Discourse strategies across cultures: An investigation of casual conversation in English and Japanese

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MA dissertation, Nottingham University, U.K.
September, 1998

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I once spent an evening in Thailand chatting with a group of fellow treckers around a camp fire. We were quite a cosmopolitan party; two Australians, an Englishman (myself), three Italians, two Swedes and a Japanese girl. As tends to happen in situations such as this, English was the medium of communication and, being an English teacher, I automatically began to assess the language levels of the group. The Swedes, as usual, had no problems and were even making jokes in English, the Japanese girl, although rather soft spoken and with a somewhat slow delivery, was graded as Intermediate in my mental level check and the Italians were clear Elementary students.

As the evening progressed, the conversation became quite animated and I was surprised to see that the Italians, despite their linguistic deficiencies, were participating energetically. The Japanese girl, on the other hand, did not seem able to join in although I knew that she very much wanted to. As time went by she grew more and more frustrated and eventually left our company, preferring to be alone rather than suffer the indignity of 'non-existence' with us.

Clearly here, the inability of the Japanese girl to participate in the conversation involved more than a lack of linguistic resources since she had a distinct advantage over the Italians on this score. So what was it that was causing her problems ?

Living in Japan for a number of years, I began to appreciate the fact that Japanese conversation operates under different rules from English and that an understanding of the language alone did not necessarily guarantee trouble-free communication. My own impression was that the topics selected for discussion tend to be different; whereas the British often seem to look for reasons to disagree with each other or complain about someone or something, the Japanese dislike anything that might threaten the group harmony and select uncontrovertial and 'happy topics' wherever possible. Turn-taking patterns seem different too; while in English the floor is 'up for grabs' to anyone who is quick-witted or loud enough to take it, Japanese conversation appears to be a much more gentle affair with participants actually listening carefully to each other.

The body language of conversationalists is also very different; in Japanese there seems to be less eye contact, less facial expression and fewer gestures. It is as if the volume on the stereo system has been turned down so that if you want to pick up the signals you have to listen much more carefully. This relies on the interlocutor's ability to put themselves in anothers' shoes; a skill perhaps not so well developed in the British who expect people to 'speak up' if they are unhappy. Pauses in conversation seem longer and more frequent in Japanese discourse; when I first arrived in Japan, I found the silences very uncomfortable and tried to fill them with words as much as possible until I began to realise that for them this was the normal rhythm of conversation.

These are all, of course, mere impressions of differences and although perhaps interesting do not provide the discourse analyst or the language teacher with anything concrete to work with. This research sets out to look at real examples of natural spoken discourse in English and Japanese and to contrast them in an effort to find corroborating evidence in support of the impressionistic reports outlined above. After analysing the typical features of conversation in the two languages, I turn to a sample of text where a Japanese student participates in dinner-table chat with three English people and try to identify the sources of problems in communication between the two cultures. My hope is that through this kind of approach, we may begin to understand why it is that linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient to allow non-native speakers to participate in natural conversation in English and we may begin to see new ways to prepare our students for the challenges that await them outside the classroom in the place where people are not paid to listen to them: the real world.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Methodological Considerations

2.1.1 The Quantitative vs. Qualitative Debate

When attempting to decide on a methodology for the collection and analysis of casual conversation, one of the first issues which has to be resolved is whether to take a quantitative or a qualitative approach. Historically, the pure sciences have used quantitative methods to 'prove' or 'disprove' theories. This generally involves controlled conditions in a laboratory where only one variable at a time is altered and any changes observed are quantified and attributed to that particular variable. To be fair, this approach has been extremely rewarding, resulting in many of the scientific advances seen this century but it has also produced a climate in which every serious researcher had to be seen to be on the 'quantitative bandwagon' to be taken seriously. As Lorenz stated in 1971:

> "We are living in a time in which it has become fashionable to assess the exactitude, and with it the value, of any scientific result by the extent to which quantitative methods have taken part
>
> in producing it".

Not only does the approach have to appear scientific, the way in which reports are written up also implies objectivity through the use of the passive, impersonal constructions, nominalisations and so on. Cook (1992: 97) takes a rather cynical view of all this;

> "Ironically, in view of their pretensions to objectivity, these habits imply a belief more in keeping with magic than with science: that a particular form of words somehow alters what happened, deleting the real agent as well as the grammatical one".

Unfortunately for linguists, humans and the language they produce are not particularly amenable to laboratory conditions. There are so many influences on the way a person speaks; the environment, the relationship with the other participants, the topics spoken about and so on, that the goal of objective investigation is an impossibility.

Fortunately for the human 'sciences', there has been a growing realisation of the limitations of quantitative methodology in recent years and less confidence now exists that anything can be proved beyond all reasonable doubt. A point which Popper (1959: 111) makes rather more eloquently than I

am able to do: "The empirical basis of objective science has nothing 'absolute' about it. Science does not rest upon rock-bottom. The bold structure of its theories rises, as it were, above a swamp".

With the fall of the "myth of objectivity" (Walford 1991: 1 citing Medawar), qualitative approaches have seen a rise in popularity. One such approach is ethnography which refers to the detailed study of a small group of people within a society. The ethnography of communication is defined by Richards, Platt & Platt (1992: 129) as language "not studied in isolation but within a social and cultural setting". This kind of research seeks to understand rather than prove (van Lier, 1988) and although it can give researchers new insights, it is not without problems of its own. An observer's interpretation of an interaction between people might be very different from what the participants themselves experience, particularly if those involved come from disparate cultural backgrounds. This is what Widdowson (1979) refers to as 'ethnocentric contamination'. One possible solution to this dilemma is to also involve the participants in the process of analysis, something advocated by a number of researchers (Grimshaw, 1982; Candlin, 1987; McGregor, 1986).

A further problem from the perspective of the discourse analyst attempting to record natural conversation is what Stubbs (1983: 224) refers to as the observer's paradox:

> "Ideally, we want to know how people use language when they are not being observed. When speakers know that they are being observed, their language shifts towards more formal styles, probably rather erratically... The language which linguists would most like to be able to record is the language which is most susceptible to contamination by observation".

There are a number of strategies which can be employed to minimise the observer's effect on the observed:

(i) To record interaction without the knowledge of the observed, although this obviously has ethical implications.

(ii) To record longer sequences of interaction with the knowledge of the observed but to analyse later sections in the hope that participants will have grown accustomed to the recording equipment.

(iii) For the observer to actually become accepted into the group they hope to observe.

With the growing awareness of the flaws in both quantitative and qualitative approaches, researchers (for example see Stubbs, 1983 & Candlin, 1987) are becoming more eclectic: "all methods of data-

collection have sources of error: one should, therefore, combine methods which have different biases" (Stubbs, 1983: 236). Results obtained from different sources can then be compared and contrasted, a process known as 'triangulation', and if they agree with each other, researchers can be reasonably confident of their results.

2.1.2 Transcription of Spoken Discourse

The analysis of spoken discourse has only been possible for a few decades as technology has advanced to a stage where good quality recordings of speech are available. The whole field is therefore, not surprisingly, in its infancy and there are no standard guidelines to aid researchers, a state of affairs Stubbs (1983: 219) finds most unsatisfactory:

> "There is... a lack of recognised and accepted procedures for collecting, presenting and analysing conversational data. Paradoxically, many papers on spoken interaction do not attempt to analyse and present data on verbal behaviour which has been systematically, in whatever way, collected, recorded or observed in specific, naturally occurring social situations".

Grimshaw (1982) also cites a number of problems he perceives with the available literature on the analysis of conversational discourse:

(i) Few analysts have undertaken 'comprehensive discourse analysis' where they are accountable for a complete conversation.

(ii) There are a paucity of texts of complete speech events involving more than two participants.

(iii) There is a lack of ethnographic grounding, or a failure to provide it where available.

(iv) There is generally a low quality of textual records and texts with 'multi-channel recordings'
    (ie. both video and audio) are very rare indeed.

Transcripts available for spoken discourse range from the highly detailed variety commonly found in American conversational analysis where information on pronunciation, intonation and stress are commonly included, to the more simple variety advocated by researchers such as Carter & McCarthy (1997). It is probably fair to say that there is no one correct method of transcription and the amount and variety of information recorded will largely depend on the questions being asked. However much detail is marked on a transcription, it is important to remember that it can never be an objective record of an

event: "There are many acts of perceiving, remembering, selecting, interpreting and translating, which lie between the data and the linguist's report" (Labov cited in Stubbs, 1983: 230). Many of the acts Labov is referring to here can have a substantial effect on the results; some examples, particularly pertinent to this investigation are given below by way of example:

(i) Which items on the transcript are marked as back-channels and are back-channels counted as turns ?

(ii) Are all independent utterances placed on new lines in the transcript (and effectively counted as turns) as in Svartvik & Quirk (1980) or are some "short linguistic manifestations" (Bublitz, 1988) included in the running text of the principle speaker ?

(iii) In analysing topic in conversation, how do we know when a topic shift has occurred ? Crow (1983: 151) says in response to this question: "It is clear that no two people will hear a conversation in the same way, and what sounds like a topic shade to one coder might be considered topic maintenance by another".

Clearly, there are no easy answers to questions such as these but until researchers have a unified approach to the problems of transcription, it will difficult to make meaningful comparisons between different sets of data. In the meantime, the best we can do is to be as explicit as possible about the decisions we have made in recording spoken discourse, a view shared by Stubbs (1983: 220): "When there are few accepted procedures of analysis, as in research on spoken interaction, it is particularly important to keep the reader in clear view of precisely what data the analysis has been based on".
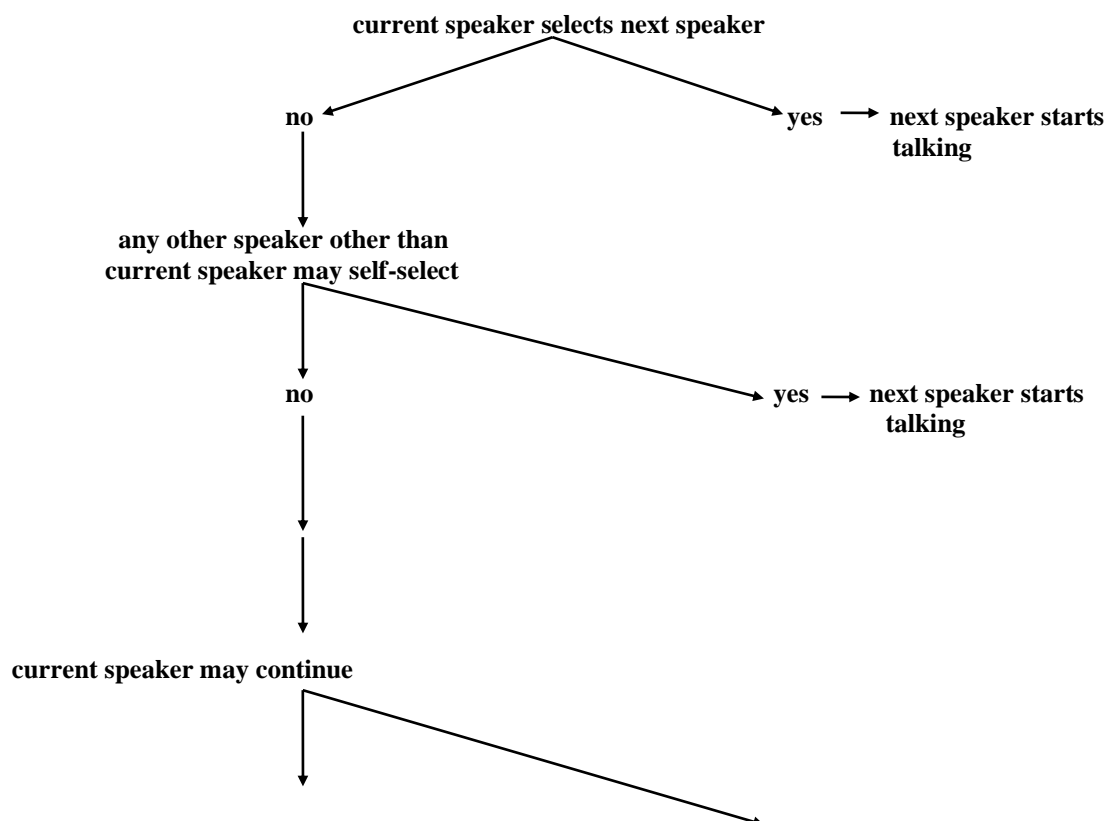
2.2 The Nature of Conversation

Most of the analysis on the structure of conversation has, typically, been with English and I am making the, perhaps misguided, assumption in this investigation that the models presented here can usefully be applied to other languages. What follows below is a brief overview of some of the more important features of natural conversation identified by linguists to date.

2.2.1 Turn-taking

That participants in a conversation take turns in speaking hardly needs pointing out but it was not until Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson's seminal work in 1974 that the systematicity of turn-taking was recognised. They looked at turn-taking patterns in conversations spanning all contexts and genres and concluded that there were a number of general features:

(i)   Typically only one party talks at a time.

(ii) Occurrences of more than one participant speaking at any time are common but brief.

(iii) Transitions from one turn to the next with no gap and no overlap, along with transitions having a
      slight gap or slight overlap, make up the majority.

(iv) Current speakers may select the next speaker or participants may self-select.

(v)   Repair mechanisms exist for dealing with breakdowns in the turn-taking system.

(vi) Turn changes generally occur at transition relevance places (TRP's), points in a conversation when
      syntactic, semantic, visual and prosodic clues come together to indicate that a speaker is willing to
      relinquish the floor.

Sacks et al. provide three rules for the allocation of turns at TRP's and these are represented diagramatically below:

current speaker selects next speaker

no   **yes** → **next speaker starts talking**

any other speaker other than current speaker may self-select

no   **yes** → **next speaker starts talking**

current speaker may continue

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no                                      yes ——→ current speaker
                                                continues
 |
 |
 ↓
silence
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This set of rules for turn-taking is cyclical in that it is re-applied at each TRP. More recently, however,

Houtkoop & Mazeland (1985: 597) have pointed out some inadequacies in this model:

> "it appears that not all turn-taking behaviour can be explained in terms of Sacks et al.'s model. There are stretches of talk where the completion points of turn-constructional units do not present themselves as transition relevance places ie. as opportunities for turn-transfer... A speaker who is producing such a larger project not only has the right to take a turn which is constructed out of more syntactical units, but also has the right to take as many turns as necessary to finish the project".

They refer to these larger projects as 'discourse units' and give jokes, stories and descriptions as

common examples of this phenomenon; points in a conversation when the normal turn-taking rules are

suspended.

Slade (1997) refers to this feature of conversation with the slightly less technical terminology 'chat'

and 'chunks' where chat segments are managed locally, or turn by turn, in the way described by Sacks

et al (1974) while 'chunks' have a global or macro structure.

The 'chunks' or 'discourse units' described above do not just appear in conversation out of thin air, but

are inextricably linked to the 'chat' which occurs both before and after:

> "A story is 'triggered' in the course of turn-by-turn talk. That is, something said at a particular moment in a conversation can remind a participant (speaker or hearer) of a particular story... A story can serve as a source for triggered or topically coherent subsequent talk and... a range of techniques are used to display a relationship between the story and subsequent talk" Jefferson (1977: 220/228).

2.2.2 Topic

Natural conversations are always 'about something' and this is referred to as 'topic' in discourse analysis. Participants in a conversation pay great attention to topic while they are talking, even if they are perhaps not consciously aware of doing so. Gardner (1987: 132) illustrates this clearly: "That a speaker can, without any difficulty, sum up the topic of a conversation in a single sentence, suggests that native speakers have an intuitive awareness of topic".

Not only do we follow topic and topic changes carefully during conversation but we also try to ensure that what we say is consistent with what has gone before:

> "Speakers do not cast their utterances at random into the stream of conversation. Rather they link them deliberately with the succession of contributions from all participants and place them
>
> at certain points rather than at others. Above all they ensure that their utterances form a contribution to the topic at hand and so can be understood by other participants as 'topically coherent' " (Bublitz, 1988: 26).

The way that topic moves naturally from one subject to another in conversation is known as 'topic shift'. Crow (1983), suggests that there are four types of topic shift:

(i) Coherent shift ~ changes in topic where there is a logical progression of ideas. The principle form of

coherent shift is known as 'topic shading' which: "introduces a new topic by first establishing its

relevance to or connection with the topic that has been on the floor" (ibid: 142). What normally

happens is that a sub-topic in the preceding talk is taken up as the main topic of conversation. Topic

shading generally results in discussions starting on one subject and finishing somewhere completely

different, resulting in comments such as 'How did we end up talking about x ?'

(ii) Renewal ~ this refers to a shift back to a previous topic after other topics or topic-shifting attempts

have intervened. These are often marked by expressions such as 'Anyway, I was telling you about..'

and so on.

(iii) Non-coherent shifts ~ this refers to a shift in topic which does not maintain the smooth flow of

connected moves.

(Iv) Inserts ~ these are abrupt shifts in topic which do not succeed in gaining the topical floor.

Bearing in mind the comments made above on the importance of topical coherence in discourse, it is perhaps not too surprising to discover that first type of shift mentioned is "the structurally preferred mechanism for topic change within conversation" (ibid: 142).

Bublitz (1988: 16/17) sees topic management as one of the key ways in which participants influence conversation, moving it in directions which suit their own goals:

> "the participants agree on the discourse topic and the topical actions connected with it either explicitly or, as is the rule, implicitly... it is normally the privilege of the primary speaker to develop discourse topic and, if not to initiate it, then certainly to perform topical actions (such as changing the topic, closing the topic, digressing from the topic etc.). The secondary speaker can violate these principles in many ways, both subtle and obvious, in order to manipulate topics, topical actions and topic talk thus steering the conversation into a direction which does not accord with the direction previously determined by his interlocutor's contributions".

In conversation, participants are usually well aware of who knows what within their group and in normal circumstances will select topics which involve or interest everyone. This is not always the case however, and conversation can be deliberately steered in directions which will exclude certain members; a far more subtle approach to dealing with people you dislike than blatant rudeness!

2.2.3   Reactive Tokens

The term 'back-channel' was first coined by Yngve in 1970 and refers "to the sounds (and gestures) made in conversation by the current non-speaker, which grease the wheels of conversation but constitute no claim to take over the turn" (Tottie, 1991: 255). Back-channels fulfil several, simultaneous roles in discourse; they have a 'supportive function', signalling agreement and understanding and a 'regulative function', encouraging a speaker to continue with his or her turn. Over the years, the number of items covered by the term 'back-channel' seems to have expanded as researchers realised that lexical items and even short phrases could also be uttered by interlocutors in the course of a conversation without making a claim to the floor. Effectively, the edges between a back-channel and a turn have become blurred as Duncan & Niederehe (1974: 237) remark: "for some of the longer back-channels, particularly brief restatements, the boundary between back-channels and speaking turns became uncertain. On an intuitive basis, some of these longer back-channels appeared to take on the quality of a turn".

Clancy et al. (1996: 355) have relegated the word 'back-channel' to a sub-group and prefer instead to use the term 'reactive token' (RT) which they define as:

> "A short utterance produced by an interlocutor who is playing a listener's role during the other interlocutor's speakership. That is Reactive Tokens will normally not disrupt the primary speaker's speakership, and do not themselves claim the floor".

They divide reactive tokens into five groups:

(i) Back-channels ~ a non-lexical, vocalic form, serving as a continuer, display of interest or claim of understanding.

(ii) Reactive expressions ~ a short, non-floor taking lexical word or phrase produced by the non-primary speaker.

(iii) Collaborative finishes ~ a speaker's utterance is completed by a non-primary speaker.

(iv) Repetitions ~ a non-primary speaker repeats or 'echoes' a portion of a previous utterance.

(v) Resumptive openers ~ 'back-channels' used by a non-primary speaker and immediately followed by a full turn from the same participant. Their function is to register the prior turn before taking the floor.

I shall follow Clancy et al.'s definitions in this investigation as I consider them the most comprehensive and clearly defined.

2.3 Japanese Conversation

The characteristics of spoken interaction in Japanese are inextricably bound to and reflect the values of the society itself, as is, no doubt, true of all languages.

Japan is a country where 'sameness' not only has none of the negative connotations it carries in the West, it is actively encouraged: 'deru kugi wa utareru' (nails which stick out get hammered back in) as the saying goes. The Japanese anthropologist, Wagatsuma Hiroshi, once remarked that "Americans are like peas on a plate, but Japanese like rice in a bowl" (cited in Yamada, 1997: 6) here of course

alluding to the sticky rice used to make sushi. Where we value difference, the Japanese value oneness and this results in a highly co-operative society. I discovered this for myself the hard way when I was asked to direct a play performed by young Japanese girls in a very expensive private school in Tokyo. I ran around in rehearsals giving director-like instructions but was rather non-plussed to see that nobody was really paying any attention. I was convinced that the whole affair would be a complete failure but over the weeks, the girls magically organised themselves and I found myself back-stage in more ways than one. The Japanese desire for 'oneness' inevitably results in a distaste for disagreement and LoCastro (1987: 112) comments that topics of conversation tend "to focus on the here-and-now. That the present evening or day or moment be pleasant with feelings of goodwill is of greatest import".

Consideration of others is also a concept fundamental to Japanese society and children are taught to think of others from an early age. Saville-Troike (1982: 244) reports on some research carried out by Clancy into mothers with two year olds in Japan:

> "she noted that they would attribute speech to individuals who had actually remained silent in order to heighten children's awareness of what others' feelings might be, or provide 'lessons in
> how to guess what others are thinking and feeling (ie. inferencing) even when they have not spoken' ".

Another characteristic of Japanese culture not yet mentioned is the value placed on order and an understanding of one's place in the hierarchical structure of the society. Taxi drivers, workmen, yakuza and primary school children all have their own special uniforms which identify them as belonging to a particular group. Factors such as age, sex, profession, and so on all enter into the calculation of one's social standing. Outside the home, women still seem to be regarded as inferiors with very few females gaining positions of authority in the work place and the 'office lady' or 'OL' typically regarded as marriage fodder for the poor over-worked salary man who never seems to get the time to leave the office and look for his own soul-mate.

The characteristics of Japanese society, somewhat stereotypically defined above, manifest themselves in a particular style of interaction in spoken discourse. Because Japan is a homogeneous society, there is a high degree of shared knowledge which means that a great deal can be left unsaid: "Japanese conversational interactants require fewer overt clues in the form of spoken words to carry on successful

communication" (Hinds, 1982: 324). Saying as little as possible whilst communicating a great deal is what is aimed for:

> "The best communication is without words in haragei (literally, belly art), silent communication. Such visceral communication is thought of as occurring between an ideal couple in Japan through a-un no kokyuu (literally ah-hm breathing): if a husband says, 'ah' a wife would immediately understand, 'hm' " (Yamada, 1997: 17).

Ellipsis is pervasive throughout conversational interaction and is used to mark topic continuity (Hinds, 1983) in the same way as pronominals mark continuity in English. However, unlike most languages which allow ellipsis of subjects, such as Spanish for example, Japanese has no marking on the verb to provide additional clues. Despite the high levels of inferrencing expected of Japanese interlocutors, the levels of misunderstanding that occur are scarcely higher than they would be in English according to Hinds (1985). Yamada (1997: 26), points out that ellipsis, as well as demanding a high degree of shared knowledge, also adds to the sense of 'togetherness': "The systematic use of pronouns creates the individual 'I' and 'you' in American English, whereas frequent non-use of pronouns in Japanese blends the distinctions among individuals in the group".

As might be expected in a society which puts a high premium on social harmony and co-operation, "speakers use a highly affect-laden interactional style, with frequent inviting and accepting of involvement on the part of all participants" (Clancy et al., 1996: 381) this results in a rather fragmented rhythm as listeners provide verbal encouragement to the speaker at the ends of most intonation groups (Clancy, 1982). The stilted delivery has benefits for all concerned:

> "verbalising short, simple syntactic constituents one at a time limits the flow of information to the listener, making it easier to understand what is being said. This type of communication also reduces the cognitive burden upon the speaker, who must only plan very brief spurts of output at once, and can use the moments of silence at the ends of intonation groups for linguistic planning" (ibid: 76).

The delivery style also allows the participants to show concern for each other's needs:

> "a speaker tends to communicate information gradually, unintrusively, allowing plenty of opportunity for the listener to assimilate the input, ask questions if necessary, and indicate comprehension. The listener, in turn, is concerned that the speaker feels supported, understood, and appreciated, and times feedback so that at the conclusion of each separate unit of production, the speaker is reassured of the listener's continuing co-operation and participation in the interaction" (ibid: 76).

Back-channels, or aizuchi as they are known in Japanese, are the principle mechanism through which speakers can show their support for the speaker and many researchers report higher levels of back-channelling in Japanese than English (Yamada, 1997; LoCastro, 1987; Clancy, 1982) although not everyone is in agreement on this point (notably Clancy et al., 1996). Another possible role of aizuchi in Japanese discourse relates to the 'supportive' and 'regulative' functions mentioned earlier. As LoCastro (1987) notes, because it is considered rude to interrupt a speaker or ask for clarification or repetition directly, auditors may be able to express their wishes indirectly by ceasing to back-channel. Similarly, since blatant disagreement is considered impolite, aizuchi (and other non-verbal communication) may provide the listener with a way of indicating their state of mind.

There are some suggestions in the literature (eg. Clancy et al.,1996) that the rate of back-channelling may be related to gender and status. This would not be surprising, particularly in a country such as Japan where these factors have such a marked effect on the language. It is relatively easy for Japanese, armed only with the transcript of a conversation, to come to quite detailed conclusions about the participants' sex and status through the syntactical and lexical clues provided. The difference between the way men and women speak in Japanese can prove rather problematical for foreign students. As most Japanese language teachers are women, male students tend to acquire an effeminate manner of speaking which can make for some interesting situations. A German man I knew in Tokyo, was very unpopular with his Japanese girlfriend's father who was reported to say something along the lines of "I don't know, there's just something about him that I don't like". This all changed when he heard the German speaking his own language on the telephone and the father realised that he was a real man after all.

Sakamoto & Naotsuka (1982) use the metaphors of tennis and bowling to describe the differences between communication in English and Japanese:

Western-style conversation is like a game of tennis:
- When I introduce a topic, I expect you to hit it back; to add something of yourself and to carry the idea further.

- The more lively the match gets, the more interesting and exciting it is.

- As long as what we attack is other's opinions rather than them personally, nobody gets hurt.

- In a conversation with more than two people, there is no waiting in line; whoever is nearest and quickest hits the ball.

- Nobody stops the game to give you a turn; you are responsible for yourself.

- Everyone does their best to keep the game going and nobody has the ball for very long.

Japanese conversation, on the other hand, is like bowling:

- You wait for your turn.

- You know your place in the line (depending on your age, status, sex and so on).

- When you bowl, everyone else stands back and watches, murmuring encouragement to you.

- Everyone waits to see how many pins you knock down and there is a pause while your score is calculated.

- When the group is sure that your turn is over, someone else lines up to take a turn but with a **different ball**. The next speaker does not return your ball and does not even begin where your ball stopped rolling. All the balls in the conversation run parallel.

The author, an American woman married to a Japanese man, found herself experiencing problems whilst in Japan because she was using an inappropriate style of participation:

> "No wonder everyone looked startled when I took part in Japanese conversations. I paid no
> attention to whose turn it was, and kept snatching the ball halfway down the alley and throwing
> it back to the bowler. Of course the conversation died. I was playing the wrong game".
> (Sakemoto & Naotsuka, 1982).

2.4 Cross-cultural Considerations

Argyle (1975: 69) relates the story of a missionary girl who ran into a spot of bother with a cannibal chief when she tried to throw him on the floor and laughed at him. In actual fact all she wanted to do was shake his hand and greet him with a smile but it is certainly a good illustration of the dangers involved in cross-cultural communication (we do not find out, however, whether said missionary ended up in the cooking pot or not). Smith (1987) makes the point that when speaking with members of our

own culture, we do not need an awareness of our style of interaction nor of the values we implicitly hold since they are shared. However, once we begin to communicate across cultures, this information becomes crucial in order to negotiate meaning. In addition to having an understanding of ourselves we also need awareness of the values and systems of our interlocutor since, "The more we know and understand someone, the greater our chances of effective communication... In the use of English, one needs to know something of the discourse strategies of the prospective other" (ibid: 3). If, for example, an Englishman asks a Japanese friend for some favour and they reply 'muzukashi' (it's difficult) whilst at the same time sucking air through their teeth, it is important to realise that 'difficult' actually means 'impossible'. Appreciation of this fact also assumes some awareness that English operates differently; when we want to refuse a request, we tend to apologise and offer some excuse by way of an explanation.

When cross-cultural misunderstandings do occur, a lack of awareness of one's own cultural norms as well as those of the other society often mean that the true cause of the problem is not discovered, instead interactants tend to evaluate each other's motives negatively:

> "when a listener does not react to a cue or is unaware of its function, interpretations may differ and misunderstanding may occur. It is important to note that when this happens and when a difference in interpretation is brought to a participant's attention, it tends to be seen in attitudinal terms. A speaker is said to be unfriendly, impertinent, rude, uncooperative, or to fail
>
> to understand" (Gumperz, 1982: 131).

Gumperz (ibid) illustrates this point with the example of Indian or Pakistani ladies employed in the cafeteria of a major British airport who were perceived by customers as being surly and unhelpful because of the intonation patterns they used. Although they had learnt the English words necessary to communicate (in a transactional sense), they had not learnt how to 'sound friendly' in English and in the absence of any other information, merely transposed the patterns from their first languages on to their second. A similar case can be made in the interaction between Japanese and Americans where Yamada (1997) reports Japanese in cross-cultural business meetings used twice as many back-channels as their American counterparts. Again, this difference in accepted levels of back-channelling often leads to mutual negative evaluation as Clancy (1982: 74) points out:

> "speakers of Japanese tend to feel rather insecure when Americans fail to respond overtly as

they speak, especially on the telephone, where non-verbal signs of continuing attention are lacking. On the other hand, some English speakers addressing Japanese listeners may find themselves reduced to paralysed silence by the barrage of verbal response and nodding which greet their words and seems to indicate that they have already been understood when they have   scarcely begun to speak".

Obviously, differences between the two cultures go much deeper than just back-channelling behaviour. The system of emphasis in both languages, for example, is very different; where Japanese emphasis is generally marked by word order, in English it is shown through the intonation patterns. Once again, the interpretations made, on both sides, are unfortunate:

> "stereotypes about Americans and Japanese emerge from their mutual inability to understand their different grammars of emphasis. Unexpected uses of stress often end up creating the stereotype that the Japanese are monotonic, reserved and cold, while Americans are overly emotional and aggressive" (Yamada, 1997: 34).

What seems clear from all of this is that cross-cultural interaction is hard work, a sentiment Brown (1986: 37) shares: "virtually every encounter with people in a foreign culture is an 'intense relationship' in which tremendous effort is expended to keep communication from breaking down".

2.5 Non-verbal Communication

Sapir (cited in Valdes, 1986) spoke of non-verbal behaviour as "an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known by none and understood by all". By 'all' here he is obviously thinking of members of the same culture since, although all societies employ gestures and body movements which convey meaning, they are not necessarily the same. This is particularly true of two cultures such as the British and Japanese which have such disparate roots. Japan is what Argyle & Cook (1976) call a 'non-contact' culture whereas Britain is a 'contact culture' (although not the most extreme example by any means). People from 'non-contact' cultures tend to:

(i) Touch each other less.

(ii) Look at each other less.

(iii) Face each other less directly.

(iv) Stand further apart.

These behavioural patterns result from early socialisation experiences and have a profound effect on the way that people communicate with each other:

"The Japanese do not look much at the face; this may be because babies are carried on the mothers' backs and therefore do not acquire as much attachment to faces as do babies in other cultures. At the same time facial expressions are greatly inhibited. So in Japan little use is made of the facial-visual channel, either in encoding or decoding" (Argyle & Cook, 1976: 33).

In Britain, facial expression and gesturing are crucial for communication as is intonation and if it is true that the Japanese use these mediums of expression in a limited way, it is interesting to speculate how exactly they manage to convey the same sort of subtleties of meaning. It is certainly not through increased reliance on lexical resources since, as I have already mentioned, ellipsis is pervasive in Japanese. My own feeling is that it is the Japanese heightened ability to read others' thoughts which may be the key.

Visual signals play a key role in the management of turn-taking in conversation as Duncan & Niederehe outlined in their important paper 'On signalling that it's your turn to speak' in 1974. They list a set of four behavioural cues which tend to occur at the beginning of a speaker's turn:

(i)   A shift away in head direction.

(ii) Audible inhalation.

(iii) Initiation of gesticulation.

(iv) Paralinguistic overloudness.

These cues are thought to help speakers to 'mesh' their turns and provide for smooth interchange in conversation (Butterworth, Hine & Brady, 1977). However, since two of the cues mentioned are visual and it appears that Japanese do not use the visual channel for communication to the same degree as we do in the West, we might wonder whether this model applies universally.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA COLLECTION

The aim of this investigation, as outlined in the introduction, was to use insights from discourse analysis and ethnographic methodology to identify differences in the conversational patterns of the Japanese and British and to determine to what extent these can explain problems in cross-cultural communication between the two groups. In order to do this, three dinner-table conversations were recorded on different evenings in the author's home;

(i) All Japanese group (2 males, 2 females).

(ii) All English group (2 males, 2 females).

(iii) Mixed group (3 males, 1 female).

The first group were Japanese students from the Centre for English Language Education at Nottingham University. All had known each other for approximately three months and met almost every day. The second group were English staff also at CELE in Nottingham, with the exception of <F1> ('Betty') who was <M1>'s girlfriend. These participants, similarly to the Japanese participants, had only known each other for a short amount of time and met most work days (again with the exception of <F1>). The mixed group consisted of one male from the Japanese group and two males and a female from the English group. Again, all knew each other through Nottingham University and met at least several times per week.

On each occasion, participants were asked to complete an initial interview form (see appendix 1) in order to determine how comparable the groups were. Each was matched as closely as possible for age, sex, educational background and relationship between participants since these factors may affect the conversational characteristics observed. Each group consisted of a total of four participants, this was large enough to allow turn-taking to come into operation but not so large that fragmentation (where more than one conversation take place concurrently) regularly occurred. Another consideration was ease of transcription; a process which becomes considerably more difficult with groups larger than four.

None of the participants were aware of the detailed reasons for the investigation since this knowledge may have encouraged them to alter their behaviour, perhaps to 'help' the researcher. Each group was asked to act as naturally as possible and treat the evening like a normal dinner-party. Although the author was present throughout, no attempt was made to include him in the conversation and, apart from serving the food, he was out of sight for the duration of the evening.

The conversation was recorded on audio and video tape which helped to improve the accuracy of the transcript and also allowed visual information to be included in the results. Obviously, this method of recording conversation is rather intrusive but the video camera was placed above eye level where it tends to be quickly forgotten (van Lier, 1988) and only sections later in the evening, when the participants had settled, were selected for transcription. With the attention required in order to interact effectively in a discussion and with the distractions of food and wine, it is difficult for participants to remain aware of the recording equipment and both the author and the interlocutors judged the transcribed sections to be relatively natural. From approximately one and a half hours of dinner-table chat, around six minutes (or 1,000 words) were transcribed on each occasion and examples of both 'chat' and 'chunks' (Slade, 1997) were included. The 'chunks' in this case being narratives triggered by the preceding talk in the way described by Jefferson (1977). Appendix 3 shows the transcripts for the three conversations, the Japanese interaction is supplemented with an English translation which tries to capture the spirit of the original rather than being a literal equivalent.

At the end of the evening, participants were asked to complete a form, outlining their perceptions of the conversation; how comfortable they felt, who they most or least enjoyed talking to, and so on (see appendix 2). Finally, approximately two weeks after the recording had taken place, the participants were asked to read the transcripts and were shown the relevant sections from the video. They were asked to comment on what they saw in a deliberately open manner in order to avoid 'leading' them and were then shown the results of the analysis and the author's conclusions before, once more, being asked to comment. This background information and participant feedback was considered vital to the accurate interpretation of the transcribed conversations. As discussed earlier, the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and the triangulation of the results makes for a far stronger argument (assuming the results concur) than would otherwise be the case.

With the approach to data collection outlined above, many of the problems commonly associated with the analysis of conversational discourse, raised in Chapter Two, were avoided; the interaction included more than two interlocutors, there was ethnographic grounding and the recordings were multi-channel. Unfortunately, the transcripts do not represent 'whole conversations' since the time needed for that would be immense; to give some idea, the meagre three thousand words of spoken discourse represented here took at least twenty hours to transcribe accurately. At that rate, the full four and a half hours of recording would take fifteen days to complete !

CHAPTER FOUR: FRAMEWORKS OF ANALYSIS

This chapter describes the frameworks for the analysis for the three communicative events which are the focus of this investigation. As mentioned earlier, the approach taken aims to be both qualitative and quantitative which means that the participants themselves as well as the recordings of the conversations were used as sources of information. In total, eight aspects of the interaction were assessed and the details of this are given below.

4.1 Background Information of Participants

This study attempts to investigate how nationality influences patterns of interaction by comparing discourse across three distinct conversations. For the comparison to be meaningful, it was important that the three evenings were as similar as possible in all ways except for the country of origin of participants. Of course no two conversations will ever be identical, even if the interlocutors are kept constant, but factors such as age, sex, educational background and relationships between participants can all be expected to influence the nature of the discourse produced and as such differences should be minimised. In order to determine the comparability of the three conversations, all group members were asked to fill in an initial interview form (see appendix 1) detailing background information relevant to this study.

4.2 Turn-taking

In order to be able to compare patterns of turn-taking within the different groups, the total number of turns for each participant and the lengths of their turns was calculated. This is not quite as straight-forward as it may seem since it relies on some rather subjective decisions made by the researcher at both the transcription and analysis stages. In this investigation, I have not counted 'reactive tokens' (Clancy et al., 1996) as turns since they do not constitute attempts to take the floor. However, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the dividing line between reactive tokens and turns is not always clear. This is particularly true with reactive expressions where a word or a phrase can take on the quality of a full turn. Words like 'yes' can take on the role of reactive tokens or turns depending on the context in which they appear. In transcript three for example (see appendix 3), 'yes' in line 26 was counted as a turn since it was the response to a question and as such was considered 'contentful'. Where turns from the same speaker are punctuated by reactive tokens or pauses it also becomes difficult to decide whether to count them as singular or multiple floor-holding sequences.

Frequency of turn-taking was also analysed by dividing the total number of turns by the length of time taken. The long narrative turns were left out of the calculations so the figures represent the 'chat' segments of casual conversation (Slade, 1997).

4.3 Topic

The transcripts of the three conversations were analysed to determine what topics arose during the discussions, how topics shifted (Crow, 1983), how often topic change occurred and who performed the 'topical actions' (Bublitz, 1988). Again, judgements relating to when a topic has changed and when it has just shifted its focus are rather subjective as Bublitz (ibid: 62) points out:

> "topics often arise naturally out of one another... Topic chains may arise which are linked by their content to a more or less marked extent. It is therefore not surprising that we cannot always decide whether in a particular case we are dealing with a topic change or a topic shift".

In this investigation, both distinct topic changes and more subtle topic shifts were counted together and contrasted with 'same topic talk'. As the transcripts for the conversations are available in appendix 3,

readers are able to assess the validity of the author's decisions with respect to topic change for themselves.

Since there is some evidence that the ability to launch topics is the key to involvement in conversations, the number of topics launched by each participant was compared with the percentage of turns taken.

4.4 A Shared World

Whenever people talk together, there is alot of information which goes unsaid because it is assumed to be 'shared knowledge'; sometimes referred to as the 'presuppositional pool'[1]. For the all-Japanese and all-English conversations, some of this assumed knowledge which is not made explicit by the participants is detailed. In the mixed-nationality conversation, it is illustrated how the interlocutors adjust themselves to the lack of mutually shared knowledge.

4.5 Reactive Tokens

Following Clancy et al. (1996), non-floor-taking moves (reactive tokens) have been classified under five headings; back-channels, reactive expressions, collaborative finishes, repetitions and resumptive openers. The number of reactive tokens used by each participant and their positioning within the flow of the conversation was determined. As previously mentioned, distinctions between reactive expressions and turns are not always clear so that the results are open to differing interpretations to some extent. Back-channels are occasionally uttered in pairs such as [hm hm] in English or [un un] in Japanese but instances such as this were counted as one here. Although laughing is sometimes regarded as a form of reactive token, it has not been included in this case. However, as can be seen from the transcripts, laughing is prevalent thoughout the conversations which suggests that it plays an important role.

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[1] The term originates from Venneman although I was unable to trace the original work for the purposes

4.6 Pauses in the Conversation

Amount of pausing in the conversations was looked at from two perspectives; firstly the delivery rate (in terms of words per minute) was calculated by dividing the total number of words spoken by the time taken; the assumption here being that a higher figure reflects less pausing. Secondly, pauses of one second or over were recorded and their positioning either within or between turns noted.

4.7 Non-verbal Communication

In this investigation, two types of non-verbal communication occurring in the all-Japanese and all-English conversations were looked at; gesturing and direction of gaze.

From the video recordings, all gestures made by the floor-holder in the section transcribed were noted. Hand movements can be quite complicated and it was felt inappropriate to record all gestures independently since some clearly belonged together, being realised in a short burst of activity and working in unison to convey a particular message. I have referred to these movements as 'gesture clusters' for want of a better name.

From the data available it was found to be impossible to evaluate how much eye contact was taking place between participants. Although the camera was placed in a position such that all faces could be seen throughout the conversations, it was not possible to determine where interlocutors' eyes were focused at any particular time. As a consequence of this, only direction of gaze has been recorded. At thirty second intervals throughout the transcribed section of the conversation, the video-recorder was paused and the direction of gaze of each participant noted.

4.8 Participant Feedback

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of this dissertation.

Two kinds of feedback were sought from participants. Firstly, immediately after the recording had taken place, they were asked to write down their perceptions of the conversation. These comments were used as background information to support inferences made from analysis of the transcripts. Secondly, participants were shown the transcripts, the video recording and the quantitative analysis and asked to give their own interpretations of the data. Their comments were contrasted with the researcher's perspective in order to ensure that the final analysis was as balanced as possible. Feedback from the Japanese participants was particularly important since, coming from a different culture, their views were less likely to concur with the author's. Comments made by subjects are brought up where relevant in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Background Information on Participants

For the purposes of this investigation, the conditions involved in each of the three recordings was kept as similar as possible. Although it was possible to keep the place, time of day, seating arrangements and physical surroundings constant, this was not true for the participants and the relationships between them. For this reason, informants were all asked to complete an initial interview form in order to determine to what extent fair comparisons could be made between the groups. Appendix 1 gives participants' full replies to the initial interview but some of the key information is summarised below for the purposes of this discussion.

(i) All-Japanese Group

Interview Question	Informant Responses
Age ?	Range from 20 to 22 years old
Nationality ?	Japanese
Place born/ raised ?	All raised in different parts of Japan
Education ?	University level
Occupation ?	All students at Nottingham University
How long have you known each other ?	Approx. 3 months
How often do you see each other ?	Most week-days at the university
How well do you know each other ? (scale from 1-5)	Range from 4 to 1

Table 1: Summary of initial interview for Japanese group

(ii) All-English Group

Interview Question	Informant Responses
Age ?	Range from 23 to 28
Nationality ?	English
Place born/ raised ?	All raised in different parts of England
Education ?	University level
Occupation ?	3 informants working at Nottingham University, 1 informant working for a temping agency
How long have you known each other ?	Range from 1 evening to 3 months
How often do you see each other ?	Range from rarely to most week-days
How well do you know each other ? (scale from 1-5)	Range from 5 to 1

Table 2: Summary of initial interview for English group

(iii) Mixed Nationality group

Interview Question	Informant Responses
Age ?	Range from 21 to 28
Nationality ?	Japanese and English
Place born/ raised ?	All raised in different parts of Japan/ England
Education ?	University level
Occupation ?	All studying or working at Nottingham University
How long have you known each other ?	Range from 2 weeks to 3 months
How often do you see each other ?	Range from a few times a week to every week-day
How well do you know each other ? (scale from 1-5)	Range from 4 to 2

Table 3: Summary of initial interview for mixed nationality group

This data seems to suggest that the three groups were quite well matched in a number of ways;

- All participants were in their early to late twenties

- All were raised in different parts of Japan/ England

- All were educated to university level

- All knew each other through their work or studies (except for <F1> in the all-English group)

- All had known each other for 3 months or less

- All saw each other at least 2/ 3 times per week at the university (again, except for <F1> in the all-English group)

- Participants claimed to know each other to varying levels within each group

There were, however, a number of discrepancies which require some explanation. One of the most important differences between the groups is the fact that in the mixed nationality conversation, three males and only one female were present. The original intention had been to have a balance of males

and females in each situation but after the first (all-Japanese) recording, the Japanese females were found to participating in only a minimal way. Since it was predicted that involvement would be even more problematical for them in the mixed nationality recording, it was felt that the results might be more illuminating if one of the more extrovert males was included instead. This may well have affected the behaviour of the female participant in the third group since she admitted to me that she felt the way she responded in conversation was influenced by the sex of her interlocutors. In her own words, she suggested that she became more 'flirty' when other women were absent from a group.

In the all-English group, two of the participants (<F1> and <M1>) had a more intimate relationship which might have been expected to influence the discourse patterns observed, particularly in speech directed at each other. However, inspection of the transcript for the second conversation does not seem to display any overt signs of intimacy between them and perhaps this is as a result of 'down-playing' their relationship in front of others.

5.2 Turn-taking

One interesting difference between the conversations in the two groups on a macro level was the greater tendency for fragmentation in the English interaction, with more than one participant taking turns simultaneously. This occurred four times during the hour and a half of conversation recorded whereas in the all-Japanese discourse, no examples of fragmentation were seen. This perhaps reflects the English focus on the individual and the Japanese focus on the group.

All of the general features of turn-taking raised by Sacks et al (1974) are in evidence in the transcripts analysed here and we also see instances where normal turn-taking is suspended while narratives are related (Houtkoop & Mazeland, 1985; Slade, 1997). These stories arise naturally from the preceding 'chat' and also influence subsequent talk in the manner described by Jefferson (1977). Beyond these common features, however, some rather dramatic differences can be seen in each context investigated. Tables 4 to 6 below summarise the turn-taking patterns found in each conversation. All reactive tokens (Clancy et al., 1996) have been excluded from the calculations on the basis that they are not regarded as floor-taking utterances and do not, therefore, constitute turns. Also, in the data for number of words

per turn, figures have been included in parentheses where the long, narrative turns are left out since these can be seen to bias the results.

(i) All-Japanese Group

Speaker	Number of Turns	Number of Words Per Turn
<M1>	25 (33.3%)	13.84
<M2>	35 (46.7%)	11.2 (9.2)[2]
<F1>	12 (16%)	4.83
<F2>	3 (4%)	4.67

Table 4: Turn-taking patterns in Japanese group

(ii) All-English Group

Speaker	Number of Turns	Number of Words Per Turn
<M1>	21 (28.38%)	22.7 (10.8)[3]
<M2>	15 (20.27%)	10.4
<F1>	20 (27.03%)	6.5
<F2>	18 (24.32%)	9.1

Table 5: Turn-taking patterns in English group

(iii) Mixed Nationality Group

Speaker	Number of Turns	Number of Words Per Turn
<M1>	7 (9.72%)	5.86
<M2>	21 (29.16%)	9.48
<M3>	21 (29.16%)	13.57
<M4>	1 (1.39%)	4
<F1>	22 (30.56%)	24.82 (16)[4]

Table 6: Turn-taking patterns in mixed nationality group

Something immediately obvious in the all-Japanese conversation is the inequality in not only the number of turns taken by each participant but also in the length of those turns. This feature appears to be related to gender with the females taking a less active role in the maintenance and development of topics. Indeed, it is striking how little <F1> and <F2> reveal about themselves throughout the entire conversation. They seem content to sit back and take on the listener's role in a way that might be

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[2] The figure in parentheses represents the number of words per turn when the long narrative (88 words over 2 turns) has been omitted.

[3] The figure in parentheses represents the number of words per turn when the long narrative (260 words over 1 turn) has been omitted.

[4] The figure in parentheses represents the number of words per turn when the long narratives (242 words over 3

perceived as overly shy or introverted in English discourse where participants are expected to 'hold their own'. The second informant questionnaire (appendix 2), where they gave their impressions of the conversation, interestingly make little mention of this inequality in turn-taking; all members of the group reported having enjoyed the discussion with no difficulty in becoming involved. Thus there is no evidence of the negative evaluation which may have arisen had this been an English conversation. The implication so far has been that the female participants were extremely passive in the discussion which is not the case at all; both were working extremely hard in the listener's role as can be seen by the high levels of aizuchi exhibited (see section 5.5 on reactive tokens).

Informant perceptions of the conversation seem to support the evidence above since all participants reported the males as having been the dominant speakers. <M2> took almost fifty percent of the turns and appears to have felt responsible for keeping the discussion moving. He remarks in appendix 2; "Chatting is one of my hobbies. But sometime there is silent. It makes me feel being in trouble. I think I must speak something". As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the Japanese are very aware of their status within a group and <M2>, as the oldest and therefore the 'senpai' may have felt that the smooth running of the conversation was his responsibility. <M1>, although taking less turns, tended to speak for longer and this seems to be a reflection of his personality and rather rambling, 'stream of consciousness' style of delivery. His extrovert nature also shows through in the mixed nationality conversation where his turns also tended to be very long (although this is not the case in the transcribed section). From an English perspective he could be criticised for 'hogging the floor' but there is no resentment towards him for this in the Japanese conversation. At one point (see transcript 1.b; line 117), he actively shifts the focus away from <F1> and back to himself at one of the rare points in the discourse where one of the women has the chance to speak in a way which, again, might be considered over-bearing in an English context. However, when the female participants were questioned on this matter later, they did not judge the example in a negative way, highlighting the risk of 'ethnocentric contamination' in situations such as this (Widdowson, 1979).

Turn-taking in the all-English conversation is more equally distributed between participants, reflecting what seems to be a greater sensitivity towards how turns are shared out. Thus the values of a particular

turns) have been omitted.

culture appear to find expression in the patterns of discourse seen; in the Japanese conversation, the male participants dominate as they do in the society as a whole, while in the English conversation, with its emphasis on equality and the individual, turn-taking is also more equal.

As in the first transcript, there is evidence of individual differences in the patterns of turn-taking. <M2> takes fewer turns reflecting his quieter personality; in the feedback session he expressed a preference for listening to others and because of a lack of confidence, generally prefers not to be the centre of attention. <M1>, in contrast, is rather extrovert and this is realised in the form of more and longer turns. He often seems to begin talking before he has made up his mind exactly what to say, displayed in a greater number of false starts and repetitions at the start of his turns. <F1> showed a preference for frequent, but short, turns. Although I did not have the opportunity to discuss this with her personally, her comments in the questionnaire (appendix 2) suggest a number of possible reasons. Her reply to the question 'Which person talked the least during the evening and why?' was; "Me. Could not participate in CELE talk. Feel less comfortable communicating in a group. Self-conscious of the camera".

The mixed nationality conversation proved to be a little disappointing in one way since I was expecting the Japanese participant (<M1>) to experience considerable difficulty in joining in with the discussion. In actual fact, as a result of his talkative nature and the native speakers' concern not to leave him out, he dominated quite long stretches of the conversation, taking very long 'turns' (I would go as far as to describe them as monologues rather than turns) in a similar way to that seen in the all-Japanese interaction. The section chosen for transcription seems to be more typical of this kind of cross-cultural communication although I believe that the native speakers were making more effort than would normally be the case to include <M1> ; probably because by this stage they had some understanding of the area under investigation and felt more responsibility to involve the Japanese speaker.

The section of the evening's discussion analysed here shows turn-taking to be largely distributed amongst the native speakers, with <M1> taking only about 10% of the total with an average of 5.86 words per turn. <M3> and <F1>'s turns were noticeably longer than in the all-English conversation and this is largely due to their attempts to include the Japanese participant, explaining topics arising in the

discussion in greater depth than would normally be the case. This is illustrated below in table 7 which shows the number and length of turns by English participants, directed either at each other or <M1>.

Speaker	No. Turns to <M1>	Average Number of Words Per Turn	No. Turns to Native Spkr.	Number of Words Per Turn
<M2>	1	6	20	9.65
<M3>	9	16.78	12	10.67
<F1>	9	31.56	13	20.15 (13)[5]

Table 7: Turns directed at Japanese participant or other native speakers in mixed nationality group

What is particularly interesting here is the fact that <M2> made rather less effort to include the Japanese participant in the conversation than the other two native speakers. In fact at times he even makes subtle moves which serve to exclude <M1>; as can be seen in line 100 of transcript 3 (see appendix 3). In the discourse immediately preceding line 100, <M3> is discussing the pronunciation of the word 'trauma' with <M1>. At this point <M2> looks at <M3> and says "So you were taking the piss then ?" a move which clearly takes the focus away from the non-native speaker in two ways; firstly, the comment is directed at the other English male and secondly, it is phrased idiomatically. McCarthy (1998) talks of the power of idioms to function as 'membershipping devices'; they are a kind of private language for the groups who use them, not always understood by all members of the same society and rarely by those from other cultures. A similar example also occurs earlier in the transcript when <F1> is explaining about her studies at university (line 24). She is just about to explain the meaning of drama therapy to the Japanese participant when <M2> interrupts, saying "Drama therapy ?" and in his next turn "Tell me more", thus stealing the lime-light again. During the participant feedback, I asked <M2> about his apparent reluctance to involve the Japanese speaker in the discussion and he admitted feeling rather resentful at the way <M1> had dominated the earlier conversation and also said that he felt bored while <M3> and <F1> gave long explanations, wanting to move on to more interesting topics. This illustrates very clearly what Bublitz (1988) describes as the power of interlocutors to steer conversation in directions to suit their own ends.

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[5] The figure in parentheses represents the number of words per turn when the long narrative directed at the native speakers (106 words over 1 turn) has been omitted.

The turn-taking patterns in the three interactions were also investigated from the point of view of frequency of turn changes (in the 'chat' sections) and this is shown below:

Conversation	No. Turns Per Minute
All-Japanese	12.81
All-English	18.64
Mixed Nationality	12.98

Table 8: Frequency of turn changes

These results indicate a substantial difference in turn-taking rate between the two languages, supporting the 'tennis vs. bowling' model (Sakamoto & Naotsuka, 1982) mentioned in section 2.3. In English turn-taking seems to be more vigorous and the floor 'up for grabs' by whoever is quick enough to take it. In contrast the pace of Japanese conversation is more sedate, with fewer turn changes. The presence of a non-native speaker in the third conversation seems to have affected the turn-taking patterns and this is probably as a result of <F1> and <M3> taking longer turns in order to explain certain ideas to the Japanese participant.

5.3 Topic

As Bublitz (1988: 16) states; "One of the most vital devices for controlling everyday conversation is the manner in which the participants handle the discourse topic". Since we are concerned here with ways of helping non-native speakers take more control in L2 encounters, it would seem appropriate to focus on topic shift. The topic changes occurring in the transcribed sections of the three conversations investigated here, along with the performer of the 'topical action' are shown below.

(i) All-Japanese Conversation

                                        <M1>   **<M2>**

subjects at university --------> doing calculations in different subjects --------> doing badly in exams

<M2>   **<M1>**   **<M1>**   **<M2>**
--------> doing part-time work --------> earning money --------> drinks (immediate context) -------->

effects of alcohol.

Speaker	No. Topical Actions Performed
<M1>	3
<M2>	3
<F1>	0
<F2>	0

Table 9: Number of topical actions performed by Japanese spkrs

(ii) All-English Conversation

                          <M1>   **<F1>**   **<M2>**
the teaching profession --------> working at Woolworths --------> operating buffing machines -------->
                          <M1>   **<F2>**
doing impressions from Star Wars --------> watching videos (Star Wars & Grease) --------> Star Wars

sounds on <F2>'s computer.

Speaker	No. Topical Actions Performed
<M1>	2
<M2>	1
<F1>	1
<F2>	1

Table 10: Number of topical actions performed by English spkrs

(iii) Mixed Nationality Conversation

                          <M3>   **<M2>**   **<M3>**
<F1>'s studies at university --------> food (immediate context) --------> bad teachers --------> dj at a
      <F1>   **<M2>**   **<M1>**   **<M3>**
disco --------> dancing --------> 'trauma' & its pronunciation --------> the meaning of 'trauma' -------->
                  <M2>   **<F1>**   **<F1>**
the word 'trauma'--------> 'taking the piss' --------> <M3>'s tendency to use clichés --------> <F1>'s
file
      <F1>
 story -------->Slush Puppies.

Speaker	No. Topical Actions Performed
<M1>	1
<M2>	3
<M3>	3
<F1>	4

Table 11: Number of topical actions performed by spkrs
in mixed nationality conversation

As Bublitz (1988) suggests, participants in all three conversations for the most part produce utterances which are topically coherent with 'shading' the predominant form of shift. Where abrupt changes in topic do occur, it is always related to the immediate environment (drinks in transcript 1 & food in transcript 3) and perhaps these should not be labelled as 'non-coherent shifts' at all since for all participants involved there is no ambiguity in the intended meaning.

In the all-Japanese discourse, topical actions are, predictably, carried out only by the male participants and this supports the view that they are taking a dominant role in controlling the direction of conversation. As mentioned earlier, there is no conflict resulting from the distribution of power within the group; the females being perfectly content, in this case, to play a 'supporting role'. I would argue that the reason for this lack of conflict is that the goals in Japanese conversation do not revolve around issues of individuality, equality and power struggles, rather participants seek to converge in harmonious oneness.

In the all-English interaction, topical actions were performed by all participants, again supporting the idea that power is distributed more equally between interlocutors (both male and female). This is not to say that perfect equality has now been established in British society; Coates (1986: 115) states quite emphatically, "Research on conversational dominance... establishes unambiguously that it is men who dominate the floor in mixed interaction" and illustrates her argument with numerous examples. However, when contrasted with the discourse patterns displayed in the Japanese conversation, the English interaction does seem to be considerably further along the path to the Western ideal of sexual equality.

In the mixed nationality conversation, topical action seems to be an accurate indicator of balance of power within the group with the non-native speaker performing only one. His topic (the meaning of the word 'trauma') was not actually taken up by the group; something defined by Crow (1983) as an 'insert'. The remaining topical actions are shared more or less equally among the English participants.

What is suggested by the discussion so far, is that the ability to perform topical actions may be the key to involvement and this idea can be further explored by comparing the number of topics 'launched' by participants with the percentage of turns taken:

(i) All-Japanese Conversation

Speaker	No. Topical Actions	Percentage of Turns
<M1>	3	33.3
<M2>	3	46.7
<F1>	0	16
<F2>	0	4

**Table 12: Relationship between topical actions performed by Japanese spkrs
and percentage of turns taken**

(ii) All-English Conversation

Speaker	No. Topical Actions	Percentage of Turns
<M1>	2	28.4
<M2>	1	20.3
<F1>	1	27
<F2>	1	24.3

**Table 13: Relationship between topical actions performed by English spkrs
and percentage of turns taken**

(iii) Mixed Nationality Conversation

Speaker	No. Topical Actions	Percentage of Turns
<M1>	1	9.7
<M2>	3	29.2
<M3>	3	29.2
<F1>	4	30.6

**Table 14: Relationship between topical actions performed by mixed
nationality spkrs and percentage of turns taken**

These figures do indeed provide some support for a relationship between topical actions and participation although the samples investigated here are too small to come to any firm conclusions.

This method of controlling the direction a conversation takes might be of particular relevance to non-native speakers performing in their L2. Topics can change rapidly in casual conversation (approx. 1 topic per minute in the examples investigated here) and for the non-native speaker to be able to participate, involves both being aware of the current topic and having something to say about it. By launching their own topics, they can steer the conversation into known territory; where they know what is being talked about and where they should have something to say about it too. Of course there is no guarantee that topical actions will be taken up by the group and interactants with less status are

correspondingly more likely to find their topics rejected as was the case for <M1>'s insert in the third conversation presented here.

There are obvious pedagogical applications for the insights emerging from this data. Possible classroom activities which might be of benefit to learners include raising awareness of the ways in which topic shifts in natural conversation (principally, as we have seen, by shading). Students could also be trained to actively listen for topic changes and to identify 'sub-topics' within the main theme, putting these forward as proposed new topics and in this way exerting more control over the discourse. This kind of approach puts more emphasis on listening skills in conversation than is traditionally the case since without the ability to follow topic shifts, topical coherence is impossible.

5.4 A Shared World

In natural conversation between people from the same culture a great deal is left unsaid, implicitly understood by all because they share the same world. It is not until we begin to interact with other cultures that we realise the extent of this assumed knowledge. The point to be taken here is that the ability to participate in cross-cultural communication relies just as much on knowledge of the target culture as it does on linguistic ability. Below is listed some of the information a non-native speaker would need to know in order to follow the all-Japanese and all-English conversations investigated here (refer to tapescripts 1.b and 2 in appendix 3):

(i) All-Japanese Conversation

- "I did it in the centre" (line 24) the 'centre' is a place to study for the entrance exams for public university; the competition to enter these is much greater than for private universities.
- "23 points was so bad" (line 46); 23 points in the high-school exam is a very low score.
- "The test is something like this" (line 50); What the typical layout of kanji exams in Japanese schools is.
- "I was forced to ask my parents" (line 67); If your parents are invited to school it means you are in

big trouble.

- "I was about 360th out of 400" (line 67) refers to <M2>'s rating at school; the Japanese education
 system is very competitive and every student knows his or her over-all position in the school.

- "I quickly stopped doing club activities" (line 98); in Japanese universities, belonging to a club and
  participating in club activities is probably more important than the subject you study. Being
  accepted in a university is very hard but once in, it is regarded as a kind of holiday before the
  serious business of work begins.

- "I was always doing part-time jobs" (line 97); because university life is very easy, many students
   spend alot of their time working rather than studying and part-time work is very easy to find.

- "I worked as a private tutor" (line 117); because university entrance exams are so difficult, many
  students have private tutors to help them prepare. This is big business in Japan and is a useful
  source of income for university students.

- "it was 130,000 a month"(line 118); 130,000 yen a month is quite alot of money for students.

- "What did you do with 130,000 yen ?" (line 129); university students usually live with their parents
  who continue to support them financially. Anything they earn from part-time work is usually
  regarded as spending money.

- "boys usually earn alot don't they" (line 135); equal opportunities has not really reached the shores
  of Japan yet and males normally find it easier to get the most attractive work.

- "Drink up Kyoko" (line 138); alcohol plays an important role in Japanese society. People are not
  expected to fill their own glasses since it is the responsibility of others to ensure that you never have
  an empty glass. This is an important way of showing concern for others.

- "My face has gone red" (line 153); Japanese tend to get drunk very quickly, at which point their
  faces often turn very red.

(ii) All-English Conversation

- "you're like bin-man teacher" (line 3); here a comparison is being made between two types of job.
  Being a bin-man is regarded as very low status work and the implication is that teaching is of
  similar status.

- "you could have worked for Woolies and got the same amount of money" (line 8); Woolworths has the reputation for being cheap and nasty (and also badly paid).

- "so they called this erm this cowboy in" (line 44); not the western variety, here 'cowboy' refers to a worker who has no real training or professional qualifications.

- "Cos the buffer had a mind of its own and you press the handle and it just shoots off" (lines 27/28); a buffer is a machine used to polish floors. When it is turned on, the rotational force exerted causes it to jerk violently to left or right.

- "they get their big erm er chimney sweep" (line 53); a chimney sweep was a long stick with a brush attached to the end which used to be used to clean the soot from chimneys. In this case, a similarity in form between the 'pipe unblocker' and a chimney sweep is being made.

- "Darth Vadar and the emperor" (line 87); a reference to some characters in the film Star Wars.

- "I think we should have a Star Wars social night that's eight hours of pay that is" (line 107); <M1> and <M2> work as social organisers for foreign students studying at Nottingham University which means that they would be paid for showing the Star Wars films.

- "they put Star Wars sounds on my computer" (line 116); computers can be loaded with different sounds by the user.

Of course this necessary background information is not offered as a comprehensive list and what needs to be made explicit in any particular cross-cultural encounter very much depends on exactly who the participants are; in the all-English conversation alot more would have to be explained to an Amazon indian than a Dutchman for example.

When Japanese and English come together in the mixed nationality conversation, the shared world is, to some extent, lost and what would normally be left unsaid has to be said if effective communication is to take place. This process is seen quite clearly at various points in transcript 3 as the English participants try to fill in background information for the Japanese speaker; <F1> explains what American Studies is (lines 12 - 14), <M3> repeats his story about his headmaster and reforms it in simpler terms (lines 94 - 99), <F1> retells a story from work (lines 111 - 120), and lastly <F1>, <M2> and <M3> all work together to construct the meaning of 'Slush Puppy' (lines 120 - 130).

This is not the only kind of assistance the native speakers are giving <M1> in the conversation. They also actively select him as next speaker (Sacks et al., 1974) at various points; "sorry Hiro I interrupted you" (line 1), "Hiro was about to say something" (line 5), "Were you ?" (line 6), "Can you dance at all ?" (line 75) and "have you been to the showcase cinemas eaten those like slushy ice drink things ...?" (lines 120 - 121). As I mentioned in section 5.2, it seemed to me that the English participants were trying harder to include <M1> than would typically be the case, suggesting that the experimental conditions were affecting the behaviour of the informants to a certain extent. However, what is illustrated quite clearly is the effort the native speakers are required to make in order to keep the non-native speaker involved. With a less sympathetic or less sensitive audience, <M1> would have had considerably more difficulty participating.

In the informant feedback session, <M3> and <F1> both expressed having made a conscious effort to include the Japanese participant in the conversation; <M3> because he was tired of "talking shop" and was interested to hear about Japan. He also commented that <M1> had looked bored and that he had tried to involve him more for this reason. <F1> explained that she sympathised with <M1> being the odd one out and, being the oldest in the group, felt some responsibility for the smooth running of the evening.

5.5 Reactive Tokens

Occurrences of the five types of reactive token outlined by Clancy et al. (1996) in each of the three conversations is shown below.

(i) All-Japanese Conversation

Speaker	No. Back-Channels	No. Reactive Expressions	No. Collab. Finishes	No. Repetitions	No. Resum. Openers
<M1>	1	2	0	0	1
<M2>	2	0	4	1	3
<F1>	44	8	0	1	3
<F2>	29	5	0	5	1
	Total: 76	Total: 15	Total: 4	Total: 7	Total: 8

Table 15: Occurrences of reactive tokens in all-Japanese conversation

(ii) All-English Conversation

Speaker	No. Back-Channels	No. Reactive Expressions	No. Collab. Finishes	No. Repetitions	No. Resum. Openers
<M1> <M2> <F1> <F2>	2 1 0 3	2 3 3 3	0 (2)[6] 0 0	2 1 0 2	0 2 0 4
	Total: 6	Total: 11	Total: (2)	Total: 5	Total: 6

Table 16: Occurrences of reactive tokens in all-English conversation

(iii) Mixed Nationality Conversation

Speaker	No. Back-Channels	No. Reactive Expressions	No. Collab. Finishes	No. Repetitions	No. Resum. Openers
<M1> <M2> <M3> <F1>	18 1 1 3	1 3 1 3	0 0 0 0	1 1 3 2	0 1 1 1
	Total: 23	Total: 8	Total: 0	Total: 7	Total: 3

Table 17: Occurrences of reactive tokens in mixed nationality conversation

In the Japanese data, something immediately obvious is the extremely high frequency of back-channels (approx. 12 per minute), almost exclusively produced by the female participants. Similarly to the reports of Clancy et al. (1996), a large proportion of these back-channels were found to occur while the primary speaker was 'midstream' and still in the process of constructing a grammatical clause which resulted in the impression of a 'stop - start' rhythm. As was mentioned in section 5.2, the number of turns taken by the female participants was very low but their production of aizuchi indicates that they were very active in the conversation, playing a supporting role. In the respondent feedback session, both <F1> and <F2> reported being much quieter in mixed-sex groups than they would be in all-women groups.

Back-channels were by far the most preferred form of reactive token with reactive expressions the next favourite, something also found by Clancy et al (ibid). That this is the case is not particularly surprising since back-channels are less intrusive on the primary speaker's turn than lexical utterances; an important point bearing in mind the frequency with which reactive tokens are used. Production of the other types of token were quite low with rather striking individual differences emerging; <M2> made all of the collaborative finishes and <F2> produced most of the repetitions.

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[6] <M2>'s responses (lines 89 & 95) are not strictly speaking collaborative finishes since they function

In the all-English conversation, the frequency of reactive tokens was much lower than for the Japanese equivalent, with reactive expressions proving the most popular. The figures reported here are substantially different from those of Clancy et al. (ibid) who claim both Japanese and English have equally high reactive token ratios. However, as they also point out; "differences from one conversation to another in our data could be as great as differences across languages" (ibid: 383). Since only the discourse from one isolated event is analysed here, it would be very dangerous to make too many claims.

In the mixed nationality conversation, it is interesting to note that the majority of back-channels produced (78.3%) are by the Japanese participant. This contrasts with the first (all-Japanese) conversation when he used only one in over six minutes of transcribed data. This would seem to indicate that production of aizuchi is not only related to gender but is also affected by context. In transcript 3, <M1> seems to take on a different role than the one he was allocated in the all-Japanese discussion, more often supporting the primary speaker. This less dominant position is hardly surprising when we remember that he was communicating in the L2. The positioning of <M1>'s back-channels is also worthy of note because they are all clustered at specific points in the conversation when talk is directed specifically at him whereas the females in the all-Japanese interaction produce aizuchi independently of the intended recipient. In the feedback session, <F1> claimed to have noticed the Japanese speaker's high use of back-channels but was not disturbed by it.

This data, taken as a whole, supports the idea that the Japanese prefer a highly affect-laden and intensely interactive style and there is also some evidence that this style is maintained in cross-cultural communication. Where discourse strategies are as different as they seem to be here, there is the possibility for misunderstandings to arise (as mentioned in 2.4). Negative evaluation is the likely result; the Japanese considering the English unsupportive and the English thinking the Japanese dismissive. By making learners aware of the patterns of interaction in the L2 and how they differ from their own language, we may be helping them to avoid unnecessary conflict.

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more as prompts for <M1>. Perhaps they would be more appropriately termed 'collaborative starts'.

5.6 Pauses in the Conversation

The average number of words uttered per minute in each of the three conversations analysed is represented below:

Conversation	No. Words Spoken Per Minute
All-Japanese	148.6
All-English	185.4
Mixed Nationality	168.2

Table 18: Number of words spoken per minute

These figures suggest that the number of words produced per minute is lower in Japanese than in English, which in turn means that there must also be more pausing occurring (as long as the time taken to say words is similar in both languages).[7] The obvious question ensuing is whether this lower rate is due to pausing within turns or between turns and this is further explored below (only pauses of one second or longer were considered).

Conversation	Pausing Between Turns	Pausing Inside Turns
All-Japanese	9.5	22.4
All-English	12.8	1.8
Mixed Nationality	3.9	2.4

Table 19: Frequency of pausing between & inside turns

This data shows that the amount of pausing is much higher in the Japanese than the English conversation; approx. 27 seconds[8] and 15 seconds respectively. It also suggests that the majority of pauses in the Japanese conversation occur within turns. These results support the patterns already pointed out, with Japanese interlocutors frequently pausing to allow listeners to respond and to give themselves thinking time. With increased competition in turn-taking in English, pauses within turns are a luxury speakers cannot afford.

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[7] There are, however, some dangers involved in comparing word counts between languages since one word in Japanese does not necessarily equal one word in English (and vice versa). For example the single lexical item 'saserareta' in Japanese is translated in four words ('was forced to do') in English.

[8] The difference in length of the two recordings has been accounted for in this figure.

5.7 Non-Verbal Communication

It was claimed in section 2.5, that the Japanese are a 'non-contact culture' (Argyle & Cook, 1976) which means that compared to the British, who come from a 'contact culture', they;

(i) Touch each other less.

(ii) Look at each other less.

(iii) Face each other less directly.

(iv) Stand further apart.

Since the participants in the context of this project were all seated around a table, points (iii) and (iv) above were not open to investigation. With respect to physical contact, although the Japanese never touched each other, a similar pattern was also seen with the English where only one incidence of touch was noted. This highlights the fact that perhaps it would be more appropriate the consider the idea of contact and non-contact cultures as a cline on which the British are somewhere in the middle, for example;

Non-contact   **Contact**

-->

Japanese   British   Italians
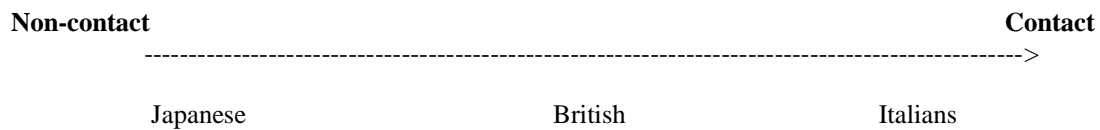
Direction of participant gaze was assessed in the all-Japanese and all-English conversations by pausing the video tape at thirty second intervals in the transcribed sections and noting down the apparent focus points of each member of the group. This was not always easy to do accurately and it must also be stressed that these results represent only eleven, split-second 'snap-shots' from over an hour and a half of recorded data and cannot therefore be taken as conclusive proof one way or another. It is hoped, however, that some of the typical features of each culture are illustrated. The diagrams below represent the positions of the participants at the table and the arrows show their estimated direction of gaze. The floor-holder is underlined in each instance and their utterances at the point of analysis are also given.

(i) All-Japanese Conversation

t = 0	t = 0.5 min.	t = 1 min.
<M1> Nanka un rigakubu (line 1)	<M2> Nanka yoku (line 6)	<M1> chigaku wa (line 21)

45
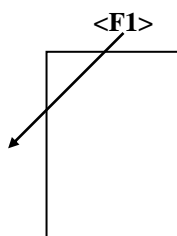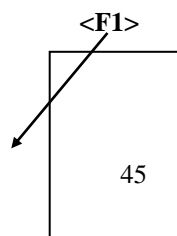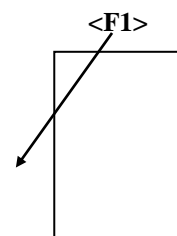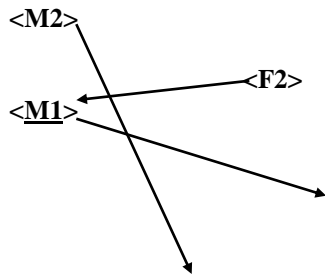
t = 1.5 mins.
<M1> saigo made (line 34)
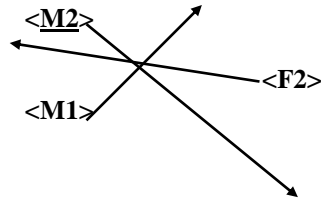
t = 2 mins.
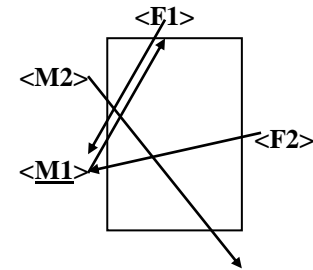<M2> Kokugo tte (line 48)
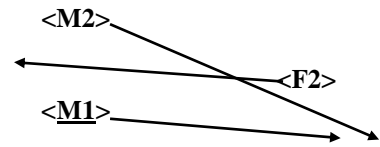
t = 2.5 mins.
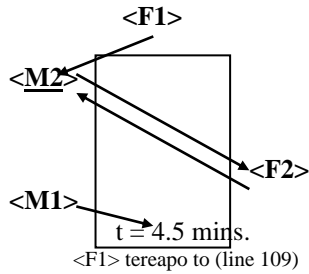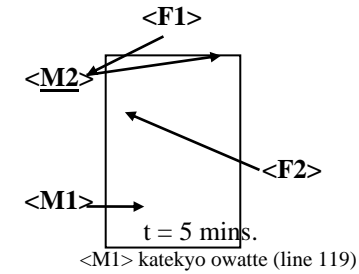<M1> Sonna omowahen (line 59)
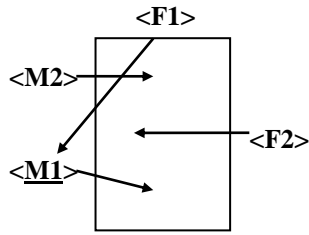
t = 3 mins.
<M2> taigaku saserarechatta (line 71)
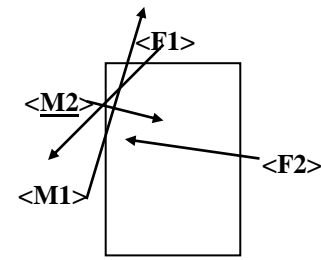
t = 3.5 mins.
<M2> warukute korenakatta (line 80)
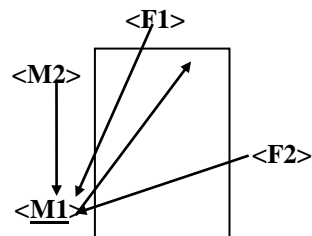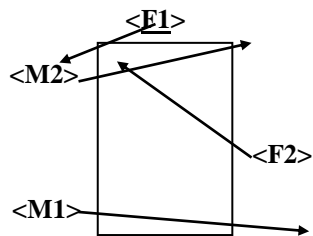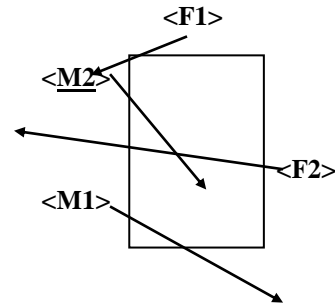
t = 4 mins.
<M2> baito shitakatta (line 94)

t = 4.5 mins.
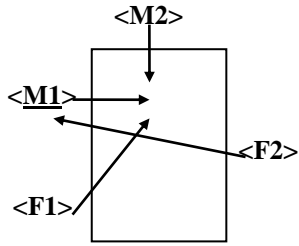<F1> tereapo to (line 109)

t = 5 mins.
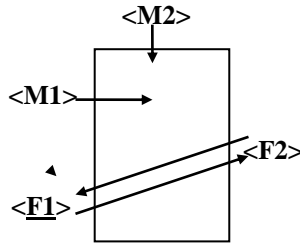<M1> katekyo owatte (line 119)

(ii) All-English Conversation

t = 0
<M1> So low status (line 1)
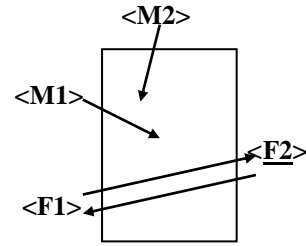
t = 0.5 min.
<F1> Buffing the floor (line 14)

t = 1 min.
<F2> Until they sacked you (line 32)
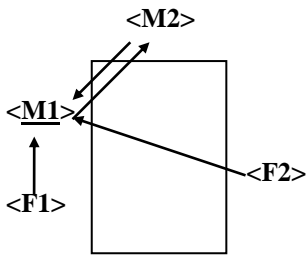
46

t = 1.5 mins.
<M1> smashed the toilet (line 46)
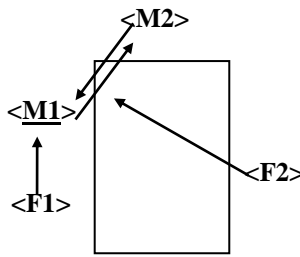
t = 2 mins.
<M1> Dynarod are in there (line 52)
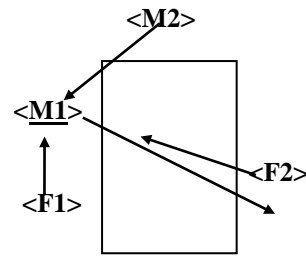
t = 2.5 mins
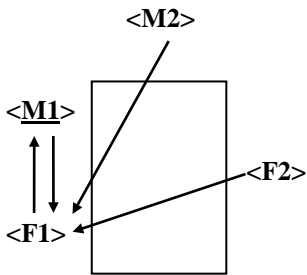<M1> in charge (line 57)

t = 3 mins.
<M1> work for Woolies (line 69)
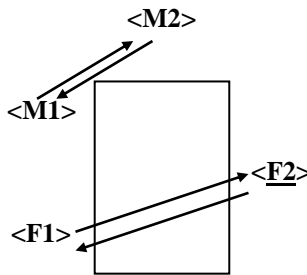
t = 3.5 mins
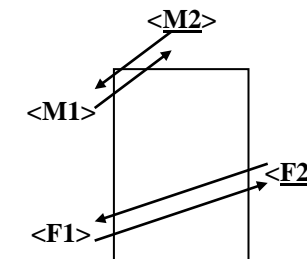<F2> not many people (line 82)

t = 4 mins.
<M1> get into character (line 91)

t = 4.5 mins.
<F2> we're pure (line 103)

t = 5 mins
<M2> romance and violence (line 113)
<F2> all right then Betty (line 114)
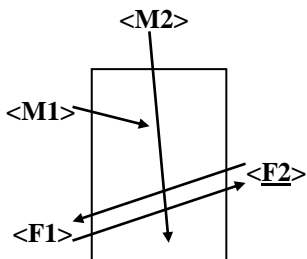
Even from the small sample analysed here, some clear differences emerge between the two cultures

with the Japanese participants looking at each other much less. The amount of direct gaze from

(a) listeners to floor-holders and (b) from floor-holders to one of the listeners is quantified below for

each conversation:

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(i) All-Japanese Conversation

Participant	Amount of Time(in Listener Role) Looking at Speaker	Amount of Time (in Speaker Role) Looking at Listener
<M1>	0%	20%
<M2>	17%	20%
<F1>	80%	100%
<F2>	55%	0[9]
	Average = 38%	Average = 46.6%

Table 20: Frequency of direct gaze for participants in speaker & listener roles in Japanese conversation

(ii) All-English Conversation

Participant	Amount of Time (in Listener Role) Looking at Speaker	Amount of Time (in Speaker Role) Looking at Listener
<M1>	20%	67%
<M2>	30%	100%
<F1>	80%	100%
<F2>	71%	100%
	Average = 50.25%	Average = 91.75%

Table 21: **Frequency of direct gaze for participants in speaker & listener roles in English conversation**

For both conversations, there appears to be some gender differences with males showing less tendency for direct gaze than females. As predicted by Argyle & Cook (1976), the Japanese do seem to spend less time looking at each other, particularly when they are in the speaker role. In the informant feed-back session, the Japanese participants agreed with the results presented here and commented that they had noticed higher levels of eye contact in Britain and sometimes felt embarrassed by this. <M1> also remarked that if he had engaged in more eye contact with the females, some form of sexual attraction might have been implied.

If it is indeed true that Japanese look less at one another while speaking, this would suggest that gestures are a largely redundant form of non-verbal communication; a point also made by Argyle & Cook (ibid) who state that the facial-visual channel is little used for either encoding or decoding. In order to test this theory, the type and frequency of hand gestures made by primary speakers in the all-Japanese and all-English conversations were analysed and the results of this are shown below.

(i) All-Japanese Conversation

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[9] <F2> did not take the speaker role in the sections of the video analysed.

Line Number in Transcript (1.b)	Type of Gesture Cluster
4	<M1> clenches R.[10] fist & knocks gently on table.
34	<M1> with elbows on table puts hands together at chest level.
45	<M1> hands at chest level, moves R. hand as if writing on L. palm.
48	<M2> arms resting on table, both hands raised slightly palms down.
51	<M1> uses both hands to draw imaginary exam.
53	<M1> moves R. hand across table, banging it gently three times.
55	<M1> draws imaginary box on table.
57	<M1> uses R. hand to write imaginary sentence across table.
66	<M2> arms resting on table, both hands raised slightly palms down.
78	<M2> moves R. hand to chest level & back to table.
90	<M2> arms resting on table taps L. palm with R. index finger.
117	<M1> taps table gently with L. hand.
122	<M1> taps table gently with L. hand.
145	<M2> covers wine glass with L. hand & moves it away from <M1> with R. hand.
146	<M1> & <F1> touch <M2>'s wine glass.
148	<F1> points at water bottle with L. hand.
150	<M1> touches stem of dressing bottle with R. hand.
157	<M1> touches face with L. hand.

Table 22: Type of gesture clusters observed in all-Japanese conversation

(ii) All-English Conversation

Line Number in Transcript (2)	Type of Gesture Cluster
15	<F2> makes circular cleaning motions with R. hand.
17	<M1> pretends to operate a buffer, both hands at chest level sway from side to side.
18	<F2> mirrors <M1>'s previous gesture, hands swaying from left to right.
22	<F1> makes downward motion with L. hand.
27	<F1> puts knife & fork down & raises both hands, palms up.
28	<F1> both hands still raised to chest level, R. hand sweeps off to the left & returns to original position.
28	<F1> brings hands together at chest level.
41	<F2> touches <M2>'s arm with R. hand.
42	<M2> makes small, circular motions with R. hand.
46	<M1> raises both hands and brings them together at neck level then moves them rapidly apart.
47	<M1> rubs chin with L. hand, confused expression on face.
47	<M1> moves L. hand, palm down from head level to shoulder level.
48	<M1> moves L. hand, palm down to head level, R. hand makes small circular motions below L.
48	<M1> moves L. hand above head level, R. hand static at head level.
49	<M1> moves R. hand up to L. above head level & back down to neck level.
49	<M1> moves L. hand to chest level, below R. hand, L.hand sways from side to side.
50	<M1> moves both hands to chest level, palms down, R. hand sways from side to side, fingers splayed.
51	<M1> sways both hands from side to side at chest level.

[10] R. = right, L = left.

52	<M1> touches chin with L. hand.
52	<M1> raises R. hand above head, index finger pointing at ceiling & makes figure of eight motions.
53	<M1> brings both hands together at head level & makes unscrewing motions.
54	<M1> makes fist with L. hand at head level & moves R. hand backwards & forwards behind it in ramming motions.
55	<M1> moves hands together at table level & makes unscrewing motions with R. hand.
55	<M1> moves both hands together at head level, then moves them apart rapidly swinging them behind his head.
57	<M1> raises vertical L. hand to chest level.
58	<M1> moves L. hand off table in a flicking motion.
58	<M1> makes a fist with R hand at head level then opens it, palm towards face and moves it down to chest level.
60	<M1> covers face with R. hand.
63	<M1> raises both hands to chest level, palms up.
65	<F2> gestures towards <F1> with R. hand.
67	<F1> raises R. hand (still holding knife), 3 fingers sweep away from knife & back twice.
69	<M1> rests L. elbow on table, and motions towards <F1> with L. hand.
76	<M2> moves both hands together to shoulder level, elbows resting on table, R. hand rotates.
84	<F1> moves R. hand up to chest level (still holding knife) & motions towards <F2>.
85	<M1> raises both hands to chest level & sways them from side to side as if operating a buffer.
87	<M2> raises R. hand to chest level, fist clenched & gestures towards <M1> with thumb.
88	<M2> gestures towards <M1> again with R. hand.
89	<M1> covers mouth with L. hand.
90	<F2> raises both hands to chest level, palms up & fingers splayed gestures towards <M1>.
91	<M1> moves L. hand to face level and gestures towards <F2>.
97	<M2> brings hands together at chest level, elbows resting on table, L. hand gestures towards <F2>.
102	<F1> raises R. hand to hide mouth from <M1> & <M2>.
103	<F2> moves R. hand to chest level, palm up, & makes circular motions.
109	<F1> raises R. hand to head level, palm down, & gestures towards <F2>.
112	<M2>, elbows resting on table, touches thumb & index finger of L. hand with R. twice.
113	<M2> touches thumb & index finger of L. hand again.
116	<F2> raises both hands to chest level & gestures towards herself.
119	<F2> raises R. hand to chest level, palm up & finger-tips touching, & moves it up and down.

T**able 23: Type of gesture clusters observed in all-English conversation**

These observations demonstrate very clearly that, as expected, the Japanese did gesture significantly less than the English; with mean figures of 2.83 gesture clusters per minute and 8.92 gesture clusters per minute respectively. Not only were there around three times less gestures by Japanese participants,

the movements displayed were also more subtle with hands never raised above chest level. In the informant feed-back session, the Japanese group agreed that they rarely used gestures in casual conversation. <M1> commented that gesturing was regarded as childish in Japan and indeed children are likely to be the highest users of gestures; until full socialisation has taken place and hand movements have been stifled. Once again, large differences were noted between individuals as is shown below in tables 22 and 23:

(i) All-Japanese Conversation

Speaker	Number of Gesture Clusters Observed
<M1>	12 (66.7%)
<M2>	5 (27.8%)
<F1>	1 (5.6%)
<F2>	0
	Total = 18

Table 24: Number of gesture clusters displayed by participants in all-Japanese conversation

(ii) All-English Conversation

Speaker	Number of Gesture Clusters Observed
<M1>	25 (52.1%)
<M2>	7 (14.6%)
<F1>	8 (16.7%)
<F2>	8 (16.7%)
	Total = 48

Table 25: Number of gesture clusters displayed by participants in all-English conversation

These figures were, of course, influenced by the number and length of turns taken by each participant but personality also seems to play a part with the two most extrovert participants (<M1> in both conversations) also displaying the highest level of gesturing. <M2> (from the all-English conversation) who was the quieter member of the group, commented in the feed-back session that he did not like to gesture too much because he was not comfortable with the extra attention it attracted.

Analysis of the transcripts reveals that a high proportion of the gestures accompany narratives in the conversation, particularly in the English interaction where <M1> displays vividly the twisting pipes and collapsing floor with his hand movements. This re-enactment of action in the story is already well

documented and in English is also often accompanied by changes in voice quality as the narrator takes on different 'personas';

> "Often the point of view or voice represented in a piece of oral storytelling which may be ambiguous or confusing in print may be easily understood with access to the tape of the storytelling, since narrators often assign distinctive accents, speech rhythms, and pitches to different characters, and reserve a neutral delivery for statements made from the vantage point of narrator in the conversation" (Polanyi, 1982: 162).

It is interesting to note that in the narratives from the all-Japanese conversation analysed here, participants do not exploit changes in voice quality to distinguish between characters. This can be seen clearly from lines 85 to 88 (transcript 1.b) where <M1> takes on the role of the teacher in <M2>'s story and <M2> responds to this by becoming the student. In an English interaction, this role-taking would almost certainly have been accompanied by a variety of gestures; <M2> bowing his head as he is being reprimanded, or changes in voice quality; <M1> using a stern tone as he says "You have to study harder" but these features are absent and the turns are delivered dead-pan so that for an English observer it is extremely difficult to understand what is going on. Japanese interlocutors, of course, have no problem understanding each other since they are not expecting these non-verbal clues to accompany changes in role. In the informant feed-back session, the Japanese participants remarked that the way the narrative had been related was perfectly normal and that using gestures or 'story voices' would be exaggerated like a comedian and would cause the audience to think of the narrator as strange; something to be avoided at all costs in such a homogeneous society.

In cross-cultural communication, we would expect the non-native participants to fall back on patterns from their own language unless they have been made aware of any differences which exist. This seems to be the case in the mixed-nationality conversation presented here, where <M1>'s direction of gaze was frequently outside the group in a similar way to that seen in the all-Japanese interaction. Gesturing was not quantified but, impressionistically, <M1> seemed to act in a similar fashion to the first conversation. In the informant feedback session, the native speakers commented on the fact that the Japanese participant had looked bored (once again, evaluating the unexpected behaviour negatively) and it was highly likely that his body language was principally responsible for this impression. <M1>, for his part, noticed nothing unusual about his body language and was surprised to hear what

impressions he had been giving the English group members since, in actual fact, he had thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

From a pedagogic perspective, it seems clear that awareness raising of the non-verbal aspects of a target language could also be of benefit to learners. In the absence of any knowledge to the contrary, students assume that the L2 operates in the same way as their own language and this results in mutual misunderstanding (and frequently antipathy) in cross-cultural communication, a point made by Argyle (1975: 69);

> "small differences of NVC are a major source of annoyance and offence, can result in being regarded by other people as cold or pushy, assertive, aggressive, or simply incomprehensible and subhuman".

But can learners benefit from awareness raising and is non-verbal communication 'trainable' ? Argyle (ibid: 69) believes that it is; "it is certainly possible to train people to use the NVC of another culture, and those who want to be accepted as members of that culture would do well to be trained in this way". Collet (1971) instructed a group of Englishmen in Arab non-verbal signals (a high contact culture where there is closer proximity between speakers, more direct orientation, more looking, smiling and touching). Arab subjects then met both trained and untrained Englishmen and were asked which they preferred; always the trained man who was judged to be more friendly. The Japanese participant in the mixed nationality interaction reported on here might also have been more successful had he been trained in the use of English non-verbal signals in a similar way to Collet's experiment. This might include awareness raising through watching videos of English conversation and role-play where learners would try to engage in more eye-contact, face each other more directly, smile more and so on. There is a danger, of course, with this kind of activity; learners might resent being made to act in an unfamiliar way, indeed in a way which in their own culture would be perceived as highly unusual and quite possibly offensive. Nobody should be forced to take on the mannerisms of another culture against their will. As Guy Aston (1988: 36) says;

> "sociopragmatic rules and conventions of the L2 should not be prescriptively taught - ie. that the learner should not be required to conform to them - but that he should as far as possible develop a 'metapragmatic awareness' which enables him to avoid patterns detrimental to personal relationships, while maintaining the maximum freedom in expressing his own personality".

At least by being aware that differences exist between nations, learners may be able to reduce the levels of misunderstanding that occur in cross-cultural communication.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Back to the Beginning

To return to where we first began, sat around a camp fire in Thailand, we are now in a better position to understand the problems experienced by the Japanese girl (who you will remember was unable to participate in the conversation despite a linguistic advantage over the Italian members of the party). Some of the possible contributing factors are listed below:

(i)   Perhaps, being female, she automatically took on a more passive role in the conversation, expecting the males in the group to select her for turns rather than self-selecting.

(ii) The turn-taking rate may have been higher than it is in Japanese with fewer pauses, making it more difficult for her to both follow the conversation and to identify opportunities to take a turn.

(iii) Perhaps she did not perform any topical actions in the conversation; guiding the discourse into areas where she would have felt more confident in speaking. If she did attempt to launch topics, they may not have been accompanied by the behavioural cues outlined by Duncan & Niederehe (1974); paralinguistic overloudness, initiation of gesticulation and so on. Without these cues, any turn-taking attempts would have been less likely to succeed.

(iv) In English, we feel at liberty to start our own individual conversations if the group topic becomes dull but in Japanese this appears to be less true. It is possible that if the Japanese girl had known this, she may have been able to turn to one of the more sympathetic members of the group to initiate her own one-to-one conversation.

(v)   Perhaps her body language was misinterpreted by the European or Australasian participants as implying boredom. Certainly, with less direct orientation, eye contact or smiling she would have seemed less friendly, reducing the likelihood that others would involve her.

(vi) Cross-cultural communication requires effort from all members of a group. If the native speakers present are not willing to give time and energy to involving the non-native speakers, filling in background information or selecting weaker members for the next turn, then participation becomes very much more difficult. It may be that in the example under discussion, the native speakers present were simply unsympathetic in which case leaving the group to look for other interlocutors would be advisable.

6.2 Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Project

In section 2.1.2, Grimshaw (1982) was reported to have criticised current conversational discourse analysis on a number of levels; a lack of analysis of whole speech events, a lack of ethnographic grounding and a scarcity of multi-channel recordings involving more than two participants. In this research I have tried to avoid as many of these pit-falls as possible. I have provided as much background information on the context of the interaction and the participants as possible and have included them in the interpretation and analysis of results. This proved very valuable because it helped to explain many of the features arising from the quantitative analysis such as why <M2> in the third conversation made fewer turns directed at the Japanese participant for example. Since the language being analysed is produced as a result of a given context, with a specific group of participants and since in a different place or with different people the language produced would have been different, it would seem only right and proper that the discourse should be explained within that context. If the informants only find out the aims of the investigation after recording has taken place, there is no risk of the knowledge affecting their behaviour. However, in this investigation, by the third evening of recording, participants had already answered the questionnaires given in appendices 1 and 2 and therefore had some idea of the research aims. This seems to have influenced the the mixed nationality conversation where, as previously mentioned, the native speakers made more effort than normal to include the Japanese speaker.

Making both audio and video recordings was also useful since it helped to guarantee the accuracy of the transcript (more difficult with four participants) and allowed non-verbal signals to be analysed as well. However, as a result of the multi-channel recording, the whole process of observation was much more intrusive and can be expected to have affected the interlocutors more than a tape-recorder, discretely hidden away. By choosing sections later in the evening, this problem was minimised and the advantages of such an approach seem to outweigh the disadvantages.

Unfortunately, I was unable to analyse a 'whole speech event' due to time constraints; each transcript representing only approximately five minutes from an hour and a half of data. The sections chosen were, however, judged to be fair representations of the whole. The sections chosen for transcription contained examples of both 'chat' and 'chunks' (Slade, 1997) and this was considered important since both are features of naturally occurring casual conversation. It is important to consider how much of

each type of discourse is included in a sample since this will affect the results of any quantitative analysis; length and number of turns for example.

Many individual differences have been remarked upon in the data such as <M1>'s tendency for long turns or <F2>'s habit of echoing other speakers (both in all-Japanese conversation). This highlights the dangers of trying to make too many generalisations from small amounts of data. In this investigation it is impossible to know how many of the differences observed relate to cultural influences and how many are specific to this one context.

6.3 Future Work

The time restrictions involved in producing this dissertation mean that many areas have been left unexplored. Ideally, the whole evening's conversation on each occasion would have been transcribed and analysed. It would be interesting to see whether the same trends emerged with more data to hand; if it was found that, for example, by doubling the sample, significant changes occurred, it might call into question results from many investigations which are based on only a few thousand words. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, methods of transcription vary from researcher to researcher so another important question is: to what extent do differing transcription techniques lead to the same results ? Do two discourse analysts working from the same recording come to the same conclusions ? In my own framework of investigation, for example, only pauses of one second or more were recorded. It is possible that with a more detailed account, different patterns would have been observed.

This work should be repeated with different participants (of similar age & background) to determine to what extent the patterns observed here relate to culture or individual personalities. It should also be repeated with groups of different ages and backgrounds to see how much variability in discourse patterns exists within a culture. Gender seems to play an important role in the conversations analysed here, so comparing single sex and mixed sex interactions would probably yield some interesting results.

Again, had more time been available it would have been interesting to have worked with the Japanese participants to see whether awareness raising of the differences between the two cultures and training in adopting the patterns of the target culture would have led to improvements. Analysis from a comparable mixed nationality conversation at a later date, after training, might give some quantifiable evidence that the features investigated here can be taught.

6.4 Practical Considerations

The Japanese participants in this study had all been studying English for over six years and had been living in Britain for at least three months. Despite this considerable exposure to English, none of them was aware of the different discourse patterns typifying the two languages; the different turn-taking systems, the varying quantities of back-channels, the non-verbal communication and so on. This is not a particularly surprising state of affairs since in schools throughout the world, teaching English often means teaching the grammar and lexis and very little else. These are, of course, important but they are not the whole story by any means. Without knowing more about how the target language operates, learners are likely to speak the words of the L2 in the same manner as they would their L1; inevitably leading to misunderstandings on both sides of the interaction.

As Halliday has stressed; "in an educational context, the problem for linguistics is to elaborate some account of language that is relevant to the work of the English teacher" (cited in Aston, 1988: 13). The 'account of language' given here, if shown to be generalisable over a wide range of contexts and participants, is highly relevant to teacher and learners. The next problem would be how to incorporate the descriptions of interactional patterns raised here into a syllabus. As suggested earlier, the first step would be to raise learners' awareness of differences through observation of real or recorded conversation in the target language and discussion. For some features, such as body language or back-channelling, this could come at an early stage in the course when learners know very little of the L2 since appreciation of these differences is not linguistically challenging. Other areas, such as following topic change or identifying transition relevance places might have to wait until later but should, I would argue, appear at some stage in the syllabus. A further step might involve encouraging learners to shift

their behaviour towards that of the target culture; for Japanese students this could include more eye contact with other interlocutors, larger and more frequent gestures, greater participation by all members and so on. Conversations could be recorded on video by the teacher to allow learners to assess their success in 'acting English'. As discussed in section 5.7, there are risks involved with this kind of classroom activity; learners may feel that they are being asked to change their very nature, with the implication that somehow the way they are is not good enough. Done in a sensitive manner, however, I believe that these kinds of negative reaction can be avoided and with so much at stake in terms of success in cross-cultural communication, surely the risk is worth taking.