to build a warm, friendly atmosphere with his student, the student’s reaction to the humour was to remain
silent. The student’s reaction could be evidence that the humour failed. (The initials HB stand for the host brother, who is five years old.)

152. HF: *so what are you going to do this weekend, [the student’s name]?
I (K1)*

153. S: *this weekend? I have no plan. R (Cnf C)*

154. HF: *Who’s coming to stay with you this weekend? F (Exp)*

155. S: *ah, um, [the student’s friend] R2*

156. HM: *oh, [student’s friend] coming to stay is she? F2 (Cnf C)*

The host father’s initiation in line 152 could be interpreted in the same way as the host mother’s first initiation in the last example (5.1.1.1, line 25) as an FTA because, as is evident from the prompt in line 154, the host father already knows what his student is going to be doing in the weekend. However, line 156 indicates that the host mother did not know that the student’s friend was intending to stay at their house. The host mother’s confirmation check causes the student to hedge confirmation (line 157).

157. S: *ah, um, ah, yes. R3 (A)*

158. HF: *had you forgotten? F3 (Exp)*

159. S: *ah, yes. R4 (A)*

160. HF: *oh if you’ve forgotten you’ll have to say she can’t come then. F4 (FTA)*

161. S: *yes, she can. R5 (A)*

162. HF: *you forgot. F5*
163. HB:  *she can come daddy.*

164. S:  *thank you, [the host brother’s name].*

165. HF:  *can she? I don’t know.*

(End of the episode)

The bald on-record FTA, disguised as humour, occurs in line 160, but it is prepared in line 152 by the use of the host’s K1 question, and in line 158 where the humour is exaggerated. We can interpret the host’s utterances as humour because of the monotone that he uses throughout the conversation until the final FTA in line 160 and then 162. The host father’s voice is very flat and said with no rise in intonation, which suggests a deadpan voice often associated with sarcasm (Capelli, Nakagawa, & Madden, 1990). Furthermore, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) sarcasm is “a sharp, bitter or cutting remark,” which, like irony, is supposed to give a different meaning to what is said. Line 160 is a very antagonistic and bald remark because it refuses what his host daughter would like to do. The student opposes the bald, on-record FTA in line 161, which could indicate that the social distance between the participants is close enough for the student to directly indicate her feelings. The student’s host brother also opposes the FTA in line 163, which seems to soften the force of the host father’s FTA. The conversation, however, is closed by the host father and there is no further negotiation; the friend was allowed to visit without any difficulties.

In this episode, the host father indirectly shows his superiority in the family by joking that his student’s friend will not be able to come and stay at their house because she has forgotten to say that this was going to happen. The humour here is at the expense of the student. The humour that the homestay father makes is based on
contrasting what solidarity (Morrow, 2006) or close social distance exists up to line 156, and then purposely distancing the relationship by saying that the student’s friend cannot come. This unexpected distancing, which is performed to increase solidarity, could have been detrimental to the relationship if the student misunderstood that this was humour.

5.1.1.3 Example of humour with an underlying message
In this conversation, the host father is encouraging his five-year old son to ask the student some questions about her favourite food. There is a level of ambiguity as to whether it is appropriate for the student to be eating muesli, which is her host father’s breakfast cereal.

243. HF: what’s [the student’s name] favourite food? I
244. HB: what’s your favourite food [the student’s name]? I
245. S: my favourite food? R (Req Cl) Oh, my favourite food, oh, (SR) I

\textit{like everything except licorice.}

246. HF: except licorice. F (OR)
247. S: yes. R2 (A)
248. HF: what’s wrong with licorice? It’s nice. F2 (Exp) (FTA)
249. S: it’s not nice R

The host father’s direct on-record FTA in line 248 is countered by the student directly indicating her difference of opinion. This could indicate that the interpersonal relationship between the participants is close enough for direct feelings to be stated
without any cause for retribution. However, the following episode seems to push the interpersonal relationship too far.

250. HB:  you don’t want weetbix, you don’t like weetbix. I

251. S:  I can eat wee, wee, weetbix R

252. HF:  I don’t think she had weetbix did she? F (Exp)

253. HB:  no. R

254. HF:  she had muesli every day. She ate my muesli. F (Com) (FTA)

255. S:  eh? R2 (Req Cl)

256. HF:  everyone’s eating my muesli F2 (Com)

257. HB:  no, I’m not. R

258. HF:  ok. F (A)

259. HB:  cos, I’m not allowed muesli. R

260. HF:  oh. F (A)

261. S:  mm. R3 (B)

(End of the episode)

In line 250, the host brother continues the conversational topic about what food the student likes and inquires whether she likes a typical New Zealand breakfast cereal called “weetbix.” The student responds that she can eat weetbix, to which the host father responds with line 252. Line 252 flouts Grice’s (1975) maxim of relevance. It would have been usual for the host father to have responded with something similar to “I don’t think she likes weetbix,” but he instead says, “I don’t think she had weetbix.” The tag question at the end of line 252 is intended for the host brother to answer and not
for the student, which gives an indication that the host father and host brother have information that the student may not have. This could highlight the distance between the student and her host brother and father. The host brother answers his father’s question with “no” (line 253). The host father then follows up his son’s response by stating twice in one utterance that “she” ate his muesli every day (line 254). This is a direct accusation without any redressive action, which I have interpreted as a bald on-record FTA. We can now see that the host’s utterance in line 252 was a preparation for line 254, which also throws scrutiny over whether or not the whole topic was prepared by the host in order for him to find out if his student had eaten his muesli. The student responds with surprise at hearing her host father say this, as indicated by her request for clarification in line 255. The host father, however, follows up her request for clarification by making a general statement that “everyone’s” eating his muesli (line 256), which is less direct than “she” ate his muesli. The host brother responds that he did not eat his father’s muesli, which limits the number of possible people who ate the father’s muesli to only the student and the mother, who is not present in this conversation. The host father follows up by acknowledging his son did not eat his muesli, which leaves the student with all the blame (line 258). The host brother then justifies why he could not have eaten his father’s muesli by saying that he is not allowed it (line 259), to which his father acknowledges with just “oh.” At this point, the student might have realised that she had not confirmed whether she had or had not eaten her host father’s muesli. If the student did not eat his muesli, then it would probably be at this point that she could say that she did not. The fact that the student does not deny her host father’s accusation in lines 254 and 256 could be silent admission. The student only responds with “mm” in line 261, which could be interpreted as just
backchannelling, but could also be a signal that the student does not know how to apologise in this situation. The host father’s tone throughout this episode is one of sarcasm. However, the sarcasm used here differs from the sarcastic remark illustrated in example 5.1.1.2, where the host father said that her friend could not stay over at their place during the weekend. In this example, I do not think that the host father intended to carry through with his threat of denying his student to bring her friend home with her because that would be defying his responsibilities of being a host father. Instead, I think that the host father was trying to build solidarity by using sarcasm with his student. However, in example 3 (lines 254 and 256 above) the meaning intended is supposed to be taken directly, rather than the opposite meaning, as in example 5.1.1.2. Rogerson-Revell (2007) makes the point that one function of humor is to release repressed emotion, such as anger or frustration. It could be, therefore, that the homestay father is indirectly indicating that he was frustrated that his muesli was being eaten by framing his message using, at the extreme sarcasm, but in this sense a weak form of irony.

5.1.1.4 Example of both host parents using humour

In this conversation, it is difficult to know if the host father is joking in an ironic way or not. The student reacted to her host father by using a positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1978), but it is unclear if the student has understood that her host father is hinting for her to wash the dishes, or clean the bathroom, in the not too distant future.

27. HF: [the student’s name] says that she would like to clean all the dishes after tea, didn’t she? I (FTA)

28. S: ah, I like to clean bathroom. R
29. HF: oh, you’d like to clean the bathroom? F (Ref)

30. S: yes. R2 (A)

(Both the homestay mother and father say “oh.”) F2 (A)

31. HM: Oh, yes, well that’s one up for me, if you’d like to. F2 (Com)

In this episode, the host father makes an assumption that his student would like to clean all the dishes after tea (line 27). He says her name and then adds a tag question to the end of his utterance (line 27). I have interpreted this line as an indirect, on-record FTA. It is an indirect FTA because the host father does not say directly for his student to clean the dishes, but rather that his student “would like to.” The student responds by saying that she likes to clean the bathroom. The student could have misunderstood the word “like” used by her host father in line 27 to what she responds with in line 28. It could be true that the student “likes” to clean the bathroom (used in the present tense), but she might have missed the indirect request that her host father has made, that is, to clean the dishes after dinner, or to take action to clean the dishes in the not too distant future. In line 29, the host father reformulates what his student said, but it is still unclear whether the student has understood whether he is talking in the present tense and in general terms, or is actually requesting that she clean the bathroom now, or at least some time in the near future. The student responds with acknowledgment (line 30), to which the host mother then adds that it would be “one up” for her if her student helps her do this. Later, after about one week, I asked the student if she had cleaned the bathroom or the dishes, but the student said that she had not done either since the conversation. From this, we could infer that the student did not understand her host father’s indirect request to clean the dishes or the bathroom.
5.1.1.5 Example of a student being led into an embarrassing situation

In this final example involving humour, the student reacted strongly by using a quick, bald, on-record strategy to repair what the student perceived to be his host father’s misinterpretation of what he had said. It is the host father who uses his power to initiate the humour.

76. HF: *so what are you going to miss? All of us? I*
77. S: *yes. R (A)*
78. HF: *oh, (2.0) oh, you’ll get back to a normal family. F (Com)*

(The student laughs slightly.)

79. HF: *no more crazy people. F (Com) (Ref)*
80. S: *eh, no crazy people? R2 (Rec) (Req Cl)*
81. HF: *ah, you called me crazy. F2 (Ref)*
82. S: *no, no, no, I didn’t. R3*

In line 76, the host father initiates with a question to his student about what he is going to miss when he returns to Japan. The host father also provides an answer “all of us” as a question to which the student acknowledges, that he will miss his host family. The host father uses the student’s response in order to follow up with a comment that his student will be able to get back to living with a “normal” family (line 78). The student laughs at this comment. The host father then continues to comment and by emphasising that his student’s family in Japan will be a “normal” family as opposed to the “crazy” family that he has currently being staying with. The student does react to the word “crazy” and requests clarification by recasting what his host father says in the
hope that the meaning of “crazy” will be more clearly defined. However, instead of his host father providing any clarification, he flouts the maxim of relevance (Grice, 1975) by stating that his student directly said that he was crazy (line 81). The student becomes aware that his host father may have misunderstood his request for clarification (line 80) because the student quickly reacts to his father’s accusation by denying that he called him crazy by repeating the words “no” three times before saying that he did not. It is as if the host father has gone out of his way to look for a reaction from his student because he has firstly reformulated the word “normal” to “crazy” so that his student can understand the meaning between the two words and then quickly reformulated the student’s request for clarification (by flouting Grice’s, 1975, maxim of relevance) into an accusatory statement saying that the student called him “crazy.” The student closes the conversation and nothing further is said. It is as if the host father has been satisfied with the student’s last denial of his accusation (line 82).

This example illustrates the power vested with the host father to lead his student into saying something contradictory to what the student actually said in order to entice a reaction, for entertainment purposes; however, it only seems to be the host father that understands the entertainment. The student is left wondering. This example illustrates the asymmetrical difference between the host parent and the student.

5.1.1.6 Conclusion to humour

There is evidence to suggest that the students did not fully understand the nature of the humour made by their host parents in these five examples given. It was always the host parents who made the humour, but in none of the examples involving humour did they explain that they were making humour, even when the students’ verbal reactions
suggest that they did not understand it was humour. Also, in many of the conversations, the host parents would collaborate to expand upon the humour. On the surface, this may not indicate anything untoward; however, it created a situation in which two people understood something and one did not. In terms of social distance, the conversations perpetuated an invisible bond of camaraderie and friendliness between the host parents, but functioned to isolate the student.

One feature common to examples 2 through to 5 presented in this section is that there is no vocalised laughter from any of the participants (except for slight laughter from the student in example 5, line 78). Furthermore, in examples 2 through to 5, the student was left to decide if they had acted appropriately or not.

5.1.2 Indirectness

This example follows on from complaints from the homestay parents that their students were not direct enough when requesting something. The student involved in this conversation was not one of the students that was complained about; however, this example does illustrate the frustration that some homestay families reported. In this example, the host parent and student are talking about the ski trip that the student will go on with his class. The student wants to borrow his host mother’s ski jacket because it is warm. The student indirectly “hints” at wanting to borrow his host mother’s jacket, but does not directly ask (line 64). In this example, it is the student who first initiates the topic of conversation.

64. S: *I want to wear* (1.5) *very warm jacket*. [Com]

65. HM: *yes, they have, they have the jackets that you hire are real ski gear*. [R]
The host parent responds in agreement to what she may have interpreted as a comment from her student about whether the ski place has warm jackets for hire. The host mother comments that the jackets are “real” ski gear. However, in line 66, the student quickly responds with “not real ski wear.”

66. S: not real ski wear F

67. HM: oh, you want a warm jacket for (2.0) now, (S: oh) or for skiing? (Req CI)

In line 67, the host mother seems to have understood that the student does not want to hire “real ski wear” and continues to suggest what he might be referring to by giving two options. The fact that the student responds to his host mother in line 66 indicates that he does not want the conversation to close. The student then acknowledges after his host mother suggests that he would like a warm jacket for now.

68. S: ah, (3.0) um, I will do I will go (2.0) um, ((Pause for seven seconds.)) R

In line 68, the student is obliged to respond to his host mother’s request for clarification; however, he seems to be hesitating his response. There are many pauses throughout his utterance, which gives his host mother the opportunity to prompt him with another more specific question (line 69). The student’s hesitation seems to have positioned the host mother into initiating questions within the framework of the IRF structure and more specifically questions that seem to isolate just what it is that the student wants. In line 69, the host mother has narrowed the question down to whether the student would like to purchase a warm jacket. The student is then positioned into simply responding, and leaving the follow-up move with the parent.
69. HM: *do you want to buy one?* I

70. S: *yes* R

71. HM: *yeah, that will cost a lot of money (2.0) yeah, um* F

The host mother’s follow-up move suggests a consequence if the student decides to buy a jacket. This response then prompts another disguised hint surrounding the situation that the student is attempting to present, without directly performing a bald on-record FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1978). In lines 69 to 71 the student responds with “yes” to buying a jacket; however, as will be illustrated in the following lines, the student changes his response to an emphatic “no” (74).

72. S: *um, where I go skiing (HM: yes) I will hire (HM: right) but I ah, ((Pause for 9 seconds.)) im*

In line 72, the student says that he will hire a jacket, but then again hesitates and does not finish his sentence. This encourages the host mother to repeat the question that she asked in line 69 and again sets up a clearly defined IRF structure.

73. HM: *do you want to buy a ski jacket?* I

74. S: *im, no, no, no, no, no* R

75. HM: *no (Rep)*

The student’s change from “yes” in line 70 to “no” in line 74 puts a doubt into how the host mother has interpreted her student. This causes the host to now repeat her student’s response as a confirmation that he will not buy a jacket. Since a doubt now exists, the
student now has the opportunity to explain the doubt, but does so by adding another hint in order to get his host mother to request clarification. It is as if the student is attempting to get his host mother to voice the FTA that he wants to perform.

76. S: *I want to hire, (1.0) but (1.5) I will play skiing before (Com)*

77. HM: *oh (A)*

78. S: *I will get cold (Com)*

The student acknowledges that he would like to hire a jacket, but now introduces the word “before.” His host mother acknowledges this (line 77). The student then continues to add that he “will get cold” before he hires a jacket. Again, the student has not explained why he will get cold, which causes his host mother to question further.

77. HM: *you will get all your gear before? I*

78. S: *ah, (2.0) R (A)*

The student’s acknowledgement to his host’s response indicates that his host mother has asked a pertinent question, or a question which directs the conversation closer to the aim of the student, that is, for his host to voice the FTA instead of him.

79. HM: *because there is a place in [city name] that you can hire all of your gear.* 80. S: *ah (A)*

81. HM: *but it’s probably easier for you to hire in Queenstown.*
In line 80, the student uses the same pattern as he used in line 78 to acknowledge that his host mother has said something that is directing her closer to performing the FTA. The host mother has now supplied information about hiring a jacket in Queenstown (the city below the ski place).

82. S: *Queenstown is cold*

The student directly responds that Queenstown is cold, which prompts his host mother to agree (line 83) and to then infer that he would like a warm jacket before he goes skiing. The student responds with a somewhat excited “yes” (line 84). Again, the IRF structure is set up by the student.

83. HM: *yes, (1.5) oh, so you want a warm jacket for before you go skiing*

84. S: *yeh, yeh, yeh, yeh, yeh*

85. HM: *oh, I understand. F*

The host mother now says that she understands what the student might be trying to do (line 85) and moves closer to the FTA. The host’s initiation in line 86 focuses on the fact that the student might not have brought a warm jacket with him, and possibly causes the host to infer that he is wanting something warm before he goes to the ski place. Line 86 could be interpreted as a reverse, or redirected, FTA that the host performs to the student.

86. HM: *Do you, did you not bring a jacket with you? (1.0) A warm jacket? I (FTA)*
The student reduces the force of the FTA by responding that he does have a jacket, but that it is very thin. In this way, the student is not embarrassed by not preparing at all for the weather, but only by not accurately judging the conditions. In line 87, the student responds with another hint so that his host mother can once again infer and then request clarification. In line 88, the host mother first repeats that the student said “very thin” and then asks if the student knows about her own jacket. The host mother does not actually perform the FTA, but only inquires if he knows about her jacket.

88. HM: *very thin, well you you know my jacket, my Kathmandu jacket, blue one*

89. S: *oh* (A)

90. S: *could you (2.0) borrow* I (FTA)

It is in line 90 that the student takes the opportunity to perform the bald, on-record FTA. The student begins with “could you,” but then pauses. It could be that the student does not know the verb to use next, or it could be a hesitational strategy to get his host mother to actually continue and perform the full FTA.

91. HM: *yes, I could lend it to you* R

92. S: *oh, thank you* F

The host mother agrees to lend the jacket to her student, to which the student seems to graciously say not just “thanks,” but a full “oh, thank you” (line 92). The student and
host mother both laugh, which could indicate that they have realised that the FTA was difficult to say directly and that both are relieved that neither host mother nor student seem to have been offended by the FTA. It is also interesting to note that the student completes his initiation of the FTA in line 90 with an appropriate follow up in line 92.

93. HM: *yes you have to look after it though it’s very expensive* ((The student laughs and then the host mother laughs slightly too.)) *ok?* (Exp)

Even though the host mother places a condition on borrowing her jacket, she seems to soften the impact of this condition (or FTA) by repeating that her student is “welcome to borrow it” (line 95). The student once again appropriately follows up with thanks (line 96).

94. S: *ah, ok, ok.* (A)

95. HM: *but you are welcome to borrow it it is very warm* (Com)

96. S: *oh, thank you* F

The host mother expands on the student’s initiation in line 90, and she continues to acknowledge and comment on the student’s follow up moves. The student then moves to close the conversation (line 96).

This example has illustrated how students went about performing FTAs. The student provided hints around a particular topic and seemed to lead his host mother into initiating a more direct question. The formulation of the IRF structure by the student provided the student with a relatively linguistically simple response move. The student seemed to strategically position his host mother as “manager” or “facilitator” (Nassaji &
Wells, 2000, p. 378) of the FTA, or in other words, a secondary player in the conversation.

5.1.3 No negotiation

In this conversation, the host mother wants to know if her student has decided to go to school or whether he will see her off at the airport when she goes on holiday to see her nephew. However, the host mother really wants to know if her student will excuse himself from school, so that he can be taken to the airport by her friend to see her off. In this conversation there is a great deal of important information mixed with relatively unimportant information. Although the student gives the impression that he understands his host mother, there is evidence to suggest that he does not.

5.  HM: ah, we gotta be at the airport at one o’clock, ah, mm. Will you be at school? I (FTA)

6.  S: mm? R (Req Cl)

7.  HM: If you want to go, [the host mother’s friend’s name] will take you. There is no problem there. F (Exp)

8.  S: thank you. R2 (A)

9.  HM: but please go to school, if you have to be at school. (S: yeah R3 (A)) um, and I know the school know that I’m going. F3 (Exp) (Com)

10. S: oh, I see. R4 (A)

11. HM: so, you know, if you want a ride, you can just see [the homestay
coordinator’s name] at school and say that I want to see my host mother away, or whatever. F4 (Ref) (Exp) (Adv) They all know I’m going to meet my nephew. (Com)

12. ((The student laughs slightly))

(End of the conversation)

The first initiation by the host mother is in line 5 (“Will you be at school?”). The host mother’s question, in the form of an off-record FTA, is at the end of an explanation regarding the time she will have to be at the airport. I have interpreted this as an off-record FTA because the host mother knows that her student will be at school at this time. (It is a normal school day for the student.) The host mother’s explanation before her question “will you be at school” functions to prepare the FTA. The host mother also hesitates just before she performs the off-record FTA. The host mother has given information that is not important for the student. It is as if the host mother is confirming her schedule to herself, but audibly enough for her student to hear. The student indirectly requests clarification by raising his voice to signal a question (line 5). This could be because the student did not understand his host’s self-confirmation and was requesting her to relate it more directly to the actual question that his host mother says at the end of line 5. As Raymond and Heritage (2006) suggest, this could be an example of the student being “pre-occupied” (p. 682) with the question. The student’s implicit request for clarification (line 5) is not acknowledged by his host mother, who begins to explain that her friend can take him “somewhere.” The host mother may have interpreted line 5 as the student backchannelling instead of requesting clarification. In line 6, the host mother does not clearly explain where her friend will take her student.
From the perspective of the student, two locations, the school and the airport, have been mentioned, so either could be where the host mother’s friend will take him. However, the student acknowledges by saying “thank you” in line 7. The host mother continues to expand her move by giving her student a choice: to go to school if he “has to,” or go to the airport to see her off (line 8). Line 8 is also mixed with extra information “…and I know the school know that I’m going.” However, the student acknowledges this extra information by saying “oh, I see” (line 9). Until this point, it seems as though the student is responding appropriately and that the host mother is probably under the impression that her student has understood what she has said to him. This is because the host mother’s final line (line 10) reformulates what she said before in line 4, 6, and 8. Line 10 seems to be more direct than her original initiation in line 4. This time there is direct reference to “…if you want a ride…” and then direct advice as to what to actually say to the homestay coordinator if he wants to see his host mother away at the airport. The student then laughs in line 11, which seems to be out of place. After this conversation, I questioned the student about the arrangements that he made. The student said that he knew that his host mother was going on a trip, but did not know what time she was leaving, nor that he could have made arrangements to have seen her off, if he had wished to do so. By using a post-analysis, we could interpret the student’s laugh in line 11 as actually a sign that he did not understand what his host mother had said to him.

5.1.4 Uncomfortable interaction

In the following conversation, the student is going out of his way to explain to his host mother that he used the colour pink to design his camera for his engineering assignment.
His host mother then tries to give him advice about what colours are commonly worn in this city. In this case, the student had a high proficiency in English and often conversed with his host parent. Throughout the conversation it appears that the student is either trying to assert his individuality, or to educate his host mother about how certain colours of clothes are perceived differently in Japan and New Zealand.

The conversation begins with both the host mother and student talking over dinner.

80. S:  
*yes, old fashioned. It’s good old fashioned is best, mm. I coloured my camera pink,  yes*

81. HM:  
**mm, mm pink**

82. HM:  
*which pink? I*

83. S:  
*brightly pink*

84. HM:  
*“oh, ↑* **yeah, that’s good. F (E+) I was wondering today (S: mm R2 (B)) what you wore today, you know? < F2 (Exp) (FTA)*

85. S:  
**pink shirts R3**

86. HM:  
*did you? F3 (Cnf C)*

87. S:  
*yes R4 (A)*

88. HM:  
*oh, F4 (A)*

89. S:  
*I began to wearing pink clothes again R5 (Exp)*

In line 84, the host mother prepares for the FTA by using the language “I was wondering” (Held, 1992). This language functions to lessen the imposition of the request that the host mother is about to perform in asking what her student wore today. The student responds with “pink shirts” (line 85), which is then followed up by the host
mother with a confirmation check through the question “did you” (line 86). The student responds to her confirmation check with “yes” (line 87). The host mother only acknowledges, but does not provide any further information. The student then expands upon his response from line 87 to confirm that he wore “pink” clothes again.

90. HM:  **That’s ok.** F5 (A)
91. S:  **yeah** R6 (A)
92. HM:  **if you are happy with that.** F6 (Exp)
93. S:  **mm. (2.5) I’m satisfied now** R7 (B) (Com)
94. HM:  **that is good.** F7 (E+) I know you wanted to wear pink so (S: mm R8 (B))
            **at long last.** (Com)

(Pause for about ten seconds.)

95. HM:  **are you going to wear pink shoes some time?** I
96. S:  **I will try again** ((the host mother laughs)) **someday. Ah, I’m not sure** when. R

The host mother has prepared for a number of FTAs, which continue (and will be illustrated) throughout the conversation. In line 90, the host mother says “that’s ok” with emphatic stress. In other words, she is giving her approval about the student wearing pink clothes again. The student acknowledges, and the host mother continues to justify her approval by saying that if her student is content with wearing pink clothes again, then that is fine with her. The student then backchannels and comments that he is now satisfied, presumably since he is wearing pink clothes again. The host mother then positively evaluates his response because she knew that he wanted to wear pink for a
long time (line 94). There is then a pause for about ten seconds where nothing is said. The host mother then initiates with an expansion as to whether he is going to wear his pink shoes again. The student responds, but it is during the student’s response that the host mother laughs. This laughter could be interpreted as the host mother badgering her student into explaining in detail about what she considers to be a rather amusing cultural difference. In New Zealand culture, the colour pink is usually associated with femininity and can draw ridicule from others, if it is worn by men in certain contexts, especially in traditional “New Zealand” macho sports such as rugby. However, in Japan, the colour pink has no association with femininity and is readily worn by both males and females.

From the student’s perspective, however, the conversation up to line 96 could be interpreted as a deliberate attempt by the student to seek a reaction from his host mother to his preference for the colour pink. The student may have realised that the colour pink is perceived differently when worn by males in New Zealand and males in Japan.

97. HM: would you wear it in summer time or winter time? ((laughs)) F (Exp)

98. S: winter time. R2

((The host mother laughs.))

99. HM: oh, not really funny for you. F2 (Com)

100. S: no. R3

During this episode (line 97 to 100), the student does not laugh, but the host mother does. The host mother may have realised that her student is not treating the topic humorously, which prompts her to utter line 99. This prompt, or recognition that the
topic may be provoking her student, immediately causes the student to respond with an emphatic “no” in line 100. The student’s emphatic “no” might have further made the host mother realise that her student was not enjoying the conversation, which prompts her to justify why she laughed (line 101).

101. HM: well, when I first saw you, you had all those (S: mm R4 (B)) things on.

F4 (Com) (FTA)

102. S: yeah, unisex fashion R5

103. HM: yeah F5 (A)

(Pause for about four seconds.)

In line 101, the host mother refers to “…all those things on.” “…all those things” refers to the student’s “pink shirts” (line 85), “pink clothes” (line 89) and “pink shoes” (line 95). The host mother could be indirectly implying that “…all those things” are not appropriate dress for the city that the student now lives in. This, therefore, is an indirect FTA (line 101), which also forms the preparation for the host mother to offer advice, as will be illustrated from line 104.

The student explains that the reason he wears pink is that it is a unisex fashion (line 102), which his host mother acknowledges by saying “yeah.” Line 102 could be interpreted in two ways; firstly, as a reason for wearing the colour pink, or secondly, as an explanation (that may include pink) for “all those things.” It is at this stage that the host mother tries to offer the student some advice about appropriate clothing for males to wear. In the following lines (104 to 105), it is important to notice that the student does not interact in any conflicting way towards his host mother, but instead politely
agrees with her and says that he will follow her advice. The conversation continues as follows:

104. HM: *there was something that I wanted to say to you,* (2.0) *like today,* when *I was traveling* (S: *travelling*) *in the bus,* (S: *mm*) *I had a look at people* (S: *mm*) *and what they were wearing* *and what women were wearing* *and what men and young people* (S: *yeah*) *and I thought* (S: *yes*) *that when I come home,* (S: *yes*) *I will tell you, observe the people.* (S: *the people*)

105. S: *what about?* R (*Req Cl*) (FTA?)

Line 104 could be interpreted as an indirect FTA. It is indirect because the host mother does not say that her student should not wear pink clothes, but instead suggests that her student should observe the kind of fashion that other people in town are wearing, implying that he might copy them. According to Bailey (2008), and in line with an interactional sociolinguistic approach, the student may not be aware that his dress, even if perceived as being slightly different, can create “interactional difficulties” (p. 2316). The student responds with a question. The student’s question could be a deliberate attempt to get his host mother to directly state what she is implying, or it could be a genuine request for clarification. The host mother repeats that she would like her student to “observe” the people, so she could be surprised that her student requests clarification in line 105. The host mother could interpret line 105 as an FTA in the fact that her student seems to have refused to take up her implicit point to observe people, so that he will understand that “…all those things” (line 101) are not appropriate dress in
the city where the student now lives. The student repeats the word “travelling” and “the people” during his host mother’s advice (line 104), which could indicate that he has not understood what she had said. However, he also backchannels five times, which could indicate that he does understand. The student’s question in line 105 “what about” could be a follow up from the host mother’s “the people,” which the student also repeated. If this is the case then the student is asking a question about what he should do about “the people.” The simple answer to this is to “observe” the people, which is a word that is not repeated by the student. This could be an indication that the student does not understand the word “observe” (line 104). The host mother’s FTA in the form of advice is repeated in line 106.

106. HM: *you just see what they are wearing during this time.* F (Ref) 

(FTA)

107. S: *yes, I will, I will see carefully next time* R2

108. HM: *mm, mm, and.* F2 (Exp)

109. S: *but, but in my time,* (HM: *mm*) *most people wear school clothes* R3 (Exp)

In line 106, the host mother does not answer the student’s question, which could indicate that she does not know that her student either does not understand what she was trying to ask him to do, or that she does not want to respond to his FTA in the form of an argument. It is in line 106 that the host mother flouts Grice’s (1975) maxim of relevance and reformulates her explanation from line 104 into a direct FTA requesting that he “…just see what they are wearing,” so that he can know that his clothes are not
appropriate to wear and may invoke ridicule from people, including his host mother if he does not conform. In this instance, it seems too severe to interpret the host mother as flouting Grice’s maxim of relevance. To flout this maxim would mean a purposeful rebellion to cooperate to achieve what the host mother is attempting to do, i.e., to give advice about the clothes that he should wear. In this case, the interpretation of line 106 could be interpreted as the host mother having a different presupposition to her student about how to give advice. The student responds to his host mother in a positive way by saying that he will do as she requests. The student’s response could further validate the claim that the host did not flout the cooperative principle because the student seemed to understand and accept what his host’s advice was. The host mother acknowledges her student’s response with agreement (line 108). The host mother tries to continue to say something after her agreement; however, the student takes the move away from her (line 109) to add a reason as to why he might not be able to carry out his host mother’s request (as indicated by the interruption defined by the bracketed parts of speech in line 108 and 109). However, his host mother questions his question (line 110).

110. HM: *what about in the evening?* F3 (Exp)

111. S: *evening* R4 (SR)

112. HM: *yes, when you are coming home, I’m sure you see (S: mm) different um, people.* F4 (Ref)

113. S: *I’ve never seen carefully.* R5 (Com)

The host mother responds to her student (line 110) by asking another question in order to offer how the student might see people, who are not in school uniform. The student
repeats the word “evening” (line 111) with a downward tone, which could suggest that the student is not asking a question, but rather thinking out loud. However, the host mother responds to her student’s repetition and reformulates her expansion from line 110, so that the student might understand how to carry out her request. The student’s comment in line 113 is an admission that he has not noticed other people’s fashions when he looks out the bus window while returning home. In this case, the student cooperates with his host mother, which is a positive politeness strategy. However, the host mother responds to the student’s comment with “yes” (line 114). This breaks Grice’s (1975) relevance maxim. It is as if the host mother is agreeing with an action that her student is about to undertake, that is, notice the fashion from the bus window on his way home; however, this is not what the student admitted.

114. HM:  yes, next time when you go to town, (S: mm) pay attention, (S: yes) and see what kind of clothes people are wearing. (6.0) F5 (Rec) (Adv)

   (FTA)

115. S:  ok. R6 (A)

(Pause for about eleven seconds)

The student’s comment in line 113 has given the host mother the opportunity to dominate the conversation. It is as if the host mother has now taken it upon herself to instruct her student as to what he should do. This then forms the FTA in line 114. The student backchannels once in the host mother’s line 114 and then acknowledges with “yes.” At the end of his host mother’s advice in line 114, the student then responds with “ok” (line 115). The conversation is then closed with the student
agreeing with his host mother that he will pay attention to what clothes people are wearing when he comes home on the bus.

After about an eleven second pause, the host mother initiates further by expanding on her previous advice and continuing her FTA (line 116).

116. HM: see what they wear on a sunny day, if the weather’s, F6 (S: yes R7 (A)) on a rainy day. (Adv) (Exp) (FTA)

The host mother’s initiation (line 116) appears to contradict itself, which may have prompted the student to repeat her last words from line 116, “rainy day (line 117).

117. S:  rainy day. R8 (Rec)

118. HM: just watch people, F8 (Adv) (Ref) (FTA) specially round Polytech and the university area. (Exp) I’m sure, when you’re looking, you’ll see lots of them. (4.0)

The student’s repetition (line 117) prompts his host mother to reformulate with a much shorter directive (line 118) “just watch people.” The host mother continues to expand line 118 by specifying where exactly her student should pay attention.

There is a pause of four seconds at the end of the host mother’s expansion (line 118) and it is then that the student initiates by further reformulating and accepting his host mother’s advice (line 119).

119. S:  I better look carefully. People’s fashion in [city name]. R9
120. HM: *yes, many people are fashion conscious here.* F9 (A) (Com)

His host mother answers with “yes” meaning that she has agreed with the action that her student has just said that he will carry out. She then expands by saying that people are fashion-conscious here, which could be an indirect way of giving advice to her student that if he copies these fashion-conscious people then he will be fashionable, too, or at least in line with more appropriate dress compared to “…all those things” (line 101).

121. S: *of course.* R10 (A)

The student’s reply seems to be out of place because there is no reason that people will “of course” be fashionable in the place where the student resides. It could be that the student is going out of his way to show his utmost agreement, not directly with the fact that people are “fashion conscious here,” but rather not wanting to antagonise his host mother any further. In other words, the student is showing his utmost compliance with his host mother.

122. HM: *so, I thought I would suggest to you* F10 (Com)

123. S: *yeah* R11 (A)

124. HM: *observe people* F11 (Adv) (FTA)

125. S: *mm* R12 (B)

(Pause for about sixteen seconds)

(End of the recording)
From line 122, the host mother continues to justify why she is telling her student to observe people, so that he will better understand how he should dress in his new surroundings. Again, in line 123, the student outwardly shows acknowledgement with “yeah” and then a final backchannel after the last two words of advice from his host mother “observe people” (line 124).

In this example, although there was a high interactive content, the cultural distance between the host and the student increased over time, as it also did over time in the homestay relationship, to the point where the student asked the Japanese liaison officers to shift him to another homestay. This occurred about one month after this conversation was recorded. Because this conversation did not directly lead to the request for action, it is not classified as a major issue. However, the host parent referred to this conversation, saying that she thought the student was argumentative, indicating that she perceived that there was a minor communication issue. At the same time, the analysis shows that the student repeatedly agreed with his host mother’s comments, possibly in an effort to avoid creating conflict. In terms of Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model, the student attended to a face-threatening act using positive politeness strategies to avoid disagreement, and cooperatively accepted his host mother’s advice using token agreement. The host mother’s efforts to give inform, instruct, and give advice appear to have frustrated the student.

This example has illustrated how what at first glance seems to be simply an exchange of opinions and advice can play a role in a major communication issue.
5.1.5 Conclusion to minor communication issues

This section has illustrated a range of minor intercultural communication issues. Some of these were humour, which were not understood by students. The second conversation concerned travel plans. The third involved the preference of a male student for the colour pink. In all three conversations in this chapter, communication issues affected the interpersonal relationships in the homestay. The third conversation, however, was one of several uncomfortable interactions, which eventually led to the dramatic action of the homestay student being placed in a different homestay. The issues that ultimately arose from these minor communication issues like these ones are, therefore, the same issues that lead to major communication issues, the topic of the next section.

5.2 Major communication issues

In this section the conversations that follow were defined as major communication issues soon after they were transcribed because action had to be taken by the Japanese liaison to resolve them. All of the major communication issues were recorded in May, 2007.

There are three major communication issues outlined in this section. Section 5.2.1 illustrates an example in which the host mother thinks that her student has understood what she would like him to do when she goes away for a night trip. Even though the student acknowledges that he understands, he does not. Section 5.2.2 provides an account of a host mother trying, but not succeeding, to indirectly hint that he should not have his female friend over when she is out. The student does not seem to understand what her intention is and so misinterprets what she would like him to do.
Section 5.2.3 illustrates a host mother trying to persuade her student to spend time away from his host family during the holidays. The student complained that his host family put pressure on him to stay away from them. The conversation transcribed below gives evidence as to how this pressure was perceived by the student.

5.2.1 Conversation 1: Going to Invercargill

The following episode is taken from a conversation with the student and the host mother in May, 2007. In the first conversation, the host mother is explaining that she will be going to Invercargill. She indirectly hints at some chores that she would like her student to do while she is away.

About five days after this conversation (when I had finished transcribing the recording), I talked with the student to gauge how much he had understood. Although he did understand that someone was going to Invercargill, he did not know it was his host mother who was going, that his host father was going to be cooking meals and looking after his younger host sister, and that he himself was going to be responsible for turning the fire on when he got home. The host mother had apparently assumed that her student could infer what needed to be done when he got home from school.

1: S: yeah, ok,

2: HM: yeah, hey [the student’s name], I’m going to tell you tomorrow (S: im) I’m going for a trip to Invercargill (S: oh) and ah, that is because I have a friend who lives there, and she is getting married (S: oh) it’s a big surprise ((S: laughs slightly)) so they only telephoned me on Saturday to tell me (S: mm mm mm) yeah, so have you been to Invercargill? I
The host has indicated what she is going to be talking about with the sentence “I’m going to tell you...” and the question at the end of her utterance, “yeah, so have you been to Invercargill?” The host parent has structured her conversation initiation into two parts. The first part provides information, while the second part changes the conversational function from informative to phatic (see Appendix 4). The transition from the first to the second part of her utterance is quick, without any pause. Without any negotiation of meaning or confirmation of what has been understood, the host mother has shifted the conversational focus to whether the student has been to Invercargill. Because the host mother is the conversation initiator and the more “powerful” interlocutor, the student responds to her change of topic.

In terms of Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model, the host mother is preparing for an FTA (preparatory stage, see Held, 1992). The host mother’s utterance prepares the student for the fact that she is going to Invercargill by stating this explicitly (a bald on-record FTA waiting for contextualisation), but she then gives the excuse that “they only telephoned me on Saturday to tell me.” This is a negative politeness strategy used to deflect attention, or to redress the FTA in line 2 that she will be leaving her student alone for a time over the weekend. From a Gricean (1975) perspective, the host mother is violating the quantity maxim and possibly the relevance maxim too. This is because the host mother states five parts of information in one utterance, which is too much information for her student to process at once, flouting the quantity maxim. The first is that she is about to tell her student that she is going to Invercargill, the second is the reason for going “she has a friend” there, the third, that her friend is getting married, the fourth, that it is a “big surprise”, and finally, the fifth, that they only telephoned her to tell her of the wedding on Saturday. The information also varies in importance, which
flouts Grice’s (1975) relevance maxim. For example, the student does not need to know that it is a “big surprise” or that she was “only telephoned” on Saturday. The question at the end of the host mother’s explanation as to what she is going to do this weekend also directs the student away from the important information contained in the first three parts of her explanation. There is hardly any room for the student to take a turn at speaking. Rather, the host mother dominates the topic, timing, and questioning. According to Itakura (2001), the host mother is engaging in “conversational dominance” (p. 1862) by restricting her student’s conversational interaction. The host mother’s question at the end attempts to pull the student into the conversation by asking him whether he has been to Invercargill. This is a positive politeness strategy used to soften the FTA through small talk. It is also a redressive action that diverts attention away from the host mother’s possible embarrassment at not taking full responsibility for her student because she is going away (see Chapter 2, section 2.7.3).

3: S:       ah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, ah, in, ah (1.5) holiday, (HM: yeah, F (A) ) I and [student’s name] and [student’s name] host family R (HM: yeah F (A) ) go to, ah, went to Invercargill.

The student explains that he has been to Invercargill for a holiday. The host mother’s use of the positive politeness strategy in line 2, using small talk to divert the strength of the FTA, seems to have worked. The student answers the host mother’s question, but does not expand the conversation further. The student responds to the question, but waits for another question without producing any more information. The student does not ask for any clarification from the host mother’s line 2. The repetitions of “yeah” and
“ah” in line 3 indicate that the student does not want to lose his turn to speak. This also indicates that he is trying his best to respond to his host mother.

4. HM: so, what did you like about Invercargill? F (Exp)
5. S: ah, we went to, ah, (2.5) most, (1.0) °most° (6.0) R2
6. HM: ah, in the city? F2 (Cnf C)
7. S: mosto, ah, Southern R3
8. HM: yeah F3 (A)
(pause for 4 seconds)
9. S: most southern °in New Zealand° R4 (Cnf)
10. HM: °say, say that again. F4 (SR) (Req Rep)
11. S: ah, (pause for 8 seconds) most south R5 (Ref)
12. HM: ah the most south F5 (Ref)
13. S: yeah R6 (A)
14. HM: you went to Bluff. F6 (Rec)
15. S: yeah, yeah, yeah R7 (A)
16. HM: Bluff ↓ yeah F7 (OR)
17. S: yeah R8 (A)

The student responds to his host mother’s initiation in line 4, but she does not understand him. The host mother gives the student a lot of time to respond. The host mother tries to anticipate her student’s response (line 6) by filling the gap with what she thinks he is trying to say. The student, however, does not answer the question, but instead continues with his original response. When the student finishes his response, his host mother acknowledges it, but after a four second pause, the student then
reformulates his response in the form of a confirmation (line 9). The student appears to be trying to provide a response which will help his host mother to understand where he went, since it was not Invercargill as the host mother had asked about, but the nearby (and more southern) town of Bluff. His response is met with a request for clarification by his host mother, but the student does not immediately respond. (It is interesting here to notice that the host mother directly requests repetition from her student in line 10; something which indicates a difference between how the host and student request information. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.) The student has interpreted his host mother’s request for repetition as not understanding what he has said. This is evidence of interpreting a conversational move in the same way as it is likely to function in a classroom. The student then moves to reformulate what was already a correct response, perhaps because he might think that requests for repetition are invariably requests for reformulation. His host mother’s reformulation functions as corrective follow-up in line 12 by adding the article “the” (although the form ‘south’ is now incorrect) and then an extension into a more specific response as a recast in line 14 (“you went to Bluff”). The student acknowledges his host mother by saying “yeah” three times, which could indicate that he may not have remembered the name of the city and was relieved that his host mother’s prompt reminded him that that was the place where he had gone. The host mother then repeats the word “Bluff,” (line 16) with a downward intonation which functions to confirm that this was what the student was trying to say and also moves to close the conversation. The student then acknowledges his host mother’s confirmation (line 17).

The host mother expands upon her follow-up move by leading into a sub-topic, telling her student what used to be at Bluff.
18. HM: yeah, where they used to have the *paua house* F8 (A) (Com)
19. S: *paua house?* R9 (Req Cl)
20. HM: *have you heard of a house with paua shells?* F10 (Cmp C) *Paua is seafood in a shell?* (Cmp C) *I think it is gone now.* (Com)
21. S: >*ah, ah, yeah (A) < we ate, ah, oyster* ↑ R11

Line 18 could function as an implicit confirmation (Cullen, 2002) of where the student had been. Line 18 could also function as the host mother expanding information about Bluff, in an attempt to prompt and therefore get her student to further confirm the place where he said he went. The host mother is also directing the topic of conversation away from the main intention of why she broached the topic in the first place, that is, what she is planning to do and, as will be illustrated later in the conversation, what action she would like her student to carry out. The student requests clarification in line 19. The host mother first provides a confirmation check and then a definition of what paua is (line 20). Finally, the host adds a comment. The student acknowledges his host mother, but his response is not relevant to his host’s first question about paua, that is, “have you heard of a house with paua shells?” Instead the student says that he ate oysters. It is unclear whether the student has understood the meaning of “paua,” especially when it is used in conjunction with “house.” In fact, the host mother is not actually asking whether the student has eaten paua, but instead whether he has related the paua house to the place where he said he went. This question, therefore, functions as an implicit confirmational question. Paua is not an oyster, but the student, on hearing “seafood in a shell,” might have thought it meant oyster. The student’s response, “oyster,” has a rising
intonation at the end, which suggests that the student is requesting confirmation, perhaps as to whether he has understood paua correctly.

In the above episode, the initiation by the host mother (‘‘so what did you like about Invercargill?’’) is not expanded on very much by the student. Instead the host mother assumes the dominant role and provides extra information. From a Gricean (1975) perspective, the host is flouting the quantity maxim by supplying too much information and limiting the student’s opportunity to expand on his response.

22. HM: oo F11 (E-) you didn’t? (Cnf C) Did you try one? Cooked or not yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah R12 (A)

23. S: cooked? (Exp) (FTA)

In line 22, however, the host mother does not respond with confirmation, but instead responds with a negative evaluative (in a joking way) as to the action that the student took.

The host mother produces a bald on-record FTA in line 22, which the student acknowledges quickly. The student has misunderstood that his host mother does not like the idea of eating raw oysters, due to her first utterance in line 22 (‘‘oo’’). He performs a positive politeness strategy by agreeing repeatedly that he tried one. It is interesting to note here that the student has overlapped his host mother’s question “did you try one?” The student is trying to express a shared pleasure with his host mother, indicating a close interpersonal relationship. The host mother then asks whether the oysters were cooked or not cooked (line 24). The host mother could now be attempting to soften her negative sound and her question “you didn’t” in her follow-up move in line 22 based on
her student’s repeated “yeah” to having presumably been excited about eating, and even perhaps liking the taste of oysters. The host’s “or” question gives an option to the student. However, as will be shown in this next episode, the student replies with the following.

24. S: *im, fish and chips*  R12

25. HM: *oh, fish and chips.*  F12 (OR)  *Did you like it?*  (Exp)  (FTA)

26. S: *ah, so-so.*  R13

27. HM: *so-so, oo*  F13 (OR)  (E-)

28. S: *ah, [student’s name] said “yuck”*  R14

The student quickly responds with “fish and chips,” which, from a Gricean (1975) perspective, does not cooperatively follow from the host’s question. It could be that the student has now realised that his host mother does not like oysters, and so quickly changes what could be an area of potential difference of opinion, and consequently threaten the interpersonal relationship between his mother and him, to another topic: fish and chips (line 24). This time, when the host mother repeats the student’s topic “fish and chips,” she asks “did you like it?” In referring to “it”, as line 29 (see below) suggests, the host mother might not be referring to whether the student likes fish and chips, but rather continuing to expand on whether the student liked oysters. Again, the host has disregarded the student’s new topic initiation and proceeds to question him as to what he thinks about oysters. This time, however, the student is ambiguous in his response and says that the taste was just “so-so” (line 26). The host mother then repeats the student’s response and provides her own opinion as to what she thinks about oysters in the form of a negative evaluative. The host’s negative evaluative reinforces a
difference of opinion between the host mother and the student and, from the student’s perspective, may have seemed to be a potential threat to the interpersonal relationship.

The student then moves to agree with his host mother, saying that his friend did not like the taste of oysters. Again, the student is trying to agree positively with his host mother in order to minimise any difference of opinion.

29. HM: \textit{yeah, F14 (A) I think yuck, but a lot of people open oyster in the shell and go ((slurping sound)) (Com) (FTA)}

30. S: \textit{oo R15 (A)}

In line 24, the host mother is moving to lead her student to agree with her that oysters are “yuck.” The student now agrees with his host mother by repeating the same sound that she made in lines 22 and 27.

31. HM: \textit{yeah, yuck ((laughs)) F16 (A) so you don’t want to try? (Exp) (FTA)}

32. S: \textit{mm, mm R17 (B)}

In line 31, the host mother acknowledges her student’s response in agreement and then moves to expand in the form of confirmation that he does not want to try raw oysters. However, the student is indifferent in his response to his host’s question and backchannels (line 32). However, his host mother persists with her questioning by checking confirmation (line 33).

33. HM: \textit{no? F17 (Cnf C)}

34. S: \textit{no R18}

35. HM: \textit{yeah F19 (A)}
The student now responds that he does not want to try to eat raw oysters. The student has changed his opinion from an excited “Yeah, yeah, yeah” in line 23 to now “no” in line 34. His host mother acknowledges his response (line 35), which acts to close this episode of the conversation.

In the next episode, the host father enters into the conversation, and comments (line 36). I have interpreted this as a new episode in the conversation because the question can stand on its own and does not need to be related to the previous conversation.

36. HF: It’s a Japanese tradition to eat lots of raw fish isn’t it? I
37. HM: yeah, [student’s name] likes raw fish R
38. S: yeah R (A)

The host mother quickly responds to the host father’s initiation, instead of letting the student respond. According to Itakura (2001), this is participatory dominance (see section 2.9.7). The host mother now responds that her student likes raw fish, when, in the previous episode, she appears to have manipulated him into agreeing that he did not want to eat raw oysters. The student responds that, in fact, he does like to eat raw fish (line 38).

These episodes have illustrated that the student is going out of his way to agree with his host mother. The student is using positive politeness strategies to avoid disagreement and, where possible, being vague about his own opinions. Instead the student says “so-so,” or says that his friend does not like something. These episodes have also illustrated that the host mother is in a more powerful position in the
conversation. Her quick response at line 36 to a question that was almost certainly
directed to the student suggests that the host mother is in control of when her student
can respond and when he cannot.

The conversation continues around the topic of Invercargill until the host
changes the focus of the conversation in line 39. This is a new episode.

39. HM: 

yeah, I (A) um, (4.0) so tomorrow [host sister’s name] will come with me
in the car, with my sister (S: mm R (B)) we will go down and we won’t
be home until about eleven o’clock at night. (Pause for 3 seconds.)

(FTA)

40. S: “go to Invercargill” R (Ref)

The host mother is performing an off-record FTA (line 39) by saying that she will not
be home until eleven o’clock at night. The student reformulates the host’s utterance
from right back in line 2, “I’m going for a trip to Invercargill,” to “go to Invercargill.”
There can be several interpretations of line 40. Is the student trying to indirectly request
clarification or confirmation from the host, or is the student vocally speaking out to his
host loudly enough to provide the host with evidence that he is thinking about
something to do with “go to Invercargill,” but not loudly enough to intrude into the
conversation directly? In the latter case, this could be interpreted as the use of an
indirect politeness strategy by the student. It is an off-record attempt to address his
host’s FTA. The student pauses after his host mother’s utterance, which could indicate
that he is trying to process what she has said (i.e., there has been a cognitive delay),
because the host mother has not slowed her rate of speech, but is talking at a “normal”
conversational speed. The student could also be preoccupied with what his host mother might be going to say next (Raymond & Heritage, 2006; as in section 5.1.3). Line 40 could be interpreted as the student’s first attempt at an indirect request for clarification, or as a signal that he has not understood what his host has said prior to this. The student’s lack of understanding is indicated firstly by his three-second pause, secondly by his soft speech, and thirdly by his rather disguised request for something. These three indications suggest that the student’s utterance “go to Invercargill” is not a request for confirmation or even a self-confirmation, but actually an indirect request for clarification, performed as an off-record FTA. However, the host has interpreted the student’s “go to Invercargill” as a confirmation check, and so responds with “yeah” in line 41.

41. HM: yeah, F (A) and come home that night, so, um, when you get home at tomorrow night, (S: yeah R2 (A)) um, I will have dinner cooked (S: oh R2 (A)) tonight and [host father's name] and [host daughter's name] will come back for dinner at six o’clock. F3 (Exp) (FTA)

The issue in communication occurs because the host has interpreted the student’s utterance in line 40 as an acknowledgement of what she will do, rather than as an indirect request for clarification.

42. S: oh, R3 (A)

43. HM: ok, F3 (A) so maybe when you get home, you could light, put fire on for us, (2.0) ok?, warm up house. (Exp) (FTA)
The student’s utterance in line 42 (and later, in line 44) is an extended hesitation, which could signal that the student is trying to process what his host mother is saying. The host mother does not seem to recognise this signal of confusion or possible lack of understanding, but rather overlaps his acknowledgement (line 42) to add further information. The overlap is resolved by what Itakura (2001) explains as somebody insisting on being heard (p. 1869). In this case it is the host mother. Furthermore, the host’s insistence illustrates the dominance and asymmetrical relationship between the student and the host, particularly at times when the host is performing an FTA. It is in line 43 that the host mother changes her off-record politeness strategies to a bald on-record FTA by requesting that her student put the fire on for them before they come home. There is no negotiation of meaning by the host mother or any checks that the student has understood what is going to happen or what he is expected to do.

44. S: (2.0) oh, ↑ R4
45. HM: you understand? F4 (Cnf C) ((2.0)) so [the host mother’s name] and [the host mother’s friend’s name] will be in Invercargill (Rec)
46. S: yeah R5 (A)
47. HM: ok, F5 (A) will come home maybe eleven o’clock, (Ref) eleven p.m. (SR)
48. S: yes R6 (A)
49. HM: yes F6 (Ref) [host father] will finish work
50. S: yes R7
51. HM: and go and get [host sister] and he will be home six p.m. F7
In line 44, the student seems to signal that he has not understood what his host mother has said because he pauses and then uses an extended rising tone as a hesitation marker. The host mother then requests confirmation that the student has understood what he is supposed to do (line 45). The student does not respond and there is a two second silence. The host uses this part of the conversation to recast what she has previously said, which functions to summarise the conversation and draw it to a close. Grice’s (1975) maxim of quantity has been flouted because the host mother has not waited for an appropriate response from her student, but instead continues with her summary of what is going to happen. Again, we must bear in mind that it may not have been the host’s intention to purposefully flout the quantity maxim, or in fact may not have been understood to have been a flout by the student. The host may have intended to keep talking, therefore risk breaking the quantity maxim, in order to keep the student involved in the conversation. Unfortunately, however, the length of the host’s utterance (as well as the speed of the utterance) may have been cognitively challenging for the student to process. The host mother acknowledges the student’s response (line 47) and then begins to conclude the conversation again. The student has probably realised that the topic of conversation is quite serious because he has changed from using a vague acknowledgement, “yeah,” to using a more formal acknowledgement, “yes.” His host mother then reformulates the student’s response, which is consequently responded to with another “yes” by the student.

52. S:          six ↓ oh R8 (A)
53. HM:        yeah, ok? F8 (A) (Cnf C)
54. S:          ah, ok, ok. R9 (A)
The student repeats the host’s word “six,” followed immediately by “oh.” The host seems to have interpreted the student’s acknowledgement to mean that the student has understood all of her explanation. However, when I talked to the student about this, it seemed he had understood only that somebody was going to Invercargill and that they would be home at six o’clock. The host then signals closure with “yeah, ok,” in the form of a question to which the student responds “ok, ok.” The host moves to close the conversation in line 55 by saying “cool,” but when there is a pause again asks, “is that ok?” This question is designed to perform a “yes” answer, which would then function to confirm an understanding and hence closure to the topic; however, the student’s turn is suddenly interrupted by the host father from another room (line 56). This interruption violates the student’s opportunity to take his turn (Sacks et al., 1974) and also emphasises the close of the conversation (see Appendix 5 for one example of an interruption.).

(HF says from the other room) *It’s all ready.*

HM: *yeah [friend of host mother]*

The host mother responds to the host father’s interruption, which further emphasises the participatory dominance that both parents hold. There is no further negotiation of meaning and the student is left not understanding very much at all. The host mother has provided a lot of information and it would probably have been difficult enough for the
student to have remembered all of it, much less to have separated out the referential and phatic parts of the conversation.

In the preceding conversation, the host mother’s checks for understanding are met with polite acknowledgement that the student has understood what she has said, but actually there is evidence to suggest that the student did not understand very much at all. The student does not give any direct requests for negotiation of meaning. It is possible that the student does not want to interrupt the flow of what his host mother is saying, and so decides to remain silent, or that he does not want to appear rude by asking his host mother to explain more clearly. Instead, the student produces indirect requests for clarification, or signals that he does not understand what the host is saying by repeating parts of his host’s utterance or by pausing for several seconds. These responses seem to be misinterpreted by the host as self-confirmation or requests for confirmation. The conversation is controlled by the host mother, as indicated by the quantity of her utterances and the way in which she quickly changes the conversational topic. The student does not elaborate on his responses until questioned further by his host.

The host mother’s politeness strategies can be summarised below, in sequence.

1. A bald on-record FTA waiting for contextualisation, but disguised as an off-record FTA in its preparatory stage.

2. A negative politeness strategy in the form of an excuse (saying that it was not her fault that she was called at the last minute) and a positive politeness strategy in the form of asserting common ground (attempting to pull the student into the conversation by asking him whether he had been to Invercargill).
3. Repeating the same off-record FTA within the frame of positive politeness strategies.

There are places throughout the conversation where the host mother uses “foreigner talk” (Ferguson, 1975). For example, in line 43, she omits “the” in “put fire on for us” and also in “warm up house.” In line 45, she omits “do” in “you understand,” and in lines 47 and 51 she omits “at” from before the host parents’ return times. Foreigner talk is often used when the speaker is trying their best to explicitly make the listener understand what they are trying to say. However, the foreigner talk that the host mother uses is not explicit or able to be clearly understood when combined with off-record FTAs within a framework of on-record positive politeness strategies.

5.2.2 Conversation 2: Weekend options

The following episode occurs when the host mother is trying to get her student to stay at somebody else’s house because she is going out on Saturday night. She gives the student the option of having his female friend over, but there seems to be an off-record FTA that this is not what she prefers. That is, the host mother did not want her student’s female friend to come over because she rang the ECNZ after the conversation with the student and enquired whether it was acceptable for him to be left alone in the house with a female friend. ECNZ said that it was not allowed. When the host mother was told this, she seemed relieved and said that she did not think it was appropriate. Subsequently, the student had to go to another friend’s house to be looked after. (The student stayed the night and went back to his homestay the following morning.)
26. HM:  

\[mm, (3.0)\) so maybe, ah, cos I have to go out on Saturday night. I (FTA)\]

27. S:  

\[oh= R (A)\]

28. HM:  

\[=but I’ll give you dinner before I go, F (Exp) \left[(S: Oh, thank you) R2 \right] \]

29. HM:  

\[but today’s only\]

\[Thursday isn’t it? F2 (Com)\]

31. S:  

\[yeah \ R3 (A)\]

32. HM:  

\[but I just thought, well, F4 (Com) \left[(S: mm R5 (B)) (2.0) mm, F5 (OR) \right] \]

\[B (4.0) mm, (OR) if, um, this girl wants to come over on Saturday\]

\[night, that’s ok, but. (Exp) (FTA)\]

33. S:  

\[oh, yeah, (2.0) oh R6 (A)\]

34. HM:  

\[stay, if you wanted to. F6 (Exp)\]

35. S:  

\[oh. R7 (A)\]

The host mother hedges her intention using an off-record FTA in line 26. We could interpret line 26 as functioning as a preparation for the FTA to come (Held, 1992). The host mother then justifies the preparation for the FTA, telling her student she will give him dinner before she goes out. Line 28 functions to soften the impact of the off-record FTA. The host mother then gives the impression that she is self-confirming (line 29), but uses a question at the end, which is acknowledged by the student. The host mother then hedges the off-record FTA by suggesting that his friend can come over, but the sentence is left hanging at “but.” The host mother is indirectly requesting that her student make plans to go out and stay at somebody else’s house. She does this by vocally self-confirming (line 29) that today is only Thursday. This implies that the student has time to make plans to stay at somebody else’s house for Saturday night, but
he does not. The student only backchannels, which could indicate that he has not really understood his host mother’s implied intention.

The host mother has changed the focus of her FTA in line 34. She is now giving her student an invitation to stay at her house. The off-record FTA is becoming more explicit because the student now has a choice. This could be categorised as an on-record FTA using a negative politeness strategy, but the student has still not recognised the off-record FTA. A new episode begins in line 36 with the host mother attempting to deviate from her previous FTA by changing the topic to what she is going to do for her student. This is a positive politeness strategy (see point 15 in Brown and Levinson’s [1978] politeness model in section 2.7.3).

36. HM:  *whatever, I might, on Saturday, if the weather’s oh, it depends on the roads, take you out to Port Chalmers in the daylight. I*

37. S:  *oh, [student's male Japanese friend's name]? R(A) (Cnf C)*

38. HM:  *° mm.° How is he? F (B) (Exp)*

There is no expansion to the FTA from line 32 and the FTA seems to draw to a close with the host mother’s utterance in line 36 (“whatever”). “Whatever” seems to function as a hedging strategy for the end of the FTA in the previous episode. Again, the FTA seems to be left hanging, as in line 32. Line 36 changes the direction of the conversation by changing the topic.

There is a communication issue that starts in line 36. Upon the student hearing the place name “Port Chalmers,” the student acknowledges with “oh” and then the name of his male friend, who lives in Port Chalmers (line 37). The student later told me that
he thought that his male friend could come and stay with him at his house as well as the
girl that was coming over to stay. This is why the student raises his male friend’s name
as a question (line 37). The student is requesting confirmation that his male friend, who
lives in Port Chalmers, is another person who can also stay the night at his host
mother’s house while she is away. Line 38 begins with the host mother responding with
what seems to be a disinterested acknowledgement. Her response does not cooperate
with her student’s confirmation and flouts Grice’s (1975) maxim of relevance of
wanting to know if the student’s friend is going to come to stay at his house on Saturday
night with the female. The host mother’s response only seems to backchannel that the
student has uttered his friend’s name. She then enquires into how his male friend, who
lives in Port Chalmers, is (line 38). This initiation is a further change in the
conversational topic.

41. S:  
42. HM:  
43. S:  
44. (Pause for two seconds.)

The student responds to his host’s initiation in line 41, which is then followed up by the
host mother requesting confirmation as to how his male friend is (line 42). However, the
student does not confirm and instead only vaguely acknowledges (line 43).

The whole episode (lines 26 to 44) seems to consist of the host mother saying
that she will be going out on Saturday night and that she would prefer that her student
also go out, although this is not stated explicitly. It is as if the host mother is vocalising
her thoughts without any regard to whether her student understands or not. About five days after the recording, I asked the student what he planned to do last Saturday night and he said that he thought that his female and male friend were both going to come over to his house and that they were both going to having a sleepover. He also thought that his host mother was going to be there and was surprised to discover that she was not at home on Saturday night, nor that his female and male friend did not come that night, and instead he spent the night at his friend’s house (but not the one in Port Chalmers). He then asked me if there was a rule that he was not allowed to spend the night at his home alone.

The fact that the host mother speaks over the student’s expression of gratitude (line 29) could indicate that the host mother is not listening for any signals from the student that he understands what she is saying. The host mother is clearly the “powerful” or conversationally dominant (Itakura, 2001) interlocutor here. As in the previous conversation (section 5.2), the host mother does not check whether the student has understood what she has said. The student does request confirmation indirectly, but the host mother seems to misinterpret this.

The conversational issue is similar to that discussed in section 5.2 because the host mother mixes referential information with phatic communion. The host mother uses positive politeness strategies to try to draw her student into the conversation, but mixes this with off-record and on-record negative politeness FTAs. The student does not seem able to differentiate between these two modes of discourse and, hence, the host mother’s intention is obscured. From a Gricean (1975) perspective, the quantity maxim is flouted (in a similar way to the conversation in section 5.2) because again, there is phatic communion mixed with referential information. However, similar to
5.2.1, the intention of either the student or the host parent may not be construed as a flout, but rather incorrect pre-suppositions concerning how the other party interprets the conversation.

5.2.3 Conversation 3: Holiday boredom

In this conversation the student is on a two-week break from his studies. This recording was identified and analysed as a major communication issue because the student had spoken to the two Japanese liaison staff complaining that his host mother sometimes forced him to eat dinner in town with his friends. An analysis of the conversation revealed that, even though there was no specific demand from the host mother that the student spend time with his friends, there seemed to be an implication that he should spend time away from home. In addition, the host mother suggested that the student should make plans to spend time with his friends while the homestay parents were away during the holiday period. This implication was later confirmed by arrangements made for the holiday period, when the student’s homestay parents went away for about three nights without their student. ECNZ discovered later that they had not invited their student, but had arranged for someone to come in for one of the nights to mind him and to cook his meals and for him to stay at somebody else’s house for the other two nights. This made the student feel uncomfortable to be at home with his homestay family because he felt that they preferred him to be out with his friends, leading to his complaint mentioned above. Lines 9 to 13 in the following conversation were previously analysed in section 4.2.14 as an example of an “or” question to illustrate turn-taking between the host and the student; however, this time, the lines will be illustrated to indicate how a major communication issue using implicit FTAs was
performed by the host. In terms of Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model (see section 2.4), the student perceived that he was very “distant” from his homestay family. The following episodes act to convey this.

4. HM: *what time you going to town?* I
5. S: *ah, one o’clock.* R
6. HM: *oh, yeah* F (A)
7. S: *yeah* R2
8. (Pause for about seven seconds.)

On their own, lines 4 to 8 look like an exchange of information. However, the host mother’s check as to what time the student is going to town (using foreigner talk) seems to be a common theme throughout the entire conversation. Even though it is not apparent in this episode (or indeed the rest of the conversation), the student had commented to the two Japanese liaison staff that he felt obligated to go to town to buy lunch, especially on a Saturday, instead of eating anything at home before he went. In line 9, the host mother begins to focus on how the student can occupy his time during the holidays.

9. HM: *do you like holidays or a little boring?* ((laughs slightly)) I (K1?)
10. S: *oh, a little boring* ((laughs slightly)) R
11. HM: *maybe, yeah,* ((laughs slightly)) F (A) *tonight we will, yeah, so you and your friend need to talk about things to do* (S: *mm* (R (B)) cos *<we’re going away> maybe we will give you some ideas, maybe tonight, and*
then you need to talk to your friends and you need to say we will do this

((laughs slightly)) (Adv) (FTA)

The host mother’s initiation in line 9 could be interpreted as a K1 display question because her follow-up move agrees with what the student has said. A display question is a question in which the speaker already knows what the addressee’s response will (or should) be. (The host mother’s question in line 9 will be shown to be a K1 initiation with support from other episodes throughout the conversation.) The host mother’s initiation is an “or” question, which gives the student a choice as to how to answer. The student responds by saying that the holidays are “a little boring” and then laughs. The host mother agrees and laughs with her student (line 11), a response that may have been appropriate irrespective of the way in which the student responded to her question in line 9.

Although the host mother does not specifically say that she would like her student to spend time away from her house while they are away, she does suggest, through a direct on-record FTA in line 11, that her student needs to talk to his friends about what they will do in the holidays. The host mother then quickly and quietly justifies why her student needs to do this. The justification is indirect, but is the reason why the host mother feels that it is important for her student to find something to do, so that he will not be at home “bored.” According to Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model, the host mother is using a positive politeness strategy by asserting that she knows what is best for her student (see section 2.7.3). The host mother continues the on-record FTA by suggesting that her student should talk to his friends in a demanding way – “we will do this” (line 11).
12. S: oh, yeah R2 (A)

13. HM: cos otherwise everybody > just stays at home < and they get a little bored ((laughs slightly and then the student laughs)) F2 (Exp) (Com)

14. HM: do you want one? I

15. S: oh, thank you R

In line 12, the student agrees with his host mother’ FTA from line 11. His host mother then continues to expand upon her justification for her student to do something in the holidays, otherwise he will be bored (line 13). The host mother is now giving a reason as to what will happen if he “just stays at home”. The conversation is drawn to a close by the host mother laughing slightly and then quickly changing the topic by asking if the student would like a snack that she has just made (line 14). The student hesitates first “oh” and then says “thank you” (line 15).

Throughout this episode, the host mother seems to be leading the student towards a certain response, or what Itakura (2001) describes as “sequential dominance” (p. 1864).

From line 15 to line 23, the student’s six year-old host sister comes into the kitchen and has the following conversation with her mother. Throughout this episode the host sister and student do not converse.

16. HM: um, I am taking [daughter’s name] and also [host sister’s friend] and [host sister’s friend] to a play this afternoon, but it is little children

17. S: ah ((laughs slightly)) (HS laughs slightly)

18. HS: Shrek
19. HM: *no, not Shrek, Shrek’s next week, I’ll take you to Shrek too, aren’t ya?

*Shrek is in about six sleeps.*

((HM laughs and then says something which is incomprehensible.))

The following lines indicate that the child would like another sandwich, but not the ones that are in front of her.

20. HS: *I don’t like those ones.*

21. HM: *why not?*

22. HM: *you have one and I’ll have one too. These are yummy and they were just cooked when we got back.*

The host mother returns to the conversation that she was having with her student about what he is going to do during the holidays. The host mother changes the conversational topic and interlocutor, (participatory dominance, Itakura, 2001) which illustrates that she is still in control of the conversation.

23. HM: *are you seeing your friends this afternoon? I*

24. S: *yeah R (A)*

25. HM: *yeah F (Rep)*

26. S: *yeah R2 (Rep)*

The host mother’s initiation in line 23 is a reformulation from her initiation from line 4 “what time you going to town?” The student acknowledges (line 24) and then his host
mother repeats his acknowledgement (line 25) to which the student then repeats with “yeah” (line 26).

27. HM: *have you been to the museum before? Do you know the museum, [student’s name]?*

28. S: *I don’t know*

29. HM: *oh*

((Pause for four seconds))

The host mother initiates a further conversational topic (line 27), which if taken on its own could be categorised as a casual conversational question. However, the question is related to the indirect implication that the host mother is trying to convey, and which is first suggested in line 11 by the FTAs: “you and your friend need to talk about things to do,” “maybe we will give you some ideas,” and finally “you need to say we will do this.” The host mother’s initiation in line 27 is more direct because it relates to a specific place and the host mother also uses her student’s name at the end of her question. The student acknowledges that he does not know the museum, which seems unlikely because he passes it every day when he goes to ECNZ and went there on a field trip in the first week of the programme. The student probably does not understand the word “museum,” which could be why he says “I don’t know.” The host mother responds with “oh” (line 29). There is then a four second pause. The host mother proceeds to explain where the museum is located; however, the explanation is vague and is interrupted by the student’s host father.
30. HM: *Down the end, near the university, [name of city] museum in a few days*

F (Exp)

31. HF: *is there a show on?*

32. HM: *yeah, a show about New Zealand, yeah, near, near the bank*

33. S: *ohh*

34. HM: *you know where the bank is across the road from the bank, museum, imm*

Line 30 flouts Grice’s (1975) maxim of manner because it contains no specific information relevant to where the museum is. “Down the end” assumes that the student would understand that “end” is a shortened expression for the “north end.” The host mother then expands her explanation by saying “near the university,” however, this is still vague because the university is very big and the student still does not have much of a specific reference point in order to go to the museum. The second part of her follow-up move (line 30) flouts Grice’s (1975) relevance maxim because it changes the topic from where the museum is to what is going to happen in a few days at the museum. The host father then interrupts (line 31) by attempting to fill in what the host mother might have said. The host mother responds with agreement, but then the second part of line 32 changes the topic again to where the museum is located “near the bank.” The student then acknowledges her explanation, which prompts her to explain more specifically where the museum is in relation to the bank with “across the road from the bank” (line 34). The host mother then hesitates, as illustrated by “imm” at the end of line 34, which could indicate that she is not convinced that her student understands where the museum is. This is why the host mother then continues with her explanation about where the museum is (line 35).
Line 35 starts with a question which has continued from line 34 “across from the bank.” It is at this point that the host mother stops describing where the museum is and instead utters “yeah” which confirms the fact that she assumes that her student now knows where the museum is.

35. HM: big grass area? yeah you could go there. I don’t know if you’re interested in that kind of thing or not F2 (Adv) (FTA)

36. S: mm R3 (B)

37. HM: we will talk tonight and get down some ideas F3 (Ref)

38. S: ah, ok R4 (A)

39. HM: you can tell your friends F4 (Ref)

40. S: ((laughs slightly))

41. HM: you need to be busy in the holidays F4 (Ref) (Adv) (FTA)

42. S: ((laughs slightly))

43. HM: otherwise it will be too boring. ((laughs slightly)) F4 (Com)

The second part of line 35 is direct advice that the student could “go there,” but it is ambiguous as to whether the host mother is referring to the museum or the “big grass area.” In this way, Grice’s (1975) maxim of manner has again been flouted. The third part of the host mother’s FTA functions as redressive action. This is a negative politeness strategy used to minimise the on-record FTA, “you could go there.” According to Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model, the negative politeness strategy minimises the FTA by being pessimistic, by saying “I don’t know if you’re interested in that kind of thing or not” (see point 3 in section 2.7.4). The student only
backchannels with “mm” (line 36), to which the host mother then emphasizes her conclusion and control of the conversation by saying that she will “talk tonight and get down some ideas” (line 37). The student hesitates and then says “ok” in response to his host mother (line 38). The host mother then continues to perform her FTA in line 39, however, the student then laughs slightly when she says this, which could indicate that he might not understand what she has said, or is using laughter to indicate that he does not want to show any conflicting attitude to what he could perceive as her FTA (line 40),

The student does not commit himself to anything, but uses redress by being vague. Throughout this episode (lines 35 to 43) there is no negotiation of meaning; it is assumed that the student understands.

The host mother’s reformulations in this episode (lines 35 to 43) are reformulated from lines 11 and 13. They function to prepare (Held, 1992) the FTAs that will follow in the evening.

The host mother’s reformulations (lines 35 to 43) function to conclude the conversation. However, the language used is more direct than previously stated in line 11 and 13 because she now uses “…you need…,” (line 41) and “otherwise it will be too boring” (line 43). The bald on-record FTA in lines 37 through to 43 has shifted from the student needing to talk to his friends about the holidays to the need to be busy during the holidays.

The host mother is implicitly putting pressure on her student in the form of advice to do something with his friends in the holidays. She is asserting or presupposing that what she is suggesting is suitable for her student. This is a positive politeness strategy used by the host mother in order for her to avoid her homestay responsibilities.
The advice is unproffered, which Morrow (2006) claims creates an asymmetrical relationship.

Lines 44 to 84 have been omitted due to reasons of space and because they include the host mother and daughter having a conversation about some cakes that the host mother has made. Line 85, in the following episode, concerns the host mother explaining when her daughter can have a cake, which is backchannelled by the student (line 86).

85. HM:  
*I’ll put these in the oven and if you want to put jam in and make icing then you can have one before you do your homework*

86. S:  
*imm B*

87. HM:  
*um, how are your friends finding the holidays? Are they finding them ok, holidays are ok, or is it somewhere in the middle, boring? I (FTA)*

It is difficult to understand why the student backchannels “imm” in the middle of his host mother’s explanation to her daughter about the cakes (line 86). Perhaps the student was attempting to draw himself more into the interaction. After the student’s utterance of “imm” his host mother changes the conversational topic back to specifically repeating what she had been enquiring about throughout this whole conversation, that is, what her student is planning to do over the holidays with his friends. The host mother gives three possible responses to her own initiation: “ok,” “somewhere in the middle,” and “boring” (line 85); however, the difference between “ok” and “somewhere in the middle” does not equate to “boring.” It seems that the host mother is leading her student into responding with either “somewhere in the middle,” which would equate to “boring,” or even only the word “boring.” This is a negative politeness strategy similar
to what was used in line 8, “…do you like holidays or a little boring?” to which the student replies with “oh, a little boring” then laughs slightly. This is followed by his host mother’s agreement “maybe, yeah,” which is also followed by her laughter. The negative politeness strategy used by the host mother is used here again in order to minimise or redirect her on-record FTA. The student responds by firstly hesitating with “oh” and then “yeah” and finally one of the responses that his host mother gave as a first option to her initiation, “ok” (line 88).

88. S: oh, yeah, ok R (A)

89. HM: ok? F (Cnf C) I

90. S: yeah R (A)

91. HM: did you, did you want any ideas. For the holidays? I (Ref) (FTA)

The host mother checks for confirmation by repeating what her student said “ok?” (line 89). In line 90, the student confirms that his host mother understood correctly. However, his host mother does not seem to expect her student to respond with “ok” because her follow up move in line 91 does not coordinate to what the student responded with. In other words, there is no reason for the host mother to give her student any advice in the form of ideas to do things over the holidays if his friends are finding the holidays “ok.” It is as if the host mother’s preparation for the implicit FTA and the direct FTA itself is now being threatened by the student responding, perhaps unconsciously, that he does not need to hear any of his host mother’s ideas. In spite of this threat to the FTA, the host mother still continues by asking if he needs her ideas
(line 91). The host mother firstly hesitates with the words “did you” (line 91), which is a negative politeness strategy. Line 91 functions as an implicit reformulation (from line 11 and 37) as to what the host mother’s intention of the whole conversation is, i.e., to give her student ideas as to what he can do with his friends over the holidays, so that he will not be at home all the time “bored.”

92. S: imm R (B)

93. HM: or, I suppose, you know, in the end there are some good things to do F (Ref) (Exp)

94. S: ohh, R (B)

((Both laugh slightly))

In line 92, the student only backchannels his host mother’s reformulation, which could be interpreted as the student politely trying to indirectly hint that he does not want any ideas as to what he could do during the holidays. His host mother continues in line 93 by using a positive politeness strategy “or I suppose you know in the end…” Line 93 functions as a negative politeness strategy in order to reduce the student’s threat to the FTA from line 91. In other words, the host mother seems determined to suggest some ideas despite the fact that her student implicitly said that his friends found the holidays “ok.” In line 94, the student only backchannels, which could be a further indirect attempt at stating that he would like to refuse his host mother’s ideas. However, in line 95, the host mother still continues her attempt at giving her student ideas. It is as if her student’s negative politeness strategy has gone unnoticed. In lines 95 and 97, the host mother’s utterance only includes positive politeness strategies (“…you know…”, “…do you know that,” and “maybe that’s something that you could do?”).
95. HM:  

*I think I’ll get umm, the Cadbury you know the Cadbury chocolate festival information, I’ll just get that.* (Pause for three seconds) *right, on Saturday there is a street party (S: imm) do you know that? (S: imm, imm) yeah (S: imm) It says put on your gloves and hat and scarf and celebrate winter, there’s going to be music and dancing, umm in the Octagon from five o’clock til seven o’clock.* F (Exp)

96. S:  

*oh, Octagon?* R (B) (Req Cl)

97. HM:  

*yeah ((laughs slightly)) yeah, so maybe that’s something that you could do.* F (FTA) (Exp) (Cnf) (Adv)

Line 95 contains specific information that the host mother is going to use in order to give her student ideas about what to do during the holidays. The student responds with backchanneling, “oh,” and then requests clarification regarding “Octagon” (line 97). It is unclear; however, what the student is referring to when he requests clarification. Is he merely repeating his host mother’s word “Octagon” or is he confirming that the street party is going to be in the Octagon? His host mother then responds to the student’s request for clarification with “yeah” and laughs (line 97). Her laughter is a further positive politeness strategy used to soften the impact of her FTA. The host mother continues her follow up move by uttering another “yeah” after her laughter, which indicates the start of her on-record FTA that the idea that she suggested is something that her student could do. The host mother does not have a rising question tone at the end of her FTA in line 97, which is evidence that she has confirmed that she has given at least one specific idea for her student to do over the holidays. Line 97 also functions as a conclusion to the conversational topic. The student does not say anything in response and the topic is closed.
Further on in the conversation, the host mother returns to her attempt to request her student to go out during the holidays (line 124).

124. HM: *so, maybe Saturday night in the Octagon will be good, do you think?* I (FTA)

125. S: *ah* R (B)

126. HM: *street party?* F (Ref) (Cnf C)

127. S: *ah* R (B)

128. HM: *do you think?* F (Ref) I *Maybe good idea, street party* (Ref) (Cnf C)

129. S: *ah* R (B)

130. HM: *you can talk to your friends about it anyway, see if it’s something that they want to do.* F (Rec) FTA

Line 124 could be interpreted as a bald on-record FTA. However, the FTA is minimised by negative politeness strategies such as hedging, for example “so, maybe,” and a positive politeness strategy by asking “do you think?” this time as a question form. Due to this mitigation line 124 is not a bald FTA. Even though the student does not commit to going to the festival, the host mother has used persuasive language such as, “do you think” (line 128) and “good idea” (line 128). “Do you think” is a positive politeness strategy that illustrates that the host mother is paying attention to her student’s feelings (see section 2.7.3). Line 128 also functions as a confirmational check (similar to line 97) because there is no rising intonation in the form of a question at the end of her utterance. In spite of the host mother saying that she plans to talk about activities for her student to
do over the holidays in the evening, it seems that she is already addressing this and is requesting confirmation from the student for the decisions that she has made. In line 130, the host mother gives an indirect negative politeness strategy that her student, “can” talk to his friends, and “see if” it is something that he would like to do. This is an indirect request to abide by her FTA.

By looking at this conversation as a whole, line 4, “what time are you going to town” can be interpreted as an indirect FTA requesting the student to spend time away from his home. This is supported by the host mother’s further initiations in the form of display questions throughout the conversation, in particular, lines 9, 23, and 87. Other follow up moves used by the host mother function to persuade and/or justify her display questions, in particular, lines 13, 41, 43, 87, and 130.

Conversation 3 has similar aspects to conversations 1 and 2. The host mother is clearly the dominant interlocutor in the way that she controls the topic and leads the student into several responses. There is no negotiation of meaning by the student or the host parent, but the host mother does perform confirmation checks. The confirmation checks are not clearly responded to by the student, which gives the host mother the opportunity to confirm her own initiation, and which may indicate that she is using display (K1) questions in which the speaker already knows what the addressee’s responses will (or should) be. Further evidence is given when the host’s display question was threatened in line 91. In spite of this threat, the host mother flouts Grice’s (1975) maxim of relevance by seemingly ignoring her student’s response and continues with her FTA. The host mother could have assumed an incorrect pre-supposition, by thinking that her student had understood what she was about to say. The host mother may genuinely feel as if it is her role to explain activities to her student in order to keep
him busy during the holidays. The host mother’s actions could be interpreted as extending consideration to the student’s needs and so not a purposeful flout of Grice’s (1975) maxims. The fact that the host flouted Grice’s maxim is evidence to support the fact that line 9 was a K1 initiation because the host mother wanted to hear her student say that the holidays were indeed boring. The host mother’s utterances also mix referential information with phatic communion, and use positive politeness strategies mixed with off-record and on-record negative politeness FTAs.

5.2.4 Major communication issues: overall findings and discussion

The following major communication issues occurred in May 2007, early in the programme. These communication issues will be discussed in terms of cultural (macro) and social (micro) factors.

In all three of the major communication issues described in this chapter, the students were reacting to FTAs. Due to the students’ linguistic ability, off-record FTAs seemed difficult for them to understand. In all three examples, the FTAs were disguised by phatic communion and topic changes. These are negative politeness strategies aimed at softening the impact of FTAs, but were not understood by the students. For example, there are bald on-record FTAs waiting to be contextualised, but disguised as off-record FTAs in the preparatory stages. There are positive politeness strategies used, such as attempts to pull the student into the conversation by trying to assert common ground, as well as the host parents asserting or presupposing concern for their students’ wants. There are negative politeness strategies used, for example, being conventionally indirect, or hedging the FTA. There are also mixtures of phatic communion and important informational content, which soften the impact of the FTA.
In all three of the conversations, the host parents used a various number of strategies in order to convey positive intentions about potentially distancing actions; actions that would also avoid their homestay responsibilities. The conversations were also not structured cooperatively, so the students did not clearly understand their host’s intentions. In all three recordings, homestay parents and students did not seem to check that any understanding had taken place, nor was there any negotiation of meaning. The students’ responses, in the form of acknowledgement, could sometimes be interpreted as requests for clarification, but seemed to be interpreted as confirmation by their host parents, which resulted in no clarification at all. One reason for this is that the parents initiations often functioned as display questions (K1) in which they wanted their students to reply in a particular way (this can be seen in the minor communication issues, particularly, example 1, line 25, example 2, line 152, example 3, line 250, example 4 line 27 and 29, example 5, line 79, as well as in the major communication issues, particularly, in conversation 1, line 31 and 36, and conversation 3, lines 9, 87, and 91). The fact that the host parents used display questions (K1) indicates that they had an intention to persuade their student from that point on to perform something. The display questions provided the host parents with the opportunity to choose the conversational topic and maintain their speaking turn. By managing the conversation in this way, the host parents could persuade, give advice or soften the impact of their FTA using negative or positive politeness strategies. These strategies often took priority over their student’s needs. The host parents were therefore, not overly concerned about understanding what their student might prefer to do, but rather were more concerned with stating their own intention. However, not reacting to their student’s needs, or
communicative signals, or, in other words, not being conversationally cooperative (Grice, 1975) resulted in the students often misunderstanding their host parents.

Several themes have arisen in common to the analyses of conversations that led to minor and major communication issues. These include host parents’ conversational dominance, a social and cultural distance between the hosts and the students, and maintenance of an asymmetrical relationship. These themes will be further discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to cultural and social factors (see also section 2.1).
Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings in light of the literature. It begins by providing brief answers to the two sets of research questions, and an overview of the chapter. It then discusses the major themes related to these answers under two headings, and then concludes the discussion of these themes.

6.1.1 Research questions

There were two sets of research questions. These are answered here.

1. How are conversations structured in the homestay environment?
   a. What influences do social and cultural factors have on them?
   b. What effects do they have on communication in the homestay environment?

The findings presented in Chapter 4 have clearly indicated that the IRF structure is common in the homestay environment. The IRF structure has been shown to promote host control of the conversations, restricting students’ interaction and reinforcing the asymmetrical relationship between homestay hosts and students. The IRF structure is a conversational style influenced by a number of factors, including Japanese students’ practices in educational contexts and social and cultural norms and homestay parent expectations. It appears to have been transferred by the students to the New Zealand homestay environment, and reinforced by other social and cultural norms. Its use appears to have limited student opportunities to use language in order to learn language in the homestay environment.
2. How are conversational maxims and politeness principles followed in homestay conversations?

   a. What influences do social and cultural factors have on them?

   b. What effects do they have on communication in the homestay environment?

The findings presented in Chapter 5 show that, despite there being no apparent intention to do so, the cooperative principle that underlies the conversation maxims and the politeness principles was undermined by both homestay hosts and students. This occurred because differences in social and cultural norms meant the hosts and students misinterpreted each other’s implicitly stated intentions, that is, specialised implicatures. This means that homestay students and hosts appeared uncooperative and impolite in their generalised implicature, which led to communication issues. Student strategies for preventing communication issues further limited their opportunities to use language to learn language in the homestay environment.

6.1.2 Overview of the chapter

Themes that emerged from the analyses of the IRF patterns found in the homestay conversations are discussed in detail in section 6.2. They include the loss of conversational control by students through the students’ first move in relation to both student and host FTAs and host evaluations. These themes illustrate the asymmetrical relationship apparent in the homestay environment. Also discussed are factors influencing the IRF structure, namely, its origins in the learned conversational pattern taught in the Japanese/English classroom and these reflect social and cultural factors that function to maintain social distance. Section 6.3 will examine the themes related to conversational cooperation and politeness. It will illustrate three specific kinds of
misunderstanding, namely, the failure of students to recognise phatic communion as such, their misinterpretations of implicatures and the “negative” transfer of Japanese concepts that involve *uchi* (inside, or personal), and *soto* (outside, or public). It also discusses other factors, such as avoiding conflict and the Japanese concept of *nemawashi* (background negotiations, or other participant voices), and how cooperation and politeness factors from both the New Zealand and Japanese culture influence the conversational strategies used by participants. Finally, section 6.4 will illustrate how the social and cultural assumptions of both the homestay parents and students combine to form a “vicious circle” that further contributed to communication issues, drawing the chapter to a close.

### 6.2 Themes related to the IRF

In this thesis I have examined the conversations of homestay hosts and students. I have found that the IRF pattern, most commonly associated with classrooms, was also common in the homestay environment. For example, the IRF was discovered in all of the 45 conversations, but in different forms due to variations in the initiating (K1, or K2) and responding (requesting repetition, clarification, backchannelling, etc.) moves. Not only were the IRF patterns a part of longer conversations, there were also many conversations that were no more than a triadic dialogue. In this section I briefly summarise the general findings by focusing on how the IRF perpetuated host control over conversations, and suggest what factors influenced its use in the homestay environment, and describe what effects it had.
6.2.1 Moves and misunderstandings

This section summarises the findings related to the IRF conversations. It first focuses on the first move in IRF conversations, showing how hosts maintained and students lost control over conversations. It then focuses on the third move, showing two ways in which hosts maintained their control over conversations. (References to the second move are also included.)

6.2.2 Loss of conversational control through the first move: Few student initiations

The findings in section 4.2 indicate that the students rarely initiated any of the conversations. This means they rarely decided the topic of conversation. Of the 18 students, only seven used the first initiative move at the start of a conversation. Of the 45 recorded conversations, there were 12 initiations performed by students throughout the conversation (with one student using a total of 5 initiation moves, 3 in a single conversation). All of the student initiations were simple introductory and formulaic initiatives (e.g., “how are you?”). All of the student initiative moves that were not formulaic greetings used the K2 format, that is, the students did not know what the answer to their initiation was going to be. This contrasted with the host parents, who used 28 K2 moves, but also 9 K1 initiations (see section 4.2.4).

Not initiating the first move put the students in the role of responding, and it meant that they rarely had access to the follow-up move and, therefore, lacked another opportunity to further manage the conversation. Interestingly, one of the conversations (see section 5.1.2) showed how the student actually took advantage of the IRF structure to purposely position himself into responding to his host’s initiation in order to suppress
his FTA. The results clearly indicate that the students are predominantly the responders in the conversations and the parents are the initiators.

One obvious reason why students were often unable to initiate conversations is because their host parents did. Part of the homestay guidelines requested homestay parents to interact with students as much as possible. Given that New Zealand is a low context culture (Hall, 1976), the host parents might have overtly decided to kick-start communication with their students by regularly initiating the first move. Even when students did have the opportunity to initiate, they seldom did. As mentioned above, and documented in the matrices, only seven students initiated the first move. Even when two students did decide to initiate the conversation, the host either ignored them (see section 4.2.21), or launched into a full narrative in response to the initiation, thereby dominating the conversation (see section 4.2.22) and restricting the student to mere backchannelling or acknowledgement. In one example (see section 4.2.13), the student initiated the topic and had the opportunity to respond with feedback or an evaluation similar to those used by parents, but did not. Furthermore, the matrices indicate that this pattern did not change over the period of the data collection. At the end of the study, students still did not initiate conversations.

6.2.3 Loss of conversational control in the first move: Student FTAs

Any examples of students initiating the first move could have been initiatives with the intention to perform an FTA (Kasper, 1990); however, often in these cases, the hosts would take advantage of the students’ initiation and provide an extensive narrative as a response (see section 4.2.22). This sometimes resulted in a change in the conversational topic, which was consequently directed by the host and might have resulted in the
student missing their opportunity to perform their FTA. It would require much skill or many moves for the conversation to be redirected by the student back to the FTA that the student wanted to perform. Actual examples of students performing FTAs have not been recorded (however, see section 5.1.4, where the student’s reply could be interpreted as an FTA) either by coincidence or because of students purposefully deciding not to perform an FTA when they knew they were being recorded. However, two related complaints that arose from the second homestay meeting held at ECNZ in August, 2007 highlighted the fact that students did not state anything directly when they wanted something, and that students raised their homestay requests and concerns through the Japanese liaison staff. These suggest that the students had FTAs to make, but did not make them.

One recorded conversation (see section 5.1.2), which I have described as an example of indirectness, gives insight into how FTAs might generally be carried out by Japanese students as well as into why Japanese students might not perform them and instead rely on nemawashi (background negotiation), or in other words, stating their FTAs to the Japanese liaison staff instead of directly to their host parents. (See section 6.7 for further discussion of this.) In the example illustrated in section 5.1.2, the student initiated the conversation topic of wanting to wear a warm jacket, but did not directly perform the FTA of asking to borrow his host mother’s jacket. Instead, he managed to convey his FTA by using his second move responses to position his host mother into initiating questions. These questions narrowed down and potentially softened the impact of the FTA the student wanted to perform. This is what I term a “reverse FTA,” in that the host mother ended up guessing what the FTA was and mentioned the precise topic in a leading way (“well, you know my jacket…”) so that the student could request it
(“could you borrow”). Doing this, however was linguistically difficult, time-consuming, and fraught with risks of incorrect interpretation.

Thus, even when students initiated conversational topics in order to perform an FTA, the negotiations were protracted. If initiatives are taken away when there is an intention to perform an FTA, then the time and effort involved in redirecting the conversation would be even greater. The interlocutors have to adapt to a particular conversational style, which Aston (1995) refers to as “progressive negotiation.” Progressive negotiation functions to lessen the impact of the FTA (see Aston, 1995; section 2.7.6), but only when the intention to communicate an FTA is understood by both parties, which is much more likely when both interlocutors share a linguistic, social and cultural background. When interlocutors do not share a common background more interpretation is required (see sections 6.6, 6.7, and 6.8, below). In the example in section 5.1.2, progressive negotiation moved from both parties discussing hiring ski gear at a resort in the future to the host mother realising that the student wanted to borrow her jacket right away, which led her to explicitly introduce her own jacket into the conversation, and resulted in the student asking if the host mother would “borrow” it. It is at this stage that the student’s implicit FTA has become an explicit FTA. Both parties were able to work together to construct an implicit FTA since they were able to recognise each other’s intention (see Martin & Nakayama, 2004).

The example in section 5.1.2 indicates that communicative interdependence relies on the willingness of host parents to negotiate conversations with perseverance, time, effort and specific communicative strategies that attempt to explicitly “unwrap” students’ FTAs from their off-record negative politeness strategies. Willingness to do this will depend not only on individual host parent(s), but also the student’s willingness
to perform their FTA, which is dependent on the degree of perceived redressive action that could be taken by their host, which in turn is dependent upon the perceived social distance between the interlocutors. In the example in section 5.1.2, even though the host mother did not at first understand the intention of her student, she cooperatively continued with the conversation. This could indicate that the relationship between the host and the student was conducive to the student to be able to negotiate successfully without fear of any kind of retribution.

However, this was only one incident. In other cases where the Japanese students might have tried to use an interdependent conversational style to perform an FTA, their intention might only have been known to them and too vague for their host parents to recognise their intention. These reasons may have caused the complaints from the host parents. In other words, the round-about way of students attempting to perform an FTA was often “lost in translation.” Although this was influenced by a number of factors discussed below, at the conversational level it arose from both the student’s failure to initiate and loss of control of conversations.

The findings indicate that, with the exception of one student (see section 5.1.3), no student performed an FTA on-record with positive politeness. This indicates that the students did not consider themselves as equals to their homestay parents.

6.2.4 Conversational control through the third move: Host FTAs

There were many times when the host parents would use the third move in order to limit their students’ opportunity to respond (see section 4.2.1, examples 6 and 7). One reason why the hosts chose to do this was because the host intended to perform an FTA. In other words, the hosts limited their use of “bound exchanges” (Berry, 1981) (multiple
IRFs) in order to communicate the FTA in a more direct style. In cases where the host’s intention was to communicate an FTA, they would firstly set the FTA up in a preparatory phase (Held, 1992) by initiating a display question (K1) that would function to quickly draw the student’s attention to the topic that they wanted to talk about. The student’s response would then function to indicate to the host that they were listening, usually in the form of a simple “yes” or “no,” which would provide their host with the opportunity to follow up by speaking in an extended and full narrative (Suzuki, 2006) and consequently performing the FTA (see section 5.2.1 for an example). When the host performed the FTA, they would usually flout Grice’s (1975) quantity maxim by giving an extended explanation, mixed with unimportant or unrelated information (see sections 4.2.14, 5.1.3, and 5.2.1 for examples). The host parent would expect their student to respond to their extended discourse with agreement. Usually, if the student responded with a short “yes,” or even “oh,” or no response at all, the host interpreted this to mean that they had understood the FTA that they had communicated (see sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). This was one situation where communication issues were common. The hosts assumed that their students had understood their FTA, when, in fact, there is evidence to indicate that the students had not. Instead, the students’ agreement was used to indicate that they were listening to the host parents and was a signal for the host parents to continue with their explanation. Thus, the students’ responses, essentially backchannelling, were signs of respect for the host rather than of understanding an FTA. This coincides with Yim and Ide’s (2000) findings, that Japanese speakers use more *aizuchi* expressions when listening to a superior than an inferior (p. 104). The homestay environment’s asymmetrical relationship influences students to use backchannelling, or
acknowledgement utterances in order to indicate respect, rather than understanding. However, the host parents interpreted their student’s *aizuchi* as understanding.

6.2.5 *Conversational control through the third move: Host evaluations*

There was evidence in the findings to suggest that evaluations used by the host parents would often function to end the conversation (there are many examples of these in Chapter 4, but particularly sections, 4.2.2 through 4.2.6 and 4.2.9). The third move offers the initiator the right to continue or discontinue the conversation. The students may have inferred that when the host performed the third move without explicitly extending the conversation (e.g., by asking a question or inviting the student to comment), then the host had decided to end the conversation. Thus the host retained control over the length of the conversation by manipulating the third move.

The findings also indicate that evaluation (whether of language or content) was usually given by the host parents when explicit questions were asked, which furthermore made use of the K1 (the host already knew the answer to the initiation). If students were aware that a conversation was a “practice,” or one where hosts were using K1, they responded with only one or two words (see section 4.2.9), not saying more in anticipation of the expected evaluation of their answer. As Coulthard (1982) illustrates, asymmetrical role relationships demonstrate a preponderance of evaluative moves. The findings indicated that there was only one example of a student using a positive evaluative “that’s good” (see section 4.2.4); however, the host parents used many positive evaluations (see sections 4.2.6 and 4.2.19). Some of the examples given in the findings indicate that some of the host parent’s evaluations performed while reformulating the meaning of their student’s speech were often taken up by the students
and even expanded. However, when the host parent recast with the intention of correcting their student’s grammar the students did not expand their responses (compare section 4.2.9, where the host parent initiates many examples of recasts which are not responded to by the student, to section 4.2.17, where the host reformulates the meaning and the student engages and expands upon their responses).

Students may have also preferred to make short responses if they perceived that the host parents would evaluate the language of their answers, such as if they made grammatical mistakes, which the students might expect in the third move if they had doubts about their language. Under these conditions the host also effectively controlled the extent of the conversation.

6.2.6 Asymmetry and dominance in conversations

One way of characterising the asymmetry of these IRF conversations is to say that the host parents dominated conversations. This means that the host parent decided the topic to be talked about, started and finished the conversation, managed who spoke (see Eggins & Slade, 1997), and used a number of assertive strategies to communicate their intentions (Berry, 2001). Itakura (2001) identifies three different types of conversational dominance: sequential, participatory, and quantitative (see section 2.9.7). Sequential dominance is the most significant of the three dominant conversational constructs because it is more closely related to the speaker’s behaviour in regard to control over topic development. There are significant examples of this in the recorded conversations, due to the host initiating the first move most of the time, as described above. In terms of participatory dominance, there was little interruption and/or overlap by the hosts in the conversations, probably because the students did not take long turns. However, there
was considerable quantitative dominance, that is, the hosts appeared to speak much more than their students by taking more and longer turns (see sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3 for examples of dominance involving major conversational issues). In other words, the host parents were conversationally dominant, a finding consistent with Spence-Brown (1993).

Dominance is not only conversational, however. It is also social. Section 2.9 discussed how students’ identities change according to what Norton (2011) terms “sites of practice” (p. 172) or Kress (1993) “social situations” (p. 27). In terms of dominance, it is social dominance that is reflected and reinforced by conversational dominance. This is one of the topics addressed in the following sections, where social and cultural factors are explored. The next section explores one reason why the IRF pattern may have been so common in homestay conversations, and how it carried social dominance with it.

6.2.7 A pattern learned from the English classroom in Japan

One explanation for the extensive use of the IRF pattern in homestay conversations demonstrated in the findings is that students have transferred it from their English classes in Japan. Van Lier (2004) suggests that language is a reproduction of education. There is evidence that the IRF structure is widespread in Japanese English language education (Takakubo, 2001; Nakamura, 2010). It is reinforced by pressure from the Japanese Ministry of Education for high test results (Luk & Lin, 2007; Ballard & Clanchy, 1991) and a traditional teaching approach which encourages compliance (Lustig & Koester, 1993; Cheng & Clark, 1993). It would not be surprising if the IRF was the conversational default structure for the students.
The IRF structure positions the teacher as the initiator and the student as the responder. This might explain why the students did not initiate conversation, but left it to their host parents to ask them something. In other words, the students were consciously acting out what they had learnt in their conversational class in Japan and perceived themselves to be engaging appropriately in conversations with their host parents. Even if they did recognise that it was appropriate for them to start conversations in the homestay environment, they were not used to initiating the first move, or responding with lengthy descriptions that made use of their personal opinions and experiences in subsequent moves. Rather, their responses appeared to be very similar to how students normally respond to their teachers in the English classroom in Japan, that is, the student is explicitly directed by the teacher into providing a grammatically accurate response, which results in short answers, which are then evaluated by the teacher. In short, by following the IRF pattern used in their English language classes in Japan, the students’ conversations were restricted (Lin, 2000; Richards, 2006).

6.2.8 A pattern reflecting hierarchies and maintaining social distance

The Japanese classroom has been characterised as perpetuating a traditional (Jarvis & Robinson, 1997; Holmes, 2005), or “dialectic” (Vaish, 2008) classroom, also termed “teacher-oriented” or “teacher-fronted” (see section 2.11). In such classrooms, the teacher is in control of the language (de Silva Joyce & Slade, 2000: Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), and students will speak only if they are “nominated” (Nakane, 2006). According to Hofstede’s (2001) Power Distance Index (PDI), there are differences in power and distance, so that the relationship between the teacher and the student is
asymmetrical, which means students will rarely speak to teachers for fear of breaking this hierarchical relationship (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). This power/distance relationship is reinforced through the use of the IRF structure, so when students transfer the conversational pattern, they also transfer the associated power/distance relationships (Conlan, 1996) (See 6.2.9 for a critique of this assertion.)

From a cultural perspective, this association of the IRF with hierarchical relationships may have been reinforced by the students’ interpreting the IRF structure as promoting an *soto* (front, or public) (Sugiyama-Lebra, 2004), which unconsciously, but strategically and conveniently, inserts a high context conversational style into a low context conversational style (Hall, 1976), without much effort required by the student at all. Further evidence is from the students’ use of backchannelling as a sign of respect for the host parents to continue their control over conversation, (aizuchi) (Yim & Ide, 2000). In the New Zealand homestay context, it not only reinforced asymmetrical conversations, it widened social distance.

Thus, the evidence of how students responded in IRF conversations suggests that transference from Japanese culture was reinforced by the social roles that the homestay parent and student played as members of different social groups (Schumann, 1976). In other words, there was a fairly wide social distance between the homestay parents and students from the very beginning of their relationship. The homestay parents were expected to act in the role of a parent, had established social positions with homes and jobs, and were native speakers of the target language that had brought the students to New Zealand. The homestay parents thus had host/parental, socioeconomic, and linguistic rights that positioned them as dominant because of their social status and education (Schumann, 1976), and also had political power (Tannen, 1994; Fukushima,
in the homestay environment. Both prior to and during the programme, the students were informed that they were bound by the rules of the homestay family within the wider framework of the New Zealand culture. They were aware of the responsibilities that their host parents had for them as students under their care, as was evident in student complaints when these responsibilities were not met to their satisfaction. In most matters host parents had the right and the responsibility to make typical decisions about family matters regarding what would happen, when it would happen, and where it would happen. Students were expected to abide by the rules of their hosts, both inside and outside the home. Failure to observe these rules risked a reprimand from the staff of one or both of the institutions. The consequences for the student might be relocation to another homestay or, in extreme cases, being sent back to Japan.

Dominance factors have been shown to affect the power distance relationships (Hofstede, 1980) between individuals. There would have been little doubt in anyone’s mind who was socially dominant in the homestay situation. As Fukushima (2000) explains, power perpetuates an asymmetrical relationship, or “modal status” (Schumann, 1976, p. 136), which, in turn, produces social distance (Schumann, 1976), which furthermore seems to have influenced the degree of interaction that the students, as well as the homestay parents carried out. It is then dependent on the open and inclusive nature of the dominant group that the non-dominant group is integrated (Berry, 1997).

It is therefore possible that the students assumed that their homestay parents had a comparatively greater right to self-assert themselves than the students did (Conlan, 1996), both in initiation and expansion of conversations. The students might have restricted their conversational roles because the students may have perceived assertion
as being socially inappropriate to their role as guest positioned as a “child” still in school and still learning the target language. The example discussed above in 5.1.2 showed how the student softened the impact of his FTA by strategically positioning himself as the secondary interlocutor even though he had initiated the conversational topic (see section 5.1.2).

There is some evidence that students who sought to assert their own views eventually gave up trying to do so and agreed with their host parents (see section 5.1.3 for an example). In one example involving uncomfortable interaction (see section 5.1.3), the student tried to assert that wearing the colour pink in Japan has a different connotation to wearing pink in New Zealand. Eventually the student agreed to follow his host mother’s recommendation that he observe what other people wore. However, even though the student agreed, it did not prevent the host mother from complaining about the assertiveness of the student, and ultimately led to the homestay arrangement being changed at the request of the student. The alleged assertiveness of the student also offers some evidence that Wilkinson (1998) is right in suggesting that study abroad students may dislike being positioned as a secondary interlocutor.

In addition, being the first to speak implies that one expects a particular response or action to be carried out. There are times when an initiation can actually be interpreted as an FTA (Schauer, 2009; Fukushima, 2003; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990), as an imposition on the listener’s time and effort involved in replying to the initiation (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). It is possible that students sometimes did not attempt to initiate a conversation because they could not judge how it would be perceived. It is also possible that they assumed that their initiatives would be regarded as impositions. According to Hall (1976), in high context cultures like Japan, self-assertion will
generally not be carried out without an overriding concern for the consequences. This lack of self-assertion was also apparent in how requests for clarifications were performed between the homestay hosts and students. In all of the conversations (except for one; see section 5.1.3), there was no evidence of students explicitly requesting clarification in connection to their host’s utterances, especially when the host was requesting their student do something important (see all three examples of major communication issues in Chapter 5). However, there is one example of a host explicitly requesting repetition from her student (see section 5.2.1). This difference highlights how explicit utterances by the hosts to negotiate meaning functions to limit misinterpretation of what the hosts perceive to be important information. However, students’ lack of self-assertion in explicitly requesting repetition means that students do not get many opportunities to negotiate the meaning of their host parents’ utterances, which results in a greater degree of misinterpretation.

If the students perceived themselves as not fully understanding the expectations of conversations in the New Zealand context, and, more specifically, in their individual host family, then the student might have waited to be spoken to rather than initiating conversations.

However, in terms of a post-structuralist approach, it would be academically fraught to accept such an assertion of transferability without critique. Section 2.9 discussed how students’ cultural identities and constructions of self oscillate between different social situations, therefore, we could expect that the Japanese students in this study also select specific construals of self to cope with this change.
6.2.9 Conclusion of themes related to the IRF

In my answer to the first set of research questions, I found that the IRF pattern is commonly used in homestay conversations. It maintains a formulaic pattern that predetermines turn-taking, length of response, and the roles and rights of the interactants. Students appeared to rarely initiate conversations, and even when they did, they lost control of the topics. Host parents usually initiated conversations and maintained control of them. Students tended to give short responses, did not elaborate on their responses, and may even have expected their responses to be evaluated. In short, the IRF pattern restricted student interaction.

Initially the use of the IRF may have only reflected the learned language use and the social distance between the homestay students and parents. However, its continued use throughout the data collection period, with little change in the role the students took in the conversations, suggests that the interactional roles in which the students were placed by the IRF structure may have limited their language use and, hence, their opportunities to learn through use.

Students were cast in the role of responding, not initiating, and not following up with the option of providing evaluation or expansion, a claim that Luk (2004) suggests as being the result of the IRF structure, in that students’ voices were silenced and/or “restricted” (p. 116) (as explained in section 2.8.2; also see Lemke, 1990; Lin, 2000; Ohta, 1999; Richards, 2006) This meant that host parents acted as “managers” (Nassaji & Wells, 2000) who could decide the topic and who could “prospect” (Sinclair, 1992) whether the next move was relevant or cooperative (Grice, 1975). Hence, the host parents were sequentially dominant (Itakura, 2001; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), which
meant that the students’ opportunities for using English and potentially learning from that use were limited.

The IRF structure appears to be transferred from Japanese English classrooms, and when combined with transfer from Japanese social and cultural aspects, functioned to position the students into a lower status role. The IRF structure restricted the roles of the interlocutors, fostering asymmetrical relationships that then perpetuated the interactional roles. For these language learners, the mutually reinforcing social and interactional roles stymied their opportunities to develop their language skills through conversation in the homestay environment—one of the main aims for placing students in homestays.

6.3 Themes related to cooperation and politeness

In this thesis, in all of the situations leading to communication issues, I have assumed that there was no intent to miscommunicate by either the students or the hosts. Nevertheless, the conversations have illustrated that communication issues did occur. In this section I first briefly review implicatures. I then describe the three ways in which implicatures functioned in both the minor and major communication issues that occurred in the findings. Finally, I consider the consequences of communication issues: the need for students to avoid further conflict, and the reinforcement of the predominant pattern of interpersonal relationships between homestay hosts and students.

6.3.1 Implicatures

Aoki and Okamoto (1988) claim that people all over the world share similar values and beliefs and thus assume that people communicate with the aim of being polite and with
minimal imposition to one another (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Fraser, 1990). Grice (1975) proposes that the conversational principle and its maxims, if rationally followed, (Leech, 1983) function to guide communication (see section 2.5.2).

However, even though speakers may accept the general aims of the conversational maxims and politeness principles, they may modify how the maxims and principles guide their practices in culturally dependent ways (Grice, 1989; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Achiba (2003) claims that misunderstandings might arise if the norms and conventions of one culture differ from those norms and conventions of another. Bouton (1994), Levinson (2000) and Fraser (1990) all suggest that particularised implicatures (or specific inferences that may operate within one’s own culture) and conversational implicatures (Levinson, 2000) (common assumptions regarding inferences that operate when one is speaking a language), may be distorted when positioned against the generalised implicatures (what is expected or perceived to be understood by both parties at a particular time and in a particular place) of utterances. Thus, the findings suggest that communication issues were due to the failure of generalised implicatures because the particularised (or specialised) implicatures of the students and hosts differed. For example, in the conversation of a student performing an FTA to a host parent (see section 5.1.2, and section 7.2.3, above), the student used particularised implicatures in order to provide hints for his host mother to realise that he wanted to borrow her jacket, but that he did not want to directly ask this. The student tried to rely on his host mother to understand these hints, but it was not until far into the conversation that the host mother realised this. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), if a speaker decides to go off record, then they have decided to implicitly signal an FTA. However, interpreting the degree of implicitness is culturally dependent (see Schauer, 2009 and
Achiba, 2003 for a discussion of “hints”). As discussed above in section 6.2.3, this example illustrates how challenges arise when interlocutors have two different sets of cultural expectations or management styles (Harris & Moran, 1979). When participants do not understand the norms and conventions of one another’s cultures, then challenges arise. In particular, Trosborg (1995) found that there were a greater number of hints used according to the degree of imposition perceived by the speaker. The student in the example in section 5.1.2 may have perceived borrowing his host mother’s jacket as a great imposition and so decided to create what he thought to be an appropriate degree of implication for his host mother. Other examples of particularised implicatures include the host parents joking with their students (see section, 5.1.1). In these examples, the host parents were the ones who were in control of the humour, and almost always at the expense of their student. Generalised implicatures occurred when hosts expected that their students had understood what they were told to do. Often, the students acknowledged or gave the impression that they had understood what was requested of them, but really had not, such as the example of the host wanting her student to turn the fire on to make the house warm when she was away (see section 5.2.1), or the example where the host mother is under the expectation that her student understands that he can leave school to go and see his host mother off at the airport (see section 5.1.3)

6.3.2 Three kinds of misunderstandings

In this section, I explain the three ways in which specialised implicatures were misinterpreted in homestay conversations. The specialised implicatures of phatic communion by the host parents may have been beyond the proficiency of students, and so misunderstood. The specialised implicatures of positive politeness by host parents
and of negative politeness strategies, such as short answers or silence by the students were misinterpreted. The specialised implicatures of conventional formulaic language common in families in New Zealand may have violated student assumptions about what such formulas implied based on the role played by similar formulas in Japan. Because specialised implicatures failed, so did the generalised implicatures, causing communication issues.

6.3.2.1 The failure of phatic communion

The findings show that students both failed to understand and failed to use phatic communion in conversations with their host parents. Host parents use of phatic communion indirectly signalled a non-controversial, friendly atmosphere, which, if appropriately responded to by the recipient, could lead into further conversation, or full narratives (Suzuki, 2006), and thereby provide an opportunity for the students to use English. As Ochs and Capps (2001) explain (see section 2.8.2), these discursive practices need to be known to all participants in order to function smoothly in the conversation. Unfortunately, the students did not have these language skills (see Wierzbicka, 1991), failed to understand their hosts’ intentions, and, therefore, were unable to extend the conversations initiated by the host parents or initiate their own.

The findings indicate that host parents often attempted to draw their student into conversation by asking open-ended questions such as “did you have a good day?” (see example 1 in section 4.2.21). However, the students, who seemed to interpret these questions as requiring only a “yes” or “no” response, misunderstood these intentions (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.22 and Chapter 5, sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3). They
interpreted the utterances literally instead of the understanding pragmatic intentions of the host parents.

Conversations that appeared to be designed to build friendly interpersonal relations were not responded to. This meant that opportunities created by the hosts to reduce social distance were often passed over by the students. One of Spence-Brown’s (1993) findings was that host parents became frustrated at the fact that their students did not converse with their host parents when given the opportunity to do so. This study suggests that perhaps the students simply did not understand how to interpret and respond to phatic communion.

The students’ use of phatic communion was also limited. Although the students did ask questions (e.g., “how about you?” see section 4.2.21), there was very little questioning or response after this. This indicates that, although the students might have learnt particular structures, such as “How are you?”, they had not learnt how to use them to further conversation. In this way, the students’ learnt structures functioned merely as orally prescribed paired sequences or adjacency pairs (see section 3.1.4).

The findings also indicate that the students used conversations predominantly to inform their parent about something. For example, students only seemed to report specific events in their lives that occurred within a very short time frame, usually the previous couple of days. There were no recorded instances of students using full narratives (Suzuki, 2006) when conversing with their host parents. The content of the students’ language was also often devoid of feelings or opinions (a finding similar to the findings of Spence-Brown, 1993 and Campbell & Xu, 2004; see section 2.1.4.).

As with the IRF structure, English classes in Japan may have played a role in the communication issues associated with phatic communion. English classes in Japan
may have prompted students to adhere to the literal or sentential meaning of utterances, in contrast to recognising their pragmatic function when used in conversations by their New Zealand host parents. The Japanese English educational system places emphasis on the grammar/translation method of teaching, which means that pragmatic meaning is overshadowed by the sentential or literal meaning (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.22 and Chapter 5, sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3) because of institutional curricula involving bottom-up teaching practices (starting from words and progressing to sentences, to complex structures, and finally to meaning of language) and prescribed textbooks that focus on “translation and drill-focused teaching techniques” (Browne & Wada, 1998, p. 105; also see Sargeant, 2005; Torikai, 2005). This means that the hosts’ use of phatic communion is not interpreted appropriately by the students because they have not had practice at recognising this aspect of conversation, and, therefore, do not know how to respond to it.

6.3.2.2 Implicatures and the “inside” (uchi) zone

As shown in Chapter 4 the hosts regularly performed what students may have perceived as FTAs by asking questions that pushed their students to communicate their feelings, (Apte, 1974; Wetzel, 1994; see also Campbell & Xu, 2004, in relation to “insiders, or personal area (uchi) and outsiders, or public area (soto)”) (see sections 4.2.5, 4.2.14 and 4.2.17). For example, in many cases when the hosts intended to communicate an FTA, they used phatic communion combined with positive politeness strategies to soften the impact of the FTA (see section 5.2.1). Positive politeness strategies used by the host parents functioned to draw the student into the conversation by asserting common ground, in order to create a small social distance within the students’ uchi
(personal)zone. Although the intention might have been to convey positive feelings of solidarity, in many cases there were difficulties for the students in interpreting the implicatures. Students did not appear to understand the implicit signals given by the host parents aimed at softening the FTA (see section 5.1.1.2). Although the intention of the hosts may have been to interact with their students in order to increase solidarity or to decrease the social distance (Schumann, 1978) between them, solidarity also entails elements of power and identity (Rogerson-Revell, 2007; Norton, 2010). In other words, even though the parents were trying to include their students, there was an implicit power exerted by the parents over their students which suggested that the parents had the right to communicate in this particular style, that is, initiating and communicating FTAs with positive politeness mixed with phatic language, and, furthermore, that no redressive action would be taken by the student. This implicit power that the host parents exhibited may have maintained a hierarchical relationship, similar to what is found in the classroom, that is, the host in the position of a teacher and, therefore, in a position of authority and the student as passive and not initiating conversation unless called upon (see section 2.3.2).

When the students perceived themselves to be in face-threatening situations, including situations when they lacked the language proficiency to express themselves (see section 5.2.3), the students often remained silent and responded with one or two words (see section 5.1.1.3). By this means, the students gave an implicit signal that they would like the conversation to draw to a close, rather than risk embarrassment or misinterpretation (a similar finding to Nakane, 2006, 2007). Thus, the Japanese students might have also been relying on an implicit communicative style (see Hall & Hall, 1990) which was then misinterpreted by the host parents, who may have then
considered that their student was unfriendly or unwilling to communicate, and may have been frustrated by this failure to interact (a finding similar to Spence-Brown’s 1993 study).

The host parents did not seem to have understood these implicit signals. In fact, some of the conversations have shown that the host parents could be quite persistent with their questioning, even at times when the students gave only one or two word responses to their questions (see sections 4.2.4, 4.2.8, 4.2.9, 4.2.17, and 4.2.20). It is possible that, at these times, the host parents knew that they were being recorded and so wanted to show me (in my capacity as English teacher at the time of the recording) that they were going out of their way to interact with their student and indicate that the social distance between them was close. As has been mentioned (see section 4.2.8), even though these conversations may have been somewhat contrived (on the part of the host parents), it nevertheless illustrates that host parents did not understand students’ implicit intentions, even when the host parents were making an effort to use a friendly conversational style.

6.3.2.3. Being outside the family

There is some evidence that the students had reason to be confused about what were and were not appropriate ways of expressing politeness in homestay conversations. Host parents may have unknowingly and indirectly pushed their students into being outside their immediate family circle, which would have widened the social distance between themselves and the student.

Sugiyama-Lebra (2004), claims that the soto, or public zone functions as a safe haven because it means that personal opinions or confrontation are not at the forefront
of conversation, as they may be in the *uchi* or personal or family zone. A close relationship between the interactants is based on what Conlan (1996) describes as formal politeness. It can be expected that in this context, the interactants would use formulaic responses (as would be expected in a high context culture, see Hall, 1976) and implicitness (contextual inferencing see Frajzyngier & Jirsa, 2006), or what Neulip (2000) refers to as “restricted codes” (see sections 2.2.2 and 2.6.2).

Students may have perceived themselves as conversing within an asymmetrical relationship, as signalled by the use of formulaic language (a finding similar to Welsh, 2001 and illustrated as an example in sections 4.2.2, and 4.2.21). One of the complaints from the host parents was the fact that the students did not often use “please” or “thank you” (from the homestay meeting at ECNZ in August, 2007). The host parents expected their students to always use formulaic “please” or “thank you” in different situations when they were in their homestay. In Japanese culture, however, and especially within one’s own family, using expressions such as “please” and “thank you” may be construed as a distancing move, or positioning the students outside the family circle. Therefore, if host parents expected their students to use “please” and “thank you,” they may have been perceived as implying that the relationship was a formal one in which polite conventions would show social distance. The use of the IRF structure, as described above, may have reinforced this perception that the formal social structures of the classroom were appropriate in the homestay.

Some host families would often directly and purposefully distance themselves from their student. It is as if the parents were signaling that, although the student lived with them, they were not close enough to the inner family circle to be included. This reinforcing the students’ real position within the homestay. This was exacerbated by
differences among the families. Some students were positioned within or close to the “inner” circle, while others were positioned in or close to the “outer” circle. In the example given in section 5.2.3, the student felt uncomfortable because there was a tension between living with a homestay family, and not being allowed to venture within the “inner” part of the family. This may have been one of the reasons why this student (and others) decided to spend a lot of time away from their families, especially in the evenings and in the weekends in the latter part of the programme—the topic of the next section.

The students may have felt that it was appropriate to use the conventional formality when conversing with their homestay parents. However, there were times when host parents exerted pressure for their student to move from the implicit style of interaction common in high context cultures such as Japan, to the more explicit style of interaction common in low context cultures such as New Zealand (Hall, 1976). They did this by indirectly pressuring students to offer opinions and express their feelings (see sections 4.2.5, 4.2.14 and 4.2.17). In particular, the host mother in section 4.2.5 suggests that in order for her student to get a higher grade in the TOEIC test, which the students often take as part of their English curriculum at both ECNZ and ECJ, the student “must talk to us more.” The host mother does not explain specifically what the content of the talk should consist of (as this would be quite unnatural); however, there is an explicit request that the host mother would like more “talk” from her student; albeit, an implicit request that talk should be both informative and express opinions and/or feelings. Indirect requests to reveal personal opinions through any such “talk” are likely to have been confusing for the students, who, by now, probably assumed that the requirement that they use conventional formulas such as “please” and “thank you” was
indicative of a wider social distance than that indicated by the pressure to reveal personal opinions.

6.3.2.4 Being cooperative and polite: Avoiding conflict

Students used strategies for dealing with conflict by simply avoiding the situation. The following sections explain this in more detail.

6.3.2.5 Avoiding conflict by staying away

According to Hofstede’s (1980) Uncertainty Avoidance Index Value (UAI) and Power Distance Index (PDI), one would assume that the Japanese students would rely on familiar social and cultural norms to strategically manage their conversations and actions within their homestays. An asymmetrical relationship in the homestay encourages the students to transfer their use of Japanese pragmatic conventions within social hierarchies to the New Zealand homestay context. Because they may have had a conventionally high UAI and PDI, students might attempt to avoid conflict rather than risk disharmony with their homestay parents (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). This was illustrated in section 5.1.3, in which a situation was described of a student deciding to avoid conflict with his host mother and conceding to agree with her comments about his fashion (see Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2002, 2004 for similar cross-cultural communication problems). In this example, the student used a communicative style that did not reflect his more “outgoing” or extrovert personality. As Wierzbicka (1991) suggests, the student may have masked his true feelings for the benefit of creating harmony with his host mother. Other cases in which students decided to avoid conflict rather than speak out and expose their uchi (personal) side (Sugiyama-Lebra, 2004) and
risk contention or confrontation (Smith, 1983) involved situations in which the students remained silent (see sections 5.1.3, and 5.2.3) or removed themselves from conversations altogether by staying away from their homestays (as evidenced by the students returning the digital recorder late, and with no recorded conversations).

Yager (1998) also found that students learning Spanish during a summer study-abroad programme in Mexico preferred to spend time with their friends rather than their homestay families. De Ley (1975) refers to this concept as “stranger theory” (see section 2.1.3), according to which reassurance of one’s own feelings and opinions are sought in a relaxed and comfortable space. Freed, Segalowitz and Dewey (2004) found that American students studying and staying in homestays in France often sought a place to talk with one another in their own language, rather than converse with their host parents. In other words, the students sought an environment where the enclosure between the participants was high (Schumann, 1976). In terms of Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model, it seems as if students adopted an assimilationist strategy in the beginning months of the programme, staying close to home and attempting to interact with their family, but later tended to adopt a more preservationist strategy by staying out later in the evening, consequently limiting their opportunities to interact with the target culture. However, whether Schumann’s Acculturation Model illustrated that the students’ second language acquisition was a factor in determining a direct causal link to interaction remains to be clearly seen.

In terms of Hofstede’s (1980) collectivistic cultures, the students seemed to be grouping together for support and reassurance, rather than asserting their own individuality, as would be more characteristic of individuals from an individualistic culture. The students on this project often ate in Japanese restaurants with their Japanese
friends, rather than having dinner with their homestay families in their homes. Besides mentioning that they wanted to eat Japanese food, the students said that they did not like having to converse in English and could relax more if they ate dinner away from their English-speaking homestay with their friends (see Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2002, 2004, Wilkinson, 1998 and Tanaka, 2007 for similar findings). When analysing the major communication issues in Chapter 5, it was found that the host parents sometimes planned to be away from their houses without their students. In other words, the students were sometimes excluded from family activities. Instead of encouraging the students to become integral parts of the families, which could have reduced the social distance (Schumann, 1976), the host families would often directly and purposefully distance themselves from their students. It is as if the parents were signalling that, although the students lived with them, they were not close enough to the inner family circles to be included. This reinforced their real position within the homestays, particularly since other students in the same group were included in their homestay family holidays.

The fact that some students were included in family activities indicates that not all the students were positioned in the same way within each homestay family. In the example given in section 5.2.3, the student’s position was reinforced by the host mother putting pressure on him to spend time away from the family home on Saturday, when the family was most likely to be at home. The student felt uncomfortable, and possibly even insecure, because there was a tension between living with a homestay family, his only residence in New Zealand, and not being allowed to venture within the “inner” part of the family, or even simply be at home when he wanted to be there. It would naturally follow that the student perceived that he was unwanted and deliberately excluded from
the “real” family. This may have been one of the reasons why the students decided to spend a lot of time away from their families, especially in the evenings and in the weekends in the latter part of the programme.

In this section, it has been suggested that the students frequently relied on implicit signals to communicate with their host parents. It must be noted that the onus of responsibility for the hosts to correctly interpret their students’ implicit signals does not solely rest on their shoulders. Student expectations that their host parents would be able to decipher these signals, might not have been realistic, especially if students knew from other experiences in their homestays that their signals might not be interpreted as intended. When implicit signals were not understood, the students appeared to prevent communication issues by avoiding the conversations that might occasion them. Such avoidance made the students appear even more reluctant to engage in conversation in the eyes of their homestay parents, and probably contributed to a widening of the existing social distance (Schumann, 1978) between them.

There was another strategy students could use, especially where conflict was likely. This was for students to use the Japanese liaisons as behind-the-scene intermediaries (nemawashi), which is discussed in the next section.

6.3.2.6 Avoiding conflict by using “other voices”

The students were undoubtedly aware of the challenges that they had to face if they had to try to perform an FTA to their homestay parent, particularly if they had realised that their host parent had not understood their implicit requests. In order to save time and effort it was sometimes apparently linguistically easier and more efficient for the students to simply communicate an FTA through the Japanese liaisons, a process known
as *nemawashi* (see section 3.3.4). There were many instances in which the students used *nemawashi*. Furthermore, the students often used the support of the Japanese liaisons, even in cases where the FTA was only minor.

When the host parents found out that the student had discussed matters with the Japanese liaisons, they would often indicate that they would prefer their student speak to them directly rather than involve a third party. Similar complaints were observed in Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight’s (2002, 2004) studies, in that students would often complain indirectly about their homestay hosts to the staff of the institution or write their complaints on evaluation forms rather than face their hosts directly. This finding highlights the difference in how conflict is avoided in a low and high context culture. According to Hofstede’s (1980) conflict avoidance index, individuals from a low context culture would opt to directly assert the FTA; however, individuals from a high context culture would tend to avoid conflict. The cultural differences meant that the very actions the students took to avoid conversational conflict ended up displeasing their homestay parents, and widening the social distance (Schumann, 1978) between them.

6.3.2.7 Conclusion of themes related to cooperation and politeness

In my answer to the second set of research questions, I claim that the indirect language used by both students and hosts was misunderstood due to the transference of norms and conventions across cultures. In particular, students misunderstood when homestay parents used phatic communion and politeness strategies, and host parents misunderstood when Japanese students did not use or respond in expected ways to phatic communion, and when they used silence to communicate. In other words,
specialised implicatures were misinterpreted. Because of this, the generalised implicatures of cooperation and politeness were unintentionally undermined, leading to communication issues. This had consequences for the interpersonal relationships of the participants by contributing to strained relationships and widening the social distance between them. It also had consequences for using language and thus for learning from language use, as opportunities for conversation were avoided in order to avoid the conflicts that might result.

In general, the homestay students and parents appeared to have tried to be cooperative and polite conversationalists. Unfortunately, each group did this in accordance with their culturally-based interpretation of their social roles in relation to each other. For the Japanese students, these interpretations were transferred from the Japanese context onto the New Zealand one. This transfer meant that intentions were misunderstood on both sides, and efforts to prevent giving offence, such as homestay parents attempting to soften FTAs (see sections 5.1.1.2, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3 for examples) and students using short answers and silence to maintain a respectful distance (see sections 4.2.9, 4.2.10, and 4.2.18 for examples), exacerbated rather than ameliorated the misunderstandings. In a high context culture, it is often the case that situations in which speakers do not explicitly vocalise their thoughts and feelings promotes a feeling of unanimity (Clancy, 1986), or harmony and comfort (Wierzbicka, 1991). However, deliberate silence is often perceived negatively in a low context culture (see Spence-Brown, 1993). There is some evidence that over the data collection period, the students spent less time conversing with homestay parents and even less time staying in the homestay environment in an apparent effort to avoid conflict.
Because of the different cultural understandings of their behaviour, the students’ very efforts to avoid conflict unfortunately contributed to it.

Whatever the effects of this strategy on facilitating conflict avoidance, it did not facilitate language learning. By avoiding conversation in the homestay environment, the students effectively avoided one of their main opportunities for conversation in English. Language learning through language use, one of the main reasons for placing students in homestays, was limited.

6.4 Conversations and consequences: A vicious circle

Throughout this thesis, I have made the point that both the host parents’ and students’ intentions were often misunderstood, even though both groups may have perceived their interactions as appropriate and believed their intentions were being successfully communicated.

I have suggested that these particular perceptions or “norms” of how conversations are structured in terms of triadic dialogue of the IRF structure may have developed in the English classroom in Japan and then been transferred into the conversations in the New Zealand homestay context, and were reinforced by the homestay parents’ use of them as well.

However, the conversational style used by the students in the homestay is not only based on the language learnt from the English classroom, but also reflects particular social power structures and roles associated with the teacher and the student, as well as cultural power structures and roles more generally associated with hierarchies in Japan. Although this study largely focuses on the students, it has also shown how the social and cultural assumptions of the homestay parents contributed to the
misunderstandings that arose in conversations with the students. In fact, a vicious circle was at work.

The findings have shown the IRF pattern was ubiquitous in homestay conversations. In using it, host parents might have perceived that they were fulfilling their roles as a host parents because they were interacting with their students. The students might also have perceived that they were interacting with their host families when they responded. However, probably unknown to the interlocutors, this particular interactional pattern produced a particular conversational style.

The conversational pattern may have conflicted with hosts’ expectations as to how conversations should conventionally flow, which perpetuated stereotypes about the interlocutors as passive, indirect, unassertive, and unresponsive (see Barnlund, 1975; Spence-Brown, 1993; Tanaka, 2007; Welsh, 2001; Wilkinson, 1998 for similar stereotypes). In terms of Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle, many of the conversations flouted the conversational maxims, consciously or unconsciously (consciously in the case of hosts performing humour; see section 5.1.1). However, it must be noted that in many of these cases, the host’s or the student’s incorrect pre-suppositions in regards to how the intention of the speaker was interpreted would soften the impact of the term “flout.” In many of the examples described here, the intention of the host and/or students’ utterances was not to purposefully rebel. Similarly, student transfer of the degree of formality in terms of Brown and Levinson’s (1978) positive and negative politeness strategies (and means of expressing them) appropriate in homestay conversations may have further contributed to the host parents’ perceptions of the students. Such perceptions may have also conditioned the responses of students who
did not act according to the stereotype of Japanese students, and their host parents’ perceptions of them.

The IRF structure may have led to frustration. Students may have received confusing implicit messages about FTAs, and about the degree of formal politeness and how to express it that was expected of them. Parents might have perceived themselves as always having to initiate and maintain the conversation by performing the first and third move, or by having to expand moves. Several of the conversations showed the contrived nature of conversations, and even if this was as a result of being host parents wanting to appear to be successfully meeting their obligations while being recorded, this still supports the general point that host parents may have felt pressured into being responsible for taking the conversational lead. In addition, host parents sometimes appeared to have directly and indirectly encouraged their students to respond with grammatically accurate responses, (see sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.9) which may have created pressure on both the parents and the students to monitor their language performances.

Hosts also used the IRF structure to set up and communicate FTAs with minimal student interaction. In addition, students appeared to realise that there were inherent risks of accidentally conveying FTAs when communicating with their host parents. Consequently, they apparently attempted to reduce those risks by giving short answers, remaining silent, or avoiding conversation by spending time in their bedrooms or away from their homes. The fact that students stayed away from their homestays in the later part of the programme was one reason why there might not have been any major communication issues found in the conversations recorded in the later stages of the programme. This last factor is suggested by the number of entries in the matrices of
“Recording Delayed” (see Appendix 6). Many of the students found it inconvenient in the later stages of the programme (in particular throughout January and March) to record conversations because they, or their homestay parents, would return home late in the evening and there would not be enough time to record a conversation. Some students said that they had forgotten to record their conversations, and others decided that it was not appropriate to record anything because their homestay parents were watching television or engaged in some other activity, and so they did not want to disturb them (a negative politeness strategy). The host parents may have become frustrated with their students’ perceived passivity and lack of communication and may have responded by not involving their student in much conversation after this time, thus widening the social distance between them. In Schumann’s (1986) terms, the attitudes between two groups can reach a stage where both feel negatively toward each other; in particular, individuals in the TL group feels that individuals in the L2 group are not trying to acquire the language, consequently reinforcing the social distance. Campbell and Xu (2004) claim that these feelings of negativity accumulate and consequently affect the students’ language proficiency. If the students’ language proficiency is perceived as being inadequate by themselves, the students will likely retreat even further and attempt to avoid communication altogether. A lack of communication may hinder progress in developing language proficiency, which further functions to limit the students’ interaction with their homestay families. The students, who might feel frustrated at not progressing in English, might become demotivated. They might then blame their host parents for their lack of involvement and caring responsibility, which may have been the reason students complained that their host parents did not engage
them in conversation (as was also found by Wilkinson, 1998). In short, a vicious circle was initiated and, once initiated, it was difficult to escape from.

Appropriacy conventions in a second language and culture may differ from appropriacy conventions in another culture (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980), and this may be reflected in the ways in which interlocutors indicate their communicative intentions. In other words, both students and homestay parents may have trouble bringing “the world to the words” (Brassac & Trognon, 1995, p. 558), and also, as I suggest, “the words to the world.” In the context of this study, it was not as much circumstances in the world that caused communication issues, as it was words and how the intentions behind them, as interpreted through social and cultural understandings, were understood by both parties.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Homestays are considered rich ground for experiencing a culture and language first hand (Paige, et al., 2002). There are many success stories of study abroad programmes that claim to have enhanced students’ linguistic, cultural and psychological progress (see Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2002). However, as this thesis has illustrated, despite the desire to appropriately engage in communication in order to achieve one’s goals, problems often arise.

This thesis arose out of the necessity to improve the spoken communication between New Zealand host parents and Japanese homestay students attending an engineering programme at a tertiary institution in New Zealand as what Schumann (1978) terms “unacculturated sojourners.”

Both institutions involved (Engineering College Japan, and Engineering College New Zealand) operate on the assumption that placing students in homestay environments decreases the social distance between homestay parents and students and, consequently, increases the level of students’ language acquisition and cultural experiences. How these particular distances are defined and the degree to which they are determined and maintained is not specifically discussed in any of the documentation associated with the programme.¹

I suggest that this thesis has “documented” (Wang, 2011) the study abroad experience from a socio-pragmatic perspective by focusing on communication between

¹There are, however, guidelines for accommodating people in homestays. The guidelines are contained within the New Zealand “Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students” drawn up by the New Zealand Ministry of Education. The International Centre at the Engineering College New Zealand (ECNZ) draws the attention of the homestay families to this code in seminars held at the beginning of the programme (for details of the code see: http://www.minedu.govt.nz).
New Zealand host families and Japanese students. The aim of this thesis was to understand why communication sometimes breaks down in the homestay environment. Once the reasons for the communication problems are understood, steps (which will be discussed below) can be taken to improve communication and, hence, the interpersonal relationships between the interlocutors in the homestay environment.

In order to take proactive steps to improve communication, it is necessary, first, to document how communication takes place, and, then, to provide a theoretical discussion as to why this kind of communication occurs. This thesis has done both of these things. It has discussed the reasons why communications issues might have occurred and why there seemed to be no improvement in communication over the length of the programme. This thesis assumes that, if communication issues are exposed and analysed, both theoretical and pedagogical action can help to prevent problems from occurring in study abroad programmes, particularly when a high context culture such as Japan comes into contact with a low context culture such as New Zealand. This thesis has discussed the major cultural, social and linguistic elements that influenced the recorded conversations. It has subsumed all of these characteristics under a broad socio-pragmatic umbrella to provide a clearer picture of the complexity of interrelated factors at work in communication between members of high context and low context cultures. It has also outlined various reasons as to why communication might become an issue. These factors will be outlined in the following sections. Firstly, section 7.2 provides a brief summary of each chapter in order to more precisely and clearly compile this analysis. Section 7.3 explains the significance of the findings. This section discusses both the theoretical and practical applications that could be used in order to improve homestay communication. Section 7.4 provides five limitations in relation to this study.
Section 7.5 discusses possible future research involved with homestay communication. The chapter concludes with a final comment in Section 7.6.

7.2 Summary of the thesis

This thesis has considered how students converse with their homestay parents in their homestay during a study abroad experience. It has analysed two social groups who speak two different languages in a contact situation and assessed the appropriacy of speech in a cultural context and specific social situation. It has assessed the communicative language used in the homestay between Japanese students and their homestay parents by analysing recorded conversations taken at three different time periods throughout a year’s programme. Assessing communicative language is necessary in order to maximise student learning outcomes, such as inter- and cross-cultural sensitivity as well as language proficiency (Jackson, 2008a; Gillespie, 2002; Frazier, 2007; Freed, 1995; DeKeyser, 2010; Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008; McLeod & Wainwright, 2010; Vande Berg, 2001; 2009).

Chapter 2 provided a macro perspective to explain the background of a specific communicative style used in the homestay conversations. The macro approach illustrated broad cultural and social factors in relation to Schumann’s (1986) Acculturation Model and integration strategies, Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle, and Brown and Levinson’s (1978) face and politeness variables. The sections following this moved into a micro approach by examining the Japanese educational environment in terms of the IRF conversational structure and specific Japanese communicative characteristics associated with the Japanese psyche. Chapter 3 discussed the broad qualitative approach with reference to grounded theory, interactional sociolinguistics,
pragmatics and discourse analysis. Chapter 4 provided examples of the IRF structure discovered in the homestay conversations. It illustrated that the third move can function differently in different situations and that the IRF structure is a formulaic structure transferred from the students’ Japanese/English classroom.

Chapter 5 examined minor communication issues and three major communication issues from the perspective of cultural (macro) and social (micro) factors. The examples in this chapter showed the social distance, and, hence, the interpersonal relationships between the interlocutors, through Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle and Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model.

Chapter 6 combined the analysis of the findings in relation to the literature review to discuss the ramifications of the specific homestay conversational style. It claimed that the variables combined into a “vicious circle,” which when formed, was difficult to break from.

7.3 Key findings

7.3.1 Introduction

It was discovered that communication issues were the result of cultural and social differences of interpretation within the socio-cultural domain that the interlocutors were positioned in. In short, there was negative transfer of how the students perceived conversations to be performed and differences in hosts’ expectations of how students interpreted their utterances. The key findings were presented and discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.2, but, for clarity, are summarised below. The key findings outlined below are inclusive of the main themes which emerged from this study. The final finding outlined in section 7.3.6 represents how each one of the themes is interrelated and complex, and
functions to produce a vicious circle, which once established is difficult to break away from.

7.3.2 Use of the IRF structure

One of the key findings from this thesis is evidence of a specific conversational style discovered in the homestay environment. This is the IRF (Initiation, Response, Follow-up) conversational style. It was suggested that this IRF structure could be a negative transference from how the students were taught English in Japan. In the homestay conversations the student did not usually initiate the first move and consequently were positioned into a restrictive conversational style, which further maintained power and distance variables in their homestay environment.

7.3.3 FTAs

The findings also illustrated that off-record FTAs were disguised by host parents, using a mixture of negative and positive politeness strategies and phatic communication. In this conversational style, it proved difficult for students to understand the implicature of their hosts.

Students realised that there were inherent risks in conveying FTAs when communicating with their host parents. Consequently, students reduced these risks by giving short answers, not disclosing their *uchi* (personal opinions or feelings) zone, remaining silent, negotiating by using *nemawashi* (background negotiations), or by spending time away from their homestay.
7.3.4 Lack of conversational cooperativeness

Host parents did not always converse cooperatively, particularly when they were attempting to increase solidarity by joking with their student. Students did not clearly understand how to interpret this uncooperative conversational style. In many instances both host parents and students rarely checked if one had understood precisely what the other said. One of the reasons for this was because students’ responses, in the form of acknowledgement, were sometimes misinterpreted as requests for clarification, or even confirmation that they understood the intention of their host’s utterances.

7.3.5 Use of display questions

Host parents often used display questions (K1) which resulted in students being guided to reply in a particular way. Display questions provided the host parents with the opportunity to manage and therefore direct the conversation, and consequently maintain power in language as well as their authoritative position in their home. This resulted in maintaining an asymmetrical relationship and consequently distanced the students and hosts.

Host parents sometimes used display questions to provide corrective feedback on their students’ grammaticality. This created pressure on both the parents and the students to monitor their language performances. This pressure to perform correctly may have had adverse effects on the interpersonal relationships between the students and their hosts and may have resulted in further widening the social distance.
7.3.6 A vicious circle

This study has illustrated that social and cultural assumptions of the homestay parents contributed to misunderstandings that arose in conversations with the students.

The particular IRF conversational pattern that unfolded in the homestay environment, due to cultural and social factors, may have perpetuated stereotypes about the Japanese students being passive, indirect, unassertive, and unresponsive. In short, a vicious circle was maintained throughout the year’s homestay programme.

7.4 Significance of the findings

7.4.1 Introduction

There is a great need for research into the social functions of conversation in order to design a curriculum for study abroad programmes which encourages closer social distance between people from different cultures (see section 2.1.2 and Suzuki, 2006).

This thesis has added to the research on communication in the homestay environment, both within the more general framework of study abroad programmes and the New Zealand context. Tanaka (2007, p. 1999) claims that research is limited in relation to how Japanese students converse on study abroad programmes out of class, and, in particular, within a homestay context. This study has used naturally-occurring data to determine why communication issues might occur in the homestay environment. By relying on real discourse in real time in a real place, this study has achieved something which could not be attained to the same degree through the kinds of questionnaires or interviews that have been used in other studies. Practical research is invaluable for the effective design and implementation of study abroad programmes. Furthermore, from an educational perspective, the data analysed in this thesis provides
invaluable information for curriculum design that attempts to improve communication between host parents and students, or, in other words, that aims to decrease the width of the social distance. This is something which any study abroad coordinator or manager (not to mention student or homestay parent) should benefit from knowing.

Specifically, this thesis has documented the IRF structure outside of the classroom context and analysed it within the homestay context. This is something that other study abroad research has not done. The IRF structure has also been positioned in relation to New Zealand and Japanese cultural factors. Again, this is something that has not been analysed to the same degree in other study abroad research. Therefore, the research included in this thesis provides further opportunities for expansion and integration with other studies. The following sections will summarise the theoretical and practical applications which have been identified in this thesis and which could be implemented to improve communication in the homestay.

The results from this investigation will be used to coordinate and manage discussion around communication (and cross-cultural communication issues in particular) with the aim of implementing actions to improve communication, as will be discussed in the following sections in relation to firstly theoretical and secondly practical applications.

7.4.2 Theoretical Applications

Reference to the longitudinal methodology was given in section 3.1.3 and 3.4.2. The theoretical applications of this longitudinal study offer some possible insights. Firstly, it is apparent that some students utilised strategies to avoid interaction if they felt uncomfortable with spending time in their homestays. This became apparent when there
was a marked decrease in the number of the recordings beginning from the September period. In September, the number of recordings decreased by two, in January they decreased by a further one, but in March the number of recordings decreased by ten. This significant decrease in the March recordings could be due to the programme coming to a finish in March. The students might not have worried so much about trying to maintain the interpersonal relationships with their homestay parents compared to when they first started on the programme. At the start of the programme, it would have been advantageous for the students to have invested time and effort in order to maintain a close or appropriate relationship with their homestay parents; however, this investment might have decreased over time, and significantly when the students were getting close to returning to Japan. It must be remembered, however, that not every student decided to stay away from their homestay families near the end of the programme. Of the four students who returned the recorder the conversations were deemed not to involve any major conversational issues. This in itself is significant. This could mean that the students were competent enough to communicate appropriately, which could furthermore indicate that their communicative proficiency and second language acquisition was improving. For a longitudinal study these results are important to analyse. Further analysis into the finer aspects of the students’ second language acquisition could be a future research aim.

Throughout Chapter 6, reference was made to the socialised norms and conventions learnt by students in the Japanese/English classroom. It might be said that the IRF structure limits the interaction between students and host parents in the homestay, but further evidence is needed to validate this claim. This thesis has examined the IRF structure using a micro and macro approach. It has shown that
features uncovered in both approaches perpetuate a particular conversational style. Although this thesis may have portrayed the IRF structure in a negative light, it can also be seen in a positive light. In the short term, it introduces students to an easy and convenient English conversational style, which is useful in the initial stages of learning a language. It is possible that the students feel comfortable communicating in this prescribed format, especially when the format seems to replicate structures characteristic of a high context culture. In this case, it could be detrimental to try to change this conversational style. As Young (1981) claims, new conversational styles may be difficult to acquire, especially when they have been established and learnt in one’s own country. Changing the conversational style that students have learnt may increase their levels of anxiety, which would be disadvantageous for language learning (Krashen, 1976). Neustupny (1997), however, offers a more optimistic view, claiming that new conversational styles can be learnt even by beginners, and even in one semester. There are, however, practical applications, which must be taken into consideration when attempting to alter any established syllabi in any educational institution. Some of these considerations will be discussed in the following section.

7.4.3 Practical Applications

This section will outline some simple and practical solutions and recommendations in light of some of the issues that have been raised in this thesis. It is hoped that these suggestions will help to improve communication between host families and homestay students. Some of the solutions are easy to implement and can be applied in the short term. Other solutions may require more time and effort to implement. Implementation of any solution would require staff to have a working practical and theoretical
knowledge related to the topics outlined in this thesis. This knowledge, which is outlined in the following sub-sections could be provided before the study abroad experience, but could also occur during it. The list following, however, is far from exhaustive.

It is important that study abroad programmes are designed to match the staff’s, students’ and institutions’ aims for setting up study abroad programmes in the first place. This study has illustrated that hoping and expecting that people’s aims will be realised by simple immersion in a target culture is not only unrealistic, but can also be potentially damaging.

I believe that if study abroad programmes are designed specifically to prepare participants with conversational theory and practice in relation to cultural factors, there will be improved communication between host parents and students in the short term, and reduced social distance between cultures and countries in the long term.

7.4.3.1 Preparing for the homestay-predeparture programmes

There are many practical applications that could be implemented to ease the acculturation process and minimise the social distance between the host and the student before their study abroad experience begins. Firstly, one practical application would be to have students introduce themselves to their homestay families via email, or internet link, as suggested by Raschio (2001), to provide students and hosts with culturally specific questions to ask each other before they meet face to face.

Another practical solution would be for institutions to design predeparture orientation programmes that would explore the culture and lifestyle of the study abroad destination (see Rivers, 1998; Schmidt-Rinehard & Knight, 2002; and Wilkinson, 1998,
for a discussion of predeparture programmes). Wilkinson (1998) claims that this kind of knowledge may help to prevent negative preconceptions, or stereotypes from forming. Paige et al. (2002) suggests implementing orientation programmes that teach students intercultural communication strategies, such as phatic communion, or what Neustupny (1997) refers to as conversational management (see section 2.8.1). Savignon (2007) suggests there is a need for students to learn strategic or discourse competence (see Canale, 1983 for similar recommendations). Rivers (1998) claims that departure interventions that match host families and learners are beneficial, as are programmes that teach students independent study skills. However, pre-departure and arrival orientation programmes are popular in many institutions that provide study abroad programmes. These programmes, however, need to be designed with careful consideration given to specific conversational points to students, staff, and homestay families. More specifically, the situations and examples drawn on from conversational research, such as this project, need to be demonstrated as “real-life” examples, which may have already occurred in some homestay situations. It would be useful for people involved on the study abroad programme to realise particular situations where similar conversational points were taught, and to be able to discuss them, or retell these experiences. In this way, not only teachers and students, but more importantly, homestay families are given the opportunities to speak with their own voices, thereby enriching the homestay environment and providing further evidence for conversational research.
7.4.3.2 Classroom pedagogy

In addition to pre-departure programmes, class time could be more focused on teaching pragmatic awareness. One aim of this pedagogy would be to try to improve how students express and interpret meaning in conversations with their homestays. Murray (2010), working within a pragmatic framework and utilising Grice’s (1975) cooperative principles as basic rules, or starting guidelines, provides clear, useful, classroom applications and ideas in order to implement such approaches.

Also, the conversations that were given in this research project could be given to the students to open up discussion around what they might consider to be successful, or unsuccessful conversations. Specific attention given to what is occurring in the conversations would focus language learning away from grammar and vocabulary, but on how the language is functioning, particularly in terms of the IRF structure, as well as the perceptions of the participants involved throughout the conversation. Encouraging students to look at how conversations are structured, by introducing role-playing activities that make use of these real life examples, might alleviate students’ fears of when and why they should contribute to a conversation. Specifically, role-playing homestay situations that focus attention on students requesting for clarification, expanding on a point, commenting, initiating, and knowing when it is appropriate to close a conversation would be particularly useful. Videotaping these role-playing activities and then playing them back to the whole class to emphasise particular features of the conversations would also explicitly focus on what is happening at each stage of the conversation. Finally, using these same videotaped examples in homestay meetings would have two advantages. Firstly, the examples would illustrate the same conversational features taught in the class to the students to the homestay parents, and
secondly, perhaps display the students as a dominant conversationalist that, when given the opportunity, can interact proficiently. These videotaped examples could also be used as discussion points between the homestay families and students.

7.4.3.3 Homestay workshops

One feature, mentioned in 7.4.3.1, was the benefit of having homestay workshops throughout the programme. The aim of these homestay workshops would be to specifically address some of the communication issues, as well as the positive communication aspects that occur in the homestay. These workshops would provide a voice for the homestay families and illustrate that they play an integral part in the success of the programme. Just as how the homestay conversations are used to inform classroom pedagogy (see previous section), the homestay recordings would be used to address the same features. Role-plays and discussion that include these issues will be addressed, so that homestay parents could realise how their language may influence their student’s conversational style. It is hoped that homestay workshops would provide opportunities for families to become more familiar with how they use communication, and work to reduce asymmetry and enhance their students’ opportunities to interact. Furthermore, it is hoped that homestay workshops would provide a scaffold for future research that would make use of many more homestay conversations.

7.4.3.4 Students’ expectations

The students on this programme had expectations of becoming “fluent” English speakers while on their eleven-month immersion programme. However, the students’ expectations soon diminished when they realised that interaction was much more
difficult than they had assumed it was going to be (as was attested to in the students’ written journals, which I read during the course of the programme). Marriott (2000) discovered similar findings in relation to Japanese students’ unrealistic expectations of competent interaction with first language English speakers in an academic environment in Australia. As de Silva Joyce and Slade (2000) explain, students may have a preconception of how conversation should be structured, which may involuntarily lead to a subordinate/student and dominant/host conversational style (see section 7.2.3).

One way of preventing students forming such preconceptions would be to clearly outline the reality of English language acquisition, and to provide a comparison of the cultural norms and conventions of the host country with the students’ own, before they depart for study abroad. A brief outline of what students will be able to learn and acquire on study abroad programmes would mean that students, families, and institutions would be able to set realistic, specific and attainable goals. From a psychological perspective, it would also be beneficial to outline the various stages of acculturation that the student may experience while studying abroad. Knowledge of homesickness or any other emotional strain (cf. Campbell & Xu, 2004) and stranger theory (De Ley, 1975) would increase students’ understanding of what to expect during the homestay programme.

7.4.3.5 Checks for understanding

One of the reasons for communication issues was because the hosts did not check whether their student had understood their FTA. If the hosts had checked whether the student had understood, the student might have acted more appropriately. A practical solution to this problem would be to inform the host parents to make their FTA as clear
as possible and, perhaps, to ask their student to repeat what they should do. It might also be practical to have the host parents write down any important information, so that the students could process it in their own time.

7.4.3.6 Explanation of “other voices”

In all of the conversations, the students rarely communicated FTAs to their hosts. Rather than risk affecting the interpersonal relationships, the students preferred to speak to a middle-person, such as a Japanese liaison, or to avoid conversations altogether by remaining away from their families or staying in their rooms for an extended period of time. Unfortunately, the host parents looked negatively upon this kind of action. One practical solution to this issue might be to simply explain why students decide to use the Japanese liaisons rather than approach the host parent directly. Reference could be made to the concept of nemawashi and indirectness in relation to high and low context cultures.

7.4.3.7 Documenting, interpreting and explaining the IRF structure

It was suggested in section 7.4.3 that the ramifications of the IRF structure could be discussed in the Japanese/English classroom. However, the practical applications involved might be difficult to implement. One practical limitation is the time and effort required to fully document current research related to how the IRF structure operates in the Japanese/English classroom. Full documentation, interpretation, and explanation would require a team of specialised people in order to carry it out. This is not to say that it cannot, and should not, be attempted; however, implementation would require considerable planning and coordination with the appropriate staff.
Finally, it was suggested in section 3.4.2 that specific analysis as to when and what part in the conversation the IRF emerged would have been useful. If the IRF could be predicted, interlocutors might be able to monitor their speech more appropriately. Drawing attention as to how the IRF could be managed might provide more opportunities for participants to interact with each other.

7.5 Limitations of this study

7.5.1 Introduction

This section outlines some of the limitations of this thesis. Although the limitations discussed may paint a rather pessimistic view of how the research was carried out, they also provide a foundation for future research. Future research carried out as a result of this project will help to extend the analysis undertaken in this thesis and will function to corroborate, validate, or even refute the findings. The collection of approaches used in this thesis highlights the interrelation of language and culture (see section 3.2.1); however, there are limitations within these approaches. These are discussed below.

7.5.2 Individual differences

In some circumstances, the students attempted to perform an FTA, whereas in other circumstances, they did not. Unfortunately, it is difficult to fully ascertain why this might have been the case. In some instances, students may have felt that they could impose upon their host’s time and effort (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). From the host parent’s perspective, it is difficult to ascertain why some host parents obliged their students by spending time and effort conversing with them. Obviously, the background of all the individuals involved in communication needs to be taken into consideration.
Further data would need to be collected in order to learn more about the participants; however, this type of data would be complex and difficult to obtain.

7.5.3 Relocation of students

There were some situations that necessitated relocating students to a new homestay because the interpersonal relationships between the hosts and the students had become uncomfortable. In these situations, it was difficult to determine how the students acculturated into their new environment. No recordings were obtained for any conversations that occurred in the new homestay; however, follow-up data from both the student and the homestay parent was positively assessed. Again, data collected in relation to the new homestay conversations and interpersonal relationships between the host and the student would be beneficial.

7.5.4 The recordings

The use of the digital recorder also had its limitations. Sometimes the recorder would be returned with no recording on it. Because of the limited number of recorders, when one student had the recorder other students could not record their conversations. Returning the recorder late, or with nothing on it, was an inefficient use of time. Also, the homestay parents and students knew they were going to be recorded, and there is evidence to suggest that, consequently, some of the conversations were contrived. For example, one homestay parent decided to sit her student down and ask what he would like to talk about. Another parent asked his student to read from his English journal. Some homestay parents asked their students what they should talk about for the
recording. In these instances, the students reported to me that this was not the usual practice when they were at home. Despite the artificiality of some of the conversations, the content is still worthy of analysis in terms of the ratio of parent/student talk and the choice of topics discussed. It is also interesting to note that, because in most cases the participants knew that they were being recorded, they acted in ways they thought would be appropriate in conversation. This rather contrived conversational style illustrates what homestay parents and students either assume or expect a “successful” conversation to entail.

There was also probably a considerable amount of luck involved in capturing particular communication issues when the recorder was on. Many of the findings may not have been obtained if the participants had been doing other things at other times.

7.5.6 Grice’s cooperative principle

Grice’s (1975) theory assumes that interlocutors have a proficient level of language ability and that the speakers cooperate “as equals,” (Hurvitz & Schlesinger, 2009; Fairclough, 1985; Eggins & Slade, 1997). However, in this research project, the students were subordinate to the dominant host parents, and their language ability was far from proficient. Fukushima (2003, p. 31) acknowledges that the term “cooperation” can be interpreted differently, depending on particular cultural conventions. I have used Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model to support Grice’s cooperative principle, but the same shortfalls apply, that is, what are the boundaries between a positive and negative politeness strategy, or when does an off-record FTA become an on-record FTA? More generally, what are the specific boundaries that define FTAs? Similarly, in terms of Hofstede’s (1980) collectivistic and individualistic cultures there are some
elements that could be shared by both cultures (see also Schwartz, 1990). There are also individual differences within particular groups of students, which have not been taken into account in this study. Finally, we must also be mindful of the fact that cultures are never static, but are changing all the time. What may seem culturally applicable at one time may not seem applicable at another time.

7.5.7 Methodology

This thesis has used many different kinds of approaches in what I have termed a “layered approach” (following Hatch, 1992). Although this type of approach combines many aspects which might otherwise be left out of an analysis, it does not allow for more specific aspects of any one approach to be fully explained. For example, interactional sociolinguistics also utilises prosody, and visual and gestural phenomena. These factors have not been analysed in this thesis. Similarly, discourse analysis uses the lexicon and grammatical rules to identify specific communicative cues in interaction; however, these have not been explained in any great detail in this study. Samra-Fredericks (2010) suggests that an ethnomethodological approach based on membership categorisation would provide a more appropriate framework for studying face in interaction. This thesis did not take this path and so, information that might have provided a deeper understanding of face is limited. Indeed, all theses, by necessity are limited; however, these limitations carve a path for future research.

Finally, this study was carried out in an English-speaking environment, which Pavlenko (2002) explains is an environment that has a clear dominant language and culture. Different results may emerge from homestays that are positioned in different
environments in which English is not the dominant language and/or culture. This limitation of the present research project also provides a path for future research.

### 7.6 Future Research

The recommendations in this section highlight the direction of possible future research opportunities and highlight, in a general way, how the research methodology might be improved if this study were replicated. Practical recommendations for future research of this type will be made first, and then the recommendations for future research directions will be made.

Firstly, it would have been beneficial to have had several voice recorders, to enable more than one student to record conversations at any one time. It was also proposed that both the host parents and students be provided with digital recorders. Interlocutors might decide to record the same conversations, and this could be addressed in the ethical considerations of a project.

The findings in this thesis involved a short time frame and a limited number of students. More recordings (of conversations) and/or a greater number of participants might provide validation of particular trends observed in this study. Furthermore, analysing conversations over an extended period of time might uncover long term trends regarding interpersonal relationships between host parents and homestay students. Also, comparative analyses of data obtained from subsequent groups of students arriving in New Zealand to complete the same programme (or other similar programmes around New Zealand) would provide further verification of the general findings of the present study.
It would have been beneficial to have included specific follow-up, or “stimulated recall” (Gass & Mackey, 2000; Fox-Turnbull, 2009) into the data collection process. This would have given further qualitative insight into the processes that students were thinking of when the conversations took place. Unfortunately, it would also have increased the amount of time required of participants and may have resulted in smaller participant numbers.

A post-structuralist approach (see section 2.9) can further support more informed decisions about classroom practice, as well as curriculum design and implementation. Teachers, as well as administrators need to be aware of the debates surrounding cultural and individual identities and how they change according to social situations. As Norton (2011) claims, post-structuralist theory can be a “highly practical resource in both language teaching and educational policy” (p. 171). A post-structuralist approach also seems to be in line with current research that envisions intercultural awareness as taking a more critical non-essentialist direction (Holliday, 2011, p. 18).

Concepts that relate to Locher and Watts’ (2005) relational work, as well as Spencer-Oatey’s (2005) rapport management (see section 2.7.4), would further contextualise how the students and host parents negotiated their roles in their interactions. Future research that bases interaction from these frames, thus departing from the traditional Brown and Levinson (1978) politeness model, would encourage data that, more than not, applauds successful communication, rather than focusing mainly on communication problems.

Much of this thesis has discussed cultural concepts, as well as the Japanese educational system as prevailing influences as to why the Japanese students did not actively seek out opportunities or interact more openly with their host parents. However,
as Gabonton and Hinenoya (2000) note, methodological investigation of such variables needs to be improved. It is hoped that this thesis will be used to isolate the need for a more substantial and perhaps more quantitative study for future research.

Future research might identify, verify and/or predict the general patterns of the students’ or parents’ responses. Furthermore, a model could be attempted to predict what behaviour might arise, both from the speaker and hearer perspectives. An extensive analysis of conversations which includes an examination of the characteristics already examined in this thesis, such as hesitations, pauses, implicit requests for clarification, acknowledgement or confirmation, might help to determine how the IRF structure could be used to build opportunities to expand, rather than restrict conversation.

One direction for future research which was not directly addressed in this thesis, but which needs to be mentioned in relation to the wider aspect of dominance and the more specific aspect of conversational topic selection, is the relationship between the hosts’ dominance as a ‘parent’ (and homeowner) and their dominance as an interlocutor (Itakura, 2001) in the conversations with their students. This could contribute to improved communication in situations other than homestays, such as the workplace.

English teachers in New Zealand, particularly those connected to study abroad programmes, would benefit from workshops that address the particular conversational aspects discussed in this thesis, as well as the practical applications of classroom pedagogy discussed in section 7.4.3.2. Awareness and willingness to address these practical applications discovered from this research project will go a long way to alleviating possible communication issues in the homestay environment.
Finally, textbooks and supplementary materials could be published that incorporate authentic conversations taken from the homestay environment that function to highlight the conversational features illustrated in this thesis.

7.7 Final comment

In section 1.1.2, I referred to the pragmatic question asked by Hayberland and Mey (1977, p. 8): “How did this utterance come to be produced?” This thesis has answered that question using a socio-pragmatic framework to illustrate the complex interrelated network of micro and macro factors that combine to create communication. This thesis has further shown that in order for speakers to competently communicate their intentions there is an overriding necessity to do so according to particular cultural norms and conventions. In other words, interlocutors need to be interculturally and cross-culturally aware of how they are communicating. This thesis has hopefully gone some way towards drawing two seemingly distinct cultures closer together with the aim of producing positive communication experiences. Time will tell.
List of References


Erikson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119-161). New York: Collier-Macmillan.


Harris, P. R., & Moran, R. T. (1979). Managing cultural differences. Houston, TX: Gulf.


Appendix 1

Ethical consent forms

Dr M Sweetnam-Evans
Department of English
Division of Humanities

28 November 2006

Dear Dr Sweetnam-Evans,

I am again writing to you concerning your proposal entitled “Cross-cultural communication dilemmas for Japanese high school students on an exchange year in New Zealand”, Ethics Committee reference number 06/174.

Thank you for sending me a letter outlining answers to the Committee’s concerns. The Committee appreciated receiving details of how emotional distress would be dealt with if it should come up, and reasons why non English speaking families are excluded.

Thank you, specifically, for the prompt and very thoughtful response. I wish you all the best for your up and coming research.

On the basis of this response, I am pleased to confirm that the proposal now has full ethical approval to proceed.

Approval is for up to three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, re-approval must be requested. If the nature, consent, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise me in writing.

Yours sincerely,

Mr G K (Gary) Witte
Academic Committees, Academic Services
Tel: 479-8256
Email: gary.witte@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

c.c. Professor E B Tribble Head Department of English
Application Form for ethical consideration of research and teaching proposals involving human participants

(Note: Not all of the suggestions or headings on this template will necessarily apply to all projects)

[Reference Number as allocated upon approval by the Ethics Committee]
[Date]

Cross-Cultural Communication Dilemmas for Japanese High School Students on an Exchange Year in New Zealand.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR NEW ZEALAND HOMESTAY PARENTS / GUARDIANS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy through the Linguistics Department of Otago University for Michael Pryde. The project aims to analyse why communication problems between Japanese students might sometimes arise when in a New Zealand homestay. I would like to know if these communication breakdowns are a result of Japanese cultural characteristics. [Mention if the project is part of a specific course e.g. This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for the Postgraduate Diploma in Science. Clear and concise explanation, in lay terms, of the major aim(s) of the project]

What Type of Participants are being sought?

I would like to ask for your help with this research if you are intending to host a Japanese student on the Certificate in English and Engineering (C.E.E.) programme. [Brief statement of the type of participants being sought; whether participation is limited to males or females only]

(The following section will not be relevant to all proposals) People who are in one or more of the categories listed below will not be able to participate in the project because, in the opinion of the researchers and the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, it may involve an unacceptable risk to them:-

• [exclusion criteria .....]

What will Participants be Asked to Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to answer some written questions as well as keeping in contact throughout the year on an informal basis. The written questions will only be at the start of the programme and will not take long to do. I would also like to tape record some interaction with you and your Japanese homestay guest for approximately two
hours about five times throughout the year. I would welcome any email correspondence related to any information that you would like to share in relation to the research.

The benefits that you will receive are that you will be helping me to understand why some communication breakdowns might have occurred and possible solutions to understanding your homestay guest even more. I believe that this research will help foster a greater sense of understanding and respect for you, your family and your guest.

[CLEAR AND CONCISE EXPLANATION IN LAY TERMS OF PRECISELY WHAT PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ASKED TO DO, AND THE AMOUNT OF TIME WHICH MIGHT BE INVOLVED]

[REFERENCE TO ANY POTENTIAL HARM OR DISCOMFORT AND TO ANY BENEFIT TO THE PARTICIPANT]

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

CAN PARTICIPANTS CHANGE THEIR MIND AND WITHDRAW FROM THE PROJECT?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

WHAT DATA OR INFORMATION WILL BE COLLECTED AND WHAT USE WILL BE MADE OF IT?

[WHAT DATA OR INFORMATION WILL BE COLLECTED?]

[IF THE PROJECT INVOLVES ANY FORM OF OPEN QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE, I.E. WHERE THE QUESTIONS HAVE NOT BEEN PRESCRIBED IN ADVANCE AND CONSEQUENTLY NOT REVIEWED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE, A STATEMENT ALONG THE LINES OF THAT SET OUT IN THE NOTE BELOW SHOULD BE INCLUDED AT THIS POINT IN THE INFORMATION SHEET]

[PURPOSES FOR WHICH THE DATA OR INFORMATION IS BEING COLLECTED]

[THE USE WHICH WILL BE MADE OF THE DATA AND WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO IT INCLUDING RESEARCHERS, TYPISTS, TRANSCRIBERS, STAFF MAKING PHOTOCOPIES ETC]

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the library but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned above will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect and destroy data gathered by email. However, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed. Caution is advised in the electronic transmission of sensitive material.

WHAT IF PARTICIPANTS HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?
Application Form for ethical consideration of research and teaching proposals involving human participants

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Michael Pryde or Dr. Moyra Sweetnam Evans
Otago Polytechnic Department of English
4773 014 Ext.8421 University Telephone Number: 3 479 1100
Ext. 8614

[Home contact details of student researchers should not be included unless a special case is been made to, and approved by, the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee]

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee

[Note: The above statement should not be included if the project has been considered and approved at departmental level]
Application Form for ethical consideration of research and teaching proposals involving human participants

(Note: Not all of the suggestions on this template will necessarily apply to all projects; for some projects, additional information may also be required)

[Reference Number as allocated upon approval by the Ethics Committee]  
[Date]

Cross-Cultural Communication Dilemmas for Japanese High School Students on an Exchange Year in New Zealand.

CONSENT FORM FOR NEW ZEALAND HOMESTAY PARENTS / GUARDIANS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. Personal identifying information [video-tapes / audio-tapes] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;

4. [mention of open-questioning technique (see Note below) if applicable ]

5. [mention of any discomfort or risks];

6. [mention of any remuneration or compensation issues];

7. the results of the project may be published and will be available in the library but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

8. I understand that reasonable precautions have been taken to protect data transmitted by email but that the security of the information cannot be guaranteed.

I agree to take part in this project.

............................................................  ..........................................................
(Signature of participant)  (Date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee
I am writing a report for my University studies. My report is going to be about how Japanese students have conversations with their New Zealand homestay families. Adults do not always know how young people have conversations. So this report will help adults know what young people think about these things.

Your participation in being asked questions is voluntary, which means you do not have to take part if you don’t want to. Nothing will happen to you if you decide you don’t want to be asked questions.

There will be about 15 other young people being asked questions.

To help us question you about conversations with your homestay family we will be using some written and some oral questions. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions you will be asked. If you don’t want to answer some of the questions that’s fine.

When we are ask you these questions they will be taped. If at anytime during the questioning you want to leave you can or if you want the tape turned off I will do that.

The words on the tape will be typed out by a professional typist and will only be seen by myself, my teachers (Moyra and John) and the person who did the typing. After we have finished with the transcript and the tape they will be destroyed.

When I am writing my report I may write about some of the things that you have talked about but I will not use your name.

If you have any concerns after our questioning you can come and talk to me. I will keep everything private but if I think that you might not be safe I might have to tell some other adults who can help me make you safe.

Your parents have said its okay for me to talk with you today but if you don’t want to talk with me then that’s fine. You can ask me any questions you like before you take part in the questioning.
Early in the programme, seminars were hosted by the International Centre, ECNZ, in order to address any issues that might be causing concern for the homestay parents. Three main concerns were brought forward by the homestay parents:

1. Students neglected to say "please" or "thank you," especially when receiving dinner.
2. Students did not say "goodnight" before going to their bedrooms, but instead left the living room unannounced.
3. Students often did not elaborate when asked, "did you have a good day?"

There was also one expectation some homestay parents were demanding from their students. This was that students respond in some situations with a definitive "yes" or "no."

CONSENT FORM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary which means I do not have to take part if I don't want to and nothing will happen to me.
- He will be asking me questions about how I have conversations with my New Zealand homestay family.
- There are no right or wrong answers and that if I don't want to answer some of the questions that's fine.
- Anytime I want to stop talking that's okay and he will turn the tape off.
- He is writing a report for his University work.
- He will write about some of the things I've talked about but won't use my name.
- The tape and the copy of my words from the tape will only be seen by him, his teachers, (Moyra and John) and the typist.
- The copy of my words from the tape will be kept private.
- If I have any worries about our talk then I can talk about these with him.

I consent to Michael talking with me over the year and to the talk being taped.

.................................................................

Date:..................................................

Young people's signature

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix 3

Key to Transcriptions

The key to the transcriptions have been taken from: Edmondson (1981); Psathas (1995); Tannen (1984); Atkinson and Heritage (1984); Hutchby and Woofitt (2004).

: Separates the contracted name from the actual conversation.
.
Represents a pause no longer than one second.
,
Represents a pause for less than half a second.
(?) Represents that the last word spoken was undecipherable.

(3.5) This represents time in seconds. This example shows 3.5 seconds. Times are approximate. For ease of reference and clarity, I have also added comments such as “silence for about 5 seconds” in brackets.

(3 minutes 45 seconds) For ease of reference and clarity, I have enclosed time in minutes and seconds in a written form enclosed in brackets.

_______ Underline marks an emphatic stress.

1) Numbering in a transcript is for convenience or reference. Sequential numbering is used to indicate a break in the rhythm of one of the speakers.

(((sigh))) Double parentheses are used to indicate a description of some phenomenon. These could be details of the conversational scene, or various characterisations of the conversation.

(((silence))) When an interlocutor is expected to reply, but does not, I have stated that they did not reply, using the symbol “(silence).” If the silence is more than two seconds then I have stated so.

Overlapping of speech is indicated by including words from another speaker within the same line as the person who is being interrupted. Sometimes I have commented on this overlapping for clarity.

An introduction at the beginning of the transcription has been used to set the situation in context. Other information is given throughout the conversations as footnotes.
This symbol indicates that words are spoken at the same time.

This bracket indicates the end of the overlap.

*the student’s name* For anonymity, institutions’ names and people’s names are indicated with square brackets.

End of recording This signifies that, for some reason, the recording device was switched off.

↓ A downward pointed arrow indicates a marked falling intonational shift. It is placed immediately after the shift.

↑ An upward arrow indicates a marked rising intonational shift.

° ° Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk they encompass is uttered noticeably more quietly than the surrounding talk.

< > These signs cate that the talk they encompass was produced noticeably more quickly than the surrounding talk.

> < These signs indicate that the talk they encompass was produced noticeably slower than the surrounding talk.

= Marks continuation (without a pause) of the person who is speaking. Even though the line has gone onto the next line of the transcript, it does not necessarily mean that there has been a pause in the conversation.
Appendix 4

Phatic communion

Example 1

In the following conversation, (taken from May, 2007) the homestay mother often complained that her student treated her home as if he was staying in a hotel. She also complained that he hardly ever engaged in conversation.

1. HM: hello
2. S: hello
3. HM: You’ve been busy?
4. S: Yeah, what’s for dinner?
5. HM: Chicken schnitzel
6. S: Oh, that’s good (end of conversation)

In the above example, the student was asked an open question by his homestay parent. The student did not elaborate with any conversation about what he did at school to make him busy, but instead only acknowledges with “Yeah” and then proceeds to ask what was for dinner. The example here seems to illustrate why the host mother might feel the way she does about her student.

Example 2

1. HM: hello [student’s name]
2. S: hi
3. HM: it’s cold today.
4. S: yes. (No further comment added)
We can see from the above example (taken from September, 2007) that even though a phatic communicative function was performed by the homestay parent, it had little to no effect in starting or maintaining conversation with the student. (The student does not use his host mother's name, even though his host mother uses his name.)

**Example 3**

Another example (taken from September, 2007) illustrates the same point. Even though, in this case, the student had been on the study abroad programme for about six months and had a reasonable level of English proficiency, the student (S) responds only with agreement to the host father’s (HF) initiations.

1. HF: *how are your legs after the walk on Sunday?*
2. S: *ah, yeah*
3. HF: *quite sore?*
4. S: *ah yes*
5. HF: *you must be fit.*
6. S: *ah, yeah*
7. HF: *all that walking to the [institution’s name] keeps you fit.*

(End of conversation)

This type of occurrence, which happened frequently in the homestay environment, also regularly occurred in the teacher/student conversations in class.
Appendix 5

Interruption

There are numerous examples in the homestay conversations of a homestay parent suddenly ending a conversation. This may be as a result of circumstances, such as the telephone ringing, somebody knocking at the door, a pet coming into the room, or the television going off. Even though this is quite a natural occurrence in most conversations, it nevertheless illustrates how quickly homestay conversations can end and how, unless they are re-started by the parent when the immediate situation has changed, they are left incomplete. One factor I observed was that the student did not attempt to re-establish the conversation, in any of the cases where there was an interruption to the flow of conversation, where it had left off. If the conversation was started again, this was always done by the homestay parent. The following example was taken from a homestay conversation in May, 2008.

Example 1

17: HM: *Is that steak nice?*

18: S: *yeah, nice,* (pause for 5 seconds) *oh, yum*

19: HM: *Oh it’s gone funny* (watching something on television and then the television reception goes bad) (laughs)

20: S: *yeah, yeah, yeah*

21: HM: *oh, shit* (laughs)

22: S: (laughs) (End of the conversation)
Appendix a: Matrix of May, 2007

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MA</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Major (+)</th>
<th>Minor (1)</th>
<th>Neutral (0)</th>
<th>Communication breakdown</th>
<th>Best-case understanding</th>
<th>Regular full marks</th>
<th>Students being read in continuation</th>
<th>Students attending FTA</th>
<th>Incentives FTA</th>
<th>RF present</th>
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*The student was prompted in such a way as to give the homestay parent the opportunity to positively evaluate.

**There were 2 students in this conversation, both of whom were doing a homestay. Only one student was on the CEE programme.
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Appendix c: Matrix of January, 2008


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