

**THE PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE JAPANESE STUDENTS ON
HOMESTAYS AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN GREATER VANCOUVER**

by

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Abstract

Homestay living has long been considered a mainstay of successful English language programs for international students in North America based on the cross-cultural experiential learning theory. However, there is a significant knowledge gap of information on the applicability of this theory in the context of nonwestern students living in North America.

This study investigated the perceptions of young adult Japanese women who chose to live in homestays while studying English in Greater Vancouver. Eight students were selected primarily based on the number of international students living with their host family. The participants were divided into four categories: one student, two student, three student, and four student homestays.

It was found that many of the participants felt that homestays were useful especially in regards to cultural learning and the acquiring of basic life skills needed for life in Greater Vancouver. However, the participants overwhelmingly felt that students need to have more input on the host family selection process, and that the agencies or schools responsible for organizing homestays must take a greater responsibility in ensuring families offer an acceptable level of homestay care. Finally, only two of the eight participants felt that they would recommend studying English in Greater Vancouver without reservation because of the high number of Japanese students in such programs. There was a feeling amongst the participants that a large contingent of other Japanese students makes it too easy to speak Japanese which reduced their opportunities to befriend Canadians and other international students.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

In Japan, English is recognized as the international language of business and travel as well as the route to higher education (Crealock, 1993). In 1995, Burton (1996) estimated that more than 10,000,000 Japanese people were studying conversational English in Japan. In addition, Wordell and Gorsuch (1992) found that most Japanese students began formal English study in junior high school where teaching focused on reading, writing, and translating phrases from English to Japanese with a continual emphasis on grammar. They also discovered high school educators strongly recommended English courses to their students since it was a tested subject on university entrance exams.

Therefore, in order to improve their proficiency, many students have sought private English instruction in "cram schools" or language schools in addition to their school studies (Crealock, 1993). However, the dissatisfaction of many students with their level of spoken English has led to a concentrated effort by the Japanese Ministry of Education to introduce native English speaking teachers into the high school system (Wordell & Gorsuch, 1992).

In addition, many Japanese students and adults have sought to improve their English skills by studying abroad. However, the actual number of Japanese nationals

studying English abroad is difficult to calculate. In 1990, Becker estimated that as many as 60,000 Japanese students were involved in studying English abroad. One of the countries chosen by these students is Canada, where English language courses are offered through colleges, universities, private language institutes, community centers, and continuing education programs organized by local school boards. Many of the above mentioned organizations offer language education for both immigrants and visitors focusing on business, academic, or liberal education (Schmidt, 1991).

In fact, Greater Vancouver is one of the major centers in the lucrative international education field. After examining recent figures, Daniels (1995) estimated that there were approximately 6,000 international students studying in British Columbia with many of these students studying English and attending some form of specialized English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program in the Greater Vancouver area. To date, there are over 70 listed private educational facilities offering English language training in Greater Vancouver (BC Telephone, 1996). Daniels (1995) also reported as a result of examining documents obtained from the British Columbia Center for International Education that a typical foreign student spent \$18,000 per year in British Columbia. This figure implies a \$100 million industry with many secondary economic benefits.

Many of the international students arriving in Greater Vancouver to learn English and Canadian culture are choosing to live in homestays versus living independently in apartments. Most Greater Vancouver English as a Foreign language programs such as at EF International School of English provide homestays as a means of fulfilling their mandate to provide language training and cultural learning for

the international students who desire immersion (EF World, 1996). Few of these 70 listed private educational facilities offering English language training have residences available for their students. However, one notable exception is Canadian International College in North Vancouver.

Homestays are living arrangements where foreign students who are studying English reside with local families. Grove (1989) noted that the host families are to treat the students as members of the family and not as guests. The students' responsibilities usually include cleaning their bedroom, washing their laundry, and helping in the kitchen. In return, the students expect a safe, friendly, living environment where they will have an opportunity to participate as members of a Canadian family.

One reason for the popularity of homestays lies in the potential "richness" of the experience which includes language, social, and personal growth (Hansel, 1993). Many students are advised by schools and sending agencies that "if it's cultural learning you are seeking, the overseas family is the world's greatest classroom" (King & Huff, 1985, p. xx). In other words, the combination of studying abroad and living in a homestay is said to promote the understanding of "deep culture" which illuminates insider knowledge to visitors such as role defined relationships or even jokes (Hansel, 1993).

Many schools coordinate their own homestay programs while the other schools subcontract the responsibility to an independent homestay company such as Vancouver Family Homestay. These individuals are responsible for screening the host families, placing the students, and ideally monitoring the homestay experience.

1.2 Problem

Over time, there have been profound changes in the conception of homestays in respect to the host family. The idea of being a host family originally started in America with youth exchange programs where families were to "dig into their hearts and their pocketbooks to add to their household a new young person needing both emotional and financial support" (King & Huff, 1985, p. xii). This initial conception evolved to the present Greater Vancouver policy where families received approximately \$650 per month per student. The families used this money to pay for added household expenses and as a reimbursement for their participation. This practice worked well for many years because families viewed homestays as a supplement to household income and thus an incentive to become involved. However, their participation was not solely driven by monetary motives since they were also enthusiastic to share their Canadian culture with their students.

Over the years, the common practice of having one student per home developed into having two and then three. Now, some families have as many as six students living together at one time. On the basis of the above figure, these families with six students are earning approximately \$47,000 per year gross. The cost for housing and feeding a student tends to average \$150 per month which means that families with six students may be making a profit of \$37,000 per year. Furthermore, there is wide confusion even upon consulting an accountant on whether this revenue should be declared as income or is to be considered as compensation for room and board of a "household member" which causes some families to not report the

homestay revenue. The end result of these developments is that for some families, it has become more of a business venture rather than a cultural exchange.

Besides the monetary issues and the number of international students, the ethnicity of host families has also altered. Currently, people of all nationalities participate as hosts while in the past mostly white Canadians acted as hosts. One explanation might lie in the increased numbers of students coming to live in Greater Vancouver homestays has required more participating host families. And because Greater Vancouver exhibits cultural diversification and pride in being a multicultural center, families are no longer unicultural in nature. In fact, Ouston (1996) reported that 56 per cent of Vancouver residents speak a language other than English at home according to Vancouver's social planning department.

Also, the increase in the number of students desiring a homestay experience could explain why some host families are being allowed to accept three or more students into their home. In addition, the shortage of families wishing to participate in homestays could be forcing schools and homestay companies to adapt to the Greater Vancouver context by allowing the families to determine how many students can be accommodated versus the school or homestay agency having the final word.

Furthermore, many host families consist of just a mother and child which reflects the changing family structure in society and the need of many families for additional income. As a result, the financial rewards may be enticing families that do not resemble the stereotypical vision of a white nuclear Canadian middle-class family consisting of a mother, father, and several children.

As a result of the changes, two conflicting perceptions exist regarding the conception of homestays: (1) female Japanese students who expect to be part of a 'Canadian' family and (2) schools, homestay placement companies, and host families who view the experience as a way of exhibiting to the students the reality of Greater Vancouver life and gaining financial rewards. Homestays are commonly considered to be effective environments for learning a new language and culture when overseas. However, this assumption has yet to be proven in the Greater Vancouver context where homestay families exhibit unique characteristics, such as accepting many international students, which may affect the learning outcomes of the students.

1.3 Research questions

The researcher interviewed eight participants to explore the perceptions of female Japanese students on the subject of homestays and Canadian culture. The participants were divided into four groups with two students elicited from each category: a one student homestay; a two student homestay; a three student homestay; and a four or more student homestay. The following questions directed the study:

1. How does the number of international students per family impact on female Japanese students' perceptions of homestays and cultural learning?
2. What are female Japanese students' perceptions of Canadian people and culture?

3. What are the impressions of female Japanese students concerning their overall study abroad experience in Greater Vancouver?

1.4 Significance of the study

Due to the growth in this educational sector, it appeared that research was necessary to gain a better understanding of the dynamics between international students and their experiences while abroad because homestays play a large role in impacting on students' experiences. Therefore, this study examined homestay programs organized for international students attending EFL schools.

Specifically, the focus of the study documented female Japanese students' perceptions of homestays and the impact their experiences had on their understanding of Greater Vancouver society. The reason for specifically targeting female Japanese students was the researcher's belief that male and females experience homestays differently. The reason for highlighting Japanese nationals was two fold: one reason was the researcher's background experience and interest in Japan; and the other reason was that many downtown schools such as Westcoast and LSC report Japanese students continue to be one of the predominant nationalities in Greater Vancouver EFL programs.

1.5 Definitions

Since most of these terms have specialized meanings and are relevant to the study, they are defined below.

Caregiver(s)

It is the main person in the host family who interacts and provides care for the foreign student. In most cases it is a female member of the household.

Cross-cultural experiential learning theory

It refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies through a learner's contact with and reflection upon the host society.

Cross-cultural awareness

It refers to the development of, or change in attitudes towards the people and their way of life in a country with a different language, heritage, or history than one's own.

Cultural marginality

It is a feeling of being an outsider that may occur when a person who inhabited a normative position in their home society enters into a new culture.

EFL

It is an acronym for English as a Foreign Language.

ESL

It is an acronym for English as a Second Language.

Greater Vancouver

It refers to a geographic area that encompasses the cities of Vancouver, North Vancouver, Burnaby, and Richmond.

Homestays

It refers to a living arrangement where a foreign student who is studying English resides with a local family.

LSC

It is an acronym for an English language school called Language Studies Canada.

Snowball Sampling/ Network Selection

It refers to a technique that requires each participating student to recommend the next informant for the study.

1.6 Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1 begins by presenting the background of English language study in Japan and Greater Vancouver. Next, the researcher outlines the research problem in the context of Greater Vancouver homestays and female Japanese students. Finally, the significance of the study and some technical terms relevant to the thesis are explained.

In chapter 2, the researcher presents the theoretical framework for this study which is grounded in experiential cross-cultural learning. Next, the researcher provides

a brief account of student expectations, cross-cultural awareness, and homestay programs. Finally, he provides a comprehensive review of earlier empirical studies pertaining to experiential cross-cultural learning and study abroad programs.

In chapter 3, the researcher describes the pilot study and methodology of how the actual study was designed and conducted.

In chapter 4, the researcher presents the results of the data collection process for each of the eight participants profiled individually in a descriptive manner.

In chapter 5, the researcher analyzes the results in relation to the guiding questions which directed the study and discusses the implications for homestay programs dealing with young adult Japanese females. And finally, taking into account the limitations of the study, some recommendations for further research are presented.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

2.1 Theoretical framework

Cross-cultural experiential learning theory is the model that framed this research since it addresses the learning of culture in a study abroad setting. This theory presents a strong argument for the kind of conditions necessary for this type of learning. By using this theory, the researcher's purpose is to discover whether homestay programs in Greater Vancouver are creating the needed conditions for cultural learning and if so, what impact it has on female Japanese students' perceptions of Greater Vancouver.

Neff (1981) explained the importance of cultural immersion in cross-cultural experiential learning. He wrote:

Cross-cultural experiential learning can be defined as the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and competencies through a learner's contact with and reflection upon the direct realities of a host society....Cross-cultural experiential education is preeminently integrative in nature. The student connects with the host culture at all levels of his being. Such programs offer opportunities for the acquisition of factual knowledge, for synthesizing data, determining patterns of meaning, developing powers of independent observation, and for the application of knowledge and understanding to the immediate situations at hand. At the same

time, the student is provided opportunities for greater self-confidence, awareness, and understanding of his or her own culture and values; a corresponding potential for the development of personal maturity and capacities in the learning process itself. (p. 3)

Homestays are organized around the perception that they are an effective way to learn about the host culture. The Alberta Ministry of Education (1987) effectively defined the word 'culture' and its significance in a society.

Culture is defined as a complex of dynamic phenomena which predict, in the most general terms, how people normally interact with others and how they relate to their environment. Culture is largely acquired behavior; from an early age children learn a wealth of cues, signs, and symbols that govern appropriate behavior in their culture. Because all members of a society share the same symbols to some degree, individual members are often unaware of the profound influence culture has on everyday life. Not only are language, history, institutions, laws, religion, and folklore part of a culture, but also subtleties such as greeting, leave-takings and behavior patterns pertaining to authority and decorum tend to be culturally determined. In sum, culture pervades all verbal and non-verbal communication as well as every aspect of interpersonal relationships. Today, it is generally accepted that culture embraces all aspects of human life. (cited in Crealock, 1993, p. 14)

Goodwin and Nacht (1988) identified 10 educational and social goals as well as potential accomplishments used to justify various study abroad programs. These objectives were:

- to create "cultured" citizens and instill certain cultural attributes in young people of a particular social class;
- to broaden the intellectual elite;
- to foster personal growth through exposure to a foreign environment;
- to fulfill a distinctive institutional mission, such as religious institutions;
- to explore family roots;
- to master a foreign language;
- to study a specialized subject matter;
- to gain self-insight;
- to learn from others, and
- to improve international relations.

In addition, Hansel (1993) specified nine stages of an adjustment cycle in cross-cultural study abroad experiences. These were (a) preparation, (b) arrival, (c) settling in, (d) deepening the relationship, (e) culture shock, (f) the holidays, (g) culture learning, (h) predeparture, and (i) readjustment. These stages of experience were relatively standard for all students but varied in terms of depth in which each stage occurred.

2.1.1 Benefits to students

Gudykunst, Hammer, and Wiseman (1977) hypothesized that within this new cultural environment, students actually developed a third cultural perspective different from their home and host cultures. This perspective was an intermediary point of view that consisted of

open mindedness towards new ideas and experiences, the ability to empathize with people from other cultures, accuracy in perceiving differences and similarities between the sojourner's own culture and the host culture, being non-judgmental, being astute, non-critical observers in their own and other people's behavior, the ability to establish meaningful relationships with people in the host culture, and being less ethnocentric. (p. 384)

Furthermore, Hansel and Grove (1984) argued that cultural immersion accelerated learning and the growth of competence in students. As students were exposed to new ways of life, their physical senses were constantly discovering new information and stimulating the brain. This arousal led to an increase in learning and memory. Once students gained knowledge about the host culture and became familiar with the new lifestyle, they become more competent in living in the new culture which increased their self-confidence. This experience created a positive attitude towards learning.

Another benefit mentioned by Hansel and Grove (1984) was that students gained competence through making decisions and solving problems. They were confronted with a variety of options and solutions from which they were able to make wise and educated decisions. Being outsiders in the host culture, students were in an ideal position to learn through observation since they were able to observe what was unnoticeable to cultural insiders.

Finally, Hansel (1993) believed that students benefited in three ways from a study abroad experience: (a) their fluency in the foreign language improved through the constant need to communicate with the host family; (b) students came to understand the significance of certain ways of saying things and of different behaviors which helped them make sense of jokes and role-defined relationships; and (c) students experienced and learned how another culture perceived and responded to life which helped them gain a better understanding of their own culture and outlook on life.

2.1.2 Conditions for effective learning

Many of these conditions could be described as cultural marginality. Musgrove (1977) defined marginality as

change from a former position which was accepted as self-evident and normal, which was taken for granted, and presented itself as not in need of further analysis. Change to a marginal position brings into question three basic

ingredients of reality: time, typicality, and preconstituted (recipe) knowledge. Marginal situations, at least when first encountered, make time, types, and recipes problematic. (p. 7)

This condition placed people in a standpoint from which they learned about a culture partly from the perspective of an outsider and partly from the perspective of an insider. Through their relations with people of a host culture, students gained insight of the insider's view of the host culture as well as an outsider's view of their home culture. This process allowed the student to gain insight on both cultures including the abstract concept of culture itself.

Pearson (1981) in reviewing several studies of experiential cross-cultural programs noted that for cross-cultural experiential learning to be effective, some attempts to coordinate the situation were required, or the results would be erratic. For example, some people might resist the experience and therefore reinforce their misconceptions. They could even develop an animosity towards the culture that they inhabited (cited in Crealock, 1993).

Bennett (1988) applied the work of Kolb (1984) to the experiences of students who studied abroad and pointed out that learning and development were a transaction between the person and the environment.

The sojourner needs to learn-to-learn outside the classroom, outside the teacher's directions, from galleries, from architecture, from host families, from train rides, from marketplaces. Every context abroad is a potential teacher,

every moment an opportunity. To access this education, learners need a variety of skills and attitudes. (cited in Crealock, 1993, p. 11)

By placing students in a foreign environment in which they were ignorant of social, cultural, and linguistic meanings, cross-cultural experiential learning compelled students to confront and critically reflect on their own cultural values and social meanings. This stressful process gave students new tools for learning and reflection and placed them in challenging learning environments in which they solved problems in order to function. Kauffman (1992) believed this environment was ideal for cultural learning as reflected in the quote, "change in individuals occurs in periods of discontinuity, displacement, and disjunction. New insights and revelations occur at points of disjunction, not in situations of equilibrium" (p. 124).

There are a number of optimum conditions for effective cross-cultural experiential learning. First, students should be placed into challenging situations within a network of support. Michael Paige (1993) described cross-cultural education as psychologically challenging, both as a function of its content and as well as its pedagogy. He described a number of conditions that increased the psychological intensity of cross-cultural experiences. These included:

- a high degree of cultural difference between the sojourner's home and host culture;
- a high degree to which the student negatively evaluated cultural differences;
- a high degree of ethnocentricity on the part of the student;

- a high degree of ethnocentric behavior on the part of the host culture;
- a high degree of racism, sexism, or other prejudice in the host culture;
- low language skills on the part of the student;
- a high degree to which language ability is essential to functioning in the host culture;
- a high degree of immersion on the part of the student in the host culture;
- little access of students to their own culture group;
- little prior, in-depth cross-cultural experience on the part of the student;
- unrealistic student expectations of the host culture;
- being physically different from members of the host culture and feeling highly visible;
- feeling on the part of the student that part of his or her identity is invisible to the host culture;
- feeling on the part of the student disrespect or undeserved recognition from the host culture; and
- a low degree of power or control over cross-cultural situations.

2.2 Student expectations

Expectations represent factual presuppositions about certain situations and the outcome of various activities. In second language learning, student's expectations about studying in another country can be related to many factors such as the anticipated rate of success in acquiring second language competence, experiencing a

new lifestyle, participating in cultural immersion, or finding many recreational opportunities. Brislin (1981) stated that “unrealistic expectations can bring disappointment and an aggravation of problems” (p. 162). However, expectations could be altered by either the learners themselves or by external instructional activities.

In addition, homestay students usually have some perceptions of Canada before they arrive, but these ideas may change with first hand exposure to the language and culture. Saywell (1988) questioned 989 Japanese university students (of which only 32 had actually visited Canada) about Canada. While 30 percent judged their knowledge of the United States and Great Britain to be good, only 10 percent believed their knowledge of Canada was good and over 50 percent believed it was poor. One third of the students stated that where they had learned the most about Canada was in school. Yet an astounding 47 percent said they had spent less than one hour studying Canada throughout high school. The material studied was almost exclusively geographic and economically related while other Canadian topics were not covered (cited in Crealock, 1993).

2.3 Cross-cultural awareness

The immersion nature of the homestay experience means that students cannot avoid coming into contact with the local culture. This contact led to a process of adaptation leading to cross-cultural awareness. Damen (1987) defined cross-cultural awareness as an understanding of similarities and differences in cultural patterns of people from another culture. She equated Harvey's (1987) four levels of acculturation

with cross-cultural awareness. Level one was an awareness of very visible cultural traits that were superficially interpreted as exotic or bizarre and led to stereotyping on the part of the learner. As experience with the culture increased and culture shock was experienced, the learner moved to level two, an awareness of more significant and subtle expressions of culture. When frustrated with the inability to function normally and faced with contrasts to one's own culture that might seem irrational, the learner could experience conflict. But, if the learner had positive attitudes and the opportunity to establish new cultural patterns for adapting to the frustrations in level two, the learner moved to level three. Level three was marked by an awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrasted markedly with one's own but were understood cognitively. Now, the learner accepted the cultural event as alternative, not wrong behavior. Awareness of the insider's point of view came through an analysis which led to understanding. This third phase was associated with total immersion and becoming bicultural. In the final stage, the learner understood how members of the target culture felt and now felt like an insider. Throughout the acculturation process learners moved between levels, returning to level two when new experiences were introduced and then to the higher levels.

2.4 Homestay programs

Morgan (1975) believed homestay programs could learn from the experiences of universities and other agencies who have sent people abroad for learning.

Administrators could place priority on providing pre-, during, and post-encounter opportunities to maximize the valued outcomes, and to help students develop the ability to establish meaningful relationships with other persons. These experiences should be available before the student leaves his own culture and continued as the more in-depth cultural encounter occurs in the host country. Basically it is helping the person acquire cross-cultural and inter-personal sensitivity. (p. 212)

Knowledge of the culture of the students and how it contrasts with that of the host country will help the administering agency provide a successful program. It must accept responsibility for the smooth operation of the homestay at all times for all students. Morgan (1975) further believed that individual students could not control all aspects of their experience.

The overall success or failure of study abroad programs does not rest with the students. In fact, probably very little of it rests with them since they are often not able to understand the implications of the cultural encounter and their own adaptation of this encounter. Administrators of these programs must possess, or at least endeavor to acquire this expertise in understanding the process. (p. 214-5)

The coordinating agency in a homestay program provides the framework within which learners will interact in their host environment. Abrams (1981) noted the

importance of finding suitable host families with good intentions and attitudes as well as a willingness to share the host language and culture. Ironically, the more often a good family was used, the less typical it became of its culture because of its heightened awareness of other cultures. There were also financial matters and policies concerning responsibility and student behavior to consider. After the students were placed, the administrator had to deal with the inevitable mismatches (cited in Crealock, 1993).

In turn, students must be prepared by the agency for their experience. Knowledge of one's own culture, of one's host culture, as well as of verbal and nonverbal patterns of communication in the host culture are valuable skills for students planning to live overseas. Abrams(1981) recommended developing a study abroad program that stressed student knowledge of their own culture and the target culture as well as awareness of language differences. Study abroad programs benefited from a well-planned structure with emphasis on experiential learning; careful preparation of leaders, participants, and resource people; learning beyond what could be achieved in the home country; and encouraging maximum contact with new social environments. Programs should not exploit members of the host culture; however, they should further international linkages through relationships, competent leadership, student interactions with the host society, integration of experiences with academics, provisions for reflective analysis, and intellectual examination of cross-cultural experiences. As well, provisions should be made for the consolidation of learning upon reentry to the home country and the integration of further education. Administrators must be involved in the homestay process both before and after the students' arrival in

the host country as well as during the experience. Equally important, administrators should allow for follow-up procedures in the home country (cited in Crealock, 1993).

2.5 Studies related to study abroad programs

There has been significant research on study abroad programs such as Americans or Canadians entering a new culture as part of a youth exchange or college semester abroad program. These studies provide an understanding of the process of cross-cultural experiential learning that can occur in cultural immersion. The studies by Hansel and Grove (1986) and Schmidt (1991) are particularly pertinent since they present ideas that are further explored in this study.

However, only recently has the research targeted foreign students coming to North America to learn English in specialized nonacademic programs as shown in the studies by Schmidt (1991) and Crealock (1993). As a result, this study adds to this new research focus since these studies all reveal the importance of cultural learning for Japanese students and the need for greater attention to homestay programming.

2.5.1 Studies of North American participants

Hansel and Grove (1986) studied the effects of cross-cultural experiential learning of American students resulting from a homestay in a host culture. In their questionnaire, designed largely by students, experimental and control groups rated themselves with respect to 17 personal characteristics that had been identified by returnees. The sample consisted of 1000 students who had participated in the AFS study abroad program and 160 nonparticipating students who had intended to study

abroad but did not for various reasons. The 160 students were used as the comparison group from which the participating students could be evaluated. The results of the study showed significant increases in all 17 characteristics for students who studied abroad. These gains were much larger than the gains by students who did not study abroad. The 17 personal characteristics were:

- adaptability;
- awareness and appreciation of home country and culture;
- awareness and appreciation of host country and culture;
- awareness of opportunities;
- critical thinking;
- foreign language appreciation and ability;
- independence and responsibility for self;
- international awareness;
- nonmaterialism;
- understanding of other cultures;
- appreciation of own family;
- communication with others;
- exchange of ideas;
- high standards for personal relationships;
- open-mindedness;

- personal growth and maturity; and
- self-confidence.

Another study which examined the cultural adjustment process of students was conducted by Carlson and Widaman (1988) and took into consideration the possibility of attitude changes. They surveyed 450 students from the University of California who had attended one year of university in Europe and 800 who remained at home. They found that students who had been abroad expressed increased levels of international concerns and cross-cultural interests. After studying abroad, students also viewed their own country more positively but also more critically than did the group who remained at home. The more critical perceptions of students who studied overseas could be the result of increased maturity which students acquired while living abroad independently.

In a slightly different study, Kauffman (1992) interviewed students from three U.S. institutions in an effort to collect case histories of study abroad experiences. From these interviews, he highlighted six case studies that typified the kinds of people participating and their experiences. Through interviews and an extensive review of research in this field, he identified areas in which studying abroad had considerable impact such as expanded international perspectives and personal development. In terms of the development of an international perspective, students showed changes in their perception of host and home cultures and in global understanding. Changes in students' attitudes towards their home culture were apparently inversely related to the

attitudes developed toward the host culture. In terms of personal development, Kauffman (1992) found the following:

Students who can be described as less developmentally mature before they begin their study abroad are more likely to experience a greater magnitude of personal change than those who are more mature. Students who begin at a higher level of maturity are more likely to reach a sophisticated level of international understanding. Also, the less developmentally mature person who has only superficial contact with the host culture exhibits little change in either personal development or international awareness. (p. 91)

He placed the findings of this study in a theoretical framework of transformation. Kauffman viewed living abroad as a powerful environment for self-transformation due to the unfamiliar setting and because it forced a change in the students' network of belonging which allowed them to reshape their self-images.

Another similar study was conducted by Stewart (1994) who investigated how experience transformed student perceptions during youth exchanges again using Mezirow's theory of transformative learning. He collected data from six Canadian high school students during a two-week study project in Guatemala. The data was collected through observations, interviews, and journals. He found that students developed an increased level of international awareness but with minimal personal growth. The short length of the actual international exposure might have contributed to the low personal growth finding.

In 1994, Tuffo performed a related study whereby she researched the process of cross-cultural experiential learning by focusing on the transformation process. She conducted 12 in-depth interviews with U.S. undergraduate students one year after they had returned home from a four-month cultural immersion program in the Third World. Her findings showed that the students expanded their awareness of cross-cultural issues and in some cases achieved personal growth and maturity. She applied Mezirow's transformation theory but found it was an inappropriate model for her young adult participants.

2.5.2 Studies of nonwestern participants

Looking for attitude differences between better and less well adjusted students studying in the United States, Kamal and Maruyama (1990) conducted a study of 227 Arab students from Qatar. The purpose of their study was to establish whether contact variables could distinguish between these two groups of students and whether the type of contact was related to student attitudes. Using a questionnaire, they measured cross-cultural experiences. They found that the exposure to the culture of the host country alone did not promote the development of positive attitudes. Students seemed to benefit more from programmed activities that allowed for building of friendships, frequent socializing, and interaction with Americans. Therefore, Kamal and Maruyama recommended that educational experiences should be designed to include a component relating to the contact theory.

A different perspective on this topic was taken by Schmidt (1991) who explored the factors that contributed to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of Japanese students

while learning English overseas. She surveyed 62 Japanese students studying in a four year postsecondary program at Canadian International College (C.I.C) in North Vancouver, BC. Schmidt then compared the data from bilingual questionnaires with data derived from 20 individual interviews. These participants were randomly selected from the initial 62 Japanese students surveyed. Her findings revealed that the Japanese students' expectations for their study abroad experience were not being actualized. The students expected faster language development and greater contact with Canadians. The students were more interested in social communication and involvement in the larger community than a classroom focus. She interpreted these findings to mean that the Japanese students valued the acquisition of social skills and cultural knowledge as much as their language development. Schmidt, thus, recommended that the C.I.C. should focus their programming efforts on community activities and homestay placements.

Similarly, Crealock (1993) examined how the homestay experience affected aural and oral English language skills, cross-cultural awareness, and personal development of Japanese secondary school students residing in rural Alberta. She interviewed and tested 19 students at the beginning and end of their program. Since the interviews were conducted in both English and Japanese, an interpreter was also present during interviews to facilitate communication when needed. Her results showed that the homestay experience had positive effects on the students' oral and aural language proficiency, cross-cultural awareness, and personal development. The students reported an increased understanding and a more positive attitude towards Canadian culture and lifestyle. However, the students also mentioned a need for more

information and support prior to their departure to help them prepare for their homestay experience.

In summary, the literature review strongly supported the idea that cultural immersion created a fertile environment for cultural learning. Hansel and Grove (1986) studied homestays and the characteristics of cultural learning of American students which provided interesting insights into the dynamics. Also, the studies by Schmidt (1991) and Crealock (1993) both stressed that homestays were key structures in successful EFL programs for Japanese students. These studies promoted homestays as a means for furthering cross-cultural experiential learning.

However, the researchers failed to deal with several key issues that are important in the 1996 Greater Vancouver context. They did not explore the possible effects of multiple student homestays since they treated all homestays as a variable that produced a common experience. In addition, they did not examine Japanese students' perceptions of homestays and the actual cultural learning that occurred separate from their English language development. Finally, all the related empirical studies grouped female and male students together which created a general experience and as a result obscured possible differences that the sexes may have experienced in homestays.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The researcher of this study collected information by interviewing eight female Japanese students to discover how the ethnicity of the main caregiver(s), family composition, and number of international students living in the same homestay, impacted on their cultural learning. The study was exploratory in the sense that the intention was to investigate a little understood phenomena using a survey method (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Surveys are often used when investigating people's attitudes, beliefs, values, demographics, opinions, ideas, and other types of information (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). The research focus and methodology used in this study arose from a pilot study conducted in the fall of 1995 that underscored key themes and improved means for studying female Japanese students' perceptions of homestays.

3.2 Pilot study

The pilot study involved interviews with four female Japanese students studying English in Greater Vancouver. The aim was to test initial assumptions and gauge the students' perceptions and experiences in homestays before conducting the actual study. Two participants were living in a one student homestay and the other two were from homestays with three international students. All the participants were volunteers

recruited through a snowball sampling technique (also called network selection) originating from the Japanese student residing in the researcher's homestay.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) described network selection or snowball sampling as

a strategy in which each successive participant or group is named by a preceding group or individual. The researcher thus collects a selection of respondent groups or individuals on the basis of participant referrals. Network configurations vary. Some may be conceptualized as links in a chain. This occurs most frequently when a respondent or group possessing the attributes required by a researcher suggests as potential respondents an individual or group possessing the same attributes....This strategy is useful in situations where individuals investigated are scattered throughout populations and form no naturally bounded, common groups. Network selection often is the only way that researchers can identify such people....In other situations, groups may be bounded naturally, and informants may serve as access contacts from one group to another. (p. 79-80)

The time commitment of each participant varied since the number of meetings and tasks required varied. For instance, two of the students were met three times for discussions arising from their homestay experiences. These meetings were conducted at the researcher's home in the kitchen. They were also asked to maintain a journal of their homestay life. Thus, these students volunteered a total of six hours to the study.

The other two participants were interviewed only once in a conference room at the Vancouver Public Library for about one hour and did not complete the writing task.

Interview guide questions were created to give the participants and the researcher an outline of the information that would be covered during the interview. This strategy was advocated by Borg and Gall (1989) who felt interview guides made "it possible to obtain the data required to meet the specific objectives of the study and to standardize the situation to some degree" (p. 451). The students were given the questions beforehand in order to reflect on the topics. Also, the students were assured of confidentiality and advised not to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. A copy of the pilot study interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

These interview questions were effective in assessing what factors were important to the participants. Most of the questions were retained or rephrased in the final interview guide while many new questions were added that arose from the students' responses. These responses helped refine the focus of the final interview guide and make it more reflective of the participants' opinions. The following table outlines the changes to the interview questions as a result of student feedback.

Table 1 Modifications of the Interview Schedule

(Numbers Refer to the Pilot Study Interview Questions)

Question No.	Decision
1. What country are you from?	Retained
2. When did you come to Vancouver?	Retained
3. When will you return to Japan?	Retained
4. Does your homestay have more than one international student?	Rephrased
5. Before coming to Canada, what had you heard about homestays?	Retained
6. What do you think about homestays now?	Retained
7. Would you recommend homestays to a friend coming to Vancouver?	Rephrased
8. If yes, would you recommend a family with one international student? Why?	Rephrased
9. Tell me about a good memory from your homestay?	Rejected
10. Tell me about a problem in your homestay?	Rejected
11. When in the day do you usually talk to your homestay family?	Rejected
12. What do you usually talk about with members of your host family?	Rejected
13. Describe a good homestay in your own words.	Rephrased
14. What have you learned from your homestay family?	Retained

Additions based on limitations of the pilot study questions			
• Have you lived or studied outside Japan before? If so, where?			
• What ethnic background is your host family?			
• What language other than English is spoken at your homestay?			
• Does the main caregiver in your host family have an accent?			
• Before coming to Canada, what did you know about Canadians and their culture?			
• Why did you choose to study in Vancouver?			
• In your opinion, is your host family a typical Canadian family? Please give examples.			
• In your opinion, why does your host family accept international students in their home?			
• Has your understanding of Canadian people and culture changed since living here? Please explain.			
• Would you recommend studying English in Vancouver? Why or why not?			
• Can you provide any suggestions on ways to improve homestays for Japanese students?			
Summary:	Retained:	6 questions	Rejected: 4 questions
	Added:	11 questions	Rephrased: 4 questions

One significant outcome arising from the interview questions was the miscommunication occurring between the students and the homestay coordinators regarding what was a homestay. For example, the general practice of the homestay coordinator involved placing students with families who reflected Greater Vancouver's current population which entailed diverse nationalities, divorced women, and single mothers. However, the Japanese students' perceptions of a Canadian family were markedly different from the actual homestay family that the homestay coordinator selected for them. These differing conceptions about Canadians raised the issue of who was a Canadian and what was Canadian culture. The miscommunication proved problematic without consultations before, during, and after the homestay experience.

As a result, several new questions were added that explored the background information about their host family such as ethnicity, family composition, languages spoken at home, and accents. Other questions created due to these differing conceptions of homestays focused on the participants' perceptions of Canadian culture and their image of a 'typical' Canadian family. A copy of the final interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

The need for these additional questions can be seen in the students' comments about their homestay families. Three of the four participants had homestay families where at least one of the caregivers had an accent. This admission was often prefaced with comments such as, "They are nice, but..." For instance, one student commented that she was learning about Polish culture and thus wished she was with a 'Canadian' family. This student wanted the 'typical' family seen on American

television programs who was middle-class, white, and married with children. Perhaps the student did not understand that although the family stressed their Polish culture, they were not necessarily ignoring Canadian customs but rather revealing the importance of maintaining their heritage.

Again the issue of a linguistic accent was central to all the participants which was a valid concern since they were in Canada to learn English. However, from the point of view of a language teacher, certain benefits arise from interacting with people who speak with an accent. This exposure allows the student to hear the language which is commonly heard in the community. This practice might help them increase their skills at understanding English that is accented or nonstandard when interacting with Canadians in various situations. Furthermore, people who have an accent may be more sensitive to students' learning since they have been learners of English as a second language themselves. Nevertheless, this was an important concern of the participants, and therefore, needed to be included as a question.

Another additional question was added at the end of the interview guide in order to give the students a chance to make suggestions on how to improve homestays. It was found in the pilot study that the participants wanted a chance to give advice and make homestays better for future students. It would also allow them an opportunity to add anything else that they might think was relevant to the study.

An unexpected outcome arising from the pilot study was discovering that many of the students viewed homestays with only one international student to be beneficial for language practice but not for cultural learning. They believed that cultural learning was best accomplished through a homestay containing many international students

where they could exchange information about several cultures. This finding was surprising to the researcher's conception of cultural learning since he viewed cultural learning as understanding and participating effectively in the day to day life of a Canadian family. Even though the students were exposed to such experiences, they did not consider them to be valid instances of cultural learning. This finding was an important learning tool as it reinforced to the researcher that even informed assumptions and generalizations about the participants and some of their experiences must be either carefully scrutinized or avoided.

Yet, another interesting finding was the students' lack of agreement on the usefulness of the homestay experience itself. Of the four participants, only one student wanted to remain in her homestay longer. The other students began to feel restricted and often disillusioned with the cost and quality of their homestays. Two participants made comments such as they would not recommend homestays or Greater Vancouver to their friends in Japan. They did not clearly articulate the reason or reasons other than "there are too many Japanese in Vancouver" which the researcher believed was just one aspect of the problem. This finding was significant and one that required further investigation since it was unclear whether the homestay, school, Greater Vancouver society, or a combination of these factors were responsible for their overall disappointment in learning English in Greater Vancouver.

An important limitation of the pilot study was the failure to successfully conduct an observation of a student interacting in her actual homestay. Initially, the researcher did observe one of the participants during dinner with her host family. However, the intrusion created an unnatural setting for all parties involved. Therefore, the

researcher decided that partly due to the reluctance of host families and students to participate in a home observation, it would not be attempted in the final study. The other factor was the length of time needed to reside in the host families' home to observe the student and family before natural behavior would occur was deemed too intrusive. The impact of this decision on the final study was two fold: the researcher was forced to rely solely on student perceptions regarding their homestay experience; and the students were more inclined to participate in the study since it was anonymous and did not disturb their homestay life.

Another limitation of the pilot study arose from the research question itself. The importance of the number of international students per homestay was not as significant to the students as was assumed since they were more concerned about their language and cultural learning. They did not believe that the number of students per homestay was a determining factor in whether they had a positive homestay experience. However, this question was included in the final study because this result could have been a chance finding due to the small sample size.

Finally, the last serious limitation of the pilot study related to research techniques. The data collection method of using interviews, meetings, and journals did not produce markedly richer accounts or insights about homestays than the single interviews. The meetings and journals tended to divert away from their homestay experiences to outside experiences, and while interesting, were beyond the scope of the research.

As a result, the researcher decided to allocate more time and energy towards conducting follow-up interviews to validate transcriptions and interpretations. Each

participant would be met twice by the researcher which would further the researcher's understanding compared to the option of investing the majority of time and resources on a few participants in greater detail. The decision to conduct follow-up meetings was based on the researcher's realization that some of the participants' responses to questions could be interpreted in many ways and thus might need further clarification. Also, all students would be asked to complete a writing task as a means for further testing the validity of the researcher's interpretations arising from the meetings. The two participants in the pilot study worked hard at the writing component and they tended to be very insightful. Therefore, the researcher decided to assign a specific topic to keep them focused, while also giving them the freedom to express themselves in a different medium. These improvements were thus incorporated into the final study as a direct result of understandings originating from the pilot study.

3.3 Sample

The actual study again focused on Japanese students since they represented one of the predominant nationalities of international students studying in English as a Foreign language schools in Greater Vancouver. This statement was reinforced after talking to employees of three prominent downtown language schools (Westcoast, LSC, and Canadian College of English) where 30-35% of their student body consisted of Japanese nationals.

In fact, many of these schools will not allow over 35% of their student body to be of one nationality whether Japanese or Korean. As a result, schools such as Westcoast and LSC said that they had their quota of Japanese students with no

openings for up to six months even though new courses begin every month due to the high volume of student applicants. A further example of the high percentage of Japanese students arriving in Greater Vancouver is reflected by Canadian International College in North Vancouver where an employee reported that their school is 100% Japanese with current enrollment close to 300 students.

Female Japanese students were specifically targeted instead of including both sexes in this study because of the assumption that males and females have markedly different experiences and perceptions of life (Doyle & Paludi, 1991). This is especially true in the Japanese case where gender defined roles and behaviors are very deeply imbedded within the society ("Host Clubs," 1996). Thus, it can be assumed that Japanese women arrive in Greater Vancouver with cultural expectations about society and learning that set them apart from their male counterparts. These expectations then have impact on experiences in their homestay and overall satisfaction with studying English in Greater Vancouver. This point was reinforced numerous times when talking to both male and female Japanese students during the preliminary stage of inquiry into this research area.

Females in their 20's were selected for this study because their age group again represented the main clientele of the EFL programs at schools such as Westcoast, LSC, and Canadian College of English. These women had all made time commitments after completing school or leaving their jobs to study abroad. As a result, most arrived with definite perceptions of the experience they desired since they were actualizing a long held goal. Consequently, it was a rich source of data regarding homestays and cultural learning.

The sample population was not limited to persons from one language school or homestay agency. Instead, the study was open to all students attending language institutes in Vancouver who resided in the municipalities of Vancouver, North Vancouver, Burnaby, or Richmond since these cities tended to be where the majority of homestay participants were located. The result of this policy was that the eight participants in this study attended six different schools.

3.4 Procedure

The main interview site was the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) because it proved to be an excellent meeting area in the pilot study. The students often attended school nearby and visited the library after their language classes which made this area accessible and convenient. In addition, the familiar surroundings provided the students with an element of comfort. The introductions took place in the common area directly in front of the library entrance, and the interview occurred in an open glass conference room located inside the premises. This type of room provided privacy for conversations and the security of not feeling enclosed which was important for ensuring the participants' feelings of being safe and unthreatened. Other locations when the original site was inconvenient for the participants included the cafeteria in the Student Union building at the University of British Columbia and various downtown coffee shops. These sites were not ideal but were chosen when certain circumstances constituted a compromise between the participants and the researcher.

The researcher used a snowball sampling technique, also called network sampling, where each successive participant was named by the preceding informant

(McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). This technique was used for a variety of reasons such as to study participants who were not situated in any one school or under one homestay coordinator. This factor allowed for access to a subculture that crossed between schools and friendships. In this manner, the study attempted to represent a broader range of perceptions than a school based study would produce. This sampling strategy was effectively used in Merry White's (1988) study called The Japanese overseas: Can they go home again?. His rationale for applying this technique was to cross friendships, companies, and socioeconomic groups by utilizing the strong network orientation of Japanese society. This network allowed access to outsiders that were otherwise closed as family and work circles were private in the Japanese society. These justifications closely paralleled the intentions and rationale for using this technique in the present research.

A second reason for using this sampling technique was that it utilized the expertise of the students in determining the next suitable participants. In order to use a sampling that illuminated some of the occurrences in homestays, the student considered the desired criteria determined by the researcher before choosing the next participant. The researcher asked the student to identify two possible participants in case one decided not to participate. The researcher then supplied the last participant with two copies of an initial contact letter, consent form, and interview guide explaining the study. The researcher asked the student to deliver the documentation to the suitable candidates that she had recommended. The first candidate who consented to the interview was introduced to the researcher by one of the former interviewees. The participants' names, addresses, and phone numbers while living in Greater Vancouver

and upon returning to Japan were collected so that the researcher could in the future contact them if necessary. At the end of the data collection, the researcher sent a letter to those participants that were not used in the study apologizing for any inconvenience.

In the event that a student could not find any suitable participants, the researcher instructed her to recommend any available student who was then met but not interviewed. This new student acted as an intermediary who continued the recommendation process in order to maintain the overall integrity of the sampling technique.

To begin the sampling, the researcher asked several acquaintances who had access to the Japanese population to recommend initial participants who met the specified criteria. These acquaintances were people whom the researcher knew through neighborhood contacts, homestay connections, and social relationships. Once recommended, their only role in the study was to facilitate a meeting between the researcher and the initial contact person. As a result, three chains emerged and developed simultaneously which guaranteed access and aided the fulfillment of locating students who met the desired criteria. A total of 12 participants were met while only eight were interviewed and included in the study.

The sample size consisted of eight participants due to manageability. Too many participants might have created an atmosphere of quantity being viewed as 'truth' rather than quality of meanings that several meetings with the same participant produced. Furthermore, the use of a critical sampling of participants facilitated the process of collecting and verifying information with each student.

The participants were interviewed in the summer of 1996 towards the middle or end of their study abroad experience that corresponded with Hansel's (1993) stage of cultural learning or predeparture. This period of their journey allowed them to make informed comments on the topic of homestays and cultural learning. The following is a list of the four different categories of participants with two participants elicited from each category:

- a participant in a host family with one international student
- a participant in a host family with two international students
- a participant in a host family with three international students
- a participant in a host family with four or more international students

In the actual study, in-depth interviews were the primary data collection technique. Marshall and Rossman (1995) emphasized that interviews were useful because they allowed immediate follow-up and clarification by the researcher. However, a couple limitations of the study existed: the interviewer was not able to ask questions that evoked long narratives from participants due to their language abilities; and especially pertinent to this study, some questions were not fully understood by the participants.

The interview followed a semi-structured format with the use of a copy of questions that the participant had reviewed prior to the meeting (refer to Appendix B for the revised interview questions). Providing these questions for perusal was based on the results of the pilot study which revealed that EFL participants required some

structure and felt more comfortable knowing the general topics in advance. Also, the participants were permitted to consult prepared notes during the discussion. In this way, the participants had the opportunity to articulate their thoughts in greater depth and if necessary clarify any points regarding their answers with the researcher.

During the first interview, the interview guide was sometimes temporarily abandoned when the participant found a topic of interest that she believed to be important since the research focus was to gather students' perceptions about the topic and not standardized responses. However, the researcher either in the first or second meeting was able to ensure that all interview questions were discussed. This combination of a semi-structured interview with the flexibility to pursue areas of relevance is a productive method with Japanese participants since it aids in building rapport while providing the safety of structure.

During the interview, the discussion was audio-taped and supplemented with notes. The notes were useful for three reasons:

- in the case of audio-cassette failure,
- making note of nonverbal variables, and
- decreasing the participants' feelings of pressure to answer immediately since the researcher's attention is focused on writing notes after each question.

The notes were written up more thoroughly immediately after the interview in order to recreate a rich description of events and personal thoughts while the audio-taped recordings were transcribed within several days of the interview. Only one student

refused to be audio-taped, and thus basic notes as well as detailed quotations were recorded when possible.

A second meeting was usually planned one week later at which time the participants were asked to verify the authenticity of the transcripts and some of the initial interpretations. As well, the participants were asked to clarify any questions that had emerged which McMillan and Schumacher (1993) felt aided in the clarification of participants' meanings and refining the interviewer's understanding of these meanings.

Offering personal opinions or anecdotes was a delicate issue with Japanese females since they had been socialized to keep their true thoughts to themselves especially as young women. As a result, a major concern was the 'deference effect' (Bernard, 1994) which occurs when participants give the information they think the researcher wants to hear in order not to offend the researcher. No real solution existed other than creating an open environment and asking probing questions that sought clarification of points that exposed this effect.

The participants were asked to complete a written task during the interim period. They recorded their thoughts about the research topic as well as other ideas that may have had significance to the research. Thus, this task provided insightful feedback regarding homestays and cultural learning that acted as a means of verifying the interpretations and patterns extracted from the interview. However, McMillan and Schumacher (1993) noted researchers needed to appreciate that even though they only observed and recorded one instance, for some purposes a single incidence was significant.

Besides assisting in the research, the students also recognized that their participation provided personal benefits. For instance, the students had an opportunity to use the English language skills that they had been acquiring in a real context. In addition, the students were offered an oral language profile and assessment at their last meeting as a reciprocity gesture. Five of the eight participants accepted and appreciated this offer.

The final contact with the participants was arranged by holding a barbecue party for the students who were available to attend. This event was an opportunity for the researcher to keep them informed of some of his initial findings as well as receive informal feedback on their thoughts regarding these findings. This party was not a required component of their participation but they were actively encouraged to attend. As a result, the barbecue was a successful academic and social function with six of the 12 students (four of the eight who were actually studied) involved in the research process in attendance. All the students who were unable to attend were on trips or had relocated to another region of Canada. The party was in the middle of August which unfortunately was a popular time for many students to explore the rest of Canada before the next session in September.

The researcher kept thorough records through a journal, interview notes, and the labeling of all interview tapes. These steps were taken due to the following suggestions by Marshall and Rossman (1995) who asserted that certain studies:

by their nature cannot be replicated because the real world changes. Second, by keeping thorough notes and a journal or log that records each design

decision and the rationale behind it, researchers allow others to inspect their procedure, protocols, and decisions. Finally, by keeping all collected data in well-organized, retrievable form, researchers can make them available easily if the findings are challenged or if another researcher wants to reanalyze the data. (p. 146)

3.5 Data analysis

Marshall (1996) described data analysis as "the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" (p. 111). This task did not only occur at the end of data collection but throughout the research. Even the initial process of transcribing the interview tapes and compiling the interview notes involved careful interpretation.

Organizing the data included thorough readings of the texts and other data. It was at this stage that another English as a Second language educator was asked to review the data independently to see if other meanings emerged. Marshall and Rossman (1995) described the use of an outside person as a "devil's advocate" who was to critically question the researcher's analyses. A further validity check was verifying the transcriptions and any preliminary interpretations during a follow-up meeting with each participant. These two sources of feedback helped ensure that the editing and interpretation of the data was not unduly influenced by the researcher.

The text was continually reviewed to detect if the patterns triggered other meanings and formed other emergent hypotheses. These meanings and ideas were written as memos along side the text. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) noted that

memos helped the researcher move easily from the raw data to a more abstract level while also recording the reflective and concrete process for methodological explication and justification. For ease of reference, the memos were color-coded according to generated categories.

Once some main categories and concepts were deemed acceptable, the data was again analyzed for any other plausible explanations. This process was emphasized by McMillan and Schumacher (1993) who stated that

alternative explanations always exist, but they may not be reasonably supported by the data. A pattern becomes an explanation only when alternative patterns do not offer reasonable explanations central to the research problem. Plausibility is demonstrated by the presentation of the data and the rigor of the analysis. (p. 501)

These explanations were presented and either defended against or accepted which signified the reevaluation of data on a continual basis. This circular process again aided in building validity into the study since the process helped to justify interpretations of the data.

The last part of the analysis consisted of the writing process that perhaps had the greatest impact on the research. Atkinson (1991) supported this contention by stating writing was

crucial to qualitative research because this kind of research rests on description and narration, rather than on the quantification of data. Its aim is to present, not represent, experience; its target is complete accounts, hence it is discursive or lengthy and complex in its discourse. Its goal is to persuade, rather than to validate. (cited in Sherman, 1993, p. 235)

The researchers comments about the interview content was written in third-person in order to clearly differentiate between what was said by participants. The language used to discuss the students' perceptions was also carefully chosen as it had the possibility of influencing the reader's interpretation of the data.

3.6 Ethical implications

One consideration revolved around the issue of asking Japanese participants to provide personal reflections on their living environment and their understandings of Greater Vancouver society. These discussions were personal and had to be treated with care. The participants discussed matters regarding families for whom they often had strong emotional feelings. The students generally did not want to make socially undesirable statements, but these types of honest reflections were essential to the research. Therefore, to ease possible anxiety regarding divulging personal information, the students were constantly assured that they and their host families had complete anonymity.

The participants were made aware at the beginning and end of each meeting that no "best" answer existed, merely "other" answers. Their perceptions of homestays

and Greater Vancouver society were collected to better understand the impact of homestays on students' cultural learning. It was essential that they understood this fact so that they realized their assistance would benefit future students. Japanese students may have a cultural tendency to become uneasy when required to provide critical commentary. The Japanese culture encourages people to hide their true feelings during trying situations to avoid direct confrontation. This defense was the reaction that was carefully breached during the interview process.

The students who participated were rewarded with the opportunity to interact with a native English speaker. Most of the students did not have many chances to interact in a positive relaxed manner with Canadians other than their teachers and host family members. Thus, the interview, follow-up meeting, and writing practice were a positive way for them to achieve the success of having communicated on a one-on-one basis with a native English speaker.

The researcher's involvement for the past ten years with Japanese students as well as living in Japan for three years aided in the understanding of Japanese speech patterns and meanings. This knowledge did not mean that all communication was necessarily interpreted correctly, but it was thoughtfully analyzed based on his background experience. This knowledge was an advantage for the researcher compared to others who might have been less familiar with these language characteristics and cultural nuances.

The overall participation had inherent benefits for the students since as an EFL teacher, the researcher provided them with an informal language assessment and profile if they desired. This document specifically addressed ways for them to continue

their language development upon returning to Japan. The offer was posed during the initial interview, and the assessment was delivered during the final meeting. This gesture was a means of showing appreciation for their assistance with the research.

In summary, this chapter described the pilot study and how it affected the design of the actual study, the sample, the procedures, the data collection process and its analysis, and finally the ethical implications. The next chapter profiles the participants as well as their perceptions of homestays and Canadian culture.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the data is presented in descriptive form. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the students and their homestay families. A profile of each student is provided that includes background information as well as key information arising from the interview transcripts as well as the interview and follow-up meeting notes. The background information ideally gives the reader a more thorough understanding of the student and the homestay context. Presenting the data in this manner promotes the idea that each student and context must be viewed as unique.

The information from the two meetings with each student is accurately described with as few changes as possible to allow readers to make their own interpretation of the data that may lead to some form of transferability between various contexts. However, some data has been altered to facilitate a clearer reading of the results since many of the students' language abilities require improvement.

It must be noted that the flow of the interviews varied depending on the student. Variables that impacted on the interview tended to be their language level and especially their personality. One of the participants (Atsuko) also asked not to be taped which hindered the researcher's ability to capture her comments in their entirety. As a result, some of the student accounts are made up of one word answers while others provided extended answers to many of the researcher's questions.

4.2 Student profiles

4.2.1 One student homestays

Kazuko

Kazuko is from Saitama prefecture which is beside Tokyo. She was a pharmacist in a Tokyo hospital before deciding to visit Canada. She still lives at home in Saitama city with her parents. Kazuko, as seen in her interview, holds strong beliefs that she is not afraid to voice. Upon returning to Japan she will try to find employment as a pharmacist again. She is learning English for travel purposes and for the desire to speak fluently with foreigners.

Kazuko has been in Greater Vancouver for 13 months and plans to return to Japan in October of 1996. She has attended four different schools since her arrival ranging from a post-secondary affiliated language institute to several downtown chain language schools. She has also stayed with five different host families. However, she was asked to discuss her first homestay where she resided for seven months. During this period she attended a chain language school in downtown Vancouver. She commuted from North Vancouver and attended class from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Kazuko was the only international student in the home except for a short two-week period when a French-Canadian also stayed with the family.

Host family characteristics

Her host family consisted of a "father, mother, and grandmother" who were of European descent and "born in Vancouver." The sole language spoken at the home was English and the "accent is very clearly."

Attitude towards Canada and Canadians

Kazuko chose to study in Greater Vancouver because it was "safe and there is many nature" especially compared to Los Angeles where she had studied for one month. She answered "I didn't know" when asked what she knew about Canadians and their culture before coming to Canada but felt she learned a great deal about Canadian culture from her homestay experiences. She states:

Yeah, in Canada manner is very important I think. I set the table knife and fork I mistook the place. My host father said, 'No, no. This way!' I don't think very important....And rude culture. When we are eating dinner, Canadians lift foot on the chair. Bad custom.

Other contentious Canadian behaviors were "elbows on the table" when eating a meal, and people who "burp after dinner."

Attitude towards homestays

Nevertheless, Kazuko views homestays as a "very good idea...because I learned many things." She feels it is also beneficial for other Japanese females in the following ways "Because safe. I think so...Family speak a lot with student. Sometimes teach a word....Teach manners." She was especially pleased that her "host family check my grammar and pronunciation" and taught her to make "Canadian dessert....Peanut butter cookie."

Kazuko believes that her host family accepted international students because "Maybe they [want to] know different culture" and "they have empty room because the children gone."

Desirable number of students in a homestay

Kazuko said two students from different cultures would be a good arrangement while more than two would be undesirable because "the host mother and family don't take care of me a lot." She enjoyed the specialized attention given to her as can be seen in her comment, "My host family take care of me. My host mother wash my clothes and clean my room." At times when visitors come to the house for dinner, she feels "a little bit lonely. Because they are talking fast. If different student came stay there and talked" then she would not feel isolated.

Attitude towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

Kazuko would recommend studying English in Greater Vancouver to friends because "Canadian people is kindness more than American and very safe place to study English." However, she dislikes the fact there are so many Japanese people in Greater Vancouver "I speak a lot of Japanese. I don't need speak English here."

Suggestion(s) for improving homestays

Kazuko feels that host families should make greater efforts to engage students in "Conversation and [to teach them about] culture." She also thinks receiving more information about the homestay family before arriving would be useful since many

female Japanese students quickly become disillusioned with their homestays. She stated, "Most of students don't like homestay. At first student live with host family, but almost [all] student live with alone or share."

Kayo

Kayo is from the Kanto region in Japan. Before coming to Canada she worked as an office worker in a real estate company. Her previous education includes studying at a two year college. Kayo is planning to attend a local business college to study tourism after which she would like to begin her career in tourism in Canada if possible.

Kayo has been in Greater Vancouver for seven months and plans to return in April of 1997. She attends a full-time language program affiliated with a post-secondary institution in Vancouver. Her classes begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. Kayo commutes by bus every morning for 20 minutes and returns home by car with her host mother. Kayo had been alone in the homestay until recently when a Mexican student joined the household. She was asked to talk about the six month period before the second student arrived.

Host family characteristics

Her host family consists of a mother who is Indo-Canadian and speaks "I think clear." Her host mother communicates in English "but sometimes Indian" when she is on the telephone.

Attitude towards Canada and Canadians

Kayo chose to study in Canada because it "has a good quality I heard" and "Because the weather. But I misunderstood. [I thought] Vancouver didn't have lots of rain....Maybe the weather make me happy or depressed." She learned about Canada and Vancouver from "An exchange book." She did not know about Canadian culture upon arriving "Yeah. Before not very much" and was extremely surprised to learn "Here is a lot of immigrants. I was so surprised...but I have heard before but actually I didn't know how many people." However, Kayo stated, "last term I took a Canadian studies [class] so I understand background."

Attitude towards homestays

She had heard homestays were "Sometimes good, but sometimes bad. Depends on person. Yes, one of my friends in Japan studied in Australia so she stayed homestay but I like children but there is a children so sometimes she couldn't study." Kayo thinks homestays are excellent places to learn English. She stated, "One of my host mother's friends said to me, I met her the first I come here and now she said to me your English has improved." Homestays were also useful in learning about host families and their culture, "Indian and Indian-Canadian culture...because when I arrived here my host mother's friends came here from India." When asked if her family was a typical Canadian family she answered: "I don't think so. Because actually according to food we eat rice everyday...Indian food. Curry."

Kayo believes her host mother accepts international students because she "is a little lonely" and enjoys the company of others in her home. Kayo and her host mother

communicate with each other regularly. According to Kayo, "She likes to talk." Kayo believes a good homestay family needs to be "considerate" of the student by listening and trying to understand her as an individual. Kayo states:

I told my host mother that I want to be independent. I'm not so shy so she understands me...we often eat separate dinner so it's often like a share house. Just homestay but like being independent....She is also busy and also I am busy. So it is good.

Desirable number of students in a homestay

When asked if having more than one international student in your homestay was better, she replied:

I think so....Because my experience, my host mother is first time to accept an international student and also my first time to go homestay. So we did not know how to relate. So I think it's easy to relate [when there are more students]....Three is good. I think so.

Attitude towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

Kayo says she would not recommend studying English in Greater Vancouver "because there are a lot of Japanese people here" and it is too easy for them to speak in Japanese. Kayo vowed not to speak Japanese in Vancouver but found this to be a difficult task. She stated, "Actually I have decided not to speak [Japanese] in

Vancouver, Canada. But I have spoke in Japanese." She thinks that avoiding Japanese people is very important and believes her friend's idea of studying English in Germany is good: "One of my friends will go to Deutsch and she will study English in Deutsch. That's one good way."

Suggestion(s) for improving homestays

Her suggestions to make homestays better related to both the student and the family. Kayo thinks that the student should "try to connect with host family and more talking" amongst the host family and the student(s). She "didn't get any information" about her homestay family or about the role of the student in homestays before arriving in Greater Vancouver.

4.2.2 Two student homestays

Yumiko

Yumiko is from the Kanto region in Japan. She grew up in a suburb city outside of Tokyo but before coming to Canada lived alone in an apartment in Tokyo while attending a two year college majoring in English. Her career goal was to be a flight attendant, but since residing in Canada she now desires to be a tour guide for foreign visitors to Japan.

Yumiko has been in Greater Vancouver for four months and plans to return to Japan in April of 1997. She attends a respected language institute that is located on the campus of a post-secondary institution. It takes one hour to commute to class every morning by bus from her home. Her classes are from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Monday to Thursday with Friday classes ending at 12:30 p.m. There is one other international student in the house who is a female from Iran.

Host family characteristics

Yumiko's host family consists of a "father, and mother, they are from Philippines twenty years ago. They have two children...a boy who is 16 and a girl who is 14 years old." When asked if they have an accent, she replied, "No, I don't notice" but she admitted to initially having difficulty understanding the mother's pronunciation in her statement "English pronunciation is a little strange." Filipino is occasionally spoken in the home, but the 16 year old son and the 14 year old daughter "are native speakers, native Canadians, so they cannot speak Filipino" only English.

Attitude towards Canada and Canadians

Yumiko chose to live in Greater Vancouver versus Toronto even though she knew the number of Japanese students in Greater Vancouver was high. She stated:

I heard before coming here, there are a lot of Japanese people studying English and maybe it's not so good for studying or me for improving my English. But Toronto less Japanese people. But winter is terrible. Maybe I not stand the cold.

Originally, she had wanted to study in the United States. She stated:

To tell the truth, actually I really wanted to go to the U.S. to study English at first but my parents didn't allow me. In Japan, it is said that America is very dangerous, not a safety place. My parents told me, 'If I go there, we can't sleep. So please don't go.'

Previously, she had visited Canada as a tourist but was nonetheless "surprised about all the different nationalities in Vancouver. Before coming here, I couldn't imagine so many Asians." Yumiko feels that Canadian culture makes people conservative and "less friendly compared to Americans."

Attitude towards homestays

Yumiko had heard that homestays were "a good chance to talk with Canadian people, [understand] Canadian life and people." She now feels homestays are very difficult for female Japanese students since it is hard for them to fit in or as she said:

It's harder than I expected.... Actually, I want to inquire [decline] many things. Like I don't like this food. On the weekend the family wants to go somewhere with me, or I want to say turn down the volume on the TV.

But when she tries, her host "mother's face is getting sad" and so she now remains quiet. Yumiko and her friends often complain about the lack of freedom in their homestays. For instance, her host family expects a phone call by a certain time if she plans to be away for dinner. She often finds herself in the situation where she shouts

to her friends, "Oh my god, I forgot. It's too late to call." As a result, she plans "to move to apartment after the summer session."

Yumiko thinks it is important for the student to be comfortable enough to voice their opinions while also obeying the house rules. She stated:

Important to try to communicate. I had better say my opinions. Of course I have to care or I have to understand their rules. I have to call or if I go back too late maybe they are sleeping. It's very rude.

When asked if it is important for a homestay family to eat together she answered, "Yeah, but in my case we eat separately." The host father and children "come home very late, are very busy, or don't want to eat." She feels her host family accepts international students in order to have an opportunity to "communicate with another culture. It's a little bit negative but the second is this room is empty so it's a good chance to get money."

Desirable number of students in a homestay

Yumiko believes that she "would be lonely [without another student] because now it's very comfortable because I have a roommate. I can get a lot of chance to talk. Sometimes I ask her for some advice about English." Therefore, she feels two students is best.

Attitude towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

Yumiko is skeptical about recommending Greater Vancouver or homestays to friends. She stated:

Depends on my friend's characteristics, maybe I recommend....There are a lot of Japanese! But if there are a lot of Japanese or not it doesn't matter, it depends on the person. If I really want to study English, I can avoid Japanese people or speaking Japanese....Lots of Japanese downtown and in schools.

Another concern during her account was a revealing comment that has interesting educational implications:

My host mother and father are from Philippines. English pronunciation was a little bit strange. So, for the first time I met her, I can't imagine she speaks English. But more and more I get used to her English pronunciation. And now it's easy to understand.

Suggestion(s) for improving homestays

Her suggestion to improve homestays was to allow students the opportunity "to visit the family once before having to choose them. It would be better." The significance of this comment is readily apparent in the following exchange where she outlines what can happen when a student has no input into the decision process. She thinks her host family is good but admits "at first I was very shocked. So I couldn't

imagine before coming here that my host family didn't speak English fluently. But a lot of students have the same experience as me with their host families."

Yuko

Yuko is also from the Kanto region in Japan. Similar to Yumiko, she also grew up and lived in a suburb of Tokyo. She describes her family life in Japan as traditional. She worked for the last six years in a Tokyo securities company as a secretary. Previous to that, Yuko attended a two year college in Tokyo where she studied English. She is interested in gaining landed immigrant status in Canada if possible. However, if she cannot extend her stay, she has no idea as to what she will do after returning to Japan.

Yuko has been in Greater Vancouver for six months and is able to remain in Canada until January of 1997 at which time her working holiday visa expires. She attends a well known downtown chain language school and commutes from Richmond by bus. The other international student is also Japanese and with whom Yuko speaks Japanese when not interacting with the host family.

Host family characteristics

Yuko's host family consists of a host "mother, father, and two children. Both of them are girls....One is kindergarten and the other one is seven." The parents are of European-Canadian background with no discernible accent: "I think mother's background is Hungarian and father's background is Britain....Mm, I think they are

normal but sometimes mother maybe I couldn't understand what mother said because she could speak four languages. But they are normal."

Attitude towards Canada and Canadians

Yuko chose to come to Canada due to the availability of the "working holiday visa." When asked what did she know about Canada before arriving here, she stated "I don't know Canadian culture" but knew about Canada's weather and popular activities. She likes "winter, [and] winter games" but admitted that she "was scared of the weather. Because in Canada, especially in the winter, it's very chilly. After coming here, I was surprised" since the temperature was not as cold as she had expected. She also thought her personality was more suited to Canada than Australia, "I think I'm a person of Canada not Australia" because she is not interested in "sea sports like diving." Now, Yuko thinks Canadians are very polite and sensitive but "do not tell their exact thoughts while Americans are more direct." She also says "America very dangerous Canada very safe."

Attitude towards homestays

She thinks homestays are a good idea for female Japanese students especially when first arriving. She stated, "It's a good idea to stay with a host family because they teach you everything. For example, how to get on the bus and go somewhere." As a result, homestays provided her "an opportunity to speak English and learn about Canadian culture" while also receiving the skills to live in a new society. She is

positive about her homestay, and stated, "Yes, good experience! Really good experience."

Yuko feels her host family accepts students because they are interested in foreign people and appreciate cultural exchanges. A good homestay family provides the students with an opportunity to practice their "English" and discuss issues such as "about the future, about women, marriage....We really need better understanding about another language and culture."

Desirable number of students in a homestay

Yuko thinks that a one student homestay is best. She stated, "I think one student is better than two. Because if they have two and are both Japanese it is too easy to speak Japanese." Also, "sometimes if one student can speak very well and the other student can't speak very well, maybe the parent speak to the person who can speak English very well."

Attitude towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

When asked if she would recommend studying English in Greater Vancouver she answered, "Yes, no problem" as well as living in a homestay. However, she did have a friend who had a bad experience. She stated, "I think some host families do just want money" with no interest in cultural exchange.

Suggestion(s) for improving homestays

She felt that these "Canadians who don't have understanding of foreign people shouldn't do homestays." Yuko commented that "If I don't say about my homestay to the agency or school, they never ask about homestay." Therefore, no feedback was ever collected from her.

4.2.3 Three student homestays

Hitomi

Hitomi is from Kyoto, Japan. Prior to her visit to Canada, she was a part-time English grammar teacher at a local juku while also working as a receptionist at the Kansai airport. She studied English in England for two months and in the United States for a month. Upon returning to Japan, she will either enter a specialized translator school or attempt to obtain a job in a foreign company located in Tokyo.

Hitomi has been in Greater Vancouver for 18 months not including a five month break when she returned to Japan. She plans to return to Japan in August of 1997. She has been in the same Greater Vancouver homestay for 15 months. Hitomi attended a downtown language school full-time but quit when she graduated from their highest course level. Currently, she has a working-holiday visa and engages in Japanese-English language exchanges with various Canadians throughout the week while also working part-time. There are a total of three international students in the home: two Japanese females and one Korean male.

Host family characteristics

Hitomi's host family consists of a host mother who is Japanese, a "host father [who] was Canadian...two boys...the older one is four and younger one is two." The host mother "spoke Japanese to the Japanese people" which was Hitomi and another female student.

Attitude towards Canada and Canadians

Hitomi chose to study in Canada because "I wanted to get a working holiday visa." She thought Greater Vancouver was a good city. She stated:

Closer to Japan and the climate is much better than Toronto. I knew one person who came to Vancouver and she said Vancouver is an easy place to live....Canada was almost like United States. After I came here, I noticed some differences."

She has learned a great deal about Canadian culture. She noted:

Caucasian-Canadians change their moods so quickly. Japanese people, even they are not so happy, they still try to be nice to other students because it has nothing to do with them. But Canadian people will show their emotion more. So, Japanese girls don't like that.

She offered an interesting example of another cultural point in a story form:

Before I used to be very reserved and I could [not] accept everything they offered. But, my host mother was Japanese and she knew how Japanese behaved and she told me if I want something I have to say 'yes' because Canadian people only offer things once and are wanting you to accept. But Japanese people sometimes offer things and don't want you to accept. So, I learned that I must accept offers if I want something. And, it makes my host family happy if I accept. I learned that from being in the homestay for a long time and not for one or two months.

Hitomi felt that she now understands the underlying philosophy of Canadian life. She stated:

Canada welfare system is completely different way of thinking than Japan's. The Canadian system is based on Christianity and our own way of thinking is based on Buddhism. So, sometimes I don't understand Canadian people's thinking. The way thinking about work or homeless people. When I came here I didn't know why Canadian people give them money. In Japan, we think if you don't work, they don't deserve money. But some of my Canadian friends would give them money and I asked, 'Why do you give them money?' And they said, 'They should know that somebody cares about them even if they are homeless.' And I thought 'Wow' and I thought it was nice.

Attitude towards homestays

Hitomi had stayed in a homestay before and felt that "homestays are a little expensive and some families are not so good." Her host family accepts international students "because the host father came from a big family and likes to have a full house" and also, "They have kids so they thought it was good to have foreign students around." However, she has friends who had bad homestays:

I heard that it's because some host families treat homestays as a business.

Just feed them and ignore them. They are too busy to talk to students.

Sometimes they have dinner together but they didn't want to talk to students.

And sometimes, they don't even make a meal for them. They just put out cereal for them.

A good homestay family treats the international student "like a member of their family." Hitomi further thinks a good host family respects the student's privacy such as "they wouldn't come into my room without knocking." Her friend had a homestay family who "would look in her bed and closet."

Hitomi thinks another good reason to live in a homestay relates to the fact that many female Japanese students haven't acquired appropriate life skills to live independently in Greater Vancouver. She stated:

I heard that some young Japanese girls don't know what to do about anything, such as she thought her TV was broken. But it wasn't broken, the problem was the cable. Or sometimes a strange guy would come with her to her apartment even though she didn't invite him. But if I live with a host family, I can say you can't come. So, he won't follow me.

Desirable number of students in a homestay

She thinks two international students in a homestay is best mainly because in her case "three was a little crowded with the bathroom since we had one bathroom for the students." However, she mentioned that of the three students, the Korean student rarely spoke due to his shyness. She stated, "Actually, we didn't talk with him so much. He didn't like to talk with us." It is important to remember that she has already mentioned that the host mother, and the two Japanese students always spoke Japanese when communicating.

Attitude towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

Hitomi feels certain that she would recommend homestays to friends since her English improved "speaking to the children" and the host parents "taught me how to bake cakes and things...everything I learned about cooking was from my host mother." She thinks Greater Vancouver is a good place to study English "if the student is serious, if you're not serious you don't need to use English." Also, she has been able to meet many people:

There are many different people from other countries and nationalities so I was very surprised. I am very lucky to know many people here that I wouldn't have known if I hadn't lived here especially people from South East Asia...[from] school and on the street.

Suggestion(s) for improving homestays

She felt that the homestay organizing agency or the school should provide more support for students:

I think first of all I would like to suggest to the homestay organizing agency or the school provide more support for students especially if the homestay is bad. Some students put up with a bad homestay family because they don't know what else to do. Or they will just leave the homestay after a month. Sometimes the homestay family breaks the contract and puts two students in one room.

These situations are unacceptable to Hitomi who often told Japanese students to complain. Hitomi thinks that "maybe about 50%" of the students she knows have been in poor homestays which leads to a negative impression. She stated, "Your whole image of Canada becomes bad."

Another suggestion she provided was for the family and student to have more patience with one another. She often hears of many cases of miscommunication that become very negative situations for all parties involved. One example is the following story:

One Japanese girl asked her host mother if she could have friends over and the host mother said, 'You can have a friend over to stay the night.' But the Japanese girl thought that meant she could have other friends over who did not stay the night. So, afterwards the host mother yelled at her, 'You told me a lie!' but the Japanese girl was angry because she didn't tell a lie. It was just a misunderstanding.

Hiroko

Hiroko is from Yokohama, Japan. Before coming to Canada, she was a nurse in a large hospital in her home city. She studied English at a local language school for several years and lived alone in an apartment in Japan. Hiroko's language level is lower in comparison to the other participating students, but she took great care in preparing her responses. She wanted to learn English for traveling purposes and not for use in Japan.

Hiroko has been in Greater Vancouver for six months and plans to return to Japan in October of 1996. She studies at a small language school located on the westside of Vancouver. She lives in east Vancouver and commutes by bus for 40 minutes to her school everyday. She leaves for school at 8:00 a.m. and arrives home at 6:00 p.m. daily. There are "a total of three students" in her homestay, the two other students "are males...one person is Korean" and the other one is "Japanese."

Host family characteristics

Hiroko's host family consists of a "Mother, and father, and six years old son." When asked what is the ethnic background of her host family she replied, "Maybe Germany" and she is uncertain about their accents. She stated, "Maybe accent but they are very fast speakers."

Attitude towards Canada and Canadians

Hiroko had seen "television" shows in Japan about Canada and Vancouver. She was attracted to Greater Vancouver because there "is a lot of nature" versus the United States. She stated, "It is noisy. I don't like there. Cost is expensive." She had heard from her friend in Japan "that Vancouver people were kindly. And Toronto people are not kindly." Reflecting on her previous understanding of Canada, Hiroko was surprised that "Vancouver is such a modern city because of television it showed a lot of nature."

Attitude towards homestays

Hiroko had heard many positive things about homestays through her "English school in Japan." Sadly, Hiroko is not having a positive experience and blames her particular family. She stated, "At first, I think [this] Canadian family is very kindly. And they would take me out. But, they didn't." However, she said she did learn about the differences in child rearing practices between Japan and Canada. For example, "In Japan until six years old children go to bed with their parent. But Canadian children

sleep separately. I was surprised....I'm interested in children. Most of my communication is with the child."

When Hiroko was asked if her host family accepts students strictly for the money, she answered, "Maybe, I think so." Her host mother treats her like a guest and not as a member of the family. She said, "I wanna try to cook but my host mother wouldn't let me....because I am a homestay student." When she asked to cook, the host mother refused "very strongly." Hiroko would like to do more chores because she finds it so dirty in her bathroom but is not allowed: "When I first arrived, I got a list of homestay rules. And the first rule is that host mother cleans the bathroom. But it's still very dirty (Refer to Appendix C for a copy of the house rules)." The host parents "Almost always they go out for dinner" but "would leave food" for the students to heat in the microwave. On the occasions that the host parents eat dinner at home, "they go out after dinner. Husband and wife go for a drive" and left the students alone for the rest of the evening.

All these incidents characterized nonexamples of a good homestay family in Hiroko's opinion. She stated, "It is not good homestay for me." Nevertheless, she still feels homestays can be useful especially "When a Japanese student first comes to Vancouver, she doesn't know how to get around. She can also learn Canadian culture from her homestay."

Desirable number of students in a homestay

She thinks that only "one person should stay in a homestay" because in a larger homestay the more talkative students would receive all the attention as

happened in her case: "I went there first time, I can't talk very much. But two students were used to speak English. The host mother, she talks to them." Hiroko believes "A good homestay is one where the family is kind, outgoing, and they talk to us....Oh, and everyone should eat dinner together."

Attitude towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

Hiroko would recommend studying English in Greater Vancouver to her friends. She stated, "There are many Japanese students...but Vancouver is a good place to learn English." However, she does not recommend studying at a language school. She stated, "Language school is very expensive. She should go to a community center" since it offers better value.

Suggestion(s) for improving homestays

She suggested one way to improve homestays is to allow the student to "first go to look at homestay to see if it's good." She stated that "many Japanese students at my school said their homestay family is good. So many types of families." When asked if she complained to her homestay agency or school, she answered, "No. But I did tell my teacher about my homestay....My teacher told me that my family was good and kindly, but I don't think so."

4.2.4 Four or more student homestays

Atsuko

Atsuko is from Saitama, Japan which is near Tokyo. She was an English language teacher in Tokyo and lived with her parents. Canada was not her first trip abroad since she previously lived in the United States where she completed a degree in Drama. Her language skills are excellent. Atsuko plans to use her English for work purposes as she wishes to pursue an acting career in Shakespearean theater in Japan.

Atsuko has been in Greater Vancouver for 13 months and plans to return to Japan in December of 1996. She is currently on a student visa. She studied at two downtown acting schools but is currently exchanging Japanese instruction for English instruction with several people. Atsuko has a car and commutes from North Vancouver. There are three other international students in her homestay, "one Japanese, one Swiss, and one France....The Swiss student is a boy."

Host family characteristics

Atsuko's host family consists of a "mother and a grown host sister." They are of German descent and speak with "a German accent." She also "speaks German on the phone" with friends and family.

Attitude towards Canada and Canadians

Atsuko chose Canada for several reasons:

One, to obtain a working visa and Canada is more similar to America than Britain or Australia....It is more useful [learning] North American accent than British. But the British accent is more academic....I would not want to study Australian accent.

When asked what she knew about Canada and Canadian culture before arriving here, she answered that "I don't really know anything about Canada." Atsuko now thinks "Canada is more Americanized" than she had imagined. She then qualifies this by saying that Canadians are "more conservative, and more friendlier" than Americans. Atsuko says there are not as many "bums or gangs on the street."

Atsuko also had an interesting observation about Canadian people. She stated, "There are a lot of first generation people here. In America people identify their heritage with American first" versus her homestay family where she feels "it's German style I'm living in."

Attitude towards homestays

Atsuko had lived in a homestay before. She stated, "I lived in a large house in Seattle" so knew what to expect. She thinks she would recommend homestays to a friend because "it provides somebody to take care of my friend" and allows her to practice her English skills. She thinks students "learn English better in a homestay. I know some people who live in apartment and they don't speak English at all."

Atsuko's host mother accepts international students because she has "a big house and has lots of empty rooms to fill" and needs the "income" while also desiring

to "help" international students have a positive experience. In her opinion, a good homestay is one where there is good communication and "the host mother at home so I don't feel lonely. Same age children so that we can share a lot with them."

Since Atsuko had stayed in a homestay before, she compared the living conditions of both homestays:

In Seattle, my host mother insisted I work for her for one hour. It's the family thing. Here my host mother treats me like a guest.... I am lazy. I like to be appreciated and treated like a guest. But it is sad that you are not part of the family. I felt closer to the mother that made me work.

Desirable number of students in a homestay

Atsuko thinks one international student is best. She stated, "Personally, I prefer a one student because I like all the attention on me. But when I first came here, I wanted a roommate" to share experiences with. With four students in the home, Atsuko believes the student who has the lowest language ability never talks:

It's important to have the same language level. In my homestay, we have a Japanese, Swiss, French, and me. The Japanese student is shy and her language level is lower. The better language students, for example the Swiss, take the floor more and speak amongst themselves. We try to include her in the conversation. But I think she didn't learn very much English. I think one is good for learning English.

Attitude towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

Atsuko would not recommend studying English in Greater Vancouver to her friends because "if from Tokyo, here it's too laid back. My friend hated it. It's a big country. So you have to walk a lot. She didn't like that. There's also a lot of rain." As well, she believes with the high number of Japanese students in Greater Vancouver "it's easier to go with Japanese people when you are new here. Japanese people are not independent people."

Suggestion(s) for improving homestays

Atsuko felt that "people who come here need to be educated before coming." Students need to understand "the family situation here, what you do as a family member here" in Canada. She explained her reasoning by saying:

Japanese young people is not to work so they don't do that here. In Japan, the family just lets the children study without expecting them to work. Maybe [some Japanese students are] intimidated by being expected to be part of the family....Here, people are friendlier. In Japan, it doesn't happen. You always have to think about them [the host family] in some way. That did bother me, for example, phoning home if I was going to be late for dinner.

Another suggestion was preventing those host families who merely want to earn money from participating in homestay programs. She stated, "Too many people

who want money do homestays here. Not so positive." When asked if she had any personal contact with the homestay coordinator, she replied, "I answered a questionnaire. I have an agency I can go to."

Aya

Aya is from Saitama prefecture which is just outside of Tokyo. She worked as a showroom salesperson at a large car company while living at home. She also attended a university where she studied Economics. Aya would like to work in the tourism industry upon returning to Japan.

Aya has been in Greater Vancouver for 14 months and plans to return to Japan in October of 1996. She has attended three language schools with the first two being downtown chain language schools. Currently, she attends a well known language institute on Robson Street. She goes to school from 1:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. during the week. She has lived in two homestays; she resided with the first family for three months after which she transferred to her current home where she has been living for 10 months. She was asked to talk about her current homestay which has three other international students, "two Korean boys and one Taiwanese boy."

Host family characteristics

Aya's host family consists of a "mother and son....He's 20 years old." They are of European descent "I heard from England" and speak with no discernible accent "...natural. But she was born here."

Attitude towards Canada and Canadians

Aya's decision to come to Canada was through a process of elimination:

First I am thinking about going to Canada or Australia. But Australia's English is a little bit different. An accent. I prefer natural English so Canadian, American...and also I am afraid of being in the States....I thought people were friendly [in Canada].

Also the language school in which she attended in Japan conveniently had a branch school in Greater Vancouver so she chose this city "I studied English at ...in Japan so....That's why I came here."

Aya feels that she has learned a lot about Canadian culture because her family includes her in special holiday events:

I learned some Canadian culture. I had an opportunity to go to a baby shower party...Christmas parties and at special dinners turkeys...oh I remember Halloween. I made a jack-o-lantern...I wore a costume. An Indian costume lent to me by my host sister. I gave out the candy. It was really fun.

She also came to see the lifestyle and value differences:

I think they have more freedom than Japanese. At first, my first father was working and he would come home at five o'clock. In Japan it's unusual. And

also, my host family is special. My host father makes dinner, lunch, and everything....So, Canadian husband is very good. I should get a Canadian husband! Canadian men are gentlemen. And I like that.

Attitude towards homestays

Aya heard that homestays were good places to "learn Canadian culture and language." She stills thinks this idea is true especially since "it is difficult to meet native people friend so homestay is better" otherwise a student does not have an opportunity to interact with native English speakers. When questioned on whether she has learned more in a homestay than if she were in an apartment, she answered, "I think [I] have a lot of opportunity to speak English than my friends in apartment. I prefer homestay."

A good homestay in her opinion is one where the host family and students have "conversation." She especially enjoys "taking a walk with host mother and dog." The host family should be helpful to the students if they have a problem or with homework. Aya provided an example of this behavior:

If I have a problem, my host family can help me. Before, I lost my wallet in North Vancouver. I lost it at McDonalds. I asked the manager and he couldn't find it. I called my host mother and she came. She asked the manager to look harder. They did, but they couldn't find. I'm very glad [that she tried to help].

Aya's host family accepts students because "of course they want to know about different culture and also they like to take care of people.... And also, they need money....Because their house is big, they have lots of space."

Desirable number of students in a homestay

Aya feels a homestay with three international students is good because "we can learn a lot of words together when another student speaking." When she lived before in a one student homestay, she felt it was too much pressure:

Because at first, I can't speak English very well and also I didn't speak to foreigners I was nervous. I could speak with Japanese friends.... Also my first host mother really like speaking and her speaking gets very fast. And I would just say 'yes, yes.'

Attitude towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

She recommends studying English in Greater Vancouver because "I think it's a very nice place and lots of nature and you can go skiing." However, the family must be prepared to give the students some freedom as "some of my friends can't adapt to living with Canadians."

Suggestion(s) for improving homestays

Aya's suggestion for improving homestays is providing more information about the host family before arriving in Canada. She stated, "I got the information form....But

the information was not enough." Also students should be given input into the decision-making process because often, "students doesn't like family or something."

4.3 Supplemental findings

The interview transcripts as well as the interview and follow-up meeting notes were the sources of data presented in this section. However, there were two other means of collecting data that were utilized by the researcher. The journal writing task assigned to the participants was a means for verifying the reliability of the interview, follow-up meeting, and the researcher's interpretations of the data especially with the participants who were less vocal. The key points dealt with in the writing tasks were the categories of "attitudes towards homestays" and "attitudes towards Canadians and cultural learning" which accurately mirrored the accounts and feelings arising from the interview and follow-up meetings. Thus, the writing task provided an excellent medium for these students to communicate in greater depth and on topics that they valued. The following four examples of participants written comments support this assertion.

Aya's writing assignment emphasized in greater detail how homestays provided a chance to speak and improve her English skills as well as her participation in special Canadian events and customs:

I think homestay is a good way to learn English and Canadian culture. I had a good time with my host family. It's a good experience for me....Homestay gives me opportunity to speak English everyday. It helps to improve my English. Also I can learn Canadian culture from my host family. Last year I was able to have

a Christmas party with my host family and their relatives. Before the Christmas, I went to Squamish to cut a Christmas tree with my host family, their relatives and their friends. We walked on the snow. It was fun. Also I participated my host daughter's baby shower party. It was very interesting. In Japan we don't have it. Then I enjoyed Halloween. I made a jack-o-lantern with host daughter. I wore a costume. Many children came to my host house. I gave candies to children and took pictures, They were wearing cute costume. My host daughter got a lot of candy and snack. She gave me some candy and snack.

During the initial interview, Kayo discussed the need to communicate openly with the host family and form a relationship based on consideration. She also discussed issues on 'immigrants' and ethnicity. These concerns were elaborated upon in greater detail in her journal writing assignment. Kayo wrote:

The most important thing is to communicate with host family. Because sometimes I found some different culture, for instance food and habits. And also we have a different lifestyle. I think it consisted of consideration each other....Actually at first time I felt lonely because my host family (mother, her sister, and her brother-in-law) talked their own language [Hindi]. I couldn't understand not at all. In Canada, there are so many immigrant. So, at that time I felt not so good. I talked by myself. My purpose is to study English. So I said to my host mother, 'I can't understand your own language. So I feel boring.' After that she tried to speak English in front of me. Now my situation is good.

Yumiko also often mentioned 'immigrants' and ethnicity issues during her interview. She also emphasized the need for open communication between all members of the household and expressed reservations about recommending Greater Vancouver as a place to study English. Furthermore, Yumiko had some concerns regarding the quality of English that many homestay students were exposed to since the first language of some caregivers was not English. These themes were reinforced in her journal remarks. Yumiko wrote:

Even though in Vancouver, it is said host family isn't Canadian is natural, most students regard that fact as unusual. In my opinion that is one reason students want to move apartment....Because the purpose of living homestay is learn speaking English as well as appreciate their culture. Some host family don't have perfect pronunciation. However, it is the fact that host family and student [must] cooperate each other is very important. If students want to spend their time comfortably, they should try to make efforts.

In the case of Hiroko's journal writing, she provided the researcher with greater insight into the reasons for her dissatisfaction with her homestay experience. In the journal she produced examples of her troubled relationship with her host parents and her own inability to communicate in English, whereas in the interview her comments were very limited. She wrote:

Host family often go out and then I eat left over meals. I rarely eat dinner with host family. Lunch is not enough for me. I asked host mother and then lunch increased. But everyday lunch is ham sandwich only. I envied my school's student's (homestay) lunch. Host family has many rules. Host mother said fearfully 'Hot water is very very important.' I'm afraid of host mother. Host family is in the habit of watching TV. They talk each other. I have not an opportunity for talking. I can't understand and I am not [sports] fan. So I think I don't care....Then sometimes I try to communicate to family, but I almost [always] stay my room. Finally good things in homestay [is] I have good communication with homestay's child. He talks to me perseveringly.

In summary, the journal writing assignment was an effective means for checking the reliability of the interview transcripts. The participants tended to reinforce and expand upon what they had mentioned in the interview. This tendency was especially useful with the student's who gave short answers in the interview such as Hiroko and Kazuko.

A third source of data collection was a barbecue party organized for the 12 students who were either directly or indirectly involved in the research. The accounts from this event were pertinent to the study. Four of the eight students interviewed attended the barbecue party while the others were away sightseeing. Two of the four participants had left their homestay. Yuko moved because she had completed her studies and had found a job as a live-in nanny, while Yumiko moved because of her displeasure with her homestay experience. In Yumiko's case, this substantiates her

comments documented in the interview and journal assignment regarding her disenchantment with homestays due to poor communication with her host family and their accent.

Yumiko, who now lives in an apartment, expressed enjoyment with her new found freedom versus her homestay experience. She had lived in an apartment while attending university in Japan and was accustomed to the freedom and independence that this type of living environment allowed. However, when Yumiko and the other students were asked if homestays were good for female Japanese students, they all agreed that it was useful for safety, cultural learning, gaining confidence using English, and life skills necessary to live in Greater Vancouver. A number of them added that the homestay period depended on the student and could be as short as one month.

Another point arising from the barbecue discussion was that all the students stated they were happy to be involved in this research as it had been a good experience for them. They were also pleased that someone was interested in their experiences and opinions. This point was reinforced when Yumiko and Yuko, who had left their homestay, mentioned that neither the school nor homestay placement company had inquired about their satisfaction with their homestay. It appears that these students felt that the respective school and homestay placement company had failed to evaluate the host family as well as their own effectiveness as the agency responsible for arranging the housing.

Finally, the researcher was pleased to find that three of the students who attended the party made further contact by phone asking for the phone numbers of some of the other guests. The students were not in need of help from the researcher

but were interested in gaining advice from their peers. When asked about the purpose of the calls, most of these students had questions pertaining to visas, jobs, gaining Canadian residency, and names of 'good' language schools. This shows although the participants expressed a desire to interact with native English speakers, they still have a tendency to seek out their own Japanese peer group.

The fact that most of the students had differing experiences and goals made them a very useful contact that was unavailable through school friendships perhaps due to the constant flux of arriving and departing students within these language schools. Furthermore, most of the students at the party had working holiday visas and intended to search for a job once the summer term ended. Therefore, they were interested in advice from people experiencing similar situations as themselves. Consequently, the students who attended the party used the opportunity to create an informal network of contacts with the other Japanese women which was a positive but unexpected benefit of this research.

Chapter 5

Discussions, Implications, and Recommendations

5.1 Discussions of the study

This was an exploratory investigation into the perceptions of female Japanese students regarding homestays, cultural learning, and their overall satisfaction with studying English in Greater Vancouver. There have been studies focusing on experiential cross-cultural learning and others on homestays. However, the present one is unique in the following respects:

1. The study focused on homestays and not the overall studying abroad experience that has traditionally been used by researchers such as Paige (1993) when studying experiential cross-cultural learning.
2. The study did not try to include language improvement in conjunction with cultural learning like Crealock's (1993) study on homestays. Instead, the researcher built upon her findings that homestays were an important part of a study abroad program. As a result, the researcher focused on the students' perceptions of homestays such as what makes a 'good' homestay, as well as their overall satisfaction with studying English in Greater Vancouver.
3. The survey method employed in this study, allowed the researcher to determine a set criteria of characteristics for participants in the study. These guidelines were implemented because of the realization that homestays are not uniform in

composition or characteristics and thus should not be categorized as a set entity. Therefore, students who lived with one, two, three, and four other students were sought.

4. The participants in this study were recruited through a network sampling strategy (also known as a snowball sampling) which reduced possible researcher bias. This technique allowed the students to be in charge of recruiting the next participant who met the desired profile.
5. The researcher assumed that the interview, clarification meeting, and writing assignment with the eight participants was sufficient to collect data that reflected cross-cultural learning and attitudes towards homestays and Canada.
6. Finally, this study unlike other research decided to target one group of students not only by nationality but gender. This decision was based on the assumption that male and female students have different expectations and experiences when living in homestays.

The next section of this chapter is organized around the six question clusters that were embedded throughout the interview questions. The findings are discussed in relation to patterns and relations that emerged from the study.

5.1.1 Attitudes towards homestays

All participants with the exception of Yumiko (two student homestay) felt homestays were useful for language development and cultural learning. The key variable mentioned by all participants was the need for clear communication. The

students with the most positive homestays all mentioned that they had lots of communication with their main caregiver. This open communication allowed them to achieve their personal objectives such as getting help with homework, discussing Canadian values, negotiating for more independence or privacy within the homestay, and language practice.

While Yumiko (two student homestay) and Hiroko (three student homestay) were disillusioned with their homestays primarily because they had little interaction with the host parent(s). This limited their opportunity to engage in any meaningful cultural learning, language development, or relationship building that is essential when living in close proximity in a house. Many of their concerns could have been easily rectified if there had been an open line of communication with their host families.

Another finding was that six of the eight participants felt that their host families participated in homestays for the cultural exchange component and not merely for monetary benefits. While Hiroko (three student homestay) and Yumiko (two student homestay) to a lesser extent, felt that their families were solely interested in the money.

5.1.2 Desirable number of students per homestay

This category was especially interesting as the results have significant implications. None of the students felt four or more students were a desirable number in a homestay which means there is a consensus on how many students are too many. The students in four or more student homestays all reported having a positive experience but at the same time felt that four students were too many. Only Yuko (two

student homestay) said that the number of students in her present homestay was the most desirable which perhaps reveals human nature of wanting something different (refer to Table 2).

Table 2 Current versus Ideal Number of Students in a Homestay

Name	Current No. of Students	Ideal No. of Students
Kazuko	1	2
Kayo	1	3
Yumiko	2	2
Yuko	2	1
Hitomi	3	2
Hiroko	3	1
Atsuko	4	1
Aya	4	3

In summary: Yuko, Hiroko, and Atsuko thought a one student homestay was best; Yumiko, and Hitomi thought a two student homestay was best; and finally Kayo, and Aya felt that a three student homestay was the most desirable. Obviously each participant has certain needs and expectations of her homestay which might account for the variations. This would imply that there is no 'best' number in a homestay for all students since each person has her own idea based on her own particular expectations.

Some of the justifications for the participants ideal number are insightful and reflect the difficulty in organizing homestays. Most of the participants felt that female Japanese students who are of a low language ability or shy are not well suited to

homestays with more than two students. However, other students felt that there was too much pressure to speak and answer questions when residing in a single student homestay. Therefore, the participants seem to believe that a two student homestay between students of different nationalities can be beneficial to shy or low English language ability female Japanese students.

Finally, the participants who said three students would be the best justified this decision based on the ease of communication when functioning in a group. These students wanted to be part of a group and not the sole focus of the host family during activities or cultural discussions. However, these participants also felt that within a group of three international students they could still be differentiated as an individual within the group.

5.1.3 Suggestions for improving homestays

There were two common suggestions put forth by the participants. Most participants felt more information about the homestay family and their role in the house was needed while they were still in Japan. One student believed that this step would help avoid miscommunication that often leads to negative feelings between the students and the host families. Three participants said that the host families should be instructed to make greater efforts to discuss Canadian customs and values with the student(s).

Another interesting suggestion put forth by three of the participants was for the prospective homestay student to be able to visit the home in order to make an informed decision since the students are aware that there are large variations in

homestay experiences amongst their peers. The logical next step from this interview process would be having a selection of homes for them to visit so that they could then have more of a choice in determining the living environment that best suited their needs such as the size, family composition, or house rules. Or another alternative would be for the students to have a checklist of homestay variables that they can choose such as the desired number of students in the homestay, accents, ethnicity, as well as the usual preferences regarding children, and pets. However, a fundamental variable for half of the participants was the need for privacy and freedom which is difficult to determine with a visit or checklist.

Finally, a different solution put forth by five of the eight participants as the elimination of families that were participating in homestays solely for the money with no interest in the student's needs or experiences. This type of supervision is currently lacking as all the students said neither the school nor the homestay coordinator personally inquired about their homestay. The policy tended to be more "come to us if there is a problem." This policy will only be effective if the students are assertive and willing to pursue the matter through the system. Instead, one participant said that students either put up with it or leave the homestay after a month. When Hiroko (three student homestay) did complain to a teacher the reaction was that the host family was very kind as many students had stayed there before from the school without any complaints.

5.1.4 Attitudes towards Canada and Canadians

This category revealed some interesting results that should be examined closely. First, most of the students emphasized that Canada is safer than the United States. In fact, this safety aspect as well as our working holiday visa relationship with Japan were the primary reasons for the students choosing to study in Canada. This perception is widely held due to two well known shootings of Japanese youths in America in recent years.

Irregardless of the truth of this perception, it is apparent that a major factor in their decision to come to Canada was based on media images. One or two well publicized attacks or deaths of female Japanese students would certainly damage Greater Vancouver's seemingly stable and lucrative English language market.

Regarding Canadian people and culture, there were also some unexpected responses. Kazuko, for example, found that Canadians were rude based on her observations of her host family. Faults such as table manners, and personal hygiene were transferred to Canadian society as a whole. The researcher then saw this tendency in other accounts such as a comment by Hitomi during the interview mentioning that Caucasian-Canadian people are moody compared to Japanese people. She stated:

Many Japanese students say that Caucasian-Canadians change their moods so quickly. Japanese people, even [when] they are not so happy, they still try to be nice to other students because it has nothing to do with them. But, Canadian people will show their emotion more. So, Japanese girls don't like that.

Therefore, it is important to realize that many personal traits of host families are being enlarged and discussed among friends as examples of Canadian culture. Cultural learning does not always manifest itself as educators or Canadians expect. The key is to be aware of the tendency for some students to generalize and to take appropriate steps to ensure students are given a broader perspective on these types of issues.

Three of the eight participants mentioned Greater Vancouver's ethnic diversity when talking about Canadian culture. Two of these students were surprised at the numbers of "immigrants in Vancouver." Upon questioning these "immigrants" were people who were nonwhite. Yumiko in fact, voiced critical comments that everyone on her bus in the morning were Chinese and they do not speak English. There appears to be a significant misunderstanding about Canada's ethnic history that must be properly addressed or this issue could become a further detractor used to not recommend studying in Greater Vancouver.

Finally, most of the other accounts though different from each other in content had a common thread. Almost all the students did not know about Canadian people before arriving in Canada but held many images of America. Thus, Canada and Canadians were defined by the participants in contrast to Americans. Thus, comments ranged from Canadians are more conservative, less direct, more friendly, or less friendly than Americans. Also, Canada has fewer "gangs and bums."

5.1.5 Attitudes towards studying English in Greater Vancouver

One finding was that six of the eight participants complained about the high number of Japanese students in Greater Vancouver. The popularity of Greater

Vancouver with Japanese students and tourists means that restaurants and shops specifically cater to Japanese people and thus Japanese students do not have to use English while in Greater Vancouver. Another related problem is that the Japanese students according to Atsuko tend to befriend each other because of the group mentality in Japanese society which means Japanese becomes the language of communication when interacting with friends.

The constant complaint about the numbers of other Japanese students is very perplexing. On the one hand, it means that Greater Vancouver is a popular destination for students wishing to study English abroad which is good. However, it also means that this very popularity is causing students to hesitate in referring Greater Vancouver to their friends. The researcher gained this sense from the accounts that the participants wished to be in a place where people considered meeting Japanese people as a novelty instead of being treated as just one of many Japanese students. By their own admission, all the participants' friends tended to be other Japanese students. They perhaps subconsciously feel that if there weren't so many other Japanese students then they would be friends with Canadian people as well as the European and Latin American international students.

There is an ominous warning when analyzing the results from the question, "Would you recommend studying English in Vancouver to a friend?" Yuko (two student homestay), Hitomi (three student homestay), and Aya (four student homestay) clearly stated that they would recommend Greater Vancouver to their friends. Kazuko (one

student homestay) and Hiroko (three student homestay) said they would recommend Greater Vancouver but with reservations. While Kayo (one student homestay), Yumiko (two student homestay), and Atsuko (four student homestay) said clearly that they would not recommend studying English in Greater Vancouver. What makes these findings even more important is that six of the eight participants had positive experiences by their own accounts of studying and living in Greater Vancouver.

Therefore, these reservations are coming from individuals who had positive experiences and not students who had a bad homestay experience which as mentioned by Hitomi could be in the 50% range among her female Japanese schoolmates. It is interesting to note that of the two participants who had a negative homestay experience neither would unequivocally recommend studying in Greater Vancouver.

5.1.6 Significance of the host family characteristics

There was an attempt in this research to document if there was a relationship between host family characteristics and student satisfaction. As a result, many interestingly points emerged while not conclusive of any trends, do imply further research is necessary. For example, as one of the two participants who had a negative homestay experience, Yumiko also was one of two students who had a nonwhite host family (Filipino-Canadian). Furthermore, both the students who had a negative homestay experiences were the only participants who stated that there host family had accents.

However, these same two students who had negative experiences were among the four students who lived in a homestay with two parents and children. Thus, family composition appears not to be a pivotal factor in influencing student satisfaction with their homestay as was originally assumed.

5.2 Implications for Greater Vancouver homestay programs

First of all, it must be made clear that the intention of this research was to promote an accurate representation of the participants' perceptions without any claim to represent all female Japanese students' attitudes and homestay experiences. It is to the reader's discretion to judge the transferability of the findings to other contexts such as Japanese students in other Greater Vancouver homestays or other homestay programs located in different cities across North America.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) called this degree of transferability "fittingness" which is defined as the degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts. If Context A and Context B are 'sufficiently' congruent, then working hypotheses from the sending originating context may be applicable in the receiving context" (p. 124).

Fittingness is achieved by thorough descriptions and attention to detail in order that the reader has sufficient information about the context to make an appropriate judgment. Therefore, each participant was individually profiled and treated as a unique case. Each student's name was changed to ensure anonymity while the other details were maintained so that a reader could gain a true image of the participant's history, homestay situation, and perceptions of Canada. Lincoln and Guba (1985) called this appropriate base of information a "thick description."

However, after taking the above mentioned points into account this research does provide some insights and implications for individuals who are involved with homestay programs especially ones that involve female Japanese students.

The participants stated overwhelmingly that there is a need for stricter homestay controls and monitoring. There are too many families participating in homestays for the monetary rewards while ignoring the crucial role they need to play in communicating and educating the students. Schools and homestay agencies must begin to take a more active role.

Some possible ways of dealing with this problem would be providing a handbook that provides examples from former homestay students on "what makes a good homestay?" These personalized accounts may motivate and emphasize the important role the family is undertaking by accepting students. A handbook stating rules such as students must be provided with three meals fails to emphasize that the students expect and deserve more than to be fed.

Other possible control mechanisms might be for the school or homestay placement agency to conduct periodic visits to the homestay and speak both with the students and the main caregiver. Also students who leave homestays after one or two months should be either interviewed or provided with a questionnaire asking about their homestay experience. The homes with high turnover of students should be a signal to the school or homestay placement company that there may be problems.

The stricter homestay controls could then be used to deal with the issue of families housing four or more students as no participants felt this was a desirable arrangement. Furthermore, the study suggests the students' character and language

ability, as well as the nationality mix of students in the homestay must also be more carefully scrutinized to ensure positive experiences. A case in point is that shy female Japanese students with low language ability are not well suited for single or large multiple student homestays. Placement preferably should be in a two student homestay with a nonJapanese international student.

Another implication of this study was that female Japanese students wish to become more active in the placement process. This of course has broad ramifications for the industry. The fact that these students are vocalizing their disenchantment with the traditional process should be a warning for people involved in this educational industry. If the parties involved do not take steps to rectify the situation then governmental measures such as requiring host families to be licensed may be necessary.

An element that appears to concern students is the question of accents of host parents. All the participants in this study who had host parents with accents had negative homestay experiences. The validity of this relationship aside, either the homestay agency or school must reject these families or educate the students on the merit of living with these families. The status quo of not dealing with this concern is not advisable.

Currently, most students fill in a profile of themselves and the type of family with whom they want to live. The homestay placement worker then tries to match a student and family. But supply and demand often means that preferences cannot be accommodated in the Greater Vancouver context. However, even if the students preference for living with a family with children and pets is accommodated these

generalities mask more pressing questions regarding accents, and the number of homestay students expected to be living in the homestay during their stay. By including all the above mentioned issues, the students will be able to make informed decisions. Having the students rank the importance of certain characteristics to them might be more effective. The homestay placement worker then could presumably accommodate some of the preferences which would make the students feel they had real input in the selection process and thus a vested interest in making it work.

In addition, there is also a responsibility on the part of schools in conjunction with the homestay agencies to conduct a more thorough orientation before, during, and after the students homestay experience. Small seminars discussing homestays and cultural awareness might dispel tendencies for students to generalize cultural points learned in their family too broadly. This also would be an excellent vehicle for discussing the dynamic aspects of Greater Vancouver's cultural diversity. Furthermore, these opportunities could be used to discuss strategies for the Japanese students to deal with the large numbers of other Japanese students in Greater Vancouver. These measures might address most of the students' concerns and problems regarding homestays and studying English in Greater Vancouver.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

In this section, suggestions and recommendations are made based on limitations of the study and the implications of the findings.

A possible limitation as well as benefit of this type of survey research was the forced reflection by the participants about homestays, Canadian culture, and their

perceptions of studying English in Greater Vancouver. The participation in the study itself might have caused the students to reflect more deeply on homestays than would naturally occur thus possibly skewing some of their accounts. One means of limiting this potential concern is by including an observational component if possible when conducting future research on homestays. The ability to supplement the students responses with observations of scenes of daily life from within the actual homestay would be ideal. Another improvement whether in conjunction or independent of the observational component would be having the participants keep a detailed daily journal on their homestay life.

Other issues that were not included in this study such as student personality, maturity, as well as the uniqueness of each host family are all factors that could be investigated in greater detail in future research. By categorizing a student who is independent and one who is dependent merely by gender and nationality potentially produces generalized accounts versus studying the perceptions of students who exhibit similar personalities. This is not to say that one type of study has more relevance over the other, but that each produces a different perspective on this relatively unresearched phenomenon.

It seems that students who did not stay in their homestay for an extended period often left due to unfulfilled expectations which might mean that the ones who stayed are living with 'good' host families. This last point could influence the results of this research as the discontented students tended to leave after a month. Therefore, researchers should locate and study students who quickly leave their homestays to document their experiences and perceptions about studying abroad in Canada.

Finally, it is hoped that the findings from this study may serve as base for further investigation into Canadian homestays and cross-cultural experiential learning. A comparative study using the findings from this research versus male Japanese students' perceptions of homestays or even focusing on other nationalities to investigate the similarities across cultures would greatly enhance academic knowledge on the role homestays play in cultural learning and overall student satisfaction with their studying abroad experience.

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Appendices

A Pilot Study Interview Guide

1. What country are you from?
2. When did you come to Vancouver?
3. When will you return to Japan?
4. Does your homestay have more than one international student? If so, how many?
5. Before coming to Canada, what had you heard about homestays?
6. What do you think about homestays now?
7. Would you recommend homestays to a friend coming to Vancouver?
8. If yes, would you recommend a family with one international student or a family with more than one international student? Why?
9. Tell me about a good memory from your homestay?
10. Tell me about a problem in your homestay?
11. When in the day do you usually talk to a member of your host family?
12. What do you usually talk about with members of your host family?
13. Describe a good homestay in your own words.
14. What have you learned from your homestay family?

B Final Interview Guide

General information

1. What country are you from?
2. Have you lived or studied outside Japan before? If so, where?
3. When did you come to Vancouver?
4. When will you return to Japan?
5. Does your homestay have more than one international student? If yes, how many?
6. What ethnic background is your host family?
7. What language other than English is spoken at your homestay?
8. Does the main caregiver in your host family have an accent?

Discussion questions

9. Before coming to Canada, what did you know about Canadians and their culture?
10. Why did you choose to study in Vancouver?
11. Before coming to Canada, what had you heard about homestays?
12. What do you think about homestays now?
13. In your opinion, is your host family a typical Canadian family? Please give examples.
14. In your opinion, why does your host family accept international students in their home?
15. Are homestays a good idea for female Japanese students?
16. What makes a good homestay? Please give examples.
17. Does the number of international students in your homestay improve your study abroad experience? Please explain.
18. Has your understanding of Canadian people and culture changed since living here? Please explain.
19. What have you learned from your homestay family?
20. Would you recommend studying English in Vancouver to a friend? Why or why not?
21. Can you provide any suggestions on ways to improve homestays for Japanese students?

C Sample House Rules

Bedrooms

1. Keep doors closed
2. Keep room tidy
3. Host mother cleans, (dusts, vacuums, changes the sheets) once a week
4. No friends overnight
5. Make sure windows are locked & secure before leaving the house

Bathrooms

1. Downstairs bathroom for the student's use only
2. Keep all toiletries in downstairs bathroom
3. Clean up any water on bathroom floor after showers
4. Keep bathroom clean
5. Let host mother know when you need more toilet paper

Laundry

1. Each student will be assigned 1 day a week for their laundry
2. Use of hot water is to be limited for it is very expensive

Kitchen

1. Breakfast is served between 7 a.m. to 9 a.m.
2. Lunches are packed and made by host mother
3. Dinner is served between 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
4. Let Host mother know if you will not be home for Dinner

Downstairs' Office

1. Wordprocessor may be used (ask first before using)
2. You must buy all your own materials, all office materials are for Host mother's business only.

Living Room

1. Request shows to watch
2. No violent or sexual shows are to be watched in the house while host son is up

VCR Room

1. This room is for video rental use
2. This room is used for host mother's business as well so ask before making plans to rent videos as she may have work to do that night

General House

1. Ask about entertaining friends
2. Makes sure that the house is locked up before leaving. There are 3 doors to check and your bedroom window

3. Turn off lights and appliances when not using them
4. Shoes are not to be worn in the house
5. All long distance calls to be made collect or paid for by the person who is making them
6. Noise level in the house is to be kept low for the respect of anyone sleeping

D Sample Interview Transcript

Date: ...

Name: ...

A: Interviewer

B: Interviewee

A: What country are you from?

B: I'm from Japan.

A: Where in Japan?

B: Saitama, next to Tokyo.

A: You're in a busy part.

B: Yeah.

A: You work in Tokyo?

B: Yes.

A: Have you lived or studied outside of Japan before?

B: No. But I came here last June to study.

A: At ...?

B: My first school is

A: ...! Sure I know ...

B: Then ..., then ..., then ...

A: You did so many schools. Did you like ...

B: Yeah, I think teachers are good. But almost all students are Japanese, it's not good.

A: And ...?

B: Mmm, I think good but I must move from class to class long distance.

A: And ...?

B: Different country students.

A: Swiss and German?

B: Yes. Here mostly Asian students.

A: When will you return to Japan?

B: I will go back to Japan at the end of October.

A: So that's a long time.

B: I went to back to Japan last month

A: Just a holiday?

B: Yeah.

A: Did you... were you homesick for Japan?

B: Not so much.

A: Were you excited to come back to Vancouver?

B: Oh yeah.

A: When you go back in October, will you look for a job in Japan?
 B: Yeah.
 A: Do you have any ideas what you will do?
 B: I hope I'll get a job working at tourist.
 A: Oh, working with tourists?
 B: Yes. But it's hard to get a job.
 A: There are many jobs here in Canada.
 B: Yeah.
 A: Does your homestay have more than one international student?
 B: Yes.
 A: How many students?
 B: Two Korean boys and one Taiwanese boy.
 A: Wow all boys. Why three boys?
 B: I don't know.
 A: Are they younger?
 B: Yes, younger boys.
 A: What ethnic background is your host family.
 B: I heard from England.
 A: Okay, they're English.
 B: Yes.
 A: Describe the composition of your host family such as brother, two sisters...
 B: Aaa... only mother and son.
 A: How old is the son?
 B: He's 20 years old.
 A: He's older.
 B: Yes.
 A: Do you talk to him a lot?
 B: Not so much because he's very busy. But he is very friendly and kindly.
 A: Is he a student?
 B: He's working.
 A: Are languages other than English spoken at your homestay?
 B: No.
 A: Do the Koreans, the two Korean boys, sometimes speak Korean?
 B: Yes.
 A: Yeah, sometimes when there's two people from the same country...
 B: One of the Korean boys lived in North Vancouver, but he had to move and he couldn't find a new place and he came to our house. They are very close friends.
 A: Does the main caregiver, your host mother, in your host family have an accent?
 Does she have an accent do you think?
 B: No, natural. But she was born here.
 A: So she is Canadian born.
 B: Yes.

A: Before coming to Canada, what did you know about Canadians and their culture?

B: Mmm, I didn't know about Canadian culture.

A: Why did you come to Vancouver?

B: I want to learn English. First I'm thinking about going to Canada or Australia. But Australia's English is a little bit different. An accent. I prefer natural English so Canadian, American.

A: So North American accent.

B: Yes, and also I'm afraid of being in the States.

A: So you thought Canada is safer?

B: Yeah.

A: Safer and...

B: I thought people were friendly.

A: Where did you get these ideas from? From school or a book... friends?

B: From... I studied English at ... in Japan so...

A: Okay, right.

B: That's why I came here.

A: One of your teachers was Canadian?

B: No, just Japanese. And also the manager recommended Canada.

A: That's a nice thing to do. Why not Toronto?

B: They didn't have a ... school.

A: So ... has a school in Vancouver, so you came here.

B: Yeah.

A: Before coming to Canada, what had you heard about homestays?

B: I live with a Canadian family and I can learn Canadian culture and language.

A: You heard that from ...?

B: Yeah.

A: ... had a homestay?

B: Yes, but different homestay. North Vancouver. North Vancouver to ... too far so now I live near ...

A: So you changed. So you have had many experiences with homestays. What do you think about homestays now?

B: I think it's good way to study English and Canadian culture and mmm... it's difficult to make a native people friend so homestays is better.

A: So it's a good way to meet Canadians.

B: Yeah.

A: Do you ever meet any of your host brother's friends?

B: Yeah, sometimes his friends visit my house but they are so busy. They come back home, go out...

A: It's a different lifestyle when you are very young.

B: Yeah.

A: In your opinion, is your host family a typical Canadian host family?

B: Yeah.

- A: What do you usually do in your homestay?
- B: Usually uuh... I sometimes take a walk with host mother and dog.
- A: So you go on a nice walk?
- B: Yeah. They have two dogs and one cat. I love it.
- A: In your opinion, why does your host family accept international students into their home?
- B: Oooh. Of course they want to know about different culture and also they like to take care of people.
- A: Oh, okay. So she likes to take care of people.
- B: And also, they need some money.
- A: Okay, money too.
- B: Because their house is big, they have lots of space.
- A: But money is one of many things?
- B: Yes.
- A: Are homestays a good idea for female Japanese students?
- B: I think so.
- A: Why?
- B: If I have a problem, my host family can help me. Before I lost my wallet in North Vancouver. I lost it at McDonalds, I asked the manager and he couldn't find it. I called my host mother and she came. She asked the manager to look harder. They did, but they couldn't find. I'm very glad.
- A: That she tried to help?
- B: Yeah.
- A: That she cares?
- B: Yeah.
- A: Sounds like she is a very nice host mother. Now, your host mother, do you talk to her often? About school...?
- B: Yeah, mostly school and anything. When she cooks dinner.
- A: Do you... does she... when you are talking is it usually just you in the kitchen talking to her or the other students too?
- B: Usually me. But sometimes other students.
- A: Do you like the boys?
- B: Yeah.
- A: Do you sometimes go out with them to Karaoke?
- B: No, not so often.
- A: What makes a good homestay?
- B: Conversation.
- A: Is it important that your host family does activities with you such as sightseeing?
- B: Yeah. Now for me not so important because I have been here a long time. At first, in the beginning it's important.
- A: But some families are better than other families. Do you think? Which do you think is the best? Which do you like the best?
- B: Yes, I think the first family because it is a normal family, mother, and father, and daughter. It's a more normal family.

A: Right.

B: I can learn about family party or... and now only mother and son but they have a lot of students. Now I prefer my current host family.

A: Because it's different, more like a shared house. Not so much like a homestay.

B: Yeah, yeah.

A: You want more freedom.

B: Yeah.

A: Does the number of international students in your homestay improve your study abroad experience?

B: Yeah, it's good.

A: Why?

B: We can learn a lot of words together such as one student speaking...

A: So you are learning together?

B: And host mother and brother and the students all help learning vocabulary.

A: Do you have a little book at dinner for vocabulary words?

B: No, but host mother writes down some words on paper.

A: In your first family, were you... how many students?

B: Usually only me.

A: Was it too much pressure to speak English?

B: Yes because at first I can't speak English very well and also I didn't speak to foreigners I was nervous. I could speak with Japanese friends but now okay.

A: It's tough when you're expected to talk a lot.

B: Also, my first host mother really like speaking and her speaking gets very fast. And I would just say "yes, yes".

A: You just agreed with her without understanding.

B: Yes.

A: Yeah, that's difficult. Has your understanding of Canadian people and culture changed since living here? Please explain.

B: I think I haven't learned so much.

A: It's hard sometimes to know what is Canadian culture.

B: Mmhm.

A: When you think of Canadian culture, what is it?

B: I think they have more freedom than Japanese. At first, my first host father was working and he would come home at five o'clock. In Japan it's unusual. And also, my host family is special. My host father makes dinner, lunch, and everything.

A: What did the mother do?

B: Nothing. But sometimes she does wash and laundry and...

A: Why? Was she sick?

B: She has a problem. She is really fat. She has a problem.

A: That's a little uncommon that a father does all things.

B: So, Canadian husband is very good. I should get a Canadian husband. [said laughingly] Canadian men are gentlemen. And I like that.

A: Holding the door open for you...

B: Yeah.

- A: What have you learned from your homestay family?
 B: I learned some Canadian culture. I had an opportunity to go to a baby shower party.
 A: In Japan you don't have?
 B: No, not really.
 A: Was it fun?
 B: Yeah.
 A: So they include you in family events.
 B: Yeah, and Christmas parties and at special dinners turkeys.
 A: Do you like [turkey]?
 B: Yeah.
 A: Turkey is a good part of North American culture. And pumpkin pie?
 B: Yes, oh I remember Halloween. I made a jack-o-lantern.
 A: Did you dress in a costume ?
 B: Yes. I wore a costume. An Indian costume lent to me by my host sister. I gave out the candy. It was really fun.
 A: Those are good examples of Canadian culture. You will always remember those things.
 B: Yeah.
 A: Describe a typical week in your homestay. When do you speak English?
 B: I go to school from 1:30 to 6:00.
 A: So you come home quite late. Do they wait to have dinner with you?
 B: Yeah, they have dinner around 7:30.
 A: Late! So you have dinner and then tea?
 B: Yeah.
 A: Do the boys stay for tea and talk?
 B: Yeah.
 A: Do any students help clean up? Washing dishes or...
 B: Yeah, a little bit but host mother she want to relax. So when I go to bed she washed dishes. At first I wash dishes but she says not to work hard and just bring and rinse. And usually the boys make the tea.
 A: What type of tea do you make?
 B: Chinese, green tea, and sometimes English tea.
 A: So your host mother is very international.
 B: Yeah.
 A: What language skills do you believe you have acquire in a homestay that you would not have learned in an apartment?
 B: I think have a lot of opportunity to speak English than my friends in apartment. I prefer homestay.
 A: So mostly the language, vocabulary, because you are constantly hearing it.
 B: If I live in apartment, maybe I speak Japanese a lot. It's not good.
 A: I can understand that. Would you recommend studying English in Vancouver to a friend?
 B: Yeah. I think it's very nice place and lots of nature and you can go skiing...

A: So lots of recreational activities.
B: Yeah.
A: Can you provide any suggestion on ways to improve homestays?
B: I think I am comfortable.
A: No problems.
B: Yeah. But some of my friends can't adapt to living with Canadians.
A: Should there be more communication?
B: Yeah.
A: Do you think you should have more information in Japan about homestays?
B: Yeah. But I got the information from ... But the information was not enough. If students doesn't like family or something...
A: They should be moved?
B: Yeah.
A: Do you have any questions for me?
B: No.

E Sample Language Assessment

ORAL LANGUAGE PROFILE

Based on your interview with the researcher, the following describes your oral language skills in the context of speaking about a selected topic, in a semi-formal situation, and on a one-on-one basis.

Strengths

When speaking, you are able to:

- use complete sentences which contribute to your fluency
- use good intonation patterns such as rising and falling intonation
- ask clarifying questions when you are unsure of your speaker's meaning

Areas for improvement

When speaking, pay attention to:

- pluralization
- over self-correcting your speech

Suggested activities

The following are some activities that may assist your current oral language skills.

- Pluralization is a rule you understand but forget to use when speaking. To help you with plurals, try drills. For example, write a list of things you own, i.e.,

I have one cat.	I have two kimonos.
I have one brother.	I have three sisters.
I have one ...	I have five

Practice these sentences out loud and notice the /s/ sound when you read the second column. If possible, practice with a friend.

- Self-correcting your speech shows an awareness of errors which is important in language learning. However, using too many self-corrections can hurt your fluency. Try to find a balance. It's okay to have some errors so that your speech flow is not slowed.

Thank you for participating and good luck with your studies!

Chad Fryer