Japanese students in Prague. Problems of communication and interaction[1]

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Abstract

Participants in inter cultural contact situations experience communication and interaction "problems." They also derive "gratification" as a result of positive evaluations. This paper presents a survey of ten Japanese students of the Czech language who stayed in Prague and at various other locations in the Czech Republic over the summer vacation. The method used in this paper was the "interaction interview" and concentrated on actual behavior of the students, as opposed to reports based on questionnaires or traditional interviews, on a single day of their stay. The study shows that "problems" as well as "gratifications" actually occur and offers a number of observations on the processes involved. The author's ultimate concern is with policies but the paper also attends to a number of more general theoretical and methodological issues.

The present study

Europe is not a closed space. Borders change, people come and go and the process of human contact and exchange engenders profits and losses, knowledge and prejudice, understanding and misunderstanding. There is interaction and communication; sentences are exchanged. This process has always been undergoing changes, reflected in our perceptions. Researchers have moved emphasis from minorities to immigrants and guest workers (Bremer et al. 1996). But there are yet other types of contact personnel: among them tourists, students, and other middle- to short-term sojourners.

What is the actual form of this intercultural contact? How is it managed, and in what ways does differential power affect it? More than ever before we must seek rigorous methods to face the contact situation, solve its problems, and reinforce its gratifications.

The present study deals with a very limited section of these processes. A small number of Japanese students arrive annually in the Czech Republic to improve their command of Czech. My ten subjects had already studied Czech at a university in Japan, but this did not imply that they would all use such linguistic knowledge in the area of Japanese–Czech relations upon completing their courses. The objective of their study was not necessarily to directly advance their career prospects, as employment in Japan is often unconnected to the student's university major. Their competence in Czech was of various levels. For at least some of them, it was elementary when they arrived in the Czech Republic. Some postgraduates had achieved a very high level of proficiency.

1.   Theory

The design of this paper commences in the recognition that interactive situations can be classified into two categories: internal and contact. Some internal situations involve contact between culturally distinct subcultures within the same culture, such as two different social strata. However, the term "contact situation" will be employed here to refer to situations in which members of ethnically different external communities are in contact (see Neustupný 1996 on the concept of "contact situations").

This paper will employ the language-management theory (Jernudd and Neustupný 1987; Neustupný 1994b). Language-management theory has developed as a theory of language problems (cf. Neustupný 1983). It started as a branch of "language planning" theory but diverged from it in a number of ways. For this paper the most important points of difference are the following.

First, language-management theory claims that all language problems have their base in actual interaction acts.[2] This implies that we must employ methods that keep us as close to the level of actual interaction as possible. Reports on behavior in contact situations that let subjects summarize their behavior and mix actual behavior with attitudes and patterns of verbal reporting are of little value. So is methodology that relies on non-natural data, such as experiments or role-play.

Another basic tenet of language-management theory is that language problems must be viewed within the context of communication problems, and these within the context of interaction problems. Communication (COM) is considered here as composed of grammatical ("linguistic" in the narrow sense of the word — abbreviation GR) plus nongrammatical communication (NGC) processes, and interaction is seen as communication plus sociocultural (SC) interaction. From this point of view, our concern must be interaction, not communication or narrowly conceived language.

As Fairbrother (2000), following Enomoto (1993), has emphasized, participants in contact situations seem to be more sensitive to nonlinguistic features of interaction than to purely linguistic ones.

Third, from the point of view of the management theory, management processes develop in several stages.

1. Deviations from expectations concerning interaction occur. (The term "expectation" rather than "norm" will be employed in this paper.)

2. Such deviations may be noted by participants.

3. If they are noted, they may be evaluated.

4. Evaluated deviations may be the object of adjustment designs.

5. Adjustment designs may be implemented.

A deviation does not become an interaction problem unless it is noted and evaluated.

Fourth, problems are cases of negative evaluation but there is also positive evaluation, which carries considerable importance for contact situations. For example, a non-native participant notes that a building differs from his/her existing expectations of how a building should be structured. Such a participant may evaluate the difference negatively, in which case a "problem" arises. However, the evaluation can also be positive. In this case I shall speak of "gratifications." The history of the theory of "gratifications" is very short and the term is being used here for the first time (for the concept see Neustupný 1996; Fairbrother 1999, 2000).

2. Methodology

Subjects. The subjects involved in this study were six female and four male students, aged between 19 and 27, who were studying Czech at a university in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Some of these students had proceeded to M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Czech studies. The particulars of the subjects are shown in Table 1.

The "interaction interview." The methodology used for language-management studies must enable the researcher to capture processes such as noting and evaluation of deviations. The most suitable procedure is to record the behavior of the subjects and subsequently conduct follow-up interviews (cf. Neustupný 1990, 1994a). However, although (video)recording of the behavior of a single subject over the period of one day has been explored in cross-cultural studies (Neustupný 1996), it is not easy to apply, particularly in the case of a larger number of subjects in overseas settings. In the present study the "interaction interview" has been used. This methodology, developed in the 1970s at Monash University (Melbourne),

Table 1.   *Subjects of the study*

	Status at university	Sex	Number of stays in CR	Total time	Year[a]
S1	PG	M	7	2y8m	1999
S2	PG	F	4	2y3m	1997
S3	PG	F	3	2m	1999
S4	PG	F	2	2m	1999
S5	PG	M	2	1m	1998
S6	UG	M	2	6m	1999
S7	UG	F	1	2m	1998
S8[b]	UG	M	2	3y1m	1999
S9	UG	F	1	1m	1999
S10	UG	F	1	1m	1999

a.   Figures in the last column refer to the year that was the target of investigation.
b.   S8 stayed in the Czech Republic for three years with his parents when he was a child. He had virtually no contact with the Czech environment at that time.

has been employed by Asaoka (1987) for the study of parties and more recently by Muraoka (forthcoming) and others.

In conventional "recall" interviews subjects report on their customary behavior and within this process face a number of fundamental hurdles. They consist in (1) memory limitations, (2) the interference of attitudes, aims, etc., and (3) the fact that, while reporting, the subjects are bound by their system of speech ("idiom"), which imposes topical constraints and restrictions on the terminology used. All these factors, conscious or unconscious, can considerably distort the results of an interview. A typical "recall" interview initiated by questions such as "what problems did you experience in Prague" or "tell me about your experience in Prague" seem to elicit a wealth of information, but such information normally concentrates on points that made a strong impression on the subject, its selection is tainted by the subject's attitudes and beliefs, and the report includes conventional speech patterns that may not be easy to isolate. Recall interviews can, of course, be used if the researcher realizes what is at stake and is in a position to eliminate their negative aspects.

The "interaction interview" aims at capturing an act of interaction as much in its original form as possible. It consists of several stages.

1. Situational mapping. At this stage the subjects are asked to reconstruct their schedule by going through their memory in short intervals (15 to 30 minutes), and reporting in what situations they were involved.

2. Establishing details of situation. Features of the situations such as their purpose, content, participants, etc., are examined.

3. Reporting language management. For each section of each situation, subjects are asked to report all their awareness of the situation at the time

of the situation (i.e. not at the time of the interaction interview). This means that all language management of which the participants were aware will be reported.

In this way, relatively full reports, detached from attitudes and idiom, can be obtained. The subject is reporting within a given framework and is not pushed into summarizing his/her experience or evaluating it, that is, into engaging in processes for which he/she has received no training. Reporting on the evaluation of individual acts removes the pressure necessarily imposed when individuals or countries are evaluated and liberates the subject to verbalize his/her feelings. The fact that reports concern individual short acts diminishes the need to structure discourse in accordance with the speech system concerned. This methodology is unsuitable for the study of behavior that is largely unconscious, such as grammatical (language) behavior, or the study of the structure of discourse. Although subjects can sometimes report individual phrases that, for some reason, were monitored, they cannot report the exact wording of the bulk of their conversation.

For the purpose of this paper only one day of the subjects' stay in the Czech Republic was examined in detail. It was "the first full day of their last sojourn in which they did not have classes." In the second and third column of the interview sheet (details of situations and establishment of problems) I only pursued situations that belonged to the daily life and friendship domain. The method of questioning, which started with establishing the situations and only then proceeded to other details and to the management processes, resulted in remarkably rich reports. The subjects understood well that the researcher was interested in what interaction took place at the time of their sojourn in the Czech Republic, not in their attitudes and opinions at the time of the interview. They did not seem to hesitate reporting positive or negative evaluations either with regard to their own behavior or to the behavior of their Czech interactants. The interviews were conducted in May, 2000, in Tokyo; each of them lasted approximately one hour and was taped. The language used was Japanese. Initially I intended to extend each interview into a recall interview, but this was prevented by limitations on the interviewing schedule. After the interaction interview all subjects were given short questionnaires to complete. The questions concerned personal information and attitudes toward their study of the Czech language.

Discussion

The data are comparable to data from other "partner" contact situations (Fan 1994) involving Japanese participants such as studied in Melbourne

(Asaoka 1987; Marriott 1991; and others), Hong Kong (Fan 1992), and Japan (Fairbrother 1999, 2000). However, as mentioned above, this study has concentrated on short-term sojourners of a particular type within situations of the "daily life domain."

Situations within the daily life domain

The standard situations within the daily life domain were as follows:
  – getting up and the period up to breakfast;
  – breakfast;
  – transfer (including transport);
  – service-establishment situations.
  I shall characterize each of these groups of situations first.

1.   *Pre-breakfast situations*

In these situations the subjects were initially alone and could only interact with their physical environment. They noted and/or evaluated features of the buildings and rooms. S7 reported that in her hostel room there was neither a radio nor a TV but did not evaluate this negatively. Most evaluations of the subjects were either negative or positive. S8 reported that the building of the hostel was drab. For S10 the lift in the hostel building was frightening (*kowai*). Positive evaluations included such features as having a separate bathroom for two adjoining rooms (S7), that the room was large and nice (S2), or that the room had good views (S10). One subject was woken in the morning by a cleaner who was eager to proceed with her schedule of work (S2). This was evaluated negatively.

When there was more than one occupant of a room or where two rooms shared facilities, there were greetings and occasional chatting, which sometimes included verbalizations of judgments about the environment. For example, S10 met with her Japanese friend before breakfast and they exchanged evaluations of the hostel where they were staying (good to have a refrigerator, bad that the shower was too rough and hurt). This shows how SC (sociocultural) management and COM (communicative) management closely connect: SC evaluations become verbal statements and the starting point of more organized forms of management. Although this process remains a SC process it is necessarily accompanied by COM management: avoidance of possibly offensive topics, "careful" formulations, etc.

2. Breakfast situations

In breakfast situations the subjects continued SC management, which involved the evaluation of food. Positive evaluation was common and became the object of verbal statements, a fact that became apparent because the subjects possessed knowledge of evaluation by other participants (e.g. S2 reported that her friend also thought that the food was good).

These situations provided an opportunity to interact with Czech service personnel, and evaluations of the behavior of the Czech personnel were frequently negative, although not as strongly negative as evaluation in strictly service situations (cf. section 1.4). Such evaluation was sometimes based on SC behavior, but mostly it was communicative. What the subjects meant was not that service would be refused but that the nonverbal behavior of the personnel was inadequate: it indicated the lack of interest in their customers, the absence of smiling, and unprofessional tone of voice. However, although these negative reports were more than occasional, sometimes very positive evaluations were made.

Since students who stayed in a hostel met at breakfast with other students, there was small-talk. The other students were of various ethnic origin. The subjects mentioned in particular Germans, Poles, Russians, and Canadians. Since the subjects' (and other foreigners') Czech was limited, these situations created communication problems and English was employed as a means of solving these problems. When Czech could be used and was used by the subject successfully, "gratification" (positive evaluation) was reported. With regard to using English to overcome communication problems, insufficient knowledge to conduct any meaningful conversation was reported by many subjects. The English of other students was noted as being impressive (S4 and S6). On the whole it seemed that little more than very elementary small-talk was used, but this, in itself, was not perceived as a serious problem. It appears that little need was felt to develop elaborate conversation. On the whole, the communicative activity of the subjects in the breakfast situations appeared as restricted.

3. Transfer situations

Transfer situations included walking as well as using public transport. It was expected that they would present hurdles of two kinds: SC problems resulting from the presence of unfamiliar personnel and the use of nonfamiliar surroundings, and COM problems resulting from listening to the Czech language and exposure to Czech advertisements, written notices, etc.

On the whole the picture that emerges from the survey seems to indicate that the subjects did not actively observe Czechs. S10, who was an active subject in many respects, noticed that older women walked faster than in Japan. Otherwise, little attention seems to have been paid to other people walking on the streets.

Transport presented few problems, although one student got on a wrong tram and had to go back and start again. She didn't ask anyone for help, claiming that nobody was around. Another student didn't know where to obtain a ticket, so traveled without one (S2). In general, the students used pamphlets about transport in Prague that were written in English and were sent to them by organizers of their Czech courses.

The subjects not only payed little attention to the SC behavior of other participants in transfer situations; they did not report overhearing Czech to any significant extent, let alone intentionally listening. Similarly, a passive attitude was assumed toward the written environment in the means of transport and on the street. However, S8 noted car and cinema advertisements and S10 reported that she could identify the word "window" within the sentence "don't lean out of the windows" in the tram. She was pleased with herself.

On the whole, situations within the daily life domain did not seem to be noted, evaluated, or actively used for acquisition of interactive competence by the subjects. Incidentally, at least within the range of the studied situations, the subjects did not use the television for language acquisition or for any other purpose.

4.   Service situations

No other service situations than restaurants and shops (supermarkets) were reported. (Hostel meals differ in many respects and have been included above under section 1.1.)

In restaurants both Czech and English were used for reading the menu and for speaking to the waiters. It appears that the menu was basically looked at in English, and the Czech original was only employed for comparison. Subjects whose Czech was advanced complained that in the Czech Republic waiters, although addressed in Czech, often continued using English. However, this practice was confirmed in our data only for one lunch situation. Few waiters or waitresses received positive evaluation. In most cases, as S4 said, "he kindly came when you called him." Only S7's and S10's waiters were consistently kind and smiling. S10 was a very active subject; this fact raises the question whether the waiters' attitude was not partly called forth by the other subject's behavior (possibly by passivity or

indecisiveness, which may have been taken to indicate that no tips would be forthcoming).

However, cashiers in supermarkets were almost uniformly described as frightening (*kowai*) by female subjects. As in the case of meals, this was more a matter of communication of attitudes than unwillingness to serve. These people communicated lack of interest in customers and in their work, and often irritation. On the other hand orientation within the supermarket presented no problem for the subjects, and they could always find what they were looking for.

The management process

How did the subjects report on the management processes in which they participated? The management process commences with a deviation from expectations held by participants ("norms"). It is clear that expectations exist but their establishment separately from the ensuing process is not easy (cf. Kato 2000).

1.   Expectations

In most cases the subjects applied expectations of their own Japanese inter-action system. This is the most common pattern for participants of any culture. For example, the fact that food was evaluated positively was due to the application of Japanese expectations. It may have been delicious by Czech standards but that is not what was meant: it deviated from Japanese standards and it deviated positively.

However, sometimes the expectations held were stricter than the Japanese ones and this resulted in the creation of expectations particular to contact situations (cf. Marriott 1990). For example at least some of the communicative behavior of Czech service personnel, for example counter service in the hostel cafeteria, was judged strictly (S3). Japanese personnel in similar establishments do not always render personalized service accom-panied by smiles and small-talk either. However, more was expected in a contact situation.

Another expectation particular to contact situations is the rule that for-eigners should be addressed in slow, well-articulated speech (so-called foreigner talk). This surfaced in S4's and S6's reports.

The subjects possessed self-created expectations concerning a number of aspects of interaction within Czech Republic. For example, the statement

that "breakfast was better than expected" (S9), "the hostel was better than I thought" (S10), or the suspicion that Asians would be looked at differently from others (S9) show that my subjects measured the reality they encountered against expectations they created themselves or acquired from others. They do not seem to be ad hoc expectations created within the situations concerned. On the other hand, my subjects also possessed negative expectations, such as "Czech service personnel were cold and unfriendly" and subsequently voiced a positive evaluation when these expectations were not met.

The acceptance of Czech norms appeared in statements such as "well, this is how it is in the Czech Republic" (S3). However, it was not very apparent in my data. It probably applied to the use of grammatical competence, but this cannot be captured in an interaction interview. For nongrammatical communicative competence and sociocultural competence, there was no indication that the students would have been making concessions to the expectations common in their own culture.

There were several expectations that could be called "universal," but I propose that it is more exact to call them "widely shared expectations." These include, for example,

 I. all equipment should work satisfactorily (S10),
 II. no emotional tension should be present (S7),
 III. all participants would actively partake in speech (S3, S6, S5),
 IV. important information should be understood (S9), and
 V. language knowledge of participants should be adequate to the situation (S4, S6).

It will be necessary to widen this list through further research. These expectations were probably held because they were Japanese expectations, not because they were shared with the Czech system of behavior. They may be subject to exceptions but such exceptions are not ethnically bound. However, this is not true of some other expectations. For example, S5 questioned the suitability of his being presented, on arrival at his Czech friend's family home, with a dinner consisting of home-made Czech cakes, and juice. This attitude was based on his Japanese norm which normally prescribes an elaborate meal. In this case the Japanese expectation may not have been valid in the Czech system.

2. Noting

At the noting stage of the management process participants take notice of deviations from their expectations. Some of the noted deviations are later

evaluated, but some are not. The present methodology has captured a large number of notings that were evaluated and will be reported in the forthcoming discussion. However, my impression was that overall my subjects did not develop much activity in noting. They were not afraid of their new environment but they did not generate a need to interact.

There was a small number of notings that did not seem to be accompanied by evaluation. S3 noted that a shop attendant was not very active in serving her customers but did not evaluate this. S4 noted that the waiter continued addressing her in English but did not evaluate either. S6 also reported that at check-out from his hotel English was forced on him, but he claimed that he did not evaluate this negatively.

3.   Evaluation

Much evaluation was reported, some spontaneously, some following prompting. There was negative evaluation, resulting in "problems," as well as positive evaluation resulting in "gratifications." There were also neutral evaluations, which might be described as +/− evaluations: S7 said that restaurant service (on one of the occasions) was not perfect but it was "the same as in Japan," and S2 reported that a bus terminal information counter was not up to her expectations but, on prompting, maintained that she considered this normal (*futsuu*). Such neutral evaluations are developmentally important. Normatively speaking, language managers would like many negative as well as positive evaluations to become neutral.

Some speakers (S1) reported monitoring their Czech performance in key situations (e.g. greetings in first encounters), and we can assume that in these cases evaluation also took place.

A general feature of evaluation, in particular in the case of younger subjects, was a sense of communicative uncertainty. S7 said, for instance, that she was still "ill at ease" (*ochitsuite inai*) and "uncertain" (*fuan ga aru*).

(1) Problems (negative evaluations).

Sociocultural problems.   Although some subjects were unenthusiastic about some of their meals, none, except for S4, reported a negative evaluation. S4 said openly that she didn't like Czech food in general and that her lunch was not to her taste. She had her dinner in a Japanese restaurant and liked both the quality and the service (by Czech waiters). S6 didn't like the Czech "Turkish coffee" (which was a favorite drink of S1).

Occasionally, supermarket check-out personnel were perceived not only as impolite (i.e. communicatively incompetent) but also as rough (S2).

Similarly, in S10's case, she met with anger when she made a mistake and took a vegetarian food tray at breakfast and subsequently wanted to exchange it for an ordinary one.

Nongrammatical communication problems.   As mentioned above, service personnel frequently received negative evaluation. This looks like a pre-established evaluation but in my data was documented by actual instances. S3 attributed this, in the cases she reported, to the lack of smiling, and the obviously "mechanical" execution of the service. For S6 his lunch waiter was "frightening." S4 spoke of her attendants' "cold" attitude. In Japan, S3 said, an attendant smiles. However, this may be an overstatement: many Japanese attendants do not smile either. A similar evaluation concerned a Czech teacher who came to meet the students but failed to engage in small-talk (S3). It seems that in view of the lack of their linguistic and sociocultural competence the subjects overemphasized their native expectations concerning nongrammatical communication.

However, no subject reported problems with etiquette of the Czech public, systematic prompting notwithstanding. S4 noted that Czechs behaved better than the Japanese in public, offering their seats to older people on public transport. However, S4 evaluated negatively the fact that she was looked at on the Metro.

Negative evaluations concerned the use of English by some Czech interlocutors. The complaint was that when the subject used Czech, English was returned. This was reported in particular by graduate students, and the researcher received the impression that the matter had already been a stereotyped problem discussed in the group. Muraoka (forthcoming) has recently emphasized that "native networks provide members with idioms and episodes with regard to contact experiences." Such idioms and illustrations may subsequently be employed in actual interaction. There is no doubt that evaluations were shared, but my concern at this stage is what evaluations actually occurred, not where the evaluation criteria derived from. S1 reported three separate cases of being addressed in English within half a day. This reporting no doubt means that his management (negative evaluation) was strong. When he insisted on the use of Czech, it was accepted. Problems such as this concern the "variety-selection" rules of NGC competence.

The subjects evaluated their own speech (the use of "switch-on" rules) as inadequate. For example, S6 said he should have been communicatively more active at his course registration. S5 also reported that he was insufficiently active when thanking Czech people who helped him during his sojourn. Similarly S10 reported that he should have been more active in speaking to his former Czech teacher.

Grammatical competence problems.   It should be noted that none of the subjects directly reported problems of grammatical competence. This should not be taken to mean that no such problems occurred. Rather they were not caught in the grid of the interaction interviews. Indirect indications in my data can be seen in the subjects' reference to the need to take recourse to English, because of lexical and other inadequacies.

(2) Gratifications (positive evaluations).

Sociocultural gratifications.   Food is an item that appears most frequently on the list of gratifications provided by my subjects. S1 was looking forward to ham and "Turkish coffee" at breakfast. S9 thought that food at the Czech MacDonald's was tastier than at the Japanese MacDonald's.

   There were few comments on the outward appearance of the town, and this was perhaps because of the lack of adequate prompting by the researcher. One subject (S10) volunteered the opinion that the town was very different, "each window looked different."

Nongrammatical communicative gratifications.   Not all service personnel were evaluated negatively. The behavior of some was reported as neutral and some was perceived in very positive terms, such as a pension receptionist who not only advanced morning greeting but also initiated small-talk (S1). S2 reported that her lunch time waiter was acting with expedition (*tekipaki*). He did not try to impose English. S9 was pleased when a shop attendant in the town expressed his surprise at her knowledge of Czech.

Grammatical gratifications.   Grammatical gratifications were reported by a number of subjects. They evaluated their competence in Czech positively. S3 was delighted that she could engage in basic Czech conversation with a group of Poles who joined her for dinner at the same table. S4 was pleased with the way she asked for salt.

4.   Adjustment design

My data provided examples of postadjustment (i.e. adjustment that follows the surfacing of a problem) and in-adjustment (where adjustment takes place as the situation proceeds, e.g. using individual English words in non-English discourse), as well as preadjustment (where adjustment precedes the situation itself: as when a total switch to English is implemented as a tool of avoiding problems).

One typical preadjustment design of the subjects was avoidance of interaction. Although this was not directly reported in interviews, it was obvious that the interaction activity of the subjects was reduced or strongly reduced, at least with regard to non-Japanese participants. I have already mentioned that S6 admitted he was not very active when registering for his course, S5 reported that he thought he should have been more active when parting with people who helped him during his stay and S8 was aware that he should have been more communicative in contact with his former teacher.

The strategy mentioned above, not to listen to the speech being produced around or not to read signs available in the streets, is also basically an avoidance strategy.

A way of dealing with problems is to allow target-culture participants to take care of the foreign participant's needs. Such behavior approximates avoidance, but it may not be initiated by the foreign participant. It means that interaction problems are preadjusted before they occur. Much of this occurred within the limited behavior studied. The organizations that accepted the students looked after their luggage (S6), conducted them from one place to another (S3), purchased railway tickets on their behalf (S5), and accompanied them while sightseeing (S8). Of special importance is the fact that SC adjustment led to COM adjustment: there was no need for communication by the students and the inflow of input was of course limited.

Another strategy that was clearly visible in my data was the use of English to compensate for the lack of Czech. Most of my subjects reported that their competence in English at the beginning of their stay in the Czech Republic was better than their competence in Czech. However, even those postgraduates who possessed advanced Czech competence reported that in some areas of vocabulary their English was superior. For others English was an auxiliary language employed in conversation when Czech was inadequate (S3 and others). However, we should not imagine a high degree of competence in the subjects' English. The impression received from the interviews was that the competence of the subjects was rather low. S4 and S6 expressed their amazement at the high level of English of their German friends. S8 said that he felt his English should be much better than it was.

S4 thought that Czechs spoke too fast and suggested an adjustment strategy of slowing down that in fact would be foreigner talk. Foreigner talk was in fact used as an adjustment strategy by native speakers of Czech and reported in my this study by S6, who was addressed in foreigner talk at course registration. He evaluated this way of speaking positively.

In the area of sociocultural gratifications S1 reported that he was looking forward to ham and "Turkish coffee" at breakfast. In this case the

subject was actively looking for these items — an act that corresponds to the adjustment stage in the case of problems (cf. Neustupný 1996).

5.   Adjustment implementation

Adjustment designs sometimes remain unimplemented in the management sequence. No such example was recorded in my data, but this fact may be the consequence of insufficient questioning rather than of the subjects' behavior.

Some other issues

1.   The question of power

The power relationship between Japan and the Czech Republic is not clearly biased toward one of the sides. Although Japan is vastly richer at present, this was not the case at the beginning of the 1960s, and the cultural tradition of the Czech Republic is obvious. Economically the present-day Czech Republic is weak, but its dependence is not on Japan.

Problems connected with the power relationship have not been reported in the present study. The only obvious exception was S9, who suggested that "Asians" are probably attributed by Czechs a lower status than Europeans. This absence of power is significant. Should power exist as a conscious problem, it would most likely have been reported. There is a possibility that reports on the importance of power in contact situations may result from the traditional recall interviews, which presented summaries of the subjects' experience, further molded by their conscious attitudes and social policies. In other words, there is a possibility that power is not actually perceived as often as we might expect. (This is a statement about the *perception* of power and should not be taken as belittling the problem itself.)

However, we should take into account the possibility that even in our data various weaker forms of power relationships were present. This might have been the case in discourse, when the Japanese felt miserable (and possibly humiliated) because of their low level of communicative competence. In such situations the native speaker commands a high degree of power, while the foreign speaker assumes a subordinate position. Women at supermarket check-outs were perceived by many subjects as powerful (frightening) participants. Or, a similar situation may have taken place when the Japanese were struck by the (perceived) superiority of a

European city, as in the case of S10. There may also have been situations in which the superior clothing and financial power of the Japanese were brought to the surface. Perhaps more systematic prompting would bring out more information on such problems even within the bounds of the interaction interview.

2.   *Methodology*

The method of interaction interviews has proved to be more than satisfactory for the purpose of this study. It enabled the researcher to establish facts close to the level of actual behavior. Recording (followed by a follow-up interview) may allow more detailed reporting, but interaction interviews possess the advantage of not disturbing the target situation as it develops. Besides, they can be applied for behavior that is inaccessible to recording technology, and the decision as to which time span to investigate can be taken ex post. On the other hand, some features of the situations may remain unreported. In order to develop the methodology further, it will be necessary to pay special attention to the method of prompting the subjects in order to elicit as much information as possible. Another issue is whether interaction interviews will make it possible in the future to completely dispose of the traditional recall interviews or whether such instruments will be retained for the study of some aspects of language management.

Summary of results

1.   *Range of management*

The range of management in the subjects' situations. The subjects reported a considerable range of management encountered in the foreign setting. Some of this management was management of sociocultural interaction, some of communication, and some of grammatical competence.

2.   *Stages of management*

According to the stereotypical image of contact situations, what matters are "problems," that is, cases where a negative evaluation of a deviation has already been accepted and participants search for solutions. However,

this study confirms that we must pay equal attention to simple noting and evaluation, which may not be followed by an attempt for solutions. Such acts may be equally painful to the participants and significant for further actions.

3.   Negative and positive evaluations

In the course of management, negative evaluations ("problems") were commonly reported. However, positive evaluations ("gratifications") also played a prominent part. It is only the balance of negative and positive evaluation that will allow us to understand the contact situation.

4.   Expectations ("norms")

The expectations used for noting and evaluation were predominantly expectations based on the subjects' native system. However, since some such expectations are "widely shared expectations," they were also valid in the Czech system.

5.   Activity

On the whole, the subjects showed little activity. Avoidance of interaction was widespread.

6.   Adjustment strategies

There were adjustment strategies both to follow problems (negative evaluation) and to follow gratifications (positive evaluation).

7.   Czechs as interaction partners

The picture of the Czechs as interaction partners is not encouraging. There was a strong negative evaluation of service personnel in general and of attendants in supermarkets in particular. However, we should realize that the number and types of personnel met by my subjects were strongly limited — a fact common in contact situations.

8.   Issues of power

The issue of power has not been reported to a significant extent. However, it can be assumed that power relationships did exist.

What to do. Some limited recommendations can be made on the basis of this study.

I.   With regard to Japanese system
   – The question of in what way the subjects can be made more active is paramount.
   – There is a need to attend to English as a tool of international communication. At present, no trend can be seen at Japanese universities to reinforce guidance in English of either undergraduate or postgraduate students.
   – On the other hand, due consideration should be given to competition that can develop between English and other target languages, in our case Czech. It is necessary to find a formula that will develop the relationship into a partnership rather than a competition.

II.   With regard to the Czech Republic
   There is an obvious need to improve communication in the services. This seems to be particularly important in the metropolitan area.

III.   With regard to methodology
   The methodology of prompting in interaction interviews requires urgent attention.

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Notes

2.   This does not imply that all language problems stem from trouble in the transmission of the message ("misunderstanding"). Language has other than communicative functions, such as the symbolic, the networking, etc., and the failure to serve as a symbol or to support social or economic networks also counts as a language problem.

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