

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**CRITICAL INCIDENTS AS A TRAINING TOOL FOR FINNISH
EXCHANGE STUDENTS GOING TO THE UNITED STATES**

A Pro Gradu Thesis

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on kokeilla kriittisiin tilanteisiin pohjautuvan materiaalin soveltuvuutta vaihto-oppilaiden lähtövalmennuksen osana. Lähtökohtana tutkimukselle on vaihto-oppilaiden kulttuurikoulutuksen parantaminen ja näin ollen myös tutkimuksen tavoitteet ovat melko käytännönläheiset. Tutkielmassa halutaan kokeilla menetelmää, jossa nuoret eivät olisi vain passiivisia kuuntelijoita, vaan aktiivisia osallistujia.

Tutkielma jakautuu kolmeen vaiheeseen. Ensimmäinen on valmennusmateriaalikokonaisuuden luominen teini-ikäisille suomalaisille nuorille, jotka ovat lähdössä Yhdysvaltoihin vaihto-oppilaksi noin yhdeksitoista kuukaudeksi. Materiaali koostuu kymmenestä kriittisestä tilanteesta, niihin liittyvistä aktivointikysymyksistä sekä erillisestä ohjeesta pienryhmäkeskusteluun. Toinen vaihe on selvittää, pitävätkö tulevat vaihto-oppilaat kriittisiin tilanteisiin pohjautuvaa valmennusosiota kiinnostavana ja hyödyllisenä tulevaa vaihtovuottaan ajatellen. Kolmas vaihe on muokata valmennusmateriaalia osallistujien palautteen pohjalta sellaiseksi, että vaihto-oppilasjärjestö(t) voi sitä valmennuksissaan hyödyntää. Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys perustuu kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän ja koulutuksen sekä kielenkäytön tutkimukseen. Näiden alojen termejä, käsityksiä ja tutkimustuloksia on hyödynnetty tutkimuksen eri vaiheissa.

Valmennusmateriaalia kokeiltiin kahden eri ryhmän kanssa Oulussa ja Jyväskylässä, joissa osallistujia oli yhteensä 21. Työtapoina valmennusosiossa käytettiin pienryhmätyöskentelyä sekä yhteistä loppukeskustelua. Pienryhmäkeskustelut nauhoitettiin ja litteroitiin. Palautetta pyydettiin kyselylomakkeella sekä heti valmennusosion jälkeen että sähköpostikyselyllä noin puoli vuotta sen jälkeen.

Työskentely kriittisten tilanteiden avulla onnistui siinä mielessä, että osallistujat muistivat tilanteita vielä pitkänkin ajan päästä. Osa tilanteista ei välttämättä aukea oppilaille koulutustilanteessa, mutta ne voivat saada uusia merkityksiä, kun oppilas on viettänyt jo jonkin aikaa kohdekulttuurissa. Kuitenkin suurin riski kriittisten tilanteiden käyttämisessä on se, jos osallistujat eivät osaa yleistää spesifejä esimerkkitalanteita, vaan ottavat ne liian kirjaimellisesti tai muokkaavat niiden perusteella liian ahtaita käyttäytymissääntöjä itselleen. Kun tähän asiaan kiinnittää tulevaisuudessa huomiota, voidaan todeta, että valmennus kriittisten tilanteiden avulla sopii nuorille vaihto-oppilaille.

Asiasanat: critical incidents. exchange students. intercultural training.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communication is a trendy word in the international world of today. For some people it is only a distant term used for research, but for some it is more concrete – they see it as inevitable in the modern world. Some people consider it to be something that only others are involved in, yet for some it is something to be tried out personally, preferably surrounded by another culture. Whichever is one's view on the matter, one can nowadays only rarely avoid situations where people from different cultural backgrounds interact. Intercultural communication is thus an inevitable part of all of our lives, a fact that some choose to ignore and some to embrace.

We have all been in situations where things have not gone exactly as we had expected them to. The likelihood of these kinds of situations increases when we are surrounded by a foreign culture, different from our own. There are unfamiliar landscapes, faces, language and behaviour in the new environment so the natural outcome is to make mistakes. One is, after all, most likely quite dazzled by all the new and different. One way to deal with it is to try and go on as before, as in one's own culture. Another, perhaps a more educating way, is to try and see, feel, hear and taste the differences but think of them as just that – different – not better or worse, just different.

Many youngsters in their teens choose to become exchange students for a year. Immersing oneself in the local lifestyle as part of a local family and school is quite a unique experience but it is by no means just a year of fun without any setbacks, just as a year in one's own culture cannot be just fun either. Life has its ups and downs, whether one is at home or on the other side of the world. When going abroad, it is good to be aware of what might be ahead, have realistic hopes and it is even better to somehow practice or make oneself more prepared to face a great number of unexpected situations.

There are many different methods of training people who are planning to live in another culture. The training method to be chosen depends on many factors like the amount of time that can be allotted for training, the age of the sojourners, the length and purpose of their stay and so on. This study focuses on intercultural critical incidents that are situations, which the participants

have experienced as confusing or problematic in some way. Critical incidents are tried out as a training tool for Finnish teenage students planning on going to the United States as exchange students for approximately eleven months. Using critical incidents as a training tool has been tried in different fields from teacher training to training people who work in a multicultural environment. It has also been used quite a lot in cross-cultural training where different cultural issues have to be dealt with. However, this training method has not yet, to my knowledge, been tried in Finland with high-school aged youngsters going abroad as exchange students. The exercise using critical incidents gives trainees a glimpse of what might lie ahead during the upcoming year. It gives them a chance to start orienting themselves to situations that they do not necessarily understand or know how to interpret. Realising this fact is perhaps one of the most important lessons one can learn during a short orientation. Knowing to expect the unexpected spares the sojourner from a lot of unnecessary hardship. In this study a framework for the training material, which uses critical incidents and has Finnish exchange students as its target group, is outlined. Also, a training experiment using this material is reported on and as an outcome a revised training material package is presented.

There were three main aims for this study. The first was to create training material that would make exchange students more aware of upcoming confusing situations as well as possible reactions and feelings that come up during them. The second was to find out whether exchange students participating in a one-day training program find a training session that uses critical incidents and group discussion to be interesting and useful in their preparation for their upcoming year. The third aim was to revise the material according to feedback from the trainees. This study has arisen from a need to reform the training of exchange students by trying out a new approach in which the students are not just passive listeners, but active participants. Thus its main goal can be thought of as being a rather practical one. Anyhow, it can be placed in the field of intercultural communication, and to be more exact in the field of cultural training. Critical incidents as a training tool have now been tried out in the new field of Finnish exchange students learning about American culture. Also, if not given anything new to the area of Finnish and American cultural traits and their differences, it has at least combined

information about them from multiple sources to be able to justify the critical incidents used in the training material.

There are different exchange organisations in Finland for teenagers who want to go abroad and all of them are unique in how they train the students or if they do at all. For ten years I have personally been involved with one of these organisations, Youth For Understanding, and watched, among other things, how this organisation trains the ones leaving. As a former exchange student myself I have an interest in making the orientation and the exchange year for those leaving as enjoyable and educating as they can be. This study was born out of this interest.

All in all, this study consists, firstly, of a theoretical background section including information on the connection between communication and culture, some aspects of typical Finnish and American communication, exchange students, cross-cultural training methods and a closer look at especially critical incidents. Secondly, the framework for the training material is described. Thirdly, the critical incidents that make up the major part of the material are explained. Fourthly, the realisation of the experiment is explained and the outcome discussed. Next, the feedback, both straight after the exercise and after a few months, is covered and suggestions are made on how the training material should be improved. Finally, further suggestions for research are made and the improved training material package is introduced.

2 CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

The relationship between culture and communication is reciprocal in that each influences the other (Porter and Samovar 1997:24). Porter and Samovar (1997:20-21) discuss why this is this case. People learn to communicate through the influence of culture and every communicator has been moulded by it. As cultures are different from one another, so are the ways to communicate. Communicative behaviour and practices are culturally learned and shared and thus convey meaning, and to be able to share meaning there has to be similarity in perception. Culture also moulds and affects perception and to

understand someone from another culture one must learn to understand how this person perceives the world. To put it in a few words, here is Porter and Samovar's (1997:21) concise definition of communication between people from differing cultural groups: "Intercultural communication occurs whenever a message that must be understood is produced by a member of one culture for consumption by a member of another culture."

After considering the links between communication and culture described above one perhaps views intercultural communication as a rather problematic process. That it can be, but the more one knows and educates oneself in relevant matters and has the courage to put oneself into intercultural situations, the more one can get to grips with it. However, to communicate is one thing, but quite another is to communicate effectively. Below are comments and observations from three researchers on effective communication and they seem to be quite unanimous about what it consists of.

Ehrenhaus (1983:262) proposes that "effectiveness in communicative interaction is defined by the relative proportion of interpersonal coherence that is achieved. The higher the ratio of attributional congruence, the greater the effectiveness of the interaction." Here the main elements are coherence and congruence between the communicating participants. Gudykunst (1995:15) states that "communication is effective to the extent that the person interpreting the message attaches a meaning to the message that is relatively similar to what was intended by the person transmitting it. Stated differently, communication is effective to the extent that we are able to minimize misunderstandings." Also Salo-Lee et al. (1996:21) identify two factors that measure the effectiveness of communication. One is how the communicating participants interpret each other's messages, and the other is how well they perceive each other's communicative goals. Then, according to the above characterisations, the parts of effective communication are: as similar as possible interpretations of what is intended and perceived in the interaction and as few misunderstandings as possible.

Ehrenhaus (1983:261) and Gudykunst (1995:15) continue to note that communication often includes misinterpretations. Yet interactants do not always notice if communication becomes ineffective because they interpret it from their own frame of reference – communication can be making sense to

them personally even though they are not interpreting the interaction as the other had intended. For an interactant who wants to correct misinterpretations, Gudykunst (1995:16-17) introduces the concept of being mindful, being open to new information. He suggests that one should concentrate on the actual process of communication instead of the outcome. Concentrating on the process allows one to perceive subtle differences in behaviour that one would not otherwise see. However, if one concentrates on the outcome, a lot of information will be missed because one tends to think it will play out the same way as before. (Gudykunst 1995:16-17.) Cultural training could perhaps be seen as a way of teaching people to become “more mindful” as well as more open to new information and for them to pay attention to the differences taking place during communication.

There are hundreds of definitions of culture, which tells us that it is very hard to define exactly. One definition of culture that fits the purposes of this study is by Porter and Samovar (1997:12-13): “the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving”. This definition includes very important aspects of culture, which are often interwoven together and which people belonging to a certain group take for granted. When any of the aspects mentioned above differ from what one is used to, the structure of life changes from predictable to unpredictable. This always happens when one enters a different cultural environment than what one is used to. This study concentrates on that kind of phenomena and especially the specific situations where what used to be predictable in one’s own culture becomes unpredictable in another culture and which causes a feeling of everything not going as expected.

The definition above captures the different aspects of culture in a few lines rather impressively. Another, which also suits this study by emphasising an important aspect, behaviour, is by Storti (1990:14): “Culture, a system of beliefs and values shared by a particular group of people, is an abstraction which can be appreciated intellectually, but it is behavior, the principal manifestation and most significant consequence of culture, that we actually

experience. To put it another way: it is culture as encountered in behavior that we must learn to live with.” This is exactly what is emphasised in this study. Behaviour – linguistic, nonverbal or otherwise – is the aspect through which one most naturally begins to realise the underlying cultural differences and the fact that one instinctively expects people to behave like one is used to and is surprised when they do not.

A lot of what one experiences and especially how one makes sense of it in a different cultural environment is due to the way one is used to seeing things in the culture one was acculturated into. Ehrenhaus (1983:259-260) examines how culture actually affects the attribution process. His argument is based on attribution theory, which investigates how people make sense of the information around them and organise it into meaningful actions and events. Ehrenhaus (1983:260-262) concludes that the process of attribution takes place automatically because one has certain expectations about interaction. These structures of expectations are based on one’s experiences of the world in one’s own culture and they are used not only to organise information about the world but also to make predictions about new situations, interaction and information. Expectations make it possible for one to organise and create meaning to experience and interaction. Culture, then, is “the collection of expectations by which we construct, test, and modify our interpretations of the discourse and of the other’s purposes as inferred through the discourse.” (Ehrenhaus 1983:262.) Thus culture and structures of expectations are quite intertwined.

Sometimes, however, when people from different cultures meet and interact their structures of expectations do not coincide. The expectations each participant culturally carries with oneself might not be met or uncertainty about a situation can suffocate clear expectations. Although unfamiliar, the interaction is somehow made sense of by the participants. It might not, however, be the accurate attribution. (Ehrenhaus 1983:260,268.) Cultural training can help trainees recognise some of their own expectations or at least make them aware that they have them, just by growing up in a certain culture.

Since the culture that one grows up in and is socialised into is such a big part of who one is, one tends not to notice the unwritten rules that one instinctively follows. It is not always easy to explain why one acts in a certain

way in a certain situation. One might think that there are no rules per se, just that the same way of living also prevails elsewhere or that there are only rules governing some other culture, not one's own. One becomes blind concerning the rules of one's own culture because 'that's just the way things are done'. This blindness about the rules of one's own culture can be noticed even in places where one would not expect them. A good example of this can be found in one person's attempt to write about the distinguishing characteristics of the American culture. The writer, Althen, is a foreign student advisor in an American university who wanted to help visitors from other countries. Althen (1988) discusses American ways of doing things and gives advice about them for people coming to the United States from abroad in a book concerned solely with explaining these features. So on one hand, one can assume that many of the unwritten American rules are now written in this guide on how to interpret the American life style, and that the author realises that there are quite many rules in the American culture. On the other hand, however, while discussing roles, the author voices an opinion that "In the United States there are far fewer situations in which people's behavior is governed by widely agreed-upon rules" (Althen 1988:80). He takes an example from Latin America on how a woman needs a third party present in the company of a man. This is a more restricting rule than what one has in the United States in a similar situation. This implies that the author is in a sense blind to his own cultural rules if they are less restricting than when compared with another culture. For someone coming from a culture where there are more restricting rules, he/she must nonetheless know the less restricting rules as well to be able to function properly. One could thus argue that cultural rules do exist to the same extent in every culture.

So even a writer who has been interested enough to write a book about cultural rules has misconceptions and ethnocentric beliefs about what constitutes a cultural rule and in what way it is interpreted. One can only imagine how confusing interpreting and understanding one's own and other cultures' rules might be to the uninitiated. Cultural training is thus one step towards a better understanding of oneself and others in cross-cultural situations.

2.1 Adjusting to another culture

When one travels to a place where everything from general surroundings to others' behaviour is something different and new, there is no doubt that some adjusting is needed to be able to function in the new environment. Exchange students, among other sojourners, belong to the groups of people who go through the period of adjusting to a new culture.

Adjusting can be rather difficult because the sojourner carries the expectations of his/her own culture to the new environment and people in the target culture have their own cultural expectations, which often differ from the sojourner's. Misunderstandings that arise from cultural differences, then, can not usually be avoided. Cultural training can, however, help the person leaving better deal with situations of conflict.

Storti (1990:58-59) suggests a solution to the problem of adjusting. The idea behind it is that people assume that people everywhere behave basically in the same way. When one runs into a situation where people behave differently from what one is used to, one does not quite know what to do. Then arise what might be called the key moments of adjusting. They are moments of cultural discomfort, when one feels agitated, shocked, disgusted or perhaps threatened. Since these are not pleasant feelings one starts to withdraw from and avoid similar situations and even the surrounding culture. However, if these feelings could first be recognised as they arise, then be controlled and finally neutralised, they would not lead to avoidance and withdrawal, which are natural reactions to these types of negative feelings. (Storti 1990:58-59.)

It is quite common and human not to want to be in situations where one experiences negative feelings and feels out of place. Anyhow, Storti (1990:58-59) claims that if one is able to identify these feelings at the time they are happening and reflect on why one is feeling them at that particular moment, it diminishes the negative emotion. Then, as the negative feelings start to subside one is free to experience the situation that one is involved in; one is able to observe what is going on. "*We cannot experience and react to a situation simultaneously.*" (Storti 1990:59; emphasis original.)

Cultural training, as in this study, aims at helping people to adjust their expectations to some extent so that different behaviours do not come as a total surprise. Of course, most of the situations one enters in a different culture cannot be trained for and come somewhat as a surprise anyway. What training then can do, is to give the trainee the information about the element of surprise and suggestions on how to handle and recognise the feelings it conjures up.

Recognising and identifying emotional states at the time one is subject to them is neither automatic nor an easy task, and it is something that one has to learn to do. Storti (1990:63) proposes practising retrospective awareness. It means that at the end of the day one tries to recall the moments where one felt frustrated or agitated by something the local people did or said and then tries to analyse why this type of reaction arose. Storti (1990:63) claims that by doing this – collecting and analysing incidents that would have otherwise gone by without reflecting – one can start to see the pattern of one's own behaviour. The realisation thus being that one does, in fact, expect people in the different culture to behave in the same way one is used to, despite one's best intentions to think otherwise.

From the perspective of cultural training for people who have yet to experience the different culture, others' previous experiences can prove useful. Although retrospective awareness of one's own experiences taken place the same day and reflecting on them might be the best way to train oneself toward better awareness, the next best thing might quite likely be reflecting on incidents that have happened to others. This is the idea that the present study is based on and that was also tried out: reflecting on critical incidents that had happened to others in the same cultural context as where the trainees were going. A critical incident is a situation that has stuck in one's mind because there was something confusing or odd about it. Although the trainees were reading incidents that had not happened to them they could put themselves in the position of the characters in the events described and at least somehow reflect on what it would feel like if they were to be in a situation like that themselves. To do this first can help trainees later reflect on their own experiences more easily while they are staying abroad. Another way in which the present study later encouraged the trainees to practise retrospective awareness was by asking them to write incidents that they had actually been

involved in while living in the different cultural environment. (See chapter 11.2.3.) This, again, gave a chance for the trainees to practice analysing what had happened in a certain situation and what had caused the reaction of uneasiness. By writing and reflecting on the incident the trainees had to try and remember the situation and its reasons and how it made them feel. Otherwise they might not have given it much thought.

2.2 Cultural conflicts

Lehtonen (1984/1994:92) points out that linguistic interaction is not the only area where wrong interpretations and erroneous decisions are made during intercultural communication. There are different activities in different cultures that are allowed in certain situations and conflicts arise when one is not familiar with the other culture's appropriate practices. (See also Thomas 1983:104-105.) Cultural misunderstandings do not always even need foreigners and natives to become conflicts, but simply parties that are not from the same linguistic and cultural background, for example authorities versus a social or ethnic group or a teacher versus pupils. (Lehtonen 1984/1994:91-92, Thomas 1983:91.)

Prosser (1978 as quoted by Lehtonen 1984/1994:93) views communication and culture as so intertwined that almost all human social interaction has connections to culture. Everyone carries one's own cultural heritage with oneself and acts according to it unconsciously in all interactions. It influences how one interprets and reacts to what happens in one's surroundings and how one draws conclusions about others' motivations. Lehtonen (1984/1994:93) adds that culture provides the scale with which one interprets the other's choice of words, intonation, tone of speech, gestures, physical distance or closeness, hesitations and the speed of speech and being silent. Communicating parties interpret the other's symbolic behaviour from the point of view of their own reality. Examples of misunderstandings and conflicts arising from different realities moulded by different cultures are also the core of this study. What follows are brief descriptions of quite recent

Finnish studies in which intercultural problems, misunderstandings or difficulties between Finnish and another culture have been investigated.

Salo-Lee and Winter-Tarvainen (1995:81-107) described a research project concentrating on cultural communication differences between German and Finnish people reported both by German and Finnish students. The research data consisted of critical incidents collected and reported by the students. Although it might seem that the German and Finnish cultures are a lot alike, differences were found, for example in the areas of conversation culture, non-verbal communication and rules of interaction. Similar differences are being focused on in this study when putting together appropriate critical incidents for training purposes.

Arola (1997) conducted a study about multicultural education with the help of a questionnaire among Finnish exchange students who had been to Canada. Included were, among themes of multicultural education, also questions dealing with the exchange year and students' experiences in the host country. One question was about cultural misunderstandings with either the host family or at school. In the beginning of the exchange year language problems were reported by many students. Having to learn expressions that are missing from Finnish and that are typical of English, like *please* and *excuse me*, were mentioned in 25% of the answers. Students were considered rude when they did not use the above-mentioned expressions. The basic Finnish silence was also often interpreted as rudeness, reserve or homesickness. In addition to language problems, matters relating to food and eating habits were the most brought up matters. 17% of the students disapproved of their host family's habit of eating junk food. 17% thought that home discipline was more severe in Canada than in Finland since many students had had problems with having to come home at a certain time at night. 10% of the students felt that Canadian dating practices were stricter because, for example, one date had been interpreted as going steady. Other issues mentioned were misunderstandings with the perception of nudity and the excessive use of cars. (Arola 1997:62,65,66.)

Some of the issues mentioned above that students had considered difficult or different are also the ones considered in this study. The respondents in the above study and the target group in this study are Finnish exchange students

and one can assume a certain similarity between the two North-American countries, Canada and the United States, in the way people behave, talk and generally conduct themselves. Thus the problems students face during their year abroad can be expected to be similar.

2.3 Learning and using a foreign language

The foreign language learner can easily be misled after a few years of study of grammatical terms and word translations to think that he/she knows the language. But language consists of so much more than just correct grammatical forms. Other skill areas of language are penetrating foreign language teaching at school but traditionally the emphasis in Finnish secondary schools has been to mainly train pupils to produce grammatically correct written language. The main reason for this is most probably the matriculation examination where, for example, communication skills are not evaluated. What the language learner does not always know is that even perfect knowledge of the grammatical side of the language does not necessarily make it easy to communicate with someone who speaks the language natively.

Lehtonen (1984/1994:91-92) states that after one satisfactorily knows a foreign language, problems arise from culturally different value systems and in interpreting language and other symbolic acts of behaviour such as habits, customs, movements, gestures and facial expressions. Differences are also found in the way language itself is used in communication. People also tend to think that being logical and sensible means the same whatever the language. Many think that argumentation and reasoning are universal skills, not depending on language. Every language speaker interprets both their own as well as others' linguistic behaviour from the perspective of the collective reality created by their own culture. Examples of problems in the above-mentioned pragmatic areas are discussed in chapter 9.2.

Finnish exchange students going to the United States rarely have much difficulty with the English language as such since most of them have been studying it for approximately eight years at school. When students have the

chance to choose their first foreign language at school when they are entering the third grade, English is the most popular choice. Thus the difficulties of functioning in the new culture often lie with poor knowledge of pragmatics, 'language in use', rather than not knowing the English language. The above-mentioned factors by Lehtonen (1984/1994) then come into play as a sojourner, for example an exchange student, tries to make sense of a culturally new environment with perhaps a rather poor knowledge of these factors. One of the aims of this study is to make some of them more visible and distinguishable by means of cultural training, specifically in a Finnish-American context. Since every sojourner's experience is so different one can by no means expect to give an all-inclusive list or chart of what is to be expected, especially if training times are short and a lot of information has to be covered. An aim of the type of training that was tried out in the present study is to raise the trainees' awareness of what types of situations they might get involved in and perhaps give them tools for trying to make sense of them.

2.4 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is basically the field of linguistics that studies how utterances have meanings in situations and in interaction and how language is used in communication (see Leech 1983; Thomas 1995). Although there seem to be some universal basics for sending and interpreting messages in interaction their fine-tuning usually differs between cultures, and thus the chance for misunderstanding heightens. Language itself combined with the various areas that also effect communication, briefly discussed above by Lehtonen (1984/1994), vary from culture to culture and challenge the participants of interaction to be open to more and different variants than what they are used to in their own cultures. Since meaning is created and communication used so variably in different cultural environments this study considers an awareness of this fact to be important and helpful for someone trying to adjust to living in another culture. Being aware of how easily and in what areas one can be misunderstood or misinterpret something helps to identify communication break downs or other situations that might seem utterly unexplainable.

A well known theory in the field of pragmatics is Grice's cooperative principle, which practically specifies the principles and maxims that participants of a conversation follow in order to convey messages in a maximally efficient, rational and co-operative way (see Leech 1983, Levinson 1983, Thomas 1995). Thomas (1995:62) comments on this theory by saying that what is suggested is that in conversational interaction people assume others to be operating according to a set of rules. What these rules are, however, vary in different cultures. Thus although these principles are most likely universal, one must know how they are conveyed in a particular culture to be able to act accordingly. In situations where people from the same cultural background communicate with each other the message sender and receiver can usually quite easily agree on what the message consists of. The mutual understanding and interpretation are made easier by the shared rules of communication in that particular culture. Anyhow, when one enters a different cultural environment the rules and beliefs about the world are not necessarily shared anymore nor are they the same, and both sending a message to others and interpreting their messages become much more complex. Even if in these situations people know that their interlocutor is not operating under the same conversational norms than what they are used to, the chance of mistakes and misunderstandings grow. For example, some cultures use silence as a message in conversation and a more detailed discussion of this topic can be found in chapter 3, p.23-24. For someone who is not used to silence being used in this way, it can lead to an awkward situation. In other words, the way of using language, or silence for that matter, in different cultures varies and it can cause communication problems.

Pragmatic failure is one type of a communication problem and Thomas (1983:91) has characterised it as not being able to understand "what is meant by what is said". She has reserved it to specifically mean occasions where the one who interprets the message perceives the force of the sender's message as something other than was intended, for example as stronger or weaker or as an order when the intention was for it to be a request. Thomas (1983:91,99-110) further divides pragmatic failure to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure, which will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

In the area of cross-cultural communication Thomas (1983:96-97) points out that pragmatic failure by a non-native speaker is rarely recognised as an error by a native speaker if communication is otherwise fluent and grammatically competent. It is rather seen as being knowingly unfriendly or impolite, which leads to judgement towards the person's character, not one's language skills. (See also Salo-Lee 1993:81.) However, grammatical errors are recognised as such and they only reflect poor grammatical competence, not the actual character of the person.

While interpreting the speaker's intended force for an utterance, the hearer must take into consideration linguistic, as well as contextual clues. Sometimes the easiest interpretations can be made based on context alone. Certain universals in context hold true most of the time. (Thomas 1983:99-100.) Thomas (1983:100-101) takes as an example the pair *Good luck! Bad luck!*. While the former indicates wishing someone well, the latter does not mean wishing someone ill but rather is assigned the force of compassion and empathy, in spite of the same linguistic form. This can be deduced from the fact that it is not usual to openly wish someone ill, at least when the context does not indicate it.

The more difficult interpretations concern linguistic pragmatics. Divided in two main levels, which Thomas (1983:92-94,101) calls level 1 and 2, pragmatic principles allow one to assign certain meanings to utterances. Out of context a sentence such as *she took it* is quite ambiguous. One's grammatical knowledge supplies many possible meanings to it, but to narrow down the possible choices pragmatic principles are needed. At level 1 they allow sense and reference to be assigned to the sentence in context. Thus it will become clear what otherwise ambiguous *she* and *it* referred to and whether the verb *take* was used in the sense of *steal* or *agree to accept* or yet something other. At level 2, pragmatic principles allow force or value to be assigned to an utterance. For example, a misunderstanding might occur during the following exchange between J and N. N: *Is there a window open somewhere?* J: *Yes, the kitchen window is actually open.* Here, N's utterance can actually be meant as a complaint (*It's cold so why is there a window open.*), but J interprets it as a real request for information. Hence, the intended goal of the utterance, which was for J to go and close the window, was not reached.

Although pragmatic failure can occur during communication between members from the same cultural sphere as can be seen from the examples above, the chance for misunderstandings understandably heightens when cross-cultural communication is taking place.

Thomas (1983:99-110) goes further in distinguishing different types of pragmatic failure and divides level 2 into pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure, the latter term originally coming from Leech (1983:10-11). Thomas (1983:99, emphasis original) argues that pragmalinguistic failure is “basically a *linguistic* problem, caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force” and that sociopragmatic failure “stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour.” The first mentioned could be seen as more language-specific and the latter as culture-specific. The difference between the two types of failure, however, is not straightforward in all cases and they could rather be perceived as ends of a continuum than two separate types. (Thomas 1983:101.) To make the distinction more clear both types are discussed separately below.

Pragmalinguistic failure occurs when the pragmatic function of an utterance in the native language is not the same as in the target language or when speech act strategies are not appropriately transferred from the native to the target language (Thomas 1983:99-103). An example of the latter in the context of Finnish-American communication might be the usual way Finns ask for or order things at, for example, a bar, *Yksi kahvi* (*One coffee*). Since the Finnish language does not have an equivalent of the word *please*, it is often left out also when speaking English. This most likely will seem abrupt and impolite to the American ear, rather more like an order than a request that it is meant to be. The Finnish language as such is not more impolite than English – interpreting what is polite and impolite is what differs.

Sociopragmatic failure, then, occurs when the idea of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour differs between cultures. Thomas (1983:104-105) takes some examples to demonstrate sociopragmatic failure. One example is about ‘free’ and ‘non-free’ goods where ‘free’ goods are those one can help oneself to without getting permission and ‘non-free’ goods are the opposite. In one’s own home, almost everything can be considered as free goods but when visiting someone else’s home, the rules are different and more

different still if there are different cultures involved. In one's own home it is no problem to get an extra sweater from the bedroom closet when it is cold, but doing the same thing when at somebody else's home would not be considered very tactful, but rather strange and insulting even.

What are considered 'free' and 'non-free' goods depend on situations and relationships and need not be just material. The same terms can be used for information. Topics of conversation that can be considered 'freely available' vary from culture to culture. Some consider it intrusive to talk or ask about income or religion when others consider them to be perfectly safe and common topics to discuss. (Thomas 1983:104-105, Salo-Lee et al. 1996:27, see also Oksaar 1985:251-252.) Another example of sociopragmatic failure by Thomas (1983:105) is about taboo topics that are closely related to the above mentioned concepts as well. Sociopragmatic failure occurs when one makes reference to a taboo topic, not realising it is one because it can be easily discussed in one's own culture. Yet another example of sociopragmatic failure that Thomas (1983:105-106) brings up consists of different assessments of relative power or social distance. The relationship with teachers and students can be an area where sociopragmatic failure can occur. In Finland the relationship between teachers and students is mostly very informal. For example, students call teachers by their first names. In the United States the teacher does not have a much higher status but students are expected to call their teachers Miss and Sir, not by their first names.

Thomas's (1983) theory goes quite deep in analysing, not just labelling, what actually causes misunderstanding in different situations. The article gives a good selection of terms and classifications that could prove quite useful when creating or analysing critical incidents. The present study actually used Thomas's (1983) categories in the critical incidents section even though Thomas does not as such discuss critical incidents. However, the examples of misunderstandings Thomas uses can be seen as prototypical critical incidents in the sense this study uses the term.

2.5 Nonverbal communication

A big part of communication is not only verbal. Instead of, or accompanying, verbal communication messages are expressed by other means as well, such as touch, appearance, distance, smell, eye contact, the way one sits, talks or stands and so on. All of these and many more are all aspects of nonverbal communication or nonverbal behaviour.

Richmond et al. (1991:6-8) explain the distinction they draw between the terms *nonverbal behaviour* and *nonverbal communication*. *Nonverbal behaviour* is something that has the potential for forming a communicative message whereas *nonverbal communication* involves the receiver interpreting the behaviour as a message and attributing meaning to it. The same action can be interpreted as either, depending on whether one is alone or with another person who interprets the action as a message. Messages can also be sent either intentionally or accidentally. By combining these factors of whether the sender has the intent or not in sending a message and whether the receiver interprets an intentional or unintentional message, different communicational outcomes emerge. If the message is sent intentionally and the receiver interprets it as a message, *nonverbal communication* has taken place but one cannot still be sure whether the receiver interpreted the message in the intended way. In different cultures the behaviour that means that one is content and relaxed can differ somewhat. Thus a person from a differing cultural background can misinterpret the intended message of contentment. If the message is again sent intentionally but the receiver does not perceive it as a message, *nonverbal behaviour* has occurred. Then, if a behaviour that is not supposed to contain a message but is still interpreted as containing one, *nonverbal communication*, and actually accidental communication, has taken place. In a foreign culture this can happen, for example, by sending an unintentional message with one's clothing or the lack of it. There are also situations where behaviour that is not supposed to contain a message is not interpreted in any way and thus is categorised as *nonverbal behaviour*. In intercultural encounters both sending and interpreting messages are more complicated tasks than in a monocultural setting because yet another variable,

cultural difference, is added to the already many-sided communicative situation.

Richmond et al. (1991:8-9) note that people who are not familiar with literature on nonverbal communication are often insensitive to the messages they are unintentionally sending. This claim can be interpreted as a reason for intercultural training after which trainees will hopefully better recognise the ways in which they themselves and others send and interpret messages. To be more aware is essential in a new cultural environment.

“Knowledge of a language does not provide an understanding of a culture.” (Richmond et al. 1991:308). In understanding a culture Richmond et al. (1991:308) consider the nonverbal behaviours of a culture at least as important or even more important than the language of the culture.

3 ASPECTS OF FINNISH AND AMERICAN COMMUNICATION

If one is asked about what a typical American communicator is like, a couple of descriptive words most probably come to one's mind. The same happens if asked about a Finnish communicator, as well as about many other nationalities. One usually has some kind of image in one's head about what people from different cultures are like. Researchers have also tackled the question on how people from different cultures communicate and many studies around that question have been conducted. Also many have had the desire to write out the unwritten rules of communication in a certain culture. What follows are some of these aspects of both Finnish and American communication that relate to this study. Moreover, they are actually very close to sociopragmatic aspects of language and thus strongly relate to matters that were discussed in chapter 2.4.

Lehtonen and Sajavaara (1985) and Lehtonen (1984/1994) discuss the Finns' frequent use of silence. They comment that tolerance of silence varies from culture to culture and that Finns tolerate much longer silences in conversation than Americans or central Europeans. There can be different reasons for the silence of Finns in international situations. For example, at

international meetings the Finn stays silent either because of his/her inability to carry out communicative tasks in the foreign language or because of the transference of Finnish communicative phenomena to the non-Finnish situation. (Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1985:194, Lehtonen 1984/1994:96,98.)

Lehtonen and Sajavaara (1985:196) continue to say that the long silences of Finns can be interpreted in quite negative ways. The interlocutor might think that the Finn is not interested in carrying on with the conversation anymore and that he/she is indifferent, sullen or even hostile. Hence, the expectations of the interlocutor are not met and the result is communication breakdown. However, the interlocutors can be quite unaware of what caused the conflict.

Different cultures can be situated along a continuum, which conveys the attitudes concerning the use of talk and silence. At one end of the continuum are talkative cultures where the attitude towards silence is negative. In such cultures a silent person is considered to be weak and timid and the way to socialise with others, to be together, is to talk. The American society is considered to be close to this end of the continuum. (Lehtonen 1984/1994:95.) The function of talk is not, then, to convey information, but to avoid silence. A typical American starts up conversations and forces others to talk; he/she tries to create communication by talking because silence is not tolerated socially. (Lehtonen and Sajavaara: 1985:199, Lehtonen 1984/1994:95,96, Mikluha 1998:414-415.) At the other end of the continuum are cultures where also silence is one way of communicating. In these cultures social interaction does not require constant talking but messages can be conveyed through keeping quiet and silence can have many meanings. (Lehtonen 1984/1994:96.) In the Finnish culture silence is accepted to a different degree from American culture and it can be situated closer to the latter mentioned end of the continuum (Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1985:199, Lehtonen 1984/1994:96).

An addition to the observations stated above is Carbaugh's view (1995:53-56). In his preliminary observations about some differences between how Finns and Americans use language, he suggests that for Finns it is important to speak properly. The following approximate rules, according to Carbaugh (1995:55), are followed by Finns when producing one kind of proper speech:

- (1) Don't state the obvious;
- (2) If speaking, say something worthy of everyone's attention;
- (3) Don't invoke topics or themes that are contentious or conflictual (or more positively, keep present relations on harmonious ground);
- (4) Be personally committed to or invested in what you say;
- (5) What you say properly – the unobvious, socially worthwhile, noncontentious, personally involving themes – forms a basis for subsequent interactions.

These rules add nicely to what has already been stated earlier and all together they at least somewhat explain the Finns' use of silence. However, in his article in 1984 Lehtonen (1984/1994:95) expresses a view that the Finnish culture is actually moving towards the Anglo-American norms of speech behaviour. If this has been the tendency in the past twenty years, perhaps the American and Finnish communication cultures have come a bit closer to each other and the Finnish use of silence is not perhaps as excessive as it used to be.

Small talk is, according to Salo-Lee (1993:77), one of the most difficult aspects for Finns in interactions conducted in another language. Salo-Lee (1993:79-80) defines small talk as light chatting, creating a pleasant atmosphere and maintaining relationships. People are usually good at small talk in their own cultures. What create the difficulties in another language are the principles and rules of conversation, interpretation clues and rules of politeness, among other things. Salo-Lee (1993:85-86) sums up several studies concerning Finnish identity and intercultural communication in which one of the most visible findings seems to be the relationship Finns have with words and the truth. Words are assumed to directly reflect reality. Difficulties may arise when trying to interpret promises and invitations in another culture, whether to believe them and accept the invitations or not. How to interpret the friendly American utterance "don't hesitate to call me if you need anything?" (Salo-Lee 1993:87). The strong truth-value Finns put in words explains the commonly heard statement of Americans being superficial.

For Americans, engaging in small talk, or chit-chat, does not entail any obligation to meet with this person again. It is just a form of being social. There is a clash, then, with the Finnish standard of practice, which entails that people who have been engaged in conversation should follow-up on it. (Carbaugh 1995:56-57.) As Carbaugh (1995:57) puts it:

American “friendliness” thus should not be confused with “friendship”, for the former is required routinely in public encounters with an eye to linking people who are presumably different while the latter stems from other forms of action, deemed more “personal” than “public”.

The above seems to suggest that Finns have more expectations after a bit of small talk than Americans. Perhaps, though, what differs is not so much the expectation of follow-up, but the actual situations and places where it is considered appropriate or necessary to engage in small talk. If one asks a Finn whether or not one expects any follow-up after engaging in small talk at a bus stop with a stranger, the most likely answer is that one does not. Thus the claim of Finns always expecting follow-up does not, at least, apply to all situations.

4 EXCHANGE STUDENTS

About two thousand Finnish youngsters decide to travel to a foreign country as an exchange student every year and most of them still choose The United States although other countries are becoming more and more popular. Exchange organisations can be divided into two main groups: the ones that do not seek profit and are ideologically oriented (e.g. YFU, AFS) and the ones that do seek profit and are more commercial (STS, EF). Most organisations operating in Finland have very similar demands on what an exchange student should be like. For example one of the above-mentioned organisations, Youth For Understanding (YFU), selects the applicants who are most suited to handle a year abroad by conducting an interview in which, among others, the applicant’s motivation and flexibility are considered. The applicant also has to write about him/herself and the principal is asked to evaluate the applicant’s suitability to be an exchange student. The organisation’s criteria for an exchange student are that he/she is someone between 15 and 17 who gets along with different kinds of people, is easily adjusted to new environments, curious, interested in learning new things, open and has reasonably good grades at school.

The exchange student is in a different kind of position in viewing the host culture if compared to most other sojourner groups. Firstly, the age of exchange students (16-18) differentiates them as a group. They are in a state of transit between childhood and adulthood and are still flexible and open to new ways and ideas since they are trying to figure out what their way of living is. Still, they are products of their culture and as such fully qualified experts in that field as are all of us of our own culture. They might not know how to explain some aspects of their culture since it is so deeply part of what they are but the best way to help see one's own culture is to be confronted by another. This is the same for all sojourners. One usually takes culture as self-evident until something makes one question it.

Secondly, exchange students are outsiders in the target culture like any other sojourner, yet they get quite a close inside view of actual everyday life and its nuances. During their stay they are part of a local family, sharing the day-to-day life of the host culture, and most of the time they do not have a single person to share their own culture or language with – the exchange students are totally immersed in the host culture. Their age makes this possible. At the same time as they are mature enough to cope with being away from their own family and friends, they can still put themselves in the role of daughter/son in the new host family and get an idea of actually being part of that family. Mostly this chance of adaptation distinguishes high school exchange students from other sojourners. When one gets older, the same kind of immersion is not possible anymore. Thus the age of exchange students connected with their total immersion in the host culture and the length of their stay - almost a year - makes them a quite specific sojourner group. The present study focused on yet a more specific group: Finnish teenaged exchange students in the United States.

Few studies have been conducted that actually deal with high school aged exchange students. Arola's (1997) study was already discussed earlier in chapter 2.2 and another quite recent one is introduced now. Laine (1999) conducted an interview study with four Finnish exchange students who had spent their year in the United States. The aim was to find out about the exchange students' experiences during the exchange year from the perspective of learning and discover what kind of growth had taken place during the year.

Since there are only four informants the study goes through each student's individual learning process and what can be concluded is that everyone's year, its experiences and coping with the American culture is unique. Thus the study brings up the aspect of diversity of the exchange year. (Laine 1999:2,31.)

5 TRAINING METHODS FOR RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS

While it has many names – intercultural communication training, intercultural training or cross-cultural training – it refers to either training people who will live or work in another country or people who will interact with members of different cultures in their own home country. Cultural or intercultural training are the terms used in this study and the meaning they have in this context is training people who are going to live in another culture. It could perhaps be seen as a way of teaching people to become more open to new information during communication and to pay attention to the differences taking place during interaction, as in Gudykunst's (1995:16-17) concept of being mindful.

The key words when talking about the general goals of intercultural training are stress, communication and relationships (Fowler and Mumford 1995:xi-xiii, Brislin 1989:441-443.) The first goal concerning stress is to be able to reduce it or manage it since adjusting to another culture often results in symptoms such as culture shock. Trainers can use material that deals with self-esteem, tolerance for ambiguity and adjustment. The key aspect of the second goal, communication, is effectiveness. Aspects to consider in training can include language skills, getting to understand hosts and their actions from their point of view and also becoming more aware of one's own culture and communicative styles. Trained persons can better understand that although people in other cultures may do things differently it does not mean that their way of doing them is somehow inferior. It is just different. The third goal concerning relationships refers to ways in which one might develop support groups, friendships and working relationships, in a culturally sensitive manner. Trained persons can more easily dismiss negative stereotypes, look beyond

them and see people as individuals. (Fowler and Mumford 1995:xiii, Brislin 1989:441-443.)

Brislin (1989:443-454) summarizes the content of training by discussing combinations of three levels of trainee involvement crossed with three targets of training. The three levels of trainee involvement refer to the degree of trainee participation and the range includes low, moderate and high involvement levels. Low involvement means that there is only passive reception of knowledge from the point of view of participants. High involvement, then, means that participants actively collaborate with the trainers. The moderate involvement level falls between the two. The three targets of training refer to people's thinking or cognitions, their emotions or affect and their behaviour. All of these levels can be combined into a three by three matrix where different types of approaches to training can be situated. Brislin (1989:444-454) discusses each of the above combinations in the matrix by organizing different kinds of training approaches to each slot. These approaches can be seen in Table 1 below, which is adapted from Brislin (1989:445).

Table 1. Approaches to cross-cultural training

Amount of trainee involvement	Target of training		
	Cognitions	Affect	Behaviour
Low	Lectures from experts; assigned readings	Lectures from "old hands"; films; viewing cultural presentations	Presenting trainees with models who demonstrate appropriate behaviours
Moderate	Attribution training; analysis of critical incidents	Self-awareness; group discussions of prejudice, racism, values; participation in guided encounters	Cognitive/behavioural training; field trip assignments
High	Applying sophisticated concepts from the behavioural and social sciences	Role-playing; simulations of real-life demands	Extended experiential encounters with another culture or complex approximations of another culture

Brislin (1989:444-454) also gives suggestions on when a certain approach could be useful and what are the benefits and downsides of each. I will here briefly discuss the approaches that connect to this study and continue it in more detail in chapter 8.

When the levels of low involvement and cognitions are combined it results in a lecture format where trainees listen to facts and are often placed in the role of audience members. In addition to lectures this category includes assigned readings. (Brislin 1989:444-445.) This study recommends combining these rather passive approaches with something more activating, like the exercise that was tried out, which will be described in detail later.

According to Brislin's (1989:444-445) framework when the levels of low involvement and affect are combined the methods used will not include direct participation from the trainees but they will increase trainees' emotional involvement. These methods include the use of films and lectures from people who have experienced the same culture and similar problems as will those being trained. Listening to these 'old hands' can be very useful for trainees because they can see a concrete example of a person who has already done the same that they are about to do. Also recently returned sojourners often have quite positive emotions about their experiences that they can talk about, and these would be hard to convey otherwise. (Brislin 1989:444-445.)

Still following Brislin's (1989:445,447) framework, when the levels of moderate involvement and cognitions are combined it means that trainees are more involved than in the categories mentioned above. Trainees take part in exercises that are monitored by staff. The approach in this category that has been most researched is called attribution training. The main goal is to expand trainees' thinking about another culture and the exercises are supposed to get the trainees interested without frustrating them. To keep this from happening the exercises should not be too difficult. During this type of training trainees are encouraged to analyse problems from the point of view of people from the host culture. The assumption is that if they learn this, they will be more likely to adjust successfully. Then they will not be so narrow-minded as to impose just their own viewpoint or, in other words, their culture's viewpoint that one becomes accustomed to during socialisation. (Brislin 1989:445,447.) One type

of attribution training is the analysis of critical incidents, which this study tried out.

6 CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Salo-Lee and Winter-Tarvainen (1995:82) define critical incidents as incidents that the interacting participants have experienced problematic, confusing, or even funny. They are also situations that have been stuck in one's mind, perhaps even as passing questions such as: "What did I do or say wrong?" or "Was there something odd about this?". This definition mainly refers to the area of intercultural communication and it thus fits this study perfectly. However, critical incidents were not and are not used exclusively in that field, but also many others. The development of the use of critical incidents will be outlined in the following chapter and continued with a look at Finnish studies concerning critical incidents.

6.1 The cross-cultural aspect of using critical incidents

Critical incidents have been used since the late 1940's in psychological research, among others, and especially to help determine critical requirements for different occupations. The most known method, the critical incident technique, was developed by Flanagan (1954). In the early 1960's the field of cross-cultural training started using critical incidents, for example in training Peace Corps volunteers (de Frankrijker 1998:56, Wight 1995:127). Teacher education also saw the use of critical incidents. In teaching contexts critical incidents are seen as significant events and observations that are used as tools in teaching and learning especially in promoting cross-cultural awareness. They are also used to practise problem solving and to help develop personal growth and change. (de Frankrijker 1998:56.)

In the context of cross-cultural training, critical incidents have been and still are used to train people going abroad or working in multicultural environments. The goal is to train people to assess different types of

interaction from the perspectives of different cultures, to interpret them and to react to them in a culturally acceptable way. Also, so-called culture assimilators have been developed. They are a collection of situations in which there has been a cultural clash and after them suggestions on how to solve the situation. Culture assimilators can be either culture specific, pertaining to incidents between two cultures, or culture general (Salo-Lee and Winter-Tarvainen 1995:83, Frankrijker 1998:56-57.) Brislin et al. (1986) developed a "Culture General Assimilator" which is made up of a hundred incidents that have been broken into different themes relating to general human qualities such as emotions and values. The incidents contain descriptions of situations where one faces some unexpected behaviour. There is a question about the situation and multiple explanations follow from which the reader has to choose the most appropriate one. There are arguments for and against each explanation at the end of the book.

In 1995, Salo-Lee and Winter-Tarvainen (1995:82-83) commented that there had only been minor use of critical incidents as research and training material in Finland and that it was just beginning. To my knowledge there have been no studies that have used critical incidents in the specific area of Finnish-American communication, which this study now concentrates on. Neither are there records of critical incidents being used as a training tool for teenaged exchange students going abroad for a year. What follows are the few Finnish studies that connect to critical incidents in some way.

Storhammar and Ailinpieti (1995:15,21-45) report on a study conducted among Finnish senior high school pupils. The main focus was on finding out the pupils' attitudes towards the English language and people who speak English. The question sheet given to pupils contained sixteen questions and one of them concerned critical incidents. The pupils reported both incidents where they had been abroad or where they had been in contact with a foreigner in Finland. The incidents were grouped under three main headings: language mix-ups, cultural misunderstandings and a mixed group, which included incidents that were either incomprehensible or meaningless. (Storhammar and Ailinpieti 1995:22,41-44,51.)

Salo-Lee and Winter-Tarvainen's (1995) study concentrated on cultural communication differences between German and Finnish people using critical

incidents as data. Differences were found, for example in the areas of conversation culture, non-verbal communication and rules of interaction. (Salo-Lee and Winter-Tarvainen 1995:81-107.) One could state that German and Finnish cultures seem a lot alike, yet differences can be found and were found in the study mentioned above. Finnish and American cultures might also seem similar in some senses. After all, there is a common saying, but by no means is it a fact, that Finland is the most American country in Europe. There are differences to be found and this study concentrates on similar aspects than the ones mentioned above when putting together appropriate critical incidents for training purposes.

The most recent Finnish study that has used critical incidents is by Kirra (1999). The data of her study consisted of 212 critical incidents that were obtained from learning diaries of Open University students attending introductory courses to intercultural communication. All the informants were Finnish, 90% were women and their average age was 39.5 years. The encounters they had written down in their diaries had all happened with people who were something other than Finns – non-Finns. Europeans were mentioned the most (86/212), Australians the least (2/212) and there were 22 incidents out of 212 involving North Americans. There were four types of settings where the incidents took place: while a Finn was living or staying abroad for work or studies (30%), while a Finn was on a holiday or on a short-term visit abroad (24%), while a non-Finn was living in Finland (20%), and while a Finn was hosting non-Finnish guests (10%). Some of the incidents (16%) that did not fit the types of setting mentioned above were put under a category called miscellaneous situations. (Kirra 1999:33-38.) Thus Kirra's (1999) study was culture general while the present study concentrates on culture specific information. Also, there is a difference in the setting of the incidents. In the present study the main surroundings stay the same, that is the United States, and communication takes place between a Finn and an American.

Kirra's (1999) study concentrated on three main areas. The actual critical incident where problematic communication took place, the reaction to the critical incident and the coping strategies that were used in that situation. Different themes emerged from the analysis for all three areas of interest. (Kirra 1999:46-47,49-256,261-269,271-276.) One could thus say that this

approach thus gives valuable information, not just about the incidents but about how people act after being involved in one. Kirra (1999:33-34) reports that the study was carried out by using qualitative methods and the basis of analysis was Flanagan's critical incident technique.

There were five main categories of what was perceived as problematic by Finns in Kirra's (1999) study. These categories were *Language and language use* including, for example, *Language proficiency* and *Conversation management*; *Nonverbal communication* including for example *Eye contact* and *Physical appearance*, *Stereotypes*, *Role differences* including for example *Power distance* and *Miscellaneous* including for example *Eating and drinking habits* and *Greetings*. (Kirra 1999:46,49-256.) Since Kirra's (1999) study takes into account so many critical incidents one can assume to find very valuable information when considering and choosing critical incidents for training purposes. The incidents created and used in this study can be situated under the different groupings and categories of Kirra's (1999) study since it covers so many topics. However, Kirra (1999) settles for labelling situations under certain headings according to what happened in a rather superficial way, probably having to do with the vast amount of material that was collected.

6.2 General goals of the critical incident exercise (CIE)

Wight (1995:127-128) described the critical incident exercise (CIE) and discussed its development in different fields and settings. For the purposes of his article he narrowed the CIE to mean: "any concentrated series of critical incidents used in cross-cultural training" (Wight 1995:128), which fits the purposes of this study as well.

Wight (1995:128-129) listed the goals of the CIE and these general goals were partly adapted to the exercise created for this study as well. Specific goals for the incidents created for this study will be outlined and discussed later in detail. The general goals for the CIE (adapted from Wight 1995:128-129) are as follows:

- Increase participants' awareness of their own typical, idiosyncratic, or culturally determined interpretations and explanations of others' behaviour and their own attitudes and responses in situations such as the ones described.
- Draw out, compare, and analyse the various interpretations and perceptions of participants.
- Clarify the cultural differences in the incidents that might have contributed to the misunderstandings, problems, and conflicts or influenced the various interpretations and explanations of the participants.
- Assist participants in understanding the diversity among members of each culture as well as normative differences between the cultures.
- Help participants achieve the understanding necessary to behave more appropriately and effectively in similar situations.
- Enlarge participants' awareness of the kinds of things they need to learn and motivate them to continue learning. (Wight 1995:128-129)

The CIE, then, according to Wight (1995:128-129) is meant to get the participants to think about and process examples of situations that they are likely to encounter during their adjustment period to the new culture. The examples are somehow confusing, frustrating and/or difficult and thus are just like the situations that can be expected to come up. This study considers the training session to be a safe and non-threatening environment for the trainees in which they can begin their journey of realising what might be expected of them and what types of situations and feelings they may encounter during their intercultural experience.

7 THE OVERALL REALISATION OF THE TRAINING SESSION

7.1 The orientation day

There are different exchange organisations in Finland for teenagers who want to go abroad and all of them are unique in how they train the students or if they do at all. For ten years I have personally been involved with one of these organisations, Youth For Understanding. During this time I have had the opportunity to observe as well as take part in, among other things, the pre-

departure orientation of this particular organisation. The training consists of two parts that are quite different from each other. The longer training session means one day of training where both the parents and students are present and since these sessions are only organised in a few cities in Finland, some people have to travel long distances to be present. The shorter session, then, usually means inviting only the students and the duration is only from one to three hours. The aim is to organise these shorter sessions in more towns so that people do not have to travel great distances to be able to participate in them. The exercise created for this study was tried out during two separate longer training sessions.

The one-day training sessions are meant to give the parents and students a better idea of what lies ahead and to prepare them for the year abroad or a year without their child, respectively, as well as give some relevant facts. Many major issues are to be dealt with, which means that there is not much time allotted to each theme of the day. The themes include insurance information, facts and experiences from the specific country the students are going to from people who have been there themselves, knowing what happens when one adjusts to a new culture, practical information about flight schedules and such, and the rules and regulations of the organisation. The experiment of this study was seen to fit the adjustment theme and was thus fitted in instead of the earlier used format. By allowing the new method to be tested the organisation gets the potential benefit of the new training method and after this study is finished is free to use the training material as they see fit in the future.

Two of the main training approaches that are used during these orientations can be linked to Brislin's (1989:444-445) categories that were mentioned earlier in chapter 5. A big part of the whole orientation day is usually made up of lectures about the different themes and thus falls under Brislin's (1989:444-445) category where the levels of low involvement and cognitions are combined. Since the orientation is only for one day and thus time constraints play a big part in organising the content, Brislin's (1989:444) observation that time demands often restrict using other techniques, seems quite true. Anyhow, to make the lecture approach successful the lecturer has to be good in that his/her performance is enthusiastic, interesting examples are used and visual aids are well integrated. However, if the training period consists of only the

lecture approach the risk is that the program will seem dull and that too many facts will be presented so that there is not enough time to process them. (Brislin 1989:444.) These are some of the reasons why the present study tried out an exercise in which the trainees have a more active role.

Continuing with Brislin's (1989:444-445) framework, the other big part of the orientation day falls into the category where the levels of low involvement and affect are combined. This means that the trainees do not directly participate but they will hopefully become emotionally involved. Often people who have previous experiences from the same culture lecture about them. The exchange organisation uses quite a lot of these 'old hands' as well as recently returned students to relate their experiences and to give the trainees an idea of what lies ahead. These stories of experiences, like lectures, are similarly useful when there is limited time since a lot of information can be delivered in a relatively short period of time.

As mentioned before, the orientation lasts only for one day and there are practical reasons for this. Both students and parents are advised to participate in the orientation and with school and work they cannot be expected to spend weekdays on an orientation. One day is also convenient considering that the families do not have to make over-night arrangements if they come from other towns. Thus, the concrete time slot that the experiment was allotted was only approximately one and a half hours.

There is a lot of new information for students and their parents to be digested during one day and some families have to travel long distances to be present so the whole training day can only be a certain length. Usually the orientation starts at nine a.m. and ends around five p.m.

7.2 Location of the exercise in the orientation

The cities where the critical incidents exercise (CIE) was tried out were Jyväskylä and Oulu. The exercise was first carried out in Oulu on 5th of May 2001 and then in Jyväskylä on 12th of May 2001. The exercise was held during different times of the day in both places and this fact has both its advantages and disadvantages. Its advantage is that some factors in the results can

probably be related to the time of day the exercise was conducted. However, its disadvantage is that some of the students' reactions in either group can be due to the different time the exercise was conducted. Wight (1995:131) also comments on where to situate the CIE in a training program but in this case the advice was not plausible. Wight refers to longer training periods than one day and thus his advice on when to use the CIE, in the beginning or later in the program, does not fit this study.

In Oulu the CIE was situated at the very end of the orientation day, from 3.15 p.m. to about 5 p.m., which understandably resulted in most of the students being quite tired and not at their most alert. It was the last thing the students had to attend before going home. The orientation had started at nine a.m. and some of the students had driven with their families from as far as Ivalo that morning. The day had already covered quite massive topics, one after another, so already a lot of new information had been processed.

In Jyväskylä the CIE was situated earlier in the day, from 11.45 a.m. to 1.15 p.m., so that only the language test preceded it. Compared to Oulu the participants were more alert and the general atmosphere was also better. A conclusion could easily be drawn that the CIE should be conducted as early as possible during the training day so that the participants are more likely to be active, alert and not yet tired. However, one could argue that the same applies to any of the themes during the orientation. None of the themes will benefit by being the last item on the agenda after a long day of new and perhaps puzzling information.

8 FRAMEWORK FOR THE TRAINING MATERIAL

The actual parts that the CIE used in this study consisted of were also adapted from Wight (1995) and they will be discussed in more detail later in this section. Briefly summarised, the main parts were: individual work, small group work and a debriefing discussion. The trainer is mostly in the background during the first two parts except, of course, when he/she gives instructions in the beginning. The trainer's job is also to make sure that time

restraints are adhered to. During the debriefing discussion the trainer has a slightly bigger role in helping to draw conclusions and keep up the conversation.

8.1 The target group and grouping

The target group of this study consisted of twenty-one high-school aged youngsters aged between 16 and 18, who had been chosen to go the United States of America for approximately one year as exchange students by an organisation called Youth For Understanding. There were nine boys and twelve girls but the sex of the participants has not been considered as relevant in this study. The participants came from many Finnish towns but the orientations for them were held in Oulu and Jyväskylä.

There were quite a different number of participants in Oulu and Jyväskylä and this, of course, affected the grouping procedure. In Oulu there were fourteen participants, seven boys and seven girls, and they were divided into four smaller groups. There were two groups of two boys and two girls, one group of two boys and a girl and one group of one boy and two girls. In Jyväskylä there were only seven participants, two boys and five girls, which resulted in forming only two small groups. There were one boy and three girls in one group and one boy and two girls in the other.

The conversations of each small group were recorded to better establish the efficiency and relevance of the questions the groups were supposed to discuss and to find out whether the incidents and what happened in them were discovered easily or with much effort.

8.3 Individual and small group work

First, small groups were formed according to the number of participants, which was different in Oulu and Jyväskylä. As was mentioned before, there were four small groups formed in Oulu and two in Jyväskylä. To group people at this point was necessary to determine which incidents were given out to

whom. After this was established, the participants started individually reading the incidents given to them and marking their observations to the questions after each incident, which will be described in section 8.4. The aim here was to get the participants familiarised with the incidents that were allotted to their group. This was also the moment where the impressions of what happened would be formed for the first time and they would then be discussed later in the small group.

After everyone had finished reading their incidents the small groups were formed. All of the people in the same group had the same incidents, which they were supposed to discuss by telling each other what were their interpretations of the situations and reactions of the characters. The expectation was that people would analyse incidents somewhat differently from each other and that these different interpretations would, then, trigger some discussion on why someone chose to look at a situation in a certain way.

8.3 Creating the incidents

Wight (1995), an experienced critical incident trainer in various fields, believes that using critical incidents is a very good way to get trainees involved in thinking about and analysing the attitudes and behaviours that might be important when interacting in situations they are being trained for. In describing the method of using critical incidents in cross-cultural training, Wight (1995:128) describes critical incidents as “brief descriptions of situations in which there is a misunderstanding, problem, or conflict arising from cultural differences between interacting parties or where there is a problem of cross-cultural adaptation.” Each incident is supposed to give only as much information as needed to set the stage, describe what happened and perhaps describe the feelings and reactions of the participants involved in the incident. The incident is not supposed to reveal or explain the cultural differences that the participants in the described situation bring with them. Rather these differences are discovered and revealed as part of the training session. (Wight 1995:128.) One of the main aims when trying out the exercise

in Oulu and Jyväskylä was to find out whether this happened during the training session.

The first part of this study was to select a group of critical incidents to be used during the training sessions. The basic format of doing this as well as writing the incidents and carrying out the training session were adapted from Wight (1995). Wight (1995:129) recommends that incidents should ideally be based on actual events, either on the writer's own experiences or persons interviewed by the writer. The incidents for this study were written according to the writer's own experiences and the experiences of exchange students to the United States and other people who have spent some time there. When one listens to many stories of cultural difficulties experienced in the United States by non-Americans some recurring themes start to form. A couple of hypothetical incidents were formed based on these themes rather than an actual occurrence.

Wight (1995:129) recommends that when developing or selecting incidents for a certain group one should keep in mind what they are about to encounter and what types of cross-cultural interactions they might expect. When selecting the incidents for this study the circumstances of an exchange student were kept in mind. Although the students can be placed practically anywhere in the United States the basic things will remain the same where-ever they go. These include an American family they will be staying with, an American high school they will be attending and most of the time they will probably be surrounded by American teenagers or their American host family members. Keeping these things in mind the incidents used in this study were modified and adapted, when needed, to the life of a teenager. One character in every incident is an exchange student and the places (school, party, soccer game, car, coffee shop, home, the street) and persons (members of the host family, teachers, waitress, friend, previously unknown person) in the incidents are such that they can easily be identified with.

When writing the incidents Wight (1995:129-130) emphasises that every incident should be quite short and concise and that it should only contain the pieces of information that are needed: background information to set the stage, a description of what happened and possibly the reactions of the participants. As was mentioned before, the incident itself should not give clues to why

something happened. After being written the incidents should be read through by a person familiar with the culture that is dealt with to make sure the incidents are plausible and typical. In this study two persons familiar with the American culture and intercultural communication read through the incidents and after minor changes were satisfied with the outcome.

Basically there is one intended cross-cultural difficulty per incident to be identified as Wight (1995:129) recommends that each incident should focus on only one issue or problem. Different perspectives of what the issue in each incident is, can, of course, arise as different readers analyse the situation. This is not necessarily a bad thing since the main point of the incidents is to raise the reader's awareness of potential communication difficulties in new situations in a different culture. The point is not necessarily the exact difficulty as such because multiple things can and do happen to different people. The incidents are mainly examples and tools for raising the awareness of the reader of what types of situations one might find oneself in while in a different cultural environment. The language of the incidents is Finnish to ensure understanding and to make the following conversation easy to start and continue since students can use their mother tongue.

The number of incidents ultimately became ten because it seemed an appropriate number for the students to handle and to go through during a restricted time frame. More of the incidents could perhaps have made the students feel like they would never end and thus bore them rather than keep up their interest. With a smaller amount, though, the aims of compiling incidents, which are based on different theories, would not have been as well fulfilled. Also, with ten incidents there is the possibility of giving each smaller group just a few incidents but still get the information from all ten incidents during the debriefing conversation in which everybody participates at the end.

8.4 The goals of the incidents

Each incident focuses on a certain issue considered to be somewhat relevant to the mainstream American culture. The issues that the incidents are created around are based on both literature on Finnish and American cultural

typicalities and differences between them as well as the experiences of former Finnish exchange students to the United States and others who have spent long periods of time there. Anyhow, the concept of American culture and its traits are so vast that they cannot be defined in a well-rounded manner. The United States is quite the melting pot of different cultures and there are so many different ethnic groups that it is impossible to distinguish one American culture. Keeping this in mind, this study still discusses the differences and typicalities of Finnish and American cultures. These are, of course, generalisations of some sort and refer mostly to white, middle-class values and ways of life. These are, at least generally speaking, the circles in which exchange students are mostly placed. Supposedly not many ethnic communities in the United States have a tradition of hosting foreign exchange students.

There are three main goals concerning every incident. Since the incidents are all created and written in the same manner, the basic goals stay the same for each and every one. The first goal is to make trainees realise that the situations where something goes wrong or after which one is left confused, can happen virtually anywhere and with both strangers and people you have got to know a bit already. This is the reason for selecting incidents that vary from each other and that deal with different aspects of life, for example school, family and free time, and with different groups of people, for example friends, host family members, teachers and strangers. However, while selecting and writing the incidents, the aspects of teenage life in particular were kept in mind to make sure that the incidents would be interesting to the trainees so that they could better become identified with the persons in the incidents. At least one person in every incident is a teenager, every incident has an exchange student as a character and the above-mentioned spheres of life can quite definitely be seen to consume a big part in the trainee's life.

The second goal is to make trainees discuss and find possible explanations and reasons for the actions and reactions of the persons in the incidents. It has the same idea as the second general goal of the CIE by Wight (1995:128-129). As was mentioned before, there has been a certain issue in mind for each incident when writing them. This study wanted to find out whether they were easily found by the trainees, and what other possible issues would be brought

up to explain the situation. As Brislin (1989:447) pointed out, the incidents should not be too difficult. However, there is no harm in other interpretations of the incidents that come up since communication situations are always somewhat interpretable. Discussing different interpretations imitates real life in the sense that one rarely knows for sure what went wrong, at least not while still in the situation. Sometimes one does not even realise that something had gone wrong or that the other participant had a totally different interpretation of the interaction, like Gudykunst (1995:16-17) and Ehrenhaus (1983:261) explain. Other explanations can also raise rather interesting discussions concerning their plausibility. If the original issue in the incident does not come up during the group discussions the trainer can bring it up during the debriefing conversation in the end and explain the logic behind it. It can also be discussed alongside with the reasons of why nobody thought of a similar explanation earlier. Wight's (1995:128-129) third and fourth general goals of the CIE mentioned earlier in chapter 6.2 relate to these matters as well.

The third goal is to make trainees identify with the feelings of the characters in the incidents by trying to put oneself in their position and think of why they reacted as they did. In every incident there are two cultures represented: Finnish and American. They are represented by characters from both Finland and the United States. There are also activating questions at the end of each incident to make sure that both the Finnish and American points of view are considered while discussing the incident. Hence, the goal is to better learn to identify both typical aspects of one's own cultural traits as well as to try and identify with the emotions and reactions of the characters from the target culture. The same goal can be found from the general goals of the CIE by Wight (1995:128-129).

The above-mentioned specific goals and the general goals mentioned in chapter 6.2 were aided by the different parts of the exercise. What follows is an explanation of what these parts were and how they were seen to help achieve the goals.

8.4.1 Activating questions concerning the incidents

Each incident was followed with a few questions to make the participants analyse and interpret what happened, and to think what would be appropriate reactions and attitudes in that particular situation. The questions are linked to the goals, to both the specific and general ones, mentioned above, but especially to the first general and the third specific ones. They emphasise the awareness and identification of one's own and others' feelings, attitudes and responses in the situations.

The questions also assist the participants in achieving the first general goal of the CIE adapted from Wight (1995:128-129), which consisted of increasing participants' awareness of their own and others' behaviour. Each set of questions refers to both the American character/s and the Finnish one. When the participant is asked to identify with the person from his/her own culture he/she is believed to become more culturally self-aware. When the participant is asked to identify with the person from the other culture he/she is believed to become more aware of the other culture and thus empathise with persons from that culture (Wight 1995:130.)

After each incident five questions were posed, following Wight (1995:130). The questions were in Finnish as were the incidents. These were the questions after each incident:

- To what extent do you interpret the situation like _____ (name of person)?
Not at all in the same way 1 2 3 4 5 In exactly the same way.
- Why do you agree/disagree to the extent that you do?
- How do you think you would feel if you were _____ (name of person)?
- What would you do if you were in _____'s (name of person) situation?
- Why do you think _____ (name of person) acted in this way?

The above questions were meant to be answered quickly after reading each incident and their main purpose was to serve as personal notes for the trainee to better recall what each incident was about. So when the discussion of the different incidents in the small groups started one could easily remember what one thought when reading the incident earlier.

8.4.2 The instruction sheet

At the same time as the incidents were handed out to the participants they also received an instruction sheet (see appendix 1, p.111) which was adapted from Wight (1995:139). It contained advice on how to conduct the following small group conversation in a sensible manner. Along with the advice there were some questions that the group could also think about and discuss to deepen their understanding of the incident at hand. The questions were as follows:

- What is the problem in the situation?
- Why is it a problem – what are the real issues involved?
- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the persons in the incident?
- How would you prevent a problem like this from happening?
- What could you do if this kind of problem did occur anyway?
-What means or practices could you use to solve this type of problem?
- In what ways could you better prepare yourself to face and solve these types of problems?

The first two questions are linked to the second specific and general goals, which emphasise finding out and analysing different interpretations and explanations of the situation. The rest of the questions were to make the trainees ponder about other issues related to the incident, such as how it could be avoided or if it did happen how one could go about solving it. The aim was to help activate and expand the conversation and give the small group concrete questions and subjects to talk about if discussion were to be slow or hard to start.

8.4.3 The debriefing discussion

After the small group work, at the end of the training session, there was a general discussion, here called a debriefing discussion. The aim was to introduce all of the ten critical incidents that had been discussed in the small groups to the whole group so that everyone would get to hear every incident. The incidents were gone through one by one with someone familiar with the incident first summarising or reading through it. Then the person would tell

the others what they had discussed in the small group, what they thought was the problem in the situation, and how they would go about solving it. At this point others were encouraged to participate in the discussion by perhaps commenting on the incident, reasons leading to it, characters' reactions and so on. Actually the participants were encouraged to comment on any aspect and to ask questions if something was still bothering them about the incident. The trainer's role was to lead the discussion and perhaps ask questions that were not otherwise being asked to make things clearer.

The debriefing discussion was the means to achieve some more of the general goals of the CIE by Wight (1995:128-129). During the discussion the purpose was to point out, clarify and expand the issues that had come up during the small group discussions. Since most incidents are likely to illicit other interpretations as well as the one intended when writing the incident, it will easily illustrate diversity, both among the participants as representatives of the same culture and then in the target culture since many of the different interpretations may be plausible. There are not necessarily correct answers to be found but just different types of interpretations, just as it is in real life situations as well. The intended interpretation that was in mind while writing the incident was revealed after the discussion of each one so that the participants would get an idea of what was the original thinking and logic behind the incidents.

9 THE CRITICAL INCIDENTS USED IN THIS STUDY

The ten incidents were first divided into three main categories to distinguish different themes that emerged from them. The categories overlap somewhat and are by no means mutually exclusive. They were adapted from Kirra (1999) and Thomas (1983). Kirra's (1999) study revealed different themes or dimensions of communication that had been problematic for Finns when dealing with non-Finns and mainly labelled and categorised a vast amount of data on critical incidents. Thomas's (1983) work relies on pragmatic theory, and her article, which was discussed earlier in chapter 2.4, p.18-21, dealt with

pragmatic failure. Two of the main categories are somewhat similar to each other: language and language use adapted from Kirra (1999) and pragmatic failure adapted from Thomas (1983). After all, pragmatics is said to be the study of language in use. The third main category is nonverbal communication.

9.1 Language and language use

A great number of incidents that were reported in Kirra's (1999) study were selected to belong under one of the main headings language and language use. There were incidents ranging from simple misunderstandings that were due to the lack of language proficiency to more complicated notions of contrasting polite and informative ways of using the language (Kirra 1999:49-112), the latter ones of which are actually pragmatic aspects of language. Most of the incidents in this study as well are situated under the same main heading. Also Thomas (1983) talks about similar linguistic misunderstandings that are being referred to, but uses different terms to refer to the situations.

The incidents that are situated under the heading *Language and language use* deal with a variety of language aspects: conversation management and transference of mother tongue patterns into a foreign language, which are also pragmatic aspects of language, and language proficiency.

9.1.1 Silence

Incident number 3 reflects an aspect of language use which is conversation management. More specifically expectations concerning the amount of talk is the reason for a communication breakdown. The incident portrays a situation where the cultural factor that is being misinterpreted is silence.

(3) While Jouni was in the USA as an exchange student he had got to know some nice local people, one of whom was Mark. One day Mark had invited Jouni for a drive. They took off and Mark drove around town and parts surrounding it. Jouni was thrilled and he enjoyed riding along, silently admiring people and scenery that

came along. As the drive progressed Mark suddenly snapped that he can't take it anymore. He couldn't understand why Jouni was angry at him and was giving him the silent treatment. Jouni was quite surprised and confused about Mark's outburst. He felt somehow betrayed by his friend.

Silence is a way of communicating, and it should not be perceived as noncommunication. It can have a variety of functions, such as punishing others, avoiding embarrassment for others, showing respect for others and creating interpersonal distance. (Richmond et al. 1991:301.) The way in which these functions are used and interpreted in different cultures vary and sometimes is the cause of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Research shows that the patterns concerning the amount of talk and silence in Finnish and American communication differ from each other. The incident above is a demonstration of different expectations and interpretations concerning silence during interaction.

In the above incident Mark interprets Jouni's silence as a sign of anger or being upset about something and thinks Jouni is being silent intentionally so he reacts. Actually, all this probably happens so unconsciously that Mark might not, if questioned, know how to explain his reaction toward Jouni. For Jouni, being silent in the situation is probably a much more relaxed and typical way of behaving than talking all the time, and he is not intentionally conveying any other emotion than satisfaction in a way that he is used to. One would not have to speak in that type of situation according to Finnish communication patterns and this behaviour is transferred over to the non-Finnish situation. While Mark wants and needs to fill up the silence with talk because that is what he is used to, Jouni has no need to do that because he is conveying a positive message by staying silent.

The goal of the incident is to make participants realise that not just what is said is important, but also the rhythm of communication is essential with its pauses and silences. They are interpreted differently from culture to culture and one should be more aware and careful of how one uses them in a different environment. Incident number 3 hopefully makes the participants pay attention to the ways in which silences are used in the Finnish context and then they can do the same in the American context.

9.1.2 *The use of please*

Incident number 6 reflects the transference of mother tongue patterns into a foreign language. The incident portrays a situation where patterns of the Finnish way of using language transfer over to English. Thomas's (1983:99-103) theory of pragmalinguistic failure also connects to the incident in question. It occurs when the pragmatic function of an utterance in the native language is not the same as in the target language. A request translated from Finnish can be interpreted as an order in English if one does not remember to use the word *please*. Forgetting this small but significant word seems to be rather common for Finns speaking English (see e.g. Arola 1997:62, Kirra 1999:58). The cultural factor in the below incident of this study is exactly the same – the leaving out of *please*.

(6) Kati was in a coffee shop in her exchange town and she ordered a coffee at the counter. The waiter had seemed very friendly and nice when Kati had walked in but after Kati had ordered her coffee (“Coffee!”) the waiter clearly became ruder towards Kati. She kept serving the other customers in a friendly manner. Kati was offended by the waiter's behaviour and thought that maybe she doesn't like teenagers for some reason and doesn't consider them as proper customers.

In America saying *please* is expected when making requests and it is considered appropriate when talking to, for example, waitresses (Althen 1988:82), as was the case in the incident above. Kati's utterance would not be considered particularly rude in a Finnish context and it is, in fact, the normal way to order in a cafeteria. The Finnish language does not have an equivalent for the word *please* and thus it is very easy for a Finn to forget it when speaking English, in other words transfer one's mother tongue patterns into the foreign language.

The aim of the incident is to make participants aware of the different levels of politeness and that they are not straightforwardly transferable from Finnish to English. For example, even using the Finnish polite form, the conditional, will not suffice because it is not considered very polite on its own in English.

9.1.3 Mispronunciation

Incident number 8 is about language proficiency. It portrays a situation where different pronunciation causes communication breakdown. The lack of language proficiency can easily lead to misunderstandings if the learner has only minor skills in the target language. However, if one is under the impression that one's target language skills are quite good there is a possibility that one starts looking for other reasons for miscommunication than language proficiency. This is what happens in the incident below.

(8) Tiina and two of her exchange student friends were on their lunch break but they had to speak with the maths teacher, Mr Rogers, who was in the teachers' lounge. The girls saw the janitor in front of the teachers' lounge and they asked if they could see Mr Rogers. The janitor looked very confused after hearing the girls' question and he asked them to repeat the teacher's name several times. The girls felt embarrassed repeating the same name again and again and they thought that the janitor must be kidding with them. Finally the janitor asked the girls what the teacher in question taught. After finding that out the girls could see from his expression that he finally understood who they meant and went to get Mr Rogers.

The girls in the incident slightly mispronounce the name of the teacher and use different intonation than what the janitor is used to. The term mispronunciation might be misleading since the problem might just be different pronunciation, not necessarily incorrect pronunciation in terms of other varieties of English. This might lead to an especially confusing situation if the foreigner is used to his/her pronunciation being correct and good in the teacher's opinion in language classes. Different varieties of English may thus come as quite a surprise. They are probably not the foreigner's first choice when thinking of what resulted in communication failure or difficulties. In the incident Tiina and the girls mispronounce the name of the teacher, perhaps in a British English manner they have learnt from school, and the janitor does not understand them since he is used to hearing the name pronounced in a certain way all his life. After hearing what the teacher in question teaches he realises who the girls meant and says the teacher's name out loud the way he is used to saying it.

The purpose of this incident is to show the trainees that sometimes the difficulties experienced in communication can be as simple as different intonation combined with slightly different pronunciation. It might seem rather unbelievable, but it is amazing how fixated people are on very explicit ways of saying certain things.

9.2 Pragmatic failure

As was mentioned earlier, Thomas's (1983) terms are used alongside Kirra's (1999). This section, however, concentrates on what Thomas (1983:106) calls cross-culturally different 'pragmatic ground rules'. Breaking these rules is one type of sociopragmatic failure, which again is a subcategory of pragmatic failure. These issues were also discussed earlier in chapter 2.4. Cross-culturally different pragmatic ground rules mean that everything said cannot be taken literally but have to be interpreted according to a set of ground rules which vary from culture to culture. If a person speaks ungrammatically he/she is at worst considered to speak badly but if a person acts according to different pragmatic principles he/she is easily considered to behave badly. Thus a person's character is being criticised even though the problem still is a linguistic matter. (Thomas 1983:106-107.) This is an important point to get through to people expecting to live in another culture. What might seem like value judgements can actually stem from how people use language, what ground rules are adhered to. "Just as children have to learn not to interpret everything as the literal truth, so people need to be taught that pragmatic ground rules do not necessarily operate in the same way in other languages." (Thomas 1983:106-107.)

9.2.1 *Small talk*

Incident number 2 deals with small talk. More specifically, it portrays a situation where an utterance is used as a well-meaning gesture and the misunderstanding comes mainly from that.

(2) Virpi was at a soccer game with her host family. During the game Virpi started talking with a girl she had never met before sitting next to her. The conversation revealed that Virpi was an exchange student from Finland. Rachel, the girl, was interested in what Virpi thought of America and what she missed about Finland. The girls got to know each other during the game and seemed to have quite a lot to talk about. Virpi started thinking that she had found a really nice new friend. At the end of the game Rachel said that she had also enjoyed talking and that if Virpi needed anything she'd like to help. Even as Rachel was leaving and they parted in the crowd she shouted out at Virpi: "Call me anytime!" It wasn't until Rachel had been lost in the crowd that Virpi realised she didn't have Rachel's phone number nor Rachel hers. She approached the subject with the family on their way home but they just said that those types of things happen. Maybe Rachel is a busy teenager and she wouldn't have had time to see Virpi anyhow – after all they go to different schools. Virpi felt that the family's quite indifferent reaction seemed like an underestimation of the situation because they had had a good time together and they could have become friends.

Salo-Lee et al. (1996:42) state that according to research the American way of talking can appear superficial from the Finnish perspective. Certain expressions that are only meant as friendly gestures and nothing more can be considered as promises or invitations by persons from different cultures, although they are not. This is what happened in the incident above. Rachel's invitation to call was merely meant as a friendly gesture, yet Virpi interpreted it as a real invitation to call.

When considering the larger picture, not just the invitation to call, one can suspect that there were different kinds of expectations at play. The communication between the girls can be described as small talk from the point of view of Rachel. However, Virpi interpreted Rachel's behaviour and comments as genuine interest and a start of a friendship. Violating the rule of Finnish talk: "Be personally committed to or invested in what you say" by Carbaugh (1995:55) is also at play here. Finns tend to put a lot of truth-value to words and expect certain utterances, such as Rachel's in the incident, to be genuine promises leading to something (Salo-Lee 1993:85-86, Carbaugh 1995:56-57).

The goal of this incident was to get the participants to realise that the functions of talk can differ. Although the Finnish expectation is that people

mean what they say, it should not be taken as granted also somewhere else. Talk can just be a way of being friendly and nice to someone close by.

9.2.2 Greetings

Incident number 4 portrays how differently pragmatic ground rules are applied to greetings. Salo-Lee et al. (1996:16) take greetings as an example of rituals that are familiar and expected in one's own culture. One knows how to respond and act. These rules do not work as expected anymore when there are other cultures involved.

(4) Pasi had been placed in a relatively small town in the United States and during the first couple of weeks he cycled around town to get to know his surroundings better. One day a man who came cycling from the opposite direction shouted out at Pasi: "How are you?". Pasi thought that the man might be a friend of the host family's since he was so interested, even though Pasi didn't recognise him. Pasi thought that what a friendly man and while getting off his bike he started thinking what these couple of weeks had been like for him. After getting off his bike and ready to respond the man was nowhere in sight anymore and Pasi realised he was standing at the edge of the road all by himself. He was embarrassed about the possibility that somebody had witnessed what had happened and he quickly climbed back on his bike and cycled off.

Salo-Lee et al. (1996:17,46) also use the American greeting "How are you?" and the expected answer "Fine, thank you" as an example of a ritualised greeting. If the expected answer is replaced by a foreigner's unexpected answer of perhaps a thorough explanation of one's health, it can cause an awkward situation. The greeting, although in question form, is not an actual question that one wants thoroughly answered, but a message that the other person's presence has been noticed. In the incident above Pasi interpreted the man's greeting as perhaps a conversation opener or even a genuine question and was prepared to give a rather lengthy answer of how things had been going lately. The man's meaning, though, was to perhaps just acknowledge Pasi somehow while passing him.

The purpose of the incident was to familiarise participants with the American greeting “How are you?” and bring out the fact that no-one really wants to know. In other words, although in a question format, it is not actually a question at all, but a common greeting.

9.2.3 Form of address

Incident number 9 reflects differences in the form of address. It portrays the use of Finnish pragmatic ground rules in an American context. In Finland a student can use a teacher’s first name. It is considered normal. However, using the teacher’s first name in the United States is not considered appropriate: one must use Mr/Mrs connected with the last name or Sir/Miss.

(9) Katja was in her maths class and everyone was doing exercises while the teacher went around the classroom checking. Katja had enjoyed herself at school and noticed that there were a lot of discussions during classes and that many teachers encouraged pupils to voice their own opinions. But now Katja was stuck with a certain exercise and didn’t know how to proceed so she decided to ask the teacher for help. She raised her hand to get the teacher’s attention but since the teacher didn’t seem to notice that she also called out for her using her first name. The teacher seemed to startle and a girl sitting next to Katja let out a giggle and gave Katja an almost piteous look. Anyhow, the teacher came to help but seemed quite tense and didn’t properly concentrate on giving advice on how to solve the exercise. Katja didn’t quite understand what had happened because the teacher had always seemed really relaxed and helpful. Katja thought to herself whether she shouldn’t have asked for advice after all.

Katja thought that since the relationship between teacher and students seemed to be rather informal, like in Finland, she would use the same strategy for obtaining the teacher’s attention. The illusion of sameness at the level of informality made Katja think that the sameness prevailed in every aspect.

The aim of this incident was to make the participants aware of the differences in form of address and what is considered polite. Although using first names and informal speech are rather usual in Finland, one should pay attention to what forms and what type of speech are used in different situations in a different culture.

9.2.4 Assertive versus modest behaviour

Incident number 10 reflects masculine and feminine values in different cultures. It portrays the difference between assertive and modest behaviour. Hofstede (1991) established four different dimensions with which cultures can be compared, and masculinity versus femininity is one of them. Among other things it opposes the desirability of assertive behaviour against the desirability of modest behaviour. Out of 53 countries the United States was ranked the 15th most masculine country, thus being rather masculine. However, Finland is ranked 47th and thus situated at the feminine end of the list. In masculine countries, like the USA, children learn to be competitive and ambitious and assertive behaviour and attempts at excelling are appreciated. In feminine countries, like Finland, children learn to be nonambitious and modest and assertive behaviour is easily ridiculed. (Hofstede 1991:79-89.)

The Finnish way of telling others about one's skills or where one is good at is modest, something of an understatement. One can normally assume that the person can do better than what is being stated. In the United States, however, Mikluha (1998:414) noted that Americans tend to exaggerate. For someone coming from another culture this might seem arrogant or even untruthful. According to Thomas (1983:107) "It is not always easy to distinguish between moral principles and pragmatic principles. . . . Yet, if it is inconceivable that an entire people is actually less truthful than another, we must look for different pragmatic principles in operation." The following incident reflects the differences between being modest and exaggerating.

(10) During his exchange year Tommi had a host brother, Keith, who was about the same age as he was. The host family was used to going to Mexico every year during school holidays and this year they had taken Tommi with them with the permission of the exchange organisation. Tommi had studied Spanish in Finland for a couple of years as an optional subject and the family was amazed about Tommi's language skills when he could translate part of the menu at a restaurant and ask for directions. After all, Tommi had told them before that he didn't really know Spanish. All of the other family members had poorer Spanish skills than Tommi.

After returning to school after the trip Tommi heard Keith telling his friends about it. Keith bragged about how he had used Spanish fluently during the trip and demonstrated this with samples of his

good pronunciation. Tommi was ashamed of Keith's excessive bragging over his rather inferior language skills. After all, Keith had only managed to utter 'good morning/night' and order from the menu. Tommi started to think that he had an exaggerating and self-praising host brother, perhaps even a liar. Tommi felt that modesty would have been appropriate considering Keith's actual language skills.

In the incident Tommi is modest about his knowledge of Spanish but he is still the best in using it compared to the other family members. Back at school when he overhears Keith exaggerating his own Spanish skills, Tommi feels that he borders on lying and does not understand why he would want to make his friends believe he knows Spanish well even when he really does not.

The main aim of this incident was to prepare the participants for the difference in telling about, for example, oneself. Exaggeration is typical in the USA as being modest is typical in Finland. Being aware of this difference will at least help interpret others' overstatements better.

The purpose of each incident has briefly been mentioned at the end. The main aim, however, was to illustrate an array of different areas in which misunderstandings can happen. Hopefully the participants were also able to broaden the perspective outside the scope of the exact situations in the incidents. The goal was to give a glimpse of what might lie ahead and what types of self-evident truths one is used to that do not normally even cross one's mind.

9.3 Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is communication by means of nonverbal messages. It does not occur in isolation, but within different contexts and often in the company of verbal messages. Messages are interpreted in various ways in different contexts. Keeping this in mind nonverbal behaviour can be broken into several categories, such as physical appearance, face and eye behaviour, gesture and movement, vocal behaviour, space, touch, scent and smell and time. (Richmond et al. 1991:13-15.) The first two categories appear in this

study and some nonverbal behaviours, such as smiling, clothing and nudity, belonging to these categories are looked at more carefully in this section.

9.3.1 Smile

Incident number 1 actually reflects a number of nonverbal behaviours and their interpretations, but it was originally mainly built around one: smile. The incident portrays a situation in which there is no communication breakdown as such, just a misunderstanding, a misinterpretation of nonverbal clues.

(1) Kirsi was at a party where there were a lot of people who she didn't know yet. Kirsi sat on the sofa and felt she had had a good time. A friend with whom she had been sitting most of the time left to go to the ladies room and Kirsi was left to sit by herself on the sofa. Soon one of the unfamiliar boys, Jared, came to talk to Kirsi. The boy was concerned because Kirsi had seemed so sad all night. He had wanted to find out why she wasn't having a good time. Kirsi was surprised about Jared's interpretation and thought that he might not have noticed her with the friend earlier in the evening. Now that she was sitting alone he might have thought that she was lonely. That was the only interpretation Kirsi could think of for Jared's conclusion.

Referring to Richmond et al. (1991:6-8), nonverbal communication, as opposed to nonverbal behaviour, took place in the above incident. The message of being content was sent intentionally by Kirsi and the receiver, Jared, interpreted it as a message. Nonverbal communication thus took place but it turns out that the receiver had not interpreted the message in the intended way. Kirsi's behaviour that meant being content and relaxed was different from what Jared was used to. One can speculate that many aspects of Kirsi's behaviour were giving out the message for an American onlooker that she was not, in fact, enjoying herself very much. Yet from the Finnish perspective she was sending out signals of being perfectly content. The causes for the possible misunderstanding could be the following. Kirsi sat alone or only talked to one person. From the American point of view one is expected to mingle at parties and get to know people, not just sit with the person you already know. Kirsi did not smile a lot either during the evening even though

she enjoyed herself. Her expression was quite basic, which in Finland is not a sign of sadness or discomfort. However, Mikluha (1998:416), while listing many typical nonverbal communication patterns typical of Americans, mentioned that it is typical for Americans to “Keep smiling”, that they smile constantly. These signals combined together probably gave out a rather different message to the American interpreting the situation than the Finnish one sending it.

Kraut and Johnston (1999) have attempted to present evidence about the cause of smiling in social settings. They claim that according to research smiling is independent from the emotional states of the person who is smiling and rather what causes smiling is social interaction and when indicating friendliness. Anyhow, from an emotional expression view, feelings of joy or happiness are displayed by smiling and it should be a product of those feelings unless one is trying to mask or inhibit it for some reason. There are also cultural and individual differences in smiling. The things that make people happy vary both culturally and individually and the situations when it is socially appropriate to smile vary from culture to culture. (Kraut and Johnston 1999:74-76.)

The aim of the incident is to show the participants that one may be misunderstood on the basis of nonverbal clues. Even though a person may be sending signals of contentment, the same signals might be differently interpreted by the standards of another culture.

9.3.2 Dress code

Incident number 5 reflects one of the nonverbal aspects of physical appearance. The incident portrays a situation where dress code is the main cause of misunderstanding. There is an unwritten rule in American schools that one must not wear the same clothes to school for two consecutive days. Exchange students often mention this rule when asked about differences and every returned exchange student that I have asked about it say the same thing: one can not wear the same clothes to school for two days in a row. People will notice if one does not adhere to this code. In Finland there is no such rule.

(5) Saara and her American friend were discussing the upcoming night at school and that they would like to do something fun together. They decided to rent out a good video and watch it at Catherine's. Saara was concerned about how she would get back home from Catherine's at a late hour because the family's car was being serviced. Catherine ended up asking Saara to spend the night at their place so that getting a ride in the evening wouldn't have to be considered. They could go to school together the next morning. Saara thought that she already had everything she needed for the next day and thus didn't have to pick up anything. However, Catherine seemed to be surprised about Saara's opinion and asked what she was planning on wearing the next day to school. Saara then thought that perhaps she had a stain on her clothes that she just hadn't noticed but after checking she realised this was not the case. Saara then informed Catherine that she was planning on wearing the same clothes as she was now wearing. Catherine gave Saara a strange look and insisted that she lend some of her clothes since they were about the same size. Saara felt that she would rather wear her own clothes and didn't really understand why Catherine was pushing her to wear her clothes.

Saara did not understand Catherine's worries on what to wear the next day. Saara just thought she would wear the same thing as she was wearing at that moment, just as she would in Finland. But since this is so improbable and just not done in America, Catherine needed to think of a solution and she offered to lend Saara some of her clothes.

The purpose of this incident is purely practical. Since the dress code seems to be a fact why let the students figure it out for themselves and be caught in an embarrassing situation at school. The experiences of people who have gone before them are supposed to help and this is a concrete example of a fact one should be aware of.

9.3.3 Nudity

Incident number 7 reflects another aspect of physical appearance. The incident portrays different cultural perceptions of nudity. In Finland nudity in one's own home and especially among people from the same sex and from one's own family is considered quite normal. In the United States people very rarely

see other people naked, not even one's own family members and thus nudity is neither expected nor considered very normal.

(7) Sari was at home with her host brother and sister, Julie and John, who were about the same age as her. Julie was inside the house with Sari while John was mowing the lawn. Sari had just finished on the exercise cycle and she heard that Julie was starting the washing machine. Sari made sure that Julie was washing coloureds and wanted to put her sweaty training gear into the machine as well. Sari took off her clothes next to the machine, put them into the machine, switched it on and then walked to the shower. Later on she heard Julie going on about 'the naked Finn' to her friends. John could have come in at any second and Sari was just going around the house naked. Sari wouldn't have even remembered the incident had she not heard Julie talk about it. Sari found it very difficult to understand why Julie would want to make such a big deal out of such a trivial matter.

In the above incident a matter which Sari considered trivial and normal was for Julie exotic and unexpected. Sari just did what she would have done in Finland had she been in the same situation there. She did not consider that nudity between girls the same age might be a sensitive issue. Julie, on the other hand, was quite surprised to witness Sari's behaviour and did not know how to interpret it so she discussed it with her friends. According to Richmond et al. (1991:6-8) accidental nonverbal communication took place in the above incident. Sari's action was not supposed to contain any message but Julie anyhow interpreted it as containing one.

The purpose of this incident is to get participants to consider that certain types of behaviour are not considered appropriate even between family members. One might want to observe what others do and follow their lead to avoid difficult situations. This did not happen in the incident, though. Sari just walked away without even noticing that she had done something out of the ordinary.

10 THE OUTCOME OF THE TRAINING SESSION

The next section attempts to discuss how the exercise worked in relation to the goals. First the small group work will be discussed, next the debriefing

discussion and last the exercise as a whole. The findings for the small group work are shown by examining the transcribed tapes of the group discussions. The debriefing discussion is evaluated based on the trainer's notes that were written right after the discussion. What must, then, be taken into account is that the evaluation is only done based on one person's opinion and views and as such may be biased.

There were three main goals concerning the incidents. The first was to make the trainees realise that critical incidents can happen virtually anywhere. To be able to establish whether this happened or not is rather difficult. Yet, one can say that by ensuring that different locations and different groups of people were featured in the incidents the possibility of this realisation was there. The second goal was to find out whether the issues that were thought about when writing the incidents were easily found by the trainees, and what other issues were brought up to explain the incidents. More generally, the goal was to make the trainees discuss and find explanations and reasons for the actions and reactions of the characters in the incidents. The third goal was to make the trainees identify with the feelings of both the Finnish and American characters so that some of the respective cultural traits would surface.

10.1 Issues – lost and found

This section concentrates on whether the second and third goals for the incidents were reached. These goals will be referred to as the goal of explanations and the goal of reactions in this section to simplify the writing process. The second goal, from now on referred to as the goal of explanations, was to make the trainees discuss and find explanations for the situations, see whether they would find the same sort of explanations for the incidents as what were thought about when writing them, and see what other types of explanations would come up. The third goal, the goal of reactions, was to make the trainees identify with the characters' feelings and reactions. To see whether these goals were accomplished during the small group work, transcripts of the tapes that were recorded while the small group work was in progress were examined. Trainees' comments are shown to support the views

of whether or not the goals were accomplished. Different groups are not looked at separately, but as a whole. Since the number of trainees was so small it was more fruitful to look at the general outcome, not the variants between the small groups. The same themes that were formed earlier for the incidents will be used in this section as well.

10.1.1 Language and language use

Incidents number 3, 6 and 8 belonged under the theme of language and language use and the central issues in them were essentially silence, the use of *please* and pronunciation respectively.

Incident number 3 was discussed in two groups. The issue was about differences in perceiving and reacting to silence and the characters involved were Mark, an American boy, and Jouni, a Finnish boy. The incident happened in Mark's car. Both goals were accomplished during the group discussions. The groups realised that the misunderstanding stemmed from the different way of using silence. The utterances from 1 to 4 below will try to demonstrate and justify these views:

- (1) se toine ei varmaa ajatellu että suunnillee pittää keskustella koko aja siinä--
'the other one didn't probably think that you have to talk all the time--'
- (2) nii koko ajan tavallaa small talkia ja olla sillai olla asiaa koko ajan muka—
'in a way small talk all the time and to have something to say all the time supposedly--'
- (3) se mark varmaan ei oo niinku tottunu että, voi kahtoo niin hiljakseen, ympärilleen--kyllä se on aika hämmennyksissään varmaan
'this Mark probably isn't used to that, one can just look around so quietly--he's probably quite confused'

- (4) just sillee voi luulla et, sen sen markin kannalta että, että haluaakohan tää nyt olla täällä - toinen istuu hiljaa ja kattelee vaan—
 'one can think that, looking from Mark's point of view he wonders if this guy wants to be here - the guy sits quietly and is just looking around--'

All of the utterances above include either the aspect of constant talk or silence and those are the aspects that were meant to be found by the trainees. Hence the goal of explanations was achieved. Utterances 1 and 2 look at the situation from Jouni's point of view. In utterance 1 it is stated that Jouni didn't think that he had to say something all the time and in utterance 2 the choice of words, mainly "supposedly", gives the idea that the trainee also felt that there was no need to talk all the time. The perspective is Jouni's and thus Finnish. The other two utterances 3 and 4, then, look at the situation from Mark's point of view. They try to give reasons for why Mark was upset about Jouni's silence and thus try to take the American character's perspective into consideration. Trainees were very sympathetic towards Jouni's reaction, which was being surprised and confused. Utterance 3 also takes Mark's feelings into consideration. Hence, both the American and Finnish views were considered, which was the goal of reactions.

The second incident under the language and language use theme, incident number 6, was about the use of *please* and the misunderstanding stemmed from the lack of it. The characters involved in the incident were Kati, a Finnish exchange student, and a waitress. The incident took place in a coffee shop. Two groups discussed the incident and they realised why the misunderstanding took place. However, other reasons than the lack of *please* were presented during the small group discussion. The goal of explanations was then achieved, but also other explanations came up, as can be seen from utterances 5 to 9 below:

- (5) siinäähä se ongelma oli se että, se ei sanonu sitä pliis – siihen loppuun
 'that was the problem that she didn't say please – in the end'
- (6) ois voinu pyytää vähä kohteliaammin sitä kofia
 'she could've asked a bit more politely for the coffee'

- (7) mutta periaatteena vois olla ihan semmonenkin että jos se ajattelee että nuoret, tai nuoria kohellaan huonosti
‘but the principle could be just something like that if she thinks that young people, or young people are treated badly’
- (8) mää en tajunnu että siihen ois pitäny sanoo se pliis sinne loppuun
‘I didn’t realise that please should’ve been said in the end’
- (9) ehkä se ei sanonu sitä tarpeeks selvästi selvästi mitä se halus
‘maybe she didn’t say clearly enough what she wanted’

Utterances 5 and 6 bring up the points that Kati should have said *please* and that it diminished the politeness of the statement. The same point, the waitress disliking young people, which was already suggested in the incident comes up in utterance 7 and is considered to be a plausible explanation for what happened. One trainee comments that she had not realised that the misunderstanding stemmed from the lack of *please*, in utterance 8 and in utterance 9 the possibility of not speaking clearly enough is brought up. There were many views, then, on what might have caused the waitress’s behaviour.

The goal of reactions was also accomplished concerning incident number 6. Both characters’ perspectives were considered during the discussions and the following utterances will illustrate this:

- (10) siinä ois pitäny myös ajatella sitä tarjoilijan kannalta sitä asiaa
‘it should’ve also been considered from the waitress’s point of view’
- (11) jos mää oisin kati siis nii mua ärsyttäis
‘if I were kati I’d be annoyed’

Utterance 10 states that the waitress’s point of view should have been taken into account but the group did not consider the waitress’s feelings beyond that comment. Kati was identified with more strongly and utterance 11 illustrates that.

The last incident belonging under the heading language and language use is incident number 8. The cause of misunderstanding was different pronunciation and the characters involved were Tiina, a Finnish exchange student, her two exchange student friends and a janitor at the girls’ school where the incident took place. Two groups discussed this incident, and even though different

pronunciation, or rather unclear pronunciation, came up in the groups, it was not considered to be a very likely explanation. Another explanation was then thought about. The utterances below will demonstrate these points:

(12) jos ne tytöt ei vaikka puhunu sille enää niinkö selvästi paitsi toisaalta voiko tuommosta sanoo jotenki epäselvästi
 ‘if the girls didn’t perhaps talk very clearly to him anymore except on the other hand can something like that be said somehow unclearly’

(13) me aateltiin että se on sen takia että jos se ei niinku iha oikeesti tienny että mitä se opettaa – siellä on niin paljo opettajia että se ei millääv voi tietää niitä kaikkia opettajia
 ‘we thought that it’s because if he really didn’t know what he taught – there are so many teachers that he can’t possibly know all of the teachers’

Utterance 12 illustrates the possibility of talking in an unclear manner but it is questioned right after saying the possibility out loud. It does not appear that it is believed to be the cause. The other explanation that came up is shown in utterance 13. The groups speculated that American schools are so big or for some other reason the janitor does not know all of the teachers and that is what caused the problem. Anyhow, the goal of explanations was accomplished.

The goal of reactions was also achieved because both the janitor’s and the girls’ point of views were considered during the discussions. Utterances 14 and 15 below will illustrate this:

(14) molisin ehkä sen vartijan tai sen vahtimestarin kannalla koska se on on se sillekin ärsyttävä paikka kun ne kysyy
 ‘I would perhaps be on the janitor’s side because it’s an annoying situation also for him when they’re asking’

(15) se vaksi sitten pyys niitä toistamaa että jos se oli tosi töykee nii kyllä mä oisin siitä loukkaantunu mutta, jos se sillee vaan niinku että ihan niinku ihan vilpittömästi ei ymmärtäny mitä niillä oli mielessä
 ‘the janitor then asked them to repeat and if he was really rude then I would’ve been offended but, if he just kind of really sincerely didn’t understand what they had in mind’

In utterance 14 the janitor’s feelings are considered. Utterance 15 could be interpreted as considering both the girls’ and the janitor’s perspectives,

depending on how the janitor acted, which is not stated as such in the incident. On one hand, if the janitor had been rude the trainee thought that the girls would have had every right to feel offended. On the other hand, he might just have been sincere in not understanding the girls. Depending on the situation, then, both sides could be sympathised with.

To sum up the achievement of goals for the incidents under the theme language and language use one can say that both goals were achieved in the discussions of every incident.

10.1.2 Pragmatic failure

Incidents number 2, 4, 9 and 10 belonged under the theme of pragmatic failure and the central issues in them were essentially small talk, greetings, form of address and assertive versus modest behaviour.

Incident number 2, which dealt with small talk and social interaction, was discussed in two groups. The main characters involved were an American girl, Rachel, and a Finnish girl, Virpi, who talked to each other during a soccer game. The goal being referred to as the goal of explanations, that is the intended meaning of the incident being found by the trainees, was accomplished although the range of opinions about what possibly happened can be seen in the four comments below:

(16) minusta tuntuu nii jotenki ihmeelliseltä että ne ois tommosia
välinpitämättömiä että ne valehtelis
'I just feel so somehow surprised that they would be indifferent
like that, that they would lie'

(17) jos suomessa olis sama juttu että nää ois tutustunu ja jutellu ja
pitäny hauskaa nii yleensä siinä ois niinku tosiaan sitten soitettu
'if it were the same situation in Finland that they'd got to know
each other and talked and had fun then usually they'd ended up
calling'

(18) voihan tuo olla tuo koolmiienitaim (call me anytime) niin se on
vähän niin ku vaan semmonen heitto että, näin niin ku tällee joo
että palataan asiaan myöhemmin
'this call me anytime could be just a line, like see you later or
something'

- (19) se tavallaan juttelee hulluna näin ja, aattelee että sitä toista ehkä kiinnostaakin ja sit jos ei se sitte mitenkään pysty pittää siihen yhteyttä että toisaalta taas sitte niin voihan sitä aatella semmosena, linja-autopysäkkikeskusteluna, ku ei oo muutakaan keskusteltavaa
'she just goes on madly talking like this and thinks that maybe the other one might be interested but then if she can't keep in touch anyway so on the other hand you can think of it as a bus stop discussion like when there's nothing else to talk about'

In the comments above the interpretations range from lying to small talk. The first two comments, 16 and 17, look at the situation from the Finnish perspective and interpret it through the views of what would be acceptable in the Finnish context. In comment 16 Rachel's behaviour is speculated to perhaps be lying. It is a typical Finnish trait to attach a strong truth-value to words (see p.25) and thus if something said is not fulfilled a Finn may easily interpret it as lying. The last two comments, 18 and 19, interpret the situation more from the American viewpoint. In comment 18 Rachel's comment is seen as a habit of saying certain things, not meaning anything more by them. Comment 19 tries to understand the girls' conversation by comparing it with something that is generally accepted and understood in the Finnish context as well, such as talking to a stranger at a bus stop. Explanations from Rachel's side were thus looked for and the goal of reactions was accomplished for the behalf of Rachel's actions. Identifying with Virpi's reactions, then, can be seen in the comments below.

- (20) jotenki pettyny oisin
'I would be somehow disappointed'

- (21) ei pitäis niin kauheesti loukkaantuakaan
'one shouldn't be very offended'

Comments 20 and 21 are opinions about what feelings one might have if in Virpi's position. Thus the goal of reactions was also accomplished on the behalf of Virpi as well.

Incident number 4 was about distinguishing genuine greetings and questions from each other and knowing how to react to greetings. It involved Pasi, a Finnish boy, and an American man and it was discussed in two groups. The groups discussed the motivations of the characters and realised the

intended issue, the difference in the greeting culture, and thus the goal of explanations was accomplished. Below are two comments on this.

(22) ne jenkit siellä on varmaa sillai et ne huikkaa suunnillee
jokkaiselle vastaantulijalle -- kaveri luulee että no täsä vissii
kahaville lähetään ni -- se on tapa varmaa siellä
'the americans there are probably like that they say something to
everyone who comes their way -- the guy thinks that they are
about to go for coffee -- it's probably a habit there'

(23) jos usseita alkaa tuollee ni e, niinku huomaa että se on tapa sillä
tavalla
'if many start doing that, then you kind of notice that it's a habit
in a way'

The comments above point out that greeting a stranger in America is not as unusual as it is in Finland and that it doesn't lead to a longer chat. In comment 22 a point is perhaps made by overstating the Finnish boy's desire to go for a cup of coffee after being asked a question of how he is. Comment 23 articulates the way in which one notices how things are done in a certain culture. When a similar situation repeats itself enough one starts to realise that it is the usual way of handling a certain matter, in this case how to react to a greeting of this kind.

The goal of reactions was accomplished since the groups discussed how they would feel in Pasi's position. The passing man probably does not react to this situation in any way because he is long gone when Pasi gets off his bike. Hence, his reactions cannot really be pondered on. The below comments, then, reflect only what one would feel if in Pasi's situation.

(24) ehkä vois vähä olla että häh, mutta ei sitä nyt kannata miettiä
kauaa
'maybe I'd be a bit like what, but there's no point in thinking
about it for long'

(25) vähä nolottas
'I'd be a bit embarrassed'

Comment 24 implies that one could be quite confused in Pasi's situation but that one should not think about such things too long but let them pass. Embarrassment would be the main feeling if in Pasi's situation for one of the group members as can be seen in comment 25.

Incident number 3 is the third one under the heading pragmatic failure. The intended issue was form of address, and more specifically that it is not appropriate to call one's teacher by first name in the United States. The main characters involved were Katja, a Finnish exchange student, and an American teacher. This incident was discussed by two groups and they accomplished the goal of explanations as can clearly be seen from comment 26 below.

(26) ei opettajaa saa sanoa etunimellä
'a teacher can't be addressed by their first name'

The cause of the misunderstanding was thus quite clear, as the comment above shows. The goal of reactions was also accomplished. Both the teacher's and Katja's positions were considered. Comments below demonstrate these opinions.

(27) ehkä tuon opettajan kannalla koska jos joku vaa yhtäkkiä kutsuu tai sinuttelee
'maybe on the teacher's side because if someone suddenly just calls you or uses your first name'

(28) no se ois aika noloo
'well it would be quite embarrassing'

Comment 27 considers what the situation might have been like for the teacher who is used to students using something other than his/her first name. Comment 28, on the other hand, states what one might feel if in Katja's position. Since the sides of both characters were considered the goal of reactions was accomplished.

Incident number 10 is the last one under the heading of pragmatic failure. The issue there were the differences between assertive and modest behaviour that reflect masculine and feminine values of a society, the United States being more a masculine society and Finland a more feminine one. The main characters in this incident were Tommi, a Finnish exchange student, and Keith, his American host brother. The incident was discussed by five groups.

The difference of the behavioural styles was quite well recognised. Thus the goal of explanations was achieved and the comment below demonstrates this.

- (29) varmaan semmonen on suomalaisille semmonen oikeen että ne ei ossaa ollenkaan, kehua itteensä jollekin eihän tuo oo mittään, emmää oo sen kummempi, amerikkassa se on ihan päivvastoin että ne kehhuu
 ‘probably it’s like that for Finns that they can’t at all, brag about themselves to someone oh that’s nothing, I’m not any better, in America it’s quite the opposite in that they brag’

Comment 29 quite concisely shows that the intended issue was found during the discussion. One group, however, had understood the incident differently. They thought that Keith had bragged about Tommi’s good language skills although Keith bragged about his own. All other four groups, though, had found the intended issue.

Considering the reactions and feelings of both sides, in other words reaching the goal of reactions, was done. To demonstrate some of the opinions on this matter there are some comments below.

- (30) olihan se aika ärsyttävää, varsinki jos se tolei liioitteli ja, turhaan kehu itteensä ni ei oo tottunu kyllä semmoseen suomessa että, täällon aika, vaatimatonta
 ‘it was quite annoying, especially if he exaggerated in that way and, needlessly bragged about himself so one isn’t used to that in Finland that, here it is quite, modest’
- (31) sillä on niinku vaan, tapana olla, kertoo paremmin ku on sillä tavalla
 ‘he just has you know, a habit of, describing things as better than they are in a way’

Comment 30 looks at the situation from Tommi’s point of view and voices an opinion of being annoyed by Keith’s behaviour. Comment 31 tries to explain Keith’s behaviour and thus tries to look at the situation from his point of view. One might interpret the comment to mean that Keith does not behave in a certain way to annoy anyone, but simply because he is used to telling about matters in that way. As was mentioned above, the goal of reactions was accomplished.

To sum up, both goals were achieved in the discussions of every incident reflecting pragmatic failure. Incident number 10, though, was understood differently by one of the groups and was thus more difficult to evaluate.

10.1.3 Nonverbal communication

Incidents number 1, 5 and 7 belonged under the theme of nonverbal communication and the central issues in them were essentially smile and interaction, dress code and nudity.

Incident number 1, which dealt with differences in social interaction including the amount of smiling and small talk, was discussed in two groups. The main characters involved were Jared, an American boy, and Kirsi, a Finnish girl. The incident happened at a party. The goal of finding the issue that was in mind when writing the issue, the goal of explanations, was not really accomplished. Smiling did not come up at all in the groups and neither did social interaction. Another reason for Jared coming to talk to Kirsi was given, though. The interpretations of the situation can be seen below:

(32) istuu yksin siellä ja sehän näytti hirveen niin, ikävystyneeltä
‘sitting alone there and she looked really, bored’

(33) saatto olla tällöinen iskuyritys
‘could’ve been some sort of attempt to hit on her’

Utterance 32 has a hint of what the issue might be since it does not say anywhere in the incident that Kirsi was or looked bored, quite to the contrary. It says in the incident that she had had a good time. However, the group or the trainee who expressed this opinion did not go any further and discuss what the clues were for interpreting that Kirsi looked bored. By doing that the group might have realised what the issue was. The other utterance, 33, illustrates how the groups ended up interpreting the situation. They thought that it was a situation where a boy hits on a girl.

There can be several reasons why the goal of explanations was not reached. One might be that the incident was too vague, that it did not have enough clues in it for the trainees to be able to realise what caused the misunderstanding. Another reason might be that the aspects of nonverbal communication that were being hinted at were not very familiar aspects of communication to the trainees. If they are invisible in the sense that one has not had to consider or discuss them before they might be very difficult to consider or point out from a situation. Whatever the explanation is, the need to modify the incident and

make it more approachable to the trainees or to replace it with another one arose.

The goal of reactions was achieved although the situation was not interpreted as was intended. This, of course, affected how the group members interpreted being in the characters' place as the following utterances show:

(34) oishan se ihan kivaa että siihen, että huomaa niinku että välittää ja että on niinku, tulee joku jutteleen siihen
'it would be quite nice that there, to notice that someone cares and that , someone comes to talk to you'

(35) tai se tosissaan oli vaan ihan puhtaasti, huolestunu siitä
'or he was just purely, worried about her for real'

Because Jared's motive was mainly seen as trying to hit on Kirsi, trainees thought it would be nice to be approached by a young American guy, as utterance 34 illustrates. Utterance 35 brings up another motive for Jared's character, pure concern.

The characters in incident number 5 were Saara, a Finnish girl, and her friend from school, Catherine. The incident took place at school while discussing the next day and Saara possibly staying overnight at Catherine's house. It was concerned with dress code, more specifically that it is an American custom not to wear the same clothes to school two days in a row. The four groups that discussed the incident realised this. Hence the goal of explanations was accomplished. The two utterances below are examples of the comments that were made:

(36) mun yks kaveri oli vaihto-oppilaana, viime vuonna ni se just kerto että sille oli sanottu että joka päivä vaihetaan vaatteet
'one of my friends was an exchange student, last year so he told me that he'd been told that clothes are changed every day'

(37) mä kattoin yhen dokumentin tossa aika vasta just oli jenkeistä ... niillä oli se että että jos mennää kahtena päivänä peräkkäi samoissa vaatteissa kouluun ni sä oot köyhä ja sä oot paska
'I saw a documentary quite recently which was from America ... they had this thing that if you go to school two days in a row in the same clothes then you're poor and you're shit'

Utterances 36 and 37 demonstrate that information about the United States is collected from different sources. In the utterances the information came from a friend who had been there and a television programme. One can imagine that the trainees' senses are heightened to everything that they hear about the United States since they know they are going to stay there. Thus information that they would have ignored before now catch their attention.

The goal of reactions was achieved. Group members identified with Saara's character more than with Catherine's. However, the reasons for Catherine's actions were discussed a lot and thus Catherine's point of view was also considered. What follow are two examples of comments relating to these matters:

(38) mäki oisin ollu vähä niinku kummissaan niinku tuo saara tuossa
'I would've been a little confused like saara was'

(39) ja ystävällinen, se ajattelis että sen ei tarvii nolata itteensä
koulussa - nii se haluaa auttaa
'and friendly, she thought that she doesn't have to humiliate
herself at school - yeah she wants to help'

Utterance 38 illustrates the identification with Saara's feelings. Utterance 39 perhaps needs some clarification. From the context in which it was spoken it can be interpreted to mean that Catherine, in someones's view, was being friendly and wanted to help so that Saara would not humiliate herself at school. Actually it consists of two utterances that were made one after another. The longer space with a hyphen illustrates the change of speaker. Anyhow, Saara's motives were considered and thus the trainees had thought of the situation from also her point of view.

The last incident under the nonverbal communication theme was incident number 7 in which the issue was how nudity is perceived. The main characters involved were Sari, a Finnish exchange student, and Julie, her American host sister. The incident was discussed by two groups and they accomplished the goal of explanations as the utterances below illustrate:

- (40) jos ei jenkitkää ei niin vapaasti voi ottaa vaatteita pois missää
 kotonakaa nii, varmaan kannattas vähä just kattoo sitä kulttuuria
 minkälaine siellä on ja elää sem mukaan
 ‘if Americans can’t take their clothes off so freely even in their
 homes then, it would probably be useful to just look at what the
 culture is like a little and live accordingly’
- (41) et ei se nyt oo siellä tapana kuljeskella alasti
 ‘it isn’t common there to walk around naked’

Both utterances 40 and 41 demonstrate that the groups had understood that the perception of nudity was the issue that differs between the two cultures. Utterance 40 suggests that one should be perceptive and look around at what others do and try and act in the same way. The goal of reactions was also achieved since both Julie’s and Sari’s actions are discussed as the utterances below show:

- (42) mää oisin kokenu sen, melkein samalla tavalla kun se [Julie]
 ‘I would’ve experienced it, almost in the same way as her’
 [Julie]
- (43) no jos mää olisin sari kans niin mä olisin loukkaantunu,
 tilanteesta ku se ei voinu se tsuuli (Julie) sanoo siitä minulle
 mitää vaan se juoruilee selän takana
 ‘well if I were sari I would’ve been hurt, by the situation
 because that julie didn’t say anything to me about it but gossips
 behind my back’

The above comments demonstrate that the feelings of both characters were brought into the discussion and that some group members had tried to identify with their feelings and positions.

To summarise, the goals were not always achieved during the discussions of every incident reflecting nonverbal communication. Incident number 1 was not understood as intended and thus this part of the goal of explanations was not accomplished. However, other explanations for the situation arose and in this way part of the goal was achieved. Trainees tried to find some kind of solution for the misunderstanding.

All in all, every small group discussed all of the incidents that were handed to them. There were differences between groups in the amount of discussion, the depth of analysing the situation and the number of aspects that were

discussed. The aspect of what went wrong, or what was the problem, was dealt with in every group. Beyond that, though, some differences could be noticed. In the groups that had a clear leader of speech the conversation was more organised and more of the readily made questions were discussed. In the groups where nobody really took the leader role there were more silences and hesitation on what aspect to talk about and when to move on to the next incident.

Considering all of the incidents and how they were discussed in the groups it is obvious that the incidents can be seen from many different angles and they can be interpreted in many ways, just like real life situations. The issues that were in mind while writing the incidents seemed to come up with every incident, except when discussing incident number 1. Perhaps one could say that a good critical incident is one that gives room for different interpretations but also gives a good opportunity for finding the intended issue. When there are differences of opinion one has to give reasons for one's opinions and that raises discussion, which is welcome. A totally obvious incident does not leave much room for discussion if everyone agrees.

10.2 The debriefing discussion

After the small group work, at the end of the training session, there was a general discussion, here called a debriefing discussion. It was not recorded anymore and the comments made below are the trainer's views of the process. Notes about the session were made right after the discussion. Thus the opinions about the success of the final discussion are based only on one person's observations.

The aim was that the small groups would summarise or read through the incidents that they had discussed to the whole group so that everyone would get to hear every incident. All incidents were gone through in this way in both Oulu and Jyväskylä. When an incident had been discussed in many groups only one group introduced it to others. If the incident had been discussed in all groups it was not, of course, introduced anymore. Then there was only discussion about its contents. The groups that had discussed a certain incident

told others what they had discussed in their small group, what they thought was the problem in the situation, and how they would go about solving it. Other trainees were encouraged to participate in the discussion as well by commenting on any aspect. The trainees could also ask questions if something was still bothering them about a certain incident.

In Oulu the trainees were quite tired since the training session involving critical incidents was the last item of the day. This affected the amount of discussion: there was less than in Jyväskylä. In Jyväskylä the atmosphere as a whole was better than in Oulu and the earlier time of the session can be speculated to have been at least one of the reasons. Smaller group size might also have been one reason since people sometimes feel more comfortable in a smaller group of strangers. In both Oulu and Jyväskylä the debriefing discussion mainly consisted of briefly introducing the incidents and acknowledging what the problems in them were. Other aspects were not really brought to the attention of others even though they might have been discussed in the small group context. Concentrating on other groups' incidents was not very intensive and the tendency was that if a group had not discussed a certain incident themselves, they did not actively comment on the incidents that were introduced by other groups. Thus the main observation was that the most attention was given to the group's own incidents. Other groups' incidents were neither paid very much attention to nor commented on after their introduction.

As was mentioned earlier the goal during the discussion was to point out, clarify and expand the issues that had come up during the small group discussions. This was done by the help of the trainer. After each incident had been introduced there was an opportunity for questions and comments by the trainees. After they were dealt with, the trainer revealed the intended interpretation of the incident so that the participants got an idea of what was the original thinking and logic behind the situation. Other explanations were also commented on. Finally, the trainer elaborated on the issue at hand by telling some more about it and by expanding it to other situations as well.

Another goal was to help the trainees understand diversity, both as representatives of the Finnish culture and also in the target culture. This was accomplished by the different interpretations of the incidents. Firstly, the groups had sometimes interpreted the incidents a bit differently from each

other and varying opinions had arisen among the members of the small groups as well. This demonstrated that people from a single culture do not always see matters in the same way, but that there is diversity also among them. Secondly, the different interpretations of the incidents that came up in the small groups could also be seen as plausible explanations. This meant that there is diversity also among the target culture. The intended issue was not necessarily the only “correct” answer to be found. The other interpretations were just as valuable and they raised some discussion on whether or not the explanation could actually be plausible.

To improve especially the debriefing discussion, more time would be needed to ensure that the discussion could expand some more. One other way to liven up and deepen the conversation would be for every trainee to read every incident. Hence every incident would be first discussed in the small groups and then in the bigger group. In this way the trainees would have a personal view on every incident and a better ability to discuss it. They would be more inclined to discuss their opinions about an incident that they know than listen to a foreign incident that has already been “solved” by another group, as was the case in this study. To be able to do this the incidents should be sent to the trainees in advance. Then no time would be wasted on reading the incidents during the training session. Instead the small group discussions could start right away and there would probably be more time for the debriefing discussion at the end as well.

10.3 The training session as a whole

Individual work, which the training session began with, worked well but took up time unnecessarily. Since there was so little time for the session a more reasonable solution would have been to send the incidents to the trainees beforehand. Doing this would have left more time for discussion in the small groups as well as the whole group and thus perhaps deepened the level of discussion. Now since there was not much time for each incident the discussion was left at a rather superficial level. Hence, sending the incidents in advance for trainees will be recommended in the final version of the material.

The work in small groups was already discussed earlier by relating its success to certain goals incident by incident. However, it can be looked at from another angle, as in how the trainer saw its success while it was going on. The groups seemed to work quite well in the sense that there did not seem to be outsiders who were totally left out of the conversation. Everyone seemed to participate in the discussion and this could also be affirmed from the tapes. Thus everyone got a chance to express opinions and uncertainties whereas in a bigger group this might not have been the case. Small group work, then, seemed to work well in this context and can be recommended to be used also in the improved version of the material.

The questions intended to help steer and produce more discussion among the groups did not work quite as intended. The questions situated after each incident were basically the same for all incidents but they were personalised for each incident by using the names of the characters in them. Another set of questions could be found on a separate instruction sheet (see appendix 1, p.111) and they could be applied to all of the incidents. The questions after each incident worked better in the sense that the groups discussed them more than the ones on the separate sheet. To balance the two types of questions they could be given somewhat different functions in the improved material.

If the trainees were sent the incidents in advance they would get the attached questions as well but not yet the instruction sheet. During the training session the questions attached to each incident would act to trigger the trainee's memory of what he/she had thought when reading through the incidents. Thus the trainees should be encouraged to answer the questions while reading through the incidents at home. When the actual training session would begin the instruction sheet would be handed out and the trainees would be given time to read through it. This sheet would, then, be the basis for discussing the incidents, not the questions attached to each incident, which are there just to trigger the participants' memories of what they were thinking while reading through them. This way both sets of questions would have a more separate role. The level of discussion could perhaps deepen since the questions on the instruction sheet expand the scope by handling issues such as establishing practices to deal with such problems, ways in which one could prepare oneself to deal with such problems, preventing the problem from

happening and if it did, effective ways of handling it. During the training sessions in this study these questions mostly went unanswered. The trainer could have perhaps paid more attention of what was discussed in the small groups and instructed them to cover these questions as well. However, the time limits seemed tight enough even without discussing the questions on the instruction sheet. Not to give the wrong impression, some small groups attempted to discuss also those questions but it was not done systematically by all small groups. Thus more attention should be paid to getting the trainees to discuss them and the suggestion above should at least somewhat improve the situation.

The debriefing discussion was already discussed in this section but a few improvements could still be added. If the improvements referred to above are accomplished it will affect the debriefing discussion as well. The small groups will not anymore introduce incidents to others because all of the groups will have already discussed all of the incidents. The group as a whole can, then, discuss every incident together with the trainer acting as a chairman to keep the conversation on track. This discussion should focus on the questions in the instruction sheet rather than on the ones connecting to each incident as in this study. In this way different small groups could discuss not only how they understood the situation, but also what kinds of solutions and ways of prevention were suggested.

The main frame of the training session seemed to work well and it will be kept intact in the improved version. First trainees could work individually, then continue with small group work and end with the debriefing discussion. Thus the trainees would continue to have a chance to discuss and reflect on matters themselves instead of just being passive listeners to someone else telling them about facts and experiences.

11 FEEDBACK

11.1 The questionnaire administered after the training session

All twenty-one trainees answered a questionnaire about the training session they had just been involved in. The major part of the questionnaire was devised using a Likert five-point scale and it contained sixteen claims about the session. In addition to the claims the questionnaire contained five open questions. They were about the session content and the incidents.

Feedback was considered important in order to get the opinions of the trainees. After all, the training session was done to benefit them. A feedback questionnaire enabled the trainees to suggest improvements and give comments on various aspects of the training session. These comments were also valuable in evaluating how the session had worked for the trainees.

All participants answered the readily formulated questions, that is the first sixteen, where one did not have to write anything in one's own words. Not everyone, however, answered the five open questions. Some trainees chose to answer some of them and leave some blank, some chose to leave all of them unanswered. The reasons for not answering all or some of the questions might be that the participants either had no opinion on these matters or rather left for a break than stayed to answer the questions.

It was emphasised before and while handing out the feedback questionnaires that it only concerned the session with the critical incidents. Anyhow, there might be a chance that some trainees thought that they were supposed to give feedback on the whole orientation day. Some questions did not give the chance to do this since they asked specifically about the incidents. Other questions, however, held a chance of misinterpretation. The risk of evaluating, by mistake, the whole day in some questions was more acute in Oulu where the training session with critical incidents was the last part of the orientation day. While filling out the questionnaire the participants might have thought about the whole day they had experienced instead of just the last section. It seems that this happened with, at least, some of the open questions. Some of the answers can be interpreted as commenting on the whole day, not

just the training session involving critical incidents. It is impossible to say whether the same happened with some of the claims and hence it is impossible to take it into account while looking at the claims of the feedback questionnaire. In Jyväskylä misinterpreting the questions or claims was not likely to happen since the training session was administered as already the second part of the day. The whole questionnaire can be seen in appendix 2.

11.1.1 The five-point scale questions

The first sixteen questions were formulated as claims that the participants had to evaluate according to numbers ranging from one to five. In the first nine claims the numbers stand mostly for different adjectives forming a continuum between each opposite or extreme at each end, respectively 1 and 5. In the rest of the scale questions, from number ten to sixteen, the participants had to take a stand concerning the claim ranging from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”, respectively from 1 to 5. Table 1 below illustrates the claims, the opposites on the continuum as well as the mean and standard deviations of the scores. (See appendix 3 for the range of answers.)

Table 1. Trainees' opinions of the training section

Item	Scale 1-5	Mean	Standard deviation
1. The number of critical incidents was...	too small – too many	3,24	0,54
2. The length of the training session was...	too short – too long	3,24	0,70
3. "Solving" the incidents was...	easy - difficult	1,90	0,77
4. The incidents were...	boring - interesting	3,29	0,78
5. The amount of discussion about the incidents was ...	too little – too much	2,95	0,38
6. Discussing the incidents in a group and listening to others' opinions was ...	boring - interesting	3,81	0,93
7. Listening and commenting on the incidents presented by other groups was ...	boring - interesting	3,52	0,87
8. The working methods (solving the incidents, group work, commenting) were..	suitable for me – unsuitable for me	3,95	0,67
9. I participated in the group discussion...	little – a lot	3,62	0,50
10. I think that going through these types of critical incidents in advance will be useful during my exchange year.	totally disagree – totally agree	4,05	0,92
11. I had already earlier thought about similar matters than what came up in the incidents today.	totally disagree – totally agree	3,71	1,01
12. I now feel surer to face new situations during my exchange year.	totally disagree – totally agree	3,62	0,92
13. I feel that I am able to identify a critical incident.	totally disagree – totally agree	3,62	0,80
14. I assume that I will get involved in similar situations than what were dealt with today.	totally disagree – totally agree	4,19	0,81
15. I felt that I benefited from this training session.	totally disagree – totally agree	3,95	0,67
16. I think that this training session was a necessary part of the orientation day.	totally disagree – totally agree	3,85	0,81

n = 21 in every item except in number 16 where n = 20

The claims above can be divided under two major themes: items evaluating the training content and items evaluating the benefit for encountering new situations. Claims 1 to 9 belonged to the first mentioned theme. By looking at the means of those claims the trainees seem to have been quite satisfied with the training content. To sum up, the trainees thought that the number of critical incidents was suitable, the length of the session was good, solving the incidents was relatively easy, the incidents were somewhat interesting, there was enough time for discussion, it was rather interesting to discuss the incidents in a small group, listen to others' opinions and listen and comment on the incidents that were presented by the other small group(s), the working

methods of the session were rather suitable for each participant and each trainee personally participated in the group discussion.

Claims 10 to 16 belonged under the theme of items evaluating the benefit for encountering new situations. These claims could all be evaluated with the scale from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”. By looking at the means of these claims the trainees seem to have agreed in differing degrees with all of them. The claim that the trainees agreed with the most was item 14: “I assume that I will get involved in similar situations than what were dealt with today”. It can thus be speculated that the trainees considered the incidents to be quite close to real life situations and that they could somehow identify with the characters. To sum up the results under this theme, the trainees found the training session beneficial for encountering new situations.

The feedback from the 16 claims indicated that the trainees were quite happy with the contents of the training session and that they found it rather beneficial as well.

11.1.2 The open questions

Questions from number seventeen to number twenty-one were open questions, which means that the participants could answer in their own words without any preformed options to choose from. Two questions were about the contents of the session and three were about the incidents. Open questions were used among the claims to give the trainees a chance to elaborate a bit and the matters in the open questions would not have converted to claims very easily. Not all participants answered these open questions and some chose to answer only some of them.

Question number seventeen was as follows: *Was there something missing from the CIE; did you feel it lacked something?*. The participants gave the following answers:

- (1) Tiesin kaikki asiat.
'I knew all of the things.'

- (2) Toistaiseksi ei tule mieleen./Ei tule nyt mieleen./No eipä tuu ainakaan mieleen.
'Can't think of anything at the moment./Well can't think of anything.'
- (3) Enemmän USA:n tapoja nuorten keskuudesta.
'More of the habits among American youngsters.'
- (4) OK
- (5) Ei/en/ei puuttunut
'No/there was nothing missing'

The answers indicate that the participants could not very well articulate or think of what the training session lacked. One person, in comment number three, would have wanted more information on the habits of American youth. That is not, however, what the CIE is all about. The aim is not to teach exact American ways as such but to prepare trainees for surprising intercultural situations and to try and teach them to look at situations from also the hosts' point of view and not just their own. Thus the trainee's wish will not be accommodated even in the improved version of the exercise.

Question number eighteen was as follows: *Was there too much or too little of something?*. The participants gave the following answers:

- (1) Ei/ei oikeastaan
'No/not really'
- (2) Oli ihan mukavasti/ihan sopiva
'It went quite nicely/quite appropriate'
- (3) Kaikkea oli sopivasti.
'There was a good amount of everything.'
- (4) OK
- (5) Sopivasti, ehkä oli liian pitkä.
'Quite all right, perhaps it was too long.'
- (6) Aikaa oli liian vähän.
'There was too little time.'
- (7) Vähän enemmän vielä ois voinut olla nuorista./Liian vähän USA:n tapoja nuorten keskuudesta.
'There could have been a bit more about youngsters./Too little about the habits among American youngsters.'
- (8) Aika lailla hyvä päivä.
'Quite a good day.'
- (9) Ehkä hieman monipuolistaa ja tehdä jokaista "asiaa" vähän.
'Perhaps make it a bit more many-sided and do all of the things a little.'

The above answers were somewhat varied but there were no major criticisms. The comments numbered from one to four indicate that there was a

good amount of everything. Opinion number five contains a similar comment at first but then it is modified somewhat by considering the session perhaps to have been too long. The answer could actually also refer to the whole training day. There is no way of knowing the real referent of the pronoun *it* in this context. Comment number six, then, contradicts opinion number five by saying that there was too little time. Here there is also the chance that the whole training day is referred to. The answers in number seven are similar to comment number three concerning the previous question, question seventeen. More information on American youngsters is hoped for. However, as was stated earlier, the point of the exercise is not to give an exhaustive list or lecture on how young Americans behave. Comments eight and nine seem to refer to the whole day instead of just the training session with critical incidents. Thus it seems that many answers to question eighteen were somewhat ambiguous as to whether the comments referred to the whole day or just the session.

Already these few answers show that it is impossible to please everyone, even in a small group. People are different and everyone views things from their own point of view. What feels as a long time for one, can feel short to another.

Question number nineteen was as follows: *What did you think was the most interesting incident and why?* The participants gave the following answers:

- (1) Bilejuttu...Omaehtoainen.
'The party story...I could relate.'
- (2) Se jalkapallotilanne. Small talk on aika jännää.
'The football situation. Small talk is quite thrilling.'
- (3) Tervehtiminen ja hiljaisuus.
'Greeting and silence.'
- (4) Autossa hiljaa istuminen –tilanne/autoilu
'Sitting quietly in the car -situation/driving'
- (5) Vaatteiden joka päiväinen vaihtaminen (tilanne 5)./Vaateetusta käsittelevä, se poikkesi eniten kotimaan tavoista.
'The everyday changing of clothing (incident 5)./The one concerning clothing, it differed most from the habits of the native country.'

- (6) Mielenkiintoisin tilanne oli 6. Sen takia, koska itse en heti ymmärtänyt mistä on kyse.
'The most interesting incident was 6. Because I didn't understand what it was about right away.'
- (7) Alastomuus, koska se on yleisempää Suomessa.
'Nudity, because it is more common in Finland.'
- (8) Tilanne 8, koska se oli niin hassu.
'Incident 8 because it was so funny.'
- (9) Tilanne 10/Nro 10, koska samastuin Tommiin: minua ärsyttää "ylimieliset" ihmiset.
'Incident 10/Number 10 because I identified with Tommi: I get annoyed with "arrogant" people.'
- (10) Nuorten jutut.
'The stories concerning youth.'
- (11) Hmm, kaikkihan oli mielenkiintoista!
'Hmm, everything was interesting!'
- (12) Ei erikoisen mielenkiintoisin mikään.
'None of them were especially interesting.'
- (13) Yhdysvallat tänään ja myös kriittiset tilanteet
'USA today and also critical incidents'

Almost all of the incidents were mentioned in the above answers and not very many times so none of the incidents seemed to be much more interesting than the others when considering all of the answers. Here again the diversity of opinions even in a small group can be seen. However, the one mentioned the most, three times in comments number three and four, was incident number 3, which concerned silence and its different interpretations. The second most mentioned, two times in comment number 10, was incident number 10, which illustrated differences in behaviour in a masculine and a feminine culture. Incident number nine was not mentioned in anyone's answer and it concerned the form of address. The implication is that it was the least interesting incident for the participants. Other incidents were each mentioned once in the answers.

In comment number thirteen it is clearly indicated that the respondent has answered while thinking about the whole training day. USA today was another session during the training day and had nothing to do with the session concerning critical incidents.

One of the reasons for the answers being so scattered might be the fact that different small groups had different incidents to discuss. One can imagine that the incidents one's own group had become more familiar, were more easily

remembered and might have seemed more interesting than the ones the other group(s) introduced during the debriefing discussion. The incidents also seemed to appeal to different people on a personal level. Not even people in the same groups with the same incidents chose a certain incident to be the most interesting.

Question number twenty was as follows: *Was any of the incidents too obvious or 'easy'? Which incident and why?*. The participants gave the following answers:

- (1) Ei välttämättä
'Not necessarily'
- (2) Ei 'No'
- (3) Sopivia
'Appropriate'
- (4) Jotkut oli aika helppoja mutta ei liian.
'Some were quite easy but not too easy.'
- (5) Osa oli tai oikeastaan kaikki olivat helppoja.
'Some of them were or actually all of them were easy.'
- (6) Oli helppoja tilanteita, mutta ei väliä.
'There were easy incidents but it doesn't matter.'
- (7) Kaikki olivat aika helppoja/Kaikki helppo
'All of them were quite easy/All easy'
- (8) Tilanne 2 'Incident 2'
- (9) Kaikki mitkä meille sattui, eli 5, 6, 7 & 10.
'All of the ones that we happened to get, which were 5, 6, 7 & 10.'
- (10) Tilanne 4, voi tapahtua missä tahansa
'Incident 4, can happen anywhere'
- (11) Tilanne 7. Itse en ikinä kulkisi pitkin taloa alasti.
'Incident 7. I would personally never walk around naked in the house.'

Comments number one, two and three above suggest that there were no too obvious incidents but that some might have been quite easy. Opinions number five, six and seven suggest that part or all of the incidents were easy. In answers from number eight to eleven certain incidents, that is 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10, are mentioned by number as being easy. Comment number eight simply states the incident the respondent thought was easy, that is incident number 2, which concerned small talk and being friendly. As in the answers for question nineteen above, no explanations or reasons are given for stating these opinions. The question *why* has gone unanswered in all of them.

In the rest of the answers for question twenty, that is numbers 9, 10 and 11, the respondents gave some kind of explanation for their choices of easy incidents. In comment number nine the respondent thought that all of his/her group's incidents were easy. By mentioning specifically only the group's incidents it suggests that the other incidents, which were introduced by other groups, did not become as familiar as the group's own incidents, and not as much attention was paid to them. In answer number ten the respondent thought that incident number 4, which concerned greeting habits, could happen anywhere. In the last comment incident number 7 is seen as easy because the respondent claims that she would not act the same way as in the incident. She mirrors the behaviour in the incident with her own behaviour and perhaps feels that the incident is easy in the sense that she would not get involved in a similar situation.

The incident mentioned the most in the answers for question twenty was incident number 7 so according to the answers it was considered the easiest. It dealt with the perception of nudity. Incidents that were not mentioned in anyone's answer were incidents number 1, 3, 8 and 9.

Question number twenty-one was as follows: *Was any of the incidents too difficult? Which incident and why?*. The participants gave the following answers:

- (1) Ei 'No'
- (2) Sopivia
'Appropriate'
- (3) Ehkäpä tilanne 6, koska en heti ymmärtänyt sitä.
'Perhaps incident 6 because I didn't understand it right away.'
- (4) Jotkut oli vaikeita ymmärtää, esim. 8
'Some were difficult to understand, e.g. 8'

The most popular answer, ten answers, to this question was *No* so it seems that many trainees did not find the incidents too difficult. The respondent who wrote comment number two was along the same lines and thought that the incidents were appropriate. Since almost all, and in some answers all, incidents were mentioned as being easy in the question before, number twenty, it might seem somewhat contradictory that the respondents now thought that some incidents were after all difficult. There are at least two explanations for

this phenomenon. One is simply the explanation of individual difference. Different incidents were found easy/hard by different respondents. The second explanation might be that when one first reads through an incident alone it might seem a bit of a puzzle. Then, when it is discussed in the small group and somebody has an interpretation for it, it starts to feel easy and logical. However, later on when specifically asked about hard incidents one can recall the incident that felt hard in the very beginning and answer according to that. Anyhow, most of the answers to question twenty-one did not consider any incident too hard so it seems that more of the incidents were considered easy than hard.

In the above answers two incidents were also mentioned by number: 6 and 8. The respondent who wrote comment number three found incident number 6, which concerned using *please* when ordering something, quite hard. What made her perceive it as hard was the fact that she could not work out the source of the misunderstanding right away. The same can also happen in real life. A person can realise that everything is not going the way it is supposed to but still has no clue of what the problem actually is. A good incident perhaps makes the reader thoughtful and the issue in it is not obvious right away. The respondent who wrote comment number four did not again give reasons why he/she thought that incident number 8, which concerned pronunciation differences, was hard to understand. One could speculate that the incident as such cannot be very difficult to understand but the reason for the misunderstanding could be the issue, which makes the incident seem hard. As was mentioned before when discussing the incidents more closely, incident number 8 might be confusing since the Finnish trainee will not easily believe that pronouncing differently can actually cause such troubles. Comments like these came up also during the debriefing discussion. Trainees looked for other explanations for the misunderstanding, not pronunciation, and for some it was hard to understand that it was the reason. Also, it is almost impossible to convey pronunciation problems in a written description of an incident. Thus, some types of communication problems are easier and more suitable for use in a written form than others.

All in all, one generalisation can be made about the answers to the open questions: people are different and have different preferences. The trainees

that cared to answer the open questions did not agree on much as could be seen from the varied answers above. No major criticisms were written but it could be a matter of laziness and hurry in some cases. It does not necessarily mean that all was fine.

A minus for the questionnaire and oral instructions was that some trainees, most probably from Oulu, answered at least some of the questions while thinking about the whole orientation day although it was only about the session concerning critical incidents. The trainees in Oulu must have been quite tired already in the afternoon to have made such a mistake. Oral instructions were given right before the questionnaire was handed out and the questions that were misunderstood mention the words *situation* or *training section*, which relate the questions to the session at hand. However, the mistake was made.

11.2 E-mail questionnaire

To be able to find out what the trainees would remember about the training session concerning critical incidents they were contacted via e-mail after they had stayed in the United States for already a few months. Other aims were to find out whether there had been any use of the skills perhaps acquired during the session, what would the trainees' opinion of the content be now that they had lived abroad and experienced the local culture for quite some time and to acquire new critical incidents from them.

At the end of the training session in both Oulu and Jyväskylä the participants were asked for written permission to be contacted via e-mail (see appendix 4) after they had stayed in the United States for a couple of months. They were asked to write down whether or not they had an e-mail address that they were planning to use also in the United States during their exchange year. Nineteen out of the twenty-one participants returned the permission sheet. One who did not fill the sheet out at all did not remember his e-mail address but promised to send it to the trainer. He never did. From the nineteen who filled out the sheet, eighteen participants gave permission to contact them again. Fifteen had an e-mail address that they were planning to use in the United

States. One person did not answer anything when asked whether he/she had an e-mail address that he/she was planning to use during the exchange year. However, he/she provided an e-mail address and the questionnaire was sent to him/her as well. One person did not have an e-mail address that he/she was planning to use during the exchange year, one did not have one yet when the permission sheet was filled out and one was not sure whether he/she was going to use the same e-mail address in the United States. A questionnaire was anyhow sent to the then provided address.

At the start of November 2001 a questionnaire about the training session concerning critical incidents conducted in May 2001 was sent to seventeen persons. (See appendix 5.) At this point the students had been in the United States for approximately three months and the training session had been about six months ago. Fourteen of the e-mail messages went through without obvious problems, one e-mail address turned out to be someone else's not connected with YFU and two e-mail addresses were somehow faulty because the message did not get through at all. Six people answered the e-mail questionnaire.

In February 2002 the same questionnaire was sent again to people who did not answer the first time. Two more persons replied. So all in all, eight people answered the e-mail questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of four questions about the training session conducted in May 2001 and a request, with instructions, that the person write a critical incident that had happened during the three months he/she had been in the host country. The first three questions were quite connected with each other so one at a time one person's answers to these questions are dealt with together instead of grouping everyone's answers question by question. However, question 4 will be dealt with by grouping different people's answers. The personal critical incidents will also be dealt with as a group. For identification and clarity and to maintain their anonymity the persons are given letters from A to H by which they are being referred to.

11.2.1 What was remembered

The first three questions in the e-mail questionnaire dealt with what participants could still remember about the training session after almost six months. The questions following this theme were as follows:

1. What do you remember from the critical incident training session? You can list the things you remember.
2. Did any of the incidents specifically stick in your mind? What situation; what happened in it?
3. Why do you think that you remember this certain incident? Has something similar happened to you?

The respondents could not, of course, refer to the incidents by number after this time. However, for the reasons of clarification and to make it easier to look back for a certain incident if needed, the incidents that are mentioned are here referred to by number. The incidents could be easily identified from the way the respondents described them and thus could be given the proper number.

Person A recalled incidents number 1 and 8. Incident number 1 was the one that happened at the party and incident number 8 consisted of the misunderstanding that was caused by different pronunciation. Person A specifically remembered incident number 8 but could not explain why. He/she remarked that something similar had happened to him/her but that he/she had come out of these situations with fewer problems. Perhaps person A means that the communication breakdown in incident 8 seems to last for a while before either party can think of a way to move forward and start meaningfully communicating again. Person A's problems with pronunciation might have been solved much more easily and more quickly, and thus the fewer problems, perhaps.

Person B wrote that he/she remembers the training session pretty well. B could recall almost all of the incidents and could remember something about why some problems arose and how they could be solved. An incident that person B specifically remembered was also incident number 8. The reason why B remembered it is that the incident during training felt so strange that B did not in the beginning even realise why the janitor did not understand the

girls. The whole situation seemed quite unlikely and B would never have thought that he/she would find him/herself in a similar situation. Now having been in the States B had realised that he/she had been in similar situations many times.

Person C wrote that he/she does not remember any incidents. All C remembered was that the issues were discussed and that the group seemed to find some kind of solution to each. After the second question that asks about any specific incident, C did actually remember one incident. C remembered incident number 6, which concerned using the word *please*. C remembered it because he/she had often forgot to say *please* and then during the training session he/she had decided to remember it from then on.

Person D listed some things he/she remembered from the training session. These included being in a group of four, having a tape recorder on, and thinking about the incidents. D also recalled that questions like what would you do in that situation, why so and so reacted in that way, what could be done to fix the situation and so on were discussed. After that everybody had gathered together again and the incidents had been gone through together. Person D specifically remembered incidents number 4, 5, 6 and 7 and said that the one he/she remembered most was incident number 6, which concerned using the word *please*. D wrote that nothing like that had happened to him/her during his/her stay at that time but that forgetting *please* had been quite usual for him/her during a language course in England earlier. It just seemed to have stuck in her mind.

Person E did not actually answer any of the questions in the questionnaire but wrote about some things he/she had experienced with his/her host family.

Person F wrote that he/she remembered that different types of problematic situations, which could come up in the States, were gone through during the training session. F also commented that the incidents had seemed very familiar and that he/she could easily imagine something like that happening to him/herself. The specific situation that F remembered was incident number 5, which concerned not wearing the same clothes two days in a row. The reason F remembered this is that it is such an everyday thing in the States and he/she had recalled it afterwards while he/she was there. Anything similar to the

incident had not happened to F but he/she sometimes felt that he/she did not have enough clothes.

Person G was one out of the two who answered after the questionnaire was sent out again in February 2002. For these two it had been over eight months since the orientation in May 2001. Although it had been such a long time ago person G remembered the following from the training session: a lot of different situations that can come up were dealt with, such as greetings, habits about whether or not to close the door, that one is better off not walking around the house half-naked after a shower or not just sitting quietly in a car. The last two situations refer to incidents number 7 and 3 respectively. Person G remembered best incident number 7 but did not know why. G commented, though, that he/she had done his/her best to keep the conversation going. This had led to the point where someone had even hoped that person G and his/her host brother would be quiet. G also commented that the rule of being part of the conversation in a car does not always hold true. G's comment about whether or not to leave the door open is a reference to the debriefing discussion where the trainer gave an example of how easily misunderstandings can occur between the host family and the exchange student. The point that was being made was to encourage the trainees to keep their eyes open and to ask about the habits of the host family. Even very seemingly small discrepancies between the family's and student's habits, like which room door to keep open or closed, can cause surprisingly big problems. Unless they are noticed and talked about before they start to build up. Hence, the comment about doors was not a reference to an incident as such but was another memory from the training session.

Person H was the other person from the two who answered after the questionnaire was sent out again in February 2002. Although a long time ago, person H remembered being in a small group and telling other group members what she thought about the example at hand. She added that the situation was quite pressing for her because she was going through a phase of shyness then and she would not have liked to speak with anyone. She also remembered understanding some situations in a totally wrong way. She also commented that she does not have very positive memories but that there is no point in generalising because it was totally just her problem, not a problem of the

training session. The specific situation that H remembered was incident number 9 in which the Finnish girl used the teacher's first name at school. Person H remembered it because she had not understood what it was about at first. Nothing similar has happened to her because she knew not to use a teacher's first name. The closest that she has got to this kind of situation was when she called a teacher by a wrong name.

When looking at the answers as a whole certain aspects in them stand out. The answers seem to reveal that the specific incidents probably have some quite interesting elements in them to be remembered so well even after a long time. All of the participants who answered the e-mail questionnaire remembered at least one or more incidents although the training session had been conducted approximately at least six months prior to answering. Incidents number 2 and 10 were the only ones not mentioned in the answers. Some respondents, though, claimed to remember quite a few, if not all of the incidents but did not write out what happened in the ones they remember.

Person G's comments, among others, imply that some of the participants might have taken the incidents too literally and that was not the intended meaning. The intention was not to try and teach specific rules related to specific incidents, such as: "Always start or be involved in a conversation when you are in a car", as person G seems to have interpreted it. The incidents were just examples of potentially confusing situations that one could get into when living in a different culture.

Since it seems that the actual incidents were remembered, and not always the bigger issues behind them, there is a certain danger for students who do not have the ability to generalise. By using detailed incidents stereotypical thinking may be heightened in the sense that people might think Americans will always act in the way they did in the incidents. A trainee might also interpret detailed incidents as instructions on how one should act in certain situations and unnecessary details might be carried along with this memory. It seems that person G formed a rule "you have to talk while in a car" when the main point of the incident was to examine possible differences between talk and silence and their amount in Finnish and American cultures in general – not how to behave in a car. However, details seem to have stuck in the trainees' minds and it indicates that by using detailed incidents many of them are

remembered for a very long time. Care should be taken, then, by trainers to emphasise that the incidents are just examples and should not be taken too literally.

Another observation about the answers is that opinions about some of the incidents had changed somewhat after living in the target culture or that they had triggered a learning experience. For example, when discussing incident number 8 in the small groups in May 2001 the trainees did not consider different pronunciation a very plausible explanation for the misunderstanding. However, now after living in the target culture it did not seem so unbelievable anymore. One respondent had also remembered the unwritten rule of not wearing the same clothes two days in a row to school, which was the point in incident number 5, and realised that it was exactly true. Two respondents mentioned remembering the use of *please* after it came up in an incident during the training session and that they had been using it ever since. These comments also actually realise one of the general goals of the CIE, which entails that the participants gain necessary understanding to be able to behave more effectively in similar situations. What can be seen from the answers is that some of the incidents have helped the trainees behave more appropriately in some situations.

11.2.2 The training session: useful or not

Let us now turn to question 4 that addressed the issue of usefulness. It was as follows:

4. When thinking about it afterwards, do you think that the critical incidents that were dealt with during your orientation were of any use when you were preparing for your year abroad or now during your stay in the United States?

Opinions ranged from finding the training session quite useful to finding it almost useless. Five opinions can be seen as finding it useful, two as no use and one person did not have an opinion on the matter. Here are the opinions that were given. Person F commented that it had been useful. F thought that one learned to understand that in everyday life one can be confronted by the

oddest cultural differences and that one should be prepared for that. Person B was along similar lines and commented that the training session had been reasonably useful because now when one gets into similar situations one can think of what the reason for the problem is and at the same time one understands Americans better. Still a similar statement came from person H who thought that the session was useful even though he/she could not think of any examples of the usefulness. He/she, however, thought that something must have stuck in the subconscious and that it helped to prepare when one knew better what to expect. Also person G states that for him/her the incidents were useful. However, G's explanation about why he/she considers them useful was somewhat ambiguous. He/she wrote: "On vaan hankala eritellä tilanteita jos ei satu olemaan juuri kohdalla." 'It is just hard to assort/classify the incidents if they are not exactly in one's way'. His unclear statement could perhaps be interpreted as meaning that the incidents are hard to imagine if a person does not come across one. The fifth opinion in favour of the training session being at least of some use was from person A. He/she stated that there had been some use, mainly that perhaps one can better understand the emotional life 'sielunelämä' of Americans and that one is able to think about things from also their point of view.

The opposite opinions compared to the ones above follow. Person C wrote that he/she had not found the training session useful, at least not yet, because every incident had been so specific that nothing like that had happened to him/her. On top of that C did not consider discussing the incidents important for his/her exchange year. C said it was a good idea but did not work for him/her. D commented that there had not been much use of the training session or that perhaps it had helped a bit but that the same rule applies to all incidents and that it would have been clear even without the exercises. The rule according to him/her is to talk about it, discuss it, explain it and so on. Person E was the one with no opinion on this matter.

When looking at the answers as a group some conclusions can be drawn. There were generally speaking basically two ways in which the training session was seen and interpreted and it did not always seem to match with whether the training period was found useful or not. The underlying reasoning, which came through in the answers, was the revealing clue on how each

person saw the training. One way of reacting to it was to be able to capture the fundamental aim of the training session and generalise to other unexpected situations as well as being able to see the situation through the eyes of the person from the other culture. These persons were able to get away from the actual incidents and generalise, like person F who stated that now one understands that one can be confronted by some odd cultural differences anytime and one should be prepared for that. The other way of reacting to the session was to be more connected to the actual incidents and not really be able to generalise. These persons got stuck with the details more than the whole and perhaps made rules on how to act in the new culture according to some details in an incident. An example of this is the one already mentioned earlier, that is the respondent who thought that one must always be part of the conversation when in a car.

The outcome that was hoped for was the one where trainees could be able to generalise from the incidents. After all, only ten incidents were discussed and thus they cannot begin to describe the situations in which misunderstandings can occur during someone's exchange year. It is only possible to give some tools for trainees during one day of training, let alone a single training session during the day. The main realisation that can be hoped for in a couple of hours of critical incident training is that trainees would know to expect new and surprising situations and perhaps be able to start thinking of the sources of the misunderstandings that are bound to come up during their exchange year. When looking at the answers it seems that at least some trainees have got the main idea.

11.2.3 Personal critical incidents

The aim of asking the participants to write a personal critical incident was twofold. Firstly, the participants were thought to benefit by writing out a confusing situation that had happened to them. By doing this it would make them think about the situation more closely while otherwise it would probably have gone without much reflection. Some aspects might have become clearer than before as the story was written out. The questions in the e-mail

questionnaire for writing the incident might have triggered new paths of thinking. Writing the critical incident could thus be seen perhaps as a simple self-help exercise. Secondly, if some or one of the critical incidents were to capture an American-Finnish cultural issue better than the incidents used in this study, the old incident could be replaced by a new incident. The aspect of perhaps using a person's personal critical incident in improving the training session was brought up in the e-mail letter containing the questionnaire so the ones who answered it were aware of it. What follow are the stories or comments produced by asking the participants to write a personal critical incident.

The critical incident that person A describes is about changing host families and the insecurities and confusions that it brought about in him/her. For clarity's sake it might be good to mention that with YFU the exchange student is supposed to stay with one host family for the whole exchange period unless some problems occur and the student must change families. Host family changes happen for so many different reasons, and this type of situation is not something typical of the American culture, that it cannot be considered as an appropriate situation to be added to the training session at hand.

The personal incident that person B describes is about nudity, or what is perceived as inappropriate clothing in different cultures. This is how B reports his/her incident:

“Muutama viikko perheeseen tuloni jälkeen tulin suihkusta pyyhe ympärilläni ja koska päätin vähän kuivatella ennen pukemista, menin katsomaan, mitä kolme teini-ikäistä sijaisveljeäni olivat tekemässä. Astuin huoneeseen ja he alkoivat kiljumaan, kuinka iljettävää on kävellä alasti huoneesta toiseen. Olin hieman hämilläni, sillä pyyhkeeni oli huomattavan iso, enkä omasta mielestäni ollut ollenkaan alasti. Eivät he kuitenkaan ymmärtäneet, vaikka yritin sitä selittää. Tapahtuman jälkeen rupesin kyllä pukeutumaan aina heti suihkun jälkeen, mutta koin tämän reaktion silti oudoksi. Perheessä ollaan ilman paitaa shortsit jalassa, mutta pyyhe on jotain täysin siveetöntä. Ehkäpä amerikkalaiset tosiaan ovat pidättyväisempiä kuin esimerkiksi suomalaiset.”

'A few weeks after I had arrived in my family I came out of the shower wrapped in a towel and since I thought I'd dry off a bit before getting dressed I went to see what my three host brothers were doing. I stepped into the room and they started screaming about how disgusting it is to walk naked from one room to another.

I was a bit bewildered since my towel was remarkably big and I didn't think I was at all naked. They didn't understand, however, although I tried to explain. After this happened I started to dress myself right after taking a shower but I still felt this reaction was strange. The family wear shorts without a shirt but a towel is something totally indecent. Perhaps Americans really are more self-restrained/reserved than for example Finns.'

Incident number 7 in this study, which concerns nudity, will be replaced by the above incident in the second, improved version of the training session. Before that it will be moulded into a similar format than the other incidents. This new incident can be even more confusing for a Finn than the old one since it does not even involve nudity as such but a person wrapped up in a towel which is in itself considered inappropriate. This incident can be expected to raise some discussion if used in a training situation.

Person D wrote about a situation that happened when she was aiding at the school office and working with the 40-year-old secretary. One day she asked D, as she usually does, how she was that day. D just said she was OK although she said it a bit tiredly. She anyhow meant that she was fine. The secretary got worried and asked what was wrong. D was surprised but just smiled and said nothing was wrong, that she was just a bit tired. D analysed the situation as follows: "I got right after she asked me what's wrong, that I should have smiled and said I'm fine or something like that. When I seemed to be tired and not that happy and I just said I'm OK she thought that something was wrong. Americans usually act happy, even when they are having just 'a normal' day." Incident number 1 in this study, which dealt with smiling and social interaction, will be replaced by an incident that was moulded from the situation above. The issue in incident number 1 was not understood very well during the training session as was discussed earlier in chapter 10.1.3, so perhaps the situation told by person D will be clearer.

Person H wrote about an incident that happened right after she had arrived to the host family. Here is how she reports the incident:

"Olin juuri saapunut, ja menimme host-isäni kanssa ravintolaan syömään. Hän kysyi minulta että minkälaisia ruokia syön yleensä Suomessa. Sanoin jauhelihaa, eli "minced-meat" ja hän ei ymmärtänyt että mistä puhun koska hän sanoi että "minced-meat cookies" on joku jouluruoka. Sitten hän ymmärsi mitä tarkoitan, ja

alkoi puhumaan “hamburgerista” ja minä luulin että hän puhui hampurilaisista eikä jauhelihasta. Väitin vaan että ei ne oo hampurilaisia, vaan niitten sisusta... Kyllä asian oikea laita sitten lopulta selvisi, eli siis että “hamburger” tarkoittaa molempia hampurilaisia ja jauhelihaa, ja sille on naurettu myöhemmin.”

‘I had just arrived, and my host dad and I went to eat in a restaurant. He asked me what kind of food I usually eat in Finland. I said minced meat but he did not understand what I was talking about because he said that minced-meat cookies are a type of Christmas food. Then he understood what I meant and started talking about hamburgers and I thought that he was talking about actual hamburgers and not minced meat. I just kept on claiming that they aren’t hamburgers, but what is put inside of them... Finally the problem was solved, which was that “hamburger” means both the actual hamburgers and minced meat and it has been laughed at later on.’

Person C did not really have an incident to tell but he/she brought up false expectations concerning homework from school. C had not expected there to be as much homework as there is. Person F did not have time to write about an incident and person G did not mention anything about a personal critical incident in his/her reply.

The incidents above capture some aspects of American life that had felt confusing to the persons writing the incidents. This has two benefits. The respondents who wrote the incident hopefully gained something by having to process the situation more than they otherwise would have. Also this study benefited by getting to replace two incidents with two new ones told by the participants. The one concerning nudity will hopefully raise discussion on what is considered as appropriate clothing. The one dealing with smiling and appearing happy perhaps better captures the nonverbal aspect of smiling and using a certain tone of voice than did incident number 1 in the present study.

12 CONCLUSION

This study set out to take a step towards improving cross-cultural training for exchange students and to try out a training tool based on critical incidents and active participation from the trainees. The study basically consisted of three

stages. Firstly, creating training material by using critical incidents for a certain group, Finnish exchange students, that had not used this type of cultural training material before. Secondly, testing critical incidents as a training tool by trying out the created training material and asking the participants involved in the experiment to evaluate the training session. Thirdly, revising the material according to the results of trying it out as well as the feedback collected right after the training session and about six months after it.

The training material was created for one exchange organisation, YFU, and specifically for an approximately two-hour-session during a one-day orientation for Finnish exchange students going to the United States. The created material consisted of ten critical incidents that were first read through individually, then discussed in small groups and in the end with the whole group including the trainer. There were questions attached to each incident to help the discussion and the trainees also received an instruction sheet with more questions.

After trying out the training material and after collecting feedback from the trainees a few changes were made for the revised material. Basically, the main frame and order was kept the same – first individual work, then small group work and last the debriefing discussion with the whole group – but the emphasis of the content was somewhat changed. To save time in the actual session the incidents are sent to the trainees beforehand and in this way everyone gets to read every incident. In the experiment the participants seemed to focus mostly on the incidents they were given in their own group and which they were responsible for while they did not pay much attention to the other incidents. Thus by giving everyone a chance to read through all of the incidents an individual will focus on more incidents in the improved version. Also more attention is paid to the issues in the instruction sheet rather than the questions connected to each incident, which are considered as a start-off for conversation.

Using critical incidents proved to work well in the sense that they were remembered even after a long time. However, there is a risk in using them if trainees cannot generalise from them and see the bigger picture. It could be seen in the answers to the e-mail questionnaire that some respondents had

taken the incidents too literally, or converted them into quite narrow rules of behaviour. The first step of minimising this risk is by being aware of it. The trainer could state the need to generalise and give advice on not to take the incidents as rules of behaviour, but as examples of situations where misunderstandings have occurred. However, taking the matter better into account in the material and during the training session is certainly an issue to be considered in the future.

Although the incidents were mostly based on differences between American and Finnish cultures they cannot be taken to be the whole truth. Nobody knows what will happen and what kinds of situations exchange students will get into. Thus there is no point in treating the incidents as something that will happen during the year. They are used to illustrate a small range of surprising and confusing situations so that the trainees will have a chance to put themselves into the position of the characters in them and try to reason what went wrong in that specific situation. The training session rather tries to teach the tools with which to tackle problems or situations that feel odd than actual rules of conduct in specific situations. Hence not just the incidents but also how they are discussed and dealt with should be emphasised. To achieve this the activating questions and the debriefing discussion could be developed further.

The aim is also to make trainees realise that these types of situations will most probably come up, in one way or another. The one who knows to expect the unexpected is already better off than the one who is totally unprepared. The main result of Laine's (1999) research about the experiences of four exchange students is quite revealing and is important to keep in mind while training people: everyone's year is different. Training can never fully prepare trainees for what lies ahead. It can only give some building blocks that every trainee can use as best they can. But as the saying goes: "Practice makes perfect". The best way to understand, or at least experience, intercultural communication and another culture is to put oneself into real situations where they can be experienced. This is exactly what exchange students do. They let themselves be moulded by another culture by totally immersing themselves into it and in the best possible way – by becoming a son or daughter to a family from another culture.

The material tried out in this study suggests that different types of incidents suit this type of training but possible problems can, however, be pointed out. The amount of different types of incidents in this study is not enough to make tenable arguments. More research is needed. Also, it is not easy to determine whether or not a certain type of incident will work or not, at least not right away after a training session. For example, incident number 8 in this study, which dealt with language proficiency, did not seem to work very well during the training session. Trainees found it difficult to find the intended issue, which was mispronunciation, perhaps because it is hard to illustrate in a written form. Even after hearing what the intended issue was, they seemed somewhat reluctant to accept different pronunciation as the cause for the misunderstanding, perhaps because they had confidence in their language skills. However, according to the answers to the e-mail questionnaire trainees had only realised the significance of the incident after spending some time in the target culture. Thus it is not always possible to say whether or not an incident worked or will work based only on the training session. The trainees' realisations can come after many months in the target culture when something triggers a memory of an incident. Thus different types of incidents do not all seem to work in the same way.

According to feedback trainees were quite satisfied with the training session and felt that it was rather beneficial. After a few months in the target culture these opinions were strengthened for most of the respondents. It is possible to speculate whether these positive results for the training session were due to a well-built session or rather a questionnaire with leading questions and claims. On one hand, if one can anonymously fill in a questionnaire with claims using a five-point scale with opposites at each end, there is no reason not to circle the choice that correlates with the opinion the person has about the issue at hand. There is thus a good possibility of honesty and possible criticism. On the other hand, the respondents did not have anything to compare the training session with so one can imagine that any kind of information about the target culture presented in almost any way would have felt interesting and beneficial to them and evoked rather positive feelings.

Since the use of critical incidents as research and training material has only begun recently in Finland (Salo-Lee and Winter-Tarvainen 1995:82-83), this study approached a rather fresh subject. The angle differed from the earlier Finnish studies (Salo-Lee and Winter-Tarvainen 1995, Storhammar and Ailinpjeti 1995 and Kirra 1999) in which critical incidents were collected and analysed. The present study went one step further and tried out the use of critical incidents as training material for people planning to live in another culture. Cultural differences in the form of critical incidents were put to use after which feedback was collected. Now there is documented information on how a certain type of material package seemed to work for exchange students. When creating intercultural training material and training sessions in the future the experiment in this study can give ideas and input. Now that one way has been tried, there is information of what worked and what did not, which can be of use.

To broaden the perspective of this study the exchange students could be interviewed after they get back to Finland. Then the students would probably have a better view of what would be necessary and useful during training and perhaps more ideas on how the critical incident training could be improved to better meet their needs. They could also tell about and write new critical incidents that had happened during their year abroad. For future training material needs it could prove useful to start a critical incidents database where returned exchange students could write their stories.

Also, a few further research suggestions can be made that were outside the scope of this study. The use of people from the target culture in the training session to explain and broaden perspectives on the situations in the incidents could be examined. The scope of both training and trainees could also be broadened by creating and using training material for students going to other countries as well and by trying critical incident training with other age groups going abroad.

As an overview, on the basis of this study, the critical incident training method works because it gets trainees involved in thinking about and discussing the matters that are crucial when adjusting to another culture. Trainees are most likely better off after this type of training than when they are just passive listeners. Varied real life situations are hard to replicate during

training but using critical incidents and trying to identify with the characters can give some hint of what is to be expected in the new cultural environment.

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THE ACTUAL TRAINING MATERIAL PACKAGE WITH INSTRUCTIONS

ISO VALMENNUS: YHDYSVALTOIHIN LÄHTEVÄT OPPILAAT

“Sopeutuminen uuteen kulttuuriin” – kriittisiin tilanteisiin perustuva koulutusosio

Tavoitteet

Päätavoitteena on saada oppilaat ajattelemaan ja ratkomaan esimerkkitapauksia sellaisista vaikeista, hämmentävistä ja turhauttavista ongelmatilanteista, jonka tyyppisiä he voivat odottaa kohtaavansa yrittäessään sopeutua uuteen kulttuuriin.

Tarkoituksena on myös:

- lisätä oppilaiden tietoisuutta itselleen tyyppillisistä tai kulttuurilleen ominaisista tulkinnoista, joilla selittää muiden käyttäytymistä ja omia asenteitaan esimerkiksi kuvatuissa tilanteissa
- tuoda esiin, vertailla ja analysoida erilaisia tulkintoja tilanteista
- selkiinnyttää tilanteissa esiintyviä kulttuurieroja, jotka mahdollisesti aiheuttivat väärinymmärryksiä ja ongelmia tai jotka vaikuttivat oppilaiden tulkintoihin ja selityksiin
- auttaa oppilaita ymmärtämään erilaisuutta sekä yhden kulttuurin sisällä että eri kulttuureiden välillä
- auttaa oppilaita saavuttamaan sellaista ymmärrystä, joka auttaa heitä käyttäytymään sopivammin ja tehokkaammin samantyyppisissä tilanteissa
- laajentaa oppilaiden tietoisuutta asioista, joita heidän tulee oppia ja motivoida heitä jatkamaan oppimista

Vaiheet

Oppilaille lähetetään kriittiset tilanteet ja niihin liittyvät kysymykset etukäteen, jotta he voivat lukea ne läpi jo kotonaan ja vastata kysymyksiin. Kysymykset auttavat pääsemään keskustelussa alkuun ja muistamaan, mitä oppilas on ajatellut lukemisen aikana.

Itse koulutusosio jakautuu kolmeen eri vaiheeseen:

- kaikki lukevat ”Ohjeita pienryhmäkeskustelulle” –lapun itseksensä
- jaetaan oppilaat ryhmiin ja aloitetaan pienryhmäkeskustelut (3-5 hengen ryhmiä, mutta jos oppilaita viisi tai vähemmän, vain yksi ryhmä)
- käydään loppukeskustelu kaikki yhdessä vetäjien johdolla

Kesto

Koulutusosiolle on valmennuspäivänä varattu noin 1 ½ - 2 tuntia. Ihanteellisesti puolet ajasta voisi käyttää pienryhmäkeskusteluihin ja puolet loppukeskusteluun. Tärkeintä on, että kaikki tilanteet ehdittäisiin käydä läpi yhdessä. Jos oppilaat eivät ehdi käsitellä kaikkia tilanteita pienryhmissään, aloitetaan loppukeskustelu kuitenkin ajoissa ja käydään ne yhdessä läpi. Tilanteet ovat jo oppilaille tuttuja, koska he ovat lukeneet ne kotonaan.

Kouluttajat

Osion kouluttajaksi tarvitaan ainakin yksi alue-edustaja, joka osaa johtaa loppukeskustelun. Mukana voi olla Yhdysvalloissa vaihto-oppilaina ollut 'rettari' (rettareita), joka voi kommentoida oman vuotensa perusteella tilanteita.

Sisältö

Koulutusosion keskeisenä sisältönä ovat oppilaille etukäteen lähetetyt kriittiset tilanteet, jotka perustuvat Yhdysvalloissa vaihto-oppilaina aikaisemmin olleiden kertomuksiin. Ohessa on kymmenen tilannetta, mutta voit myös korvata niitä tarpeen mukaan muilla.

Jokaisen tilanteen jälkeen on pieniä apukysymyksiä, jotka on tarkoitettu lähinnä avuksi keskustelun aloittamiseen. Oppilaat ovat myös vastanneet niihin kotona ja voivat niiden avulla palauttaa mieleensä, mitä ajattelivat niitä lukiessaan. Tärkeämpää olisikin nyt keskustella ja löytää vastauksia "Ohjeita pienryhmäkeskusteluun" -monisteessa oleviin kysymyksiin. Kouluttaja voi kierrellä pienryhmäkeskustelun aikana eri ryhmien luona ja ohjata keskustelua oikeaan suuntaan.

Loppukeskustelusta voisi yrittää tehdä rennon keskustelutilaisuuden. Kouluttaja pitää huolen aikataulusta ja siitä, ettei ryhmä jää liian pitkäksi aikaa käsittelemään yhtä tilannetta. Pyrkimyksenä on saada kaikki tilanteet käytyä läpi, ainakin niin, että oppilaat kuulevat selityksen jokaiselle tilanteelle. Väärinymmärryksen syy voi olla muukin kuin mikä on ollut mielessä tilannetta kirjoitettaessa. Ryhmä voi keskustella muista tulkinnoista ja selityksistä sekä niiden uskottavuudesta. Kouluttaja voi keskustelun aikana koota kalvolle tai taululle esille tulleita eroavaisuuksia.

Kouluttajan tehtävänä on myös kertoa, että tilanteista on tarkoitus yleistää. Ne eivät ole käyttäytymissääntöjä sinänsä, vaan esimerkkejä. Kaikille tulee erilainen vuosi, ja tarkoituksena on valmistaa oppilasta yleisellä tasolla kohtaamaan uusia ja hämmentäviä tilanteita vähän paremmin.

Kouluttaja voi myös kertoa, että jollei meillä ole tarpeeksi tietoa toisesta kulttuurista, ainoaksi vaihtoehdoksi jää tapahtumien tulkitseminen oman kulttuurin kautta. Kuitenkin, jos katsomme asioita vain oman kulttuurimme sääntöjen mukaan, se usein vaikeuttaa sopeutumista ja toimimista uudessa ympäristössä, se voi esim. vähentää viestinnän tehokkuutta tai huonontaa ihmissuhteita.

OHJEITA PIENRYHMÄKESKUSTELULLE

Keskustelkaa ryhmässänne jokaisesta teille jaetusta tilanteesta. Tavoitteena on päästä yhteisymmärrykseen seuraavista kysymyksistä:

- Mikä on ongelmana tilanteessa?
- Miksi se on ongelma – mistä oikeastaan on kyse?
- Missä määrin olet samalla kannalla kuin tilanteessa esiintyvät ihmiset?
- Miten estäisit tällaisen ongelman muodostumisen?
- Mitä voisit tehdä, jos tällainen ongelma kuitenkin muodostuisi?
-Mitä keinoja voisit käyttää tämän tyyppisten ongelmien ratkaisuun?
- Millä keinoilla voisit valmistaa itseäsi paremmin kohtaamaan ja ratkomaan tällaisia ongelmia?

Keskustelun voi esimerkiksi aloittaa siitä, että kaikki kertovat, minkä numeron on antanut ensimmäiseen numeroasteikkokysymykseen. Jos hajontaa on paljon, voidaan esim. ääripäät käsitellä ensin ja tätä kautta päästä erilaisiin mielipiteisiin kiinni. Jos taas kaikki ovat jokseenkin samaa mieltä, niin katsokaa, ovatko kaikki myös samaa mieltä seuraavasta kysymyksestä eli miksi. Pitäkää huolta siitä, että kaikki ryhmäläiset saavat puheenvuoron ja että kaikki mielipiteet, näkökannat ja tulkinnat tulevat käsitellyiksi. On hyvä nähdä ongelmat monesta näkökulmasta.

Valitkaa joku pitämään kirjaa keskustelun kulusta, jotta osaatte kertoa myöhemmin toisille pienryhmille omista tilanteistanne ja eri tulkinnoista siitä, mitä tilanteessa luultavasti tapahtui, miksi jne.

Tilanne 1

Kirsi oli luvannut auttaa koulun toimistossa aina silloin tällöin ja hän teki sitä ihan mielellään. Kirsi työskenteli siellä koulun 40-vuotiaan sihteerin kanssa. Eräänä päivänä sihteeri kysyi, kuten aina: ”How are you?” Kirsi vastasi: ”I’m OK”. Yhtäkkiä sihteeri huolestui ja kysyi, mikä oli hätänä. Kirsi hymyili ja sanoi, ettei mikään ollut hätänä. Hän oli vain vähän väsynyt. Tämän jälkeen sihteeri tuntui olevan tyytyväinen ja molemmat jatkoivat omia askareitaan. Kirsi oli hämmästynyt sihteerin päätelmästä eikä hän oikein ymmärtänyt, miksi sihteeri yhtäkkiä ajatteli jonkun olevan huonosti. Ehkä sihteerillä itsellään oli huono päivä.

Missä määrin tulkitset tilannetta niin kuin Kirsi? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi olet ainakin jossain määrin samaa/eri mieltä Kirsin kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Kirsi?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit Kirsin tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet sihteerin käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Tilanne 2

Virpi oli isäntäperheensä kanssa jalkapallo-ottelussa. Pelin aikana Virpi alkoi jutella vieressä istuvan tytön kanssa, jota ei ollut ennen tavannut. Keskustelussa kävi ilmi, että Virpi on vaihto-oppilas Suomesta ja tyttö, Rachel, kyseli kiinnostuneena Virpin viihtymisestä Amerikassa ja mitä tämä ikävöi Suomesta. Tytöt tutustuivat pelin aikana ja juttua heillä tuntui riittävän. Virpi alkoi ajatella löytäneensä todella mukavan uuden ystävän. Pelin loppupuolella Rachel sanoi, että hänestäkin oli ollut mukava jutella ja että jos Virpi tarvitsisi jotakin, hän mielellään auttaisi. Vielä lähtiessään ja erotessaan tungoksessa Rachel huikkasi Virpille: ”Call me anytime!” Vasta Rachelin hävittyä väkijoukkoon Virpi älysi, että eihän hänellä ollut Rachelin puhelinnumeroa eikä Rachelillä hänen. Hän otti asian esille perheen kanssa heidän ajellessa kotia kohti, mutta perhe vain sanoi, että sellaista sattuu. Ehkä Rachel on kiireinen nuori eikä hänellä olisi ollut loppujen lopuksi aikaa tavata Virpiä kuitenkaan – käyväthän he eri kouluakin. Virpistä perheen suhteellisen välinpitämätön reaktio tuntui vähättelyltä, koska heillä oli ollut hauskaa yhdessä ja heistä olisi hyvin voinut tulla kaverit.

Missä määrin tulkitset tilannetta niin kuin perhe? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi olet ainakin jossain määrin samaa/eri mieltä perheen kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Virpi?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit Virpin tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet Rachelin käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Tilanne 3

Jounin ollessa Yhdysvalloissa vaihto-oppilaana hän oli tutustunut mukaviin paikallisiin ihmisiin, joista yksi oli Mark. Eräänä päivänä Mark oli kutsunut Jounin autoajelulle. Kaverukset lähtivät ajelulle ja Mark ajeli kaupungilla ja sen ympäristössä. Jouni oli innoissaan ja hänestä oli ihanaa istua kyydissä, ihastella ympärillä näkyviä ihmisiä ja maisemia ja hiljaa nauttia niistä. Ajelun edetessä Mark yhtäkkiä puuskahti, että hän ei kestä enää. Hän ei voinut ymmärtää, miksi Jouni oli hänelle suuttunut ja piti mykkäkoulua. Jouni oli hyvin yllättynyt ja hämmentynyt Markin äkillisestä tunteenpurkauksesta. Hän tunsi itsensä jollain lailla petetyksi ystävänsä puolelta.

Missä määrin kokisit tilanteen niin kuin Mark? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi kokisit sen ainakin jossain määrin samalla/eri tavalla Markin kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Jouni?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit Jounin tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet Markin käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Tilanne 4

Pasi oli sijoitettu suhteellisen pieneen kaupunkiin Yhdysvalloissa ja parin ensimmäisen viikon aikana hän pyöräili ympäri kylää oppiakseen tuntemaan paremmin ympäristöään. Eräänä päivänä häntä pyörällä vastaan tullut mies huikkasi Pasiin kohdalla: ”How are you?”. Pasi ajatteli miehen olevan joku isäntäperheensä tuttavista, vaikka ei tätä tunnistanutkaan ja oli sen takia niin kiinnostunut. Pasi ajatteli, että onpa siinä ystävällinen mies ja alkoi pyörän päältä noustessaan miettiä, miltä nämä parisen viikkoa olivat hänestä tuntuneet. Kun hän oli noussut pyörän päältä pois ja oli valmis vastaamaan, miestä ei enää näkynyt missään ja Pasi huomasi seisovansa tien poskessa yksin. Pasia nolostutti, jos joku oli sattunut näkemään tapauksen ja hän kipusi kiireesti takaisin pyörän selkään ja jatkoi matkaansa.

Missä määrin kokisit tilanteen niin kuin Pasi? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi kokisit tilanteen ainakin jossain määrin samalla/eri tavalla Pasiin kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Pasi?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit Pasiin tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet miehen käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Tilanne 5

Saara ja hänen jenkkiystävänsä juttelivat koulussa tulevasta illasta ja he halusivat tehdä yhdessä jotain mukavaa. He päättivät vuokrata vihdoin videolle tulleen hyvän filmin ja katsoa sen Catherinen luona. Saara oli huolissaan siitä, kuinka pääsisi myöhään illalla pois Catherinen luota, koska perheen auto oli huollossa. Catherine päätyi pyytämään Saaran yöksi heille, jolloin illan kuljetuksista ei tarvitsisi huolehtia. He voisivat hyvin aamulla mennä yhtä matkaa kouluunkin seuraavana päivänä. Saara oli sitä mieltä, että hänellä on kaikki tarvitsemansa seuraavaksi päiväksi eikä hänen näin ollen tarvitsisi käydä kotona ollenkaan ennen Catherinelle menoa. Catherine tuntui kuitenkin olevan hyvin ihmeissään Saaran mielipiteestä ja hän kysyi, mitä Saara aikoi laittaa päälleen seuraavaksi päiväksi kouluun. Saara ajatteli, että ehkä hänellä oli vaatteissaan tahra, jota hän ei ollut huomannut, mutta tarkistuksen jälkeen ne näyttivät ihan puhtailta. Saara siis ilmoitti, että ajatteli pärjäävänsä samoilla vaatteilla kuin nytkin. Catherine katsoi Saaraa vähän kummasti ja tarjoutui ehdottomasti lainaamaan hänelle jotain omistaan, olivathan he suunnilleen saman kokoisia. Saarasta tuntui, että hän kuitenkin mieluummin käyttäisi omia vaatteitaan eikä oikein ymmärtänyt, miksi Catherine tyrkytti omia vaatteitaan hänelle.

Missä määrin kokisit tilanteen niin kuin Saara? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi kokisit tilanteen ainakin jossain määrin samalla/eri tavalla Saaran kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Saara?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit Saaran tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet Catherine käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Tilanne 6

Kati oli vaihto-oppilaskaupunkinsa kahvilassa ja hän tilasi kahvin tiskillä. Tarjoilija vaikutti oikein ystävälliseltä ja mukavalta Katin tullessa sisään, mutta Katin tilattua kahvin ("Coffee!") tarjoilija muuttui silminnähdessä työkeämmäksi juuri Katia kohtaan. Muita asiakkaita hän palveli edelleen ystävällisellä tyyllillä. Kati loukkaantui tarjoilijan käytöksestä ja ajatteli, että ehkä tarjoilija ei jostain syystä pidä nuorista eikä koe heitä kunnon asiakkaiksi.

Missä määrin tulkitset tilannetta niin kuin Kati? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi tulkitset tilannetta ainakin jossain määrin samalla/eri tavalla Katin kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Kati?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit Katin tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet tarjoilijan käytöksen muuttuneen?

Tilanne 7

Muutama viikko perheeseen tulonsa jälkeen Antti tuli suihkusta pyyhe ympärillään. Hän päätti vähän kuivatella ennen pukemista ja meni katsomaan, mitä hänen isäntäperheeseensä kuuluvaa kolme teini-ikäistä veljeään olivat tekemässä. Antti astui huoneeseen ja he alkoivat kiljua, kuinka iljettävää on kävellä alasti huoneesta toiseen. Antti oli hieman hämillään, sillä hänen pyyhkeensä oli huomattavan iso, eikä hän omasta mielestään ollut ollenkaan alasti. Antti yritti selittää tilannetta, mutta veljet eivät kuitenkaan ymmärtäneet. Tapahtuman jälkeen Antti alkoi pukeutua aina heti suihkun jälkeen, mutta koki veljiensä reaktion silti oudoksi. Jälkeenpäin asiaa pohdittuaan Antti huomasi, että perheessä ollaan myös vähemmällä vaatetuksella kuin mitä hän oli pyyhkeensä kanssa, vaikkapa ilman paitaa shortsit jalassa. Antti ajatteli, että ehkäpä amerikkalaiset tosiaan ovat pidättyväisempiä kuin esimerkiksi suomalaiset.

Missä määrin kokisit tilanteen niin kuin Antti? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi kokisit tilanteen jossain määrin samalla/eri tavalla Antin kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Antti?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit ollut Antin tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet veljien käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Tilanne 8

Tiina ja kaksi hänen vaihto-oppilasystäväänsä olivat ruokatunnilla, mutta heillä oli asiaa matematiikanopettajalle, Mr Rogersille, joka oli opettajanhuoneessa. He näkivät vahtimestarin opettajanhuoneen edessä, ja he pyysivät päästä tapaamaan Mr Rogersia. Vahtimestari oli hyvin hämmentyneen näköinen tyttöjen kysymyksen kuultuaan ja hän pyysi heitä toistamaan opettajan nimen monta kertaa. Tytöistä tuntui nololta toistaa samaa pyyntöä uudestaan ja uudestaan ja he ajattelivat, että vahtimestari varmaankin vain pilaili heidän kanssaan. Viimein vahti kysyi, mitä kyseinen opettaja opetti. Saatuaan sen selville, hänen ilmeestään näki, että hän vihdoinkin ymmärsi, ketä tytöt tarkoittivat ja hän haki Mr Rogersin opettajanhuoneesta.

Missä määrin tulkitset tilannetta niin kuin tytöt? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi olet ainakin jossain määrin samaa/eri mieltä tyttöjen kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit yksi tytöistä?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit tyttöjen tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet vahtimestarin käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Tilanne 9

Katja oli matematiikan tunnilla ja kaikki tekivät tehtäviä opettajan kierrellessä ympäri luokkaa katselemassa. Katja oli viihtynyt koulussa ja huomannut, että useilla tunneilla keskusteltiin paljon ja että monet opettajat kannustivat oppilaita kertomaan omia mielipiteitään. Nyt kuitenkin Katja oli jämähtänyt erääseen tehtävään eikä osannut enää edetä, joten hän ajatteli kysyä neuvoa. Hän nosti kättään saadakseen opettajan huomion ja kutsui tätä vielä etunimellä, kun opettaja ei tuntunut huomaavan. Opettaja tuntui hätkähtävän ja Katjan vieressä istuva tyttö tirskahti. Opettaja tuli kuitenkin neuvomaan, mutta hän vaikutti aika kireältä eikä jaksanut keskittyä kunnolla tehtävän neuvomiseen. Katja ei oikein ymmärtänyt, mitä oli tapahtunut, koska opettaja oli aina vaikuttanut todella rennolta ja avuliaalta. Katja kummasteli mielessään, eikö hän olisi jostain syystä saanutkaan pyytää neuvoa.

Missä määrin kokisit tilanteen niin kuin Katja? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi kokisit tilanteen jossain määrin samalla/eri tavalla Katjan kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Katja?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit Katjan tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet opettajan ja viereisen tytön käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Tilanne 10

Tommi oli isäntäperheessä, jossa hänellä oli saman ikäinen veli, Keith. Perheellä oli tapana käydä koulun loma-aikoina Meksikossa ja tänä nyt he olivat YFU:n luvalla ottaneet myös Tommin mukaan. Tommi oli opiskellut espanjaa Suomessa pari vuotta koulussa valinnaisaineena ja perhe olikin aivan ihmeissään Tommin kielitaidosta, kun hän osasi kääntää osan ruokalistaa ravintolassa ja kysyä tietä. Perheen muut jäsenethän eivät juuri kieltä osanneet ja Tommi oli sanonut heille aiemmin, ettei hän oikein osaa espanjaa.

Palattuaan kouluun matkan jälkeen Tommi kuuli Keithin kertovan reissusta. Keith kehui, kuinka hän oli itse käyttänyt espanjaa sujuvasti matkan aikana ja antoi samalla näytteitä hyvästä ääntämyksestään. Tommia hävetti Keithin ylenpalttinen itsekehu melko olemattomasta kielitaidostaan. Keithän oli vain juuri ja juuri saanut sanottua 'hyvää päivää/yötä' ja tilattua ruokaa listalta. Tommista alkoi tuntua, että hänen veljensä oli liioittelija ja turha itsensä kehuja, ellei jopa valehtelija. Tommista vaatimattomuus olisi ollut paikallaan Keithin kielitaidon huomioon ottaen.

Missä määrin tulkitset tilannetta niin kuin Tommi? (Ympyröi)

En ollenkaan samalla tavalla 1 2 3 4 5 Täysin samalla tavalla

Miksi olet ainakin jossain määrin samaa/eri mieltä Tommin kanssa?

Miltä luulet, että sinusta tuntuisi, jos olisit Tommi?

Mitä tekisit, jos olisit Tommin tilanteessa?

Miksi luulet Keithin käyttäytyneen yllämainitulla tavalla?

Mahdollinen väärinymmärryksen syy tilanteissa

Tilanne 1: Hymyily ja sosiaalinen kanssakäyminen

- suomalainen ei hymyile kovin paljoa ”What’s wrong?” – amerikkalainen hymyilee paljon

Tilanne 2: Kohteliaisuus ja ystävällisyys, small talk

- suomalainen ei yleensä sano, mitä ei tarkoita (vrt. kuitenkin ”Soitellaan”) – amerikkalainen pitää tietyillä kohteliaisuuksilla keskustelua yllä ja osoittaa ystävällisyyttä. Kutsu on oikeasti kutsu, jos se sisältää esim. konkreettisen ajan ja paikan, mutta yleisemmät kommentit voi olla tarkoitettu vain kohteliaisuuksiksi

Tilanne 3: Hiljaisuus ja sen sietäminen

- suomalainen sietää erittäin hyvin hiljaisuutta muidenkin seurassa – amerikkalainen tulkitsee hiljaisuuden muiden seurassa äkkiä ahdistavaksi tai siten, että toinen osapuoli on suuttunut ja mököttää

Tilanne 4: Tervehtiminen

- Tyypillinen amerikkalainen tervehdys on ”How are you?”, mutta vaikka se on kysymys, siihen ei odoteta vastausta omasta terveydentilasta tms. Voi vastata vaikkapa: ”Fine. How are you?”

Tilanne 5: Eri vaatteet kouluun joka päivä

- Amerikkalaisessa koulumaailmassa on kirjoittamaton sääntö: joka päivä eri vaatteet kouluun. Nyt se ehkä naurattaa, mutta kaikki palanneet sanovat samaa...

Tilanne 6: Pyynnöt ja kohtelias kielenkäyttö

- Pitää muistaa kohtelias kielenkäyttö. ”*Would you... Could you ...*” Please-sanan käyttäminen on erityisen tärkeää. Suomalainen tyyli voi kuulostaa amerikkalaisen korvissa tyllyltä.

Tilanne 7: Alastomuus

- Suomessa ollaan totuttu alastomuuteen, jo saunakulttuurin takia. Asiaan kannattaa siis kiinnittää enemmän huomiota kuin Suomessa. Tietyt asiat voivat tuntua ’nakuilulta’, vaikka Suomessa sitä ei todellakaan siksi katsottaisi.

Tilanne 8: Ääntäminen

- Joskus ymmärtämisongelma voi olla näinkin yksinkertainen. Amerikkalaiset ovat tottuneet tietynlaiseen ääntämykseen, joten he eivät osaa odottaa toisenlaista ääntämystä esim. nimien kohdalla.

Tilanne 9: Puhuttelut

- Opettajat ovat joko Miss tai Sir, tai Mr ... tai Mrs ... Etunimiä ei ole tapana käyttää. Kavereiden vanhemmat ovat yleensä myös Mr tai Mrs. Nimiä käytetään yleensäkin enemmän, esim. tervehtiessä: ”Good morning, Katja!”, mihin taas Suomessa ei ole totuttu.

Tilanne 10: Liioittelu

- Suomalaisilla on tapana vähätellä osaamistaan ja kykyjään. Amerikkalaiset taas mieluummin liioittelevat kuin vähättelevät. Eivät he kuitenkaan valehtele sen enempää kuin suomalaisetkaan. Molemmilla on vain käytössä melkein ääripäät välillä vähättely – liioittelu.

THE FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

PALAUTELOMAKE

Muista, että arvioit tässä vain koulutusosiota, joka toteutettiin 'kriittisten tilanteiden' avulla, et koko valmennuspäivää. Ympyröi mielestäsi sopivin numero ja esitä lisäkommentteja annetuille riveille, jos haluat. Voit jatkaa kääntöpuolelle, jos tila ei riitä.

1. 'Kriittisiä tilanteita' oli määrällisesti...

liian vähän 1 2 3 4 5 liikaa

2. 'Kriittisten tilanteiden' valmennusosio oli kestoltaan...

liian lyhyt 1 2 3 4 5 liian pitkä

3. Tilanteiden "ratkaisu" oli...

helppoa 1 2 3 4 5 vaikeaa

4. Tilanteet olivat...

tylsää 1 2 3 4 5 mielenkiintoisia

5. Keskustelua tilanteista oli...

liian vähän 1 2 3 4 5 liian paljon

6. Tilanteista keskusteleminen omassa ryhmässä ja muiden mielipiteiden kuunteleminen oli...

tylsää 1 2 3 4 5 mielenkiintoista

7. Toisten ryhmien esittelemien tilanteiden kuunteleminen ja kommentointi oli...

tylsää 1 2 3 4 5 mielenkiintoista

8. 'Kriittisten tilanteiden' valmennusosion työskentelytavat (tilanteiden ratkominen, ryhmätyö, kommentointi)...

eivät sopineet minulle 1 2 3 4 5 sopivat minulle

9. Osallistuin ryhmäkeskusteluun...

vähän 1 2 3 4 5 paljon

Jos vähän (1 tai 2), niin miksi?

10. Luulen, että tällaisten 'kriittisten tilanteiden' läpikäymisestä etukäteen on hyötyä vaihto-oppilasvuoteni aikana.

täysin eri mieltä 1 2 3 4 5 täysin samaa mieltä

11. Olin ajatellut jo aikaisemmin samanlaisia asioita kuin tilanteissa tuli tänään esille.

täysin eri mieltä 1 2 3 4 5 täysin samaa mieltä

12. Tunnen itseni nyt varmemmaksi kohtaamaan uusia tilanteita vuoteni aikana.

täysin eri mieltä 1 2 3 4 5 täysin samaa mieltä

13. Koen osaavani tunnistaa kohdalleni sattuvan 'kriittisen tilanteen'.

täysin eri mieltä 1 2 3 4 5 täysin samaa mieltä

14. Oletan joutuvani vuoteni aikana samantyyppisiin tilanteisiin kuin ne, joita tänään käsiteltiin.

täysin eri mieltä 1 2 3 4 5 täysin samaa mieltä

15. Koin, että tästä valmennusosioista oli minulle hyötyä.

täysin eri mieltä 1 2 3 4 5 täysin samaa mieltä

Jos täysin tai osin eri mieltä (1 tai 2), niin miksi?

16. Mielestäni tämä koulutusosio oli tarpeellinen osa lähtövalmennusta.

täysin eri mieltä 1 2 3 4 5 täysin samaa mieltä

17. Jääkö valmennusosiosta jotain puuttumaan; jäitkö kaipaamaan jotain?

18. Oliko jotain liikaa/liian vähän?

19. Mikä oli mielestäsi mielenkiintoisin tilanne ja miksi?

20. Oliko joku tilanteista liian ilmiselvä tai 'helppo'? Mikä tilanne ja miksi?

21. Oliko joku tilanteista liian vaikea? Mikä tilanne ja miksi?

THE RESULTS OF THE FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

(frequencies, means and standard deviations)

Väite	1	2	3	4	5	Ka	S
1. 'Kriittisiä tilanteita' oli määrällisesti...	-	-	17	3	1	3,24	0,54
2. 'Kriittisten tilanteiden' valmennusosio oli kestoltaan...	-	2	13	5	1	3,24	0,70
3. Tilanteiden "ratkaisu" oli...	7	9	5	-	-	1,90	0,77
4. Tilanteet olivat...	-	4	7	10	-	3,29	0,78
5. Keskustelua tilanteista oli...	-	2	18	1	-	2,95	0,38
6. Tilanteista keskusteleminen omassa ryhmässä ja muiden mielipiteiden kuunteleminen oli...	-	3	2	12	4	3,81	0,93
7. Toisten ryhmien esittelemien tilanteiden kuunteleminen ja kommentointi oli...	-	3	6	10	2	3,52	0,87
8. 'Kriittisten tilanteiden' valmennusosion työskentelytavat (tilanteiden ratkominen, ryhmätyö, kommentointi)...	-	-	5	12	4	3,95	0,67
9. Osallistuin ryhmäkeskusteluun...	-	-	8	13	-	3,62	0,50
10. Luulen, että tällaisten 'kriittisten tilanteiden' läpikäymisestä etukäteen on hyötyä vaihto-oppilasvuoteni aikana.	-	1	5	7	8	4,05	0,92
11. Olin ajatellut jo aikaisemmin samanlaisia asioita kuin tilanteissa tuli tänään esille.	-	3	5	8	5	3,71	1,01
12. Tunnen itseni nyt varmemmaksi kohtaamaan uusia tilanteita vuoteni aikana.	1	1	5	12	2	3,62	0,92
13. Koen osaavani tunnistaa kohdalleni sattuvan 'kriittisen tilanteen'.	-	2	6	11	2	3,62	0,80
14. Oletan joutuvani vuoteni aikana samantyyppisiin tilanteisiin kuin ne, joita tänään käsiteltiin.	-	1	2	10	8	4,19	0,81
15. Koin, että tästä valmennusosioista oli minulle hyötyä.	-	-	5	12	4	3,95	0,67
16. Mielestäni tämä koulutusosio oli tarpeellinen osa lähtövalmennusta.	-	1	5	10	4	3,85	0,81

n=21 in every item except in number 16 where n=20

Appendix 4

PERMISSION SHEET FOR OBTAINING E-MAIL ADDRESSES

SUOSTUMUSLOMAKE

Nimi: _____

Suostun siihen, että minuun otetaan yhteyttä sähköpostitse syyskuun 2001 aikana. _____

En suostu siihen, että minuun otetaan yhteyttä sähköpostitse syyskuun 2001 aikana. _____

Minulla on sähköpostiosoite, jota tulen käyttämään Yhdysvalloissa oloni aikana. KYLLÄ EI

Sähköpostiosoite: _____

THE E-MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE

KYSELY

Haluaisin, että muistelet YFU:n järjestämää valmennuspäivää Oulussa/Jyväskylässä, johon osallistuit toukokuussa. Erityisesti olen kiinnostunut mielipiteistäsi koskien koulutusosiota, joka toteutettiin 'kriittisten tilanteiden' avulla.

Kriittinen tilannehan on sellainen, jonka osallistuja on kokenut jollain tapaa hämmentäväksi, ongelmalliseksi tai jopa huvittavaksi. Silloin mielessä on voinut käydä kysymys: ”oliko tässä jotain kummallista?”, ”mitähän sanoin/tein väärin?”. Valmennuspäivänä keskustelit ryhmissä erilaisista kriittisistä tilanteista ja niitä käytiin myös yhdessä läpi.

Toivoisin, että vähintään vastaisit alla oleviin kysymyksiin. Lisäksi olisi hyvä, jos kirjoittaisit vähintään yhden kertomuksen kriittisestä tilanteesta, joka on tapahtunut Yhdysvalloissa olosi aikana. Kirjoittamisen helpottamiseksi alla on kysymyksiä, joihin vastaamalla voit rakentaa tarinaasi kokemustesi perusteella.

Käsittelen kaikki vastaukset tutkimuksessani luottamuksellisesti eli kenenkään henkilöllisyys ei paljastu. Antamasi henkilökohtaiset tiedot eivät tule muiden kuin minun tietooni. Osallistumisesi on tärkeää monen seikan vuoksi. Vastaustesi perusteella saan tietoa siitä, onko kriittisten tilanteiden läpikäynnistä hyötyä vaihto-oppilaaksi lähteville. Myös kertomastasi tilanteesta voi olla hyötyä tuleville vaihto-oppilaille, jos se otetaan esimerkiksi valmennukseen.

Vastaa siis ainakin alla oleviin kysymyksiin. Jos päätät kertoa itsellesi sattuneen kriittisen tilanteen, löydät kirjoittamistasi mahdollisesti auttavia apukysymyksiä pääkyselyn jälkeen. Jos jokin jää epäselväksi tai Sinulla on muuten jotain kysyttävää, älä epäröi ottaa yhteyttä. Palauta vastauksesi mahdollisimman pian. Sähköpostiosoitteeni on: nina.sassi@suomi24.fi

KIITOS OSALLISTUMISESTA!

1. MITÄ muistat 'kriittiset tilanteet' -koulutusosiesta? Voit luetella muistamiasi asioita.
2. Jäikö joku käsitellyistä tilanteista erityisesti mieleesi? Mikä tilanne; mitä siinä tapahtui?
3. Miksi luulet, että juuri tuo tilanne jäi sinulle mieleen? Onko sinulle tapahtunut jotain samanlaista?
4. Oliko valmennuksissa käsitellyistä kriittisistä tilanteista näin jälkikäteen ajateltuna mitään hyötyä valmistautuessasi vuoteesi tai nyt oleskelusi aikana Yhdysvalloissa? Jos, niin mitä hyötyä?

Kuvaile tilannetta, joka on tapahtunut tähänastisen vaihto-oppilasvuotesi aikana Yhdysvalloissa. Voit kirjoittaa myös monesta tilanteesta, jos niitä vain mieleesi tulee. Muistele sellaista viestintätilannetta, joka oli ärsyttävä, hämmentävä, huvittava, erikoinen jne. Toinen osapuoli ei ehkä ymmärtänyt käyttäytymistäsi, kuten olit tarkoittanut tai sinä ymmärsit väärin jonkun muun käyttäytymisen. Joka tapauksessa tilanteessa oli mielestäsi jotain kummallista. Voit kirjoittaa kertomuksesi joko englanniksi tai suomeksi.

1. Kuvaile YKSITYISKOHTAISESTI mitä tapahtui ja mitä kukin sanoi tai teki. Vältä yleistyksiä, kuten ”amerikkalaiset yleensä hymyilevät paljon...” ja kirjoita jostain tietyistä tilanteista (esim. ”Ensimmäisellä viikolla koulussa Bob tuli iltapäivällä minua vastaan koulun käytävällä ja kysyi ’What’s up?’. Mietin hetken ja vastasin ’Sky’. Bob pyöritteli ihmeissään päätään ja jatkoi matkaansa eteenpäin. Minustakin tilanne ja hänen kysymyksensä oli hyvin kummallinen. Myöhemmin ymmärsin, että Bobin kysymys olikin yleinen amerikkalainen tervehdys eikä oikea, konkreettinen kysymys.”)

MITÄ tapahtui ja MITÄ kukin sanoi ja/tai teki?

MILLOIN se tapahtui?

MISSÄ se tapahtui?

KUKA/KETKÄ olivat osallisina tapahtumaan? (kerro henkilöiden taustasta sen, mitä tiedät tai voit päätellä, esim. keski-ikäinen naisopettaja, n. 45-v.)

MIKSI luulet, että tilanne ei mennytkään suunnitelmiesi mukaan/tuntui oudolta?

MITEN reagoit?

2. Lopuksi, analysoi vielä tilannetta.

-Miten selität tilanteen nyt jälkeenpäin?

-Jäivätkö jotkut seikat vielä epäselviksi? Mitkä?

-Mitä tekisit toisin ja miksi?

-Mitä opit?

Nyt sinulla on mahdollisuus yleistää, jos olet huomannut, että jotain tapahtuu toistuvasti muulloinkin kuin vain kuvailemassasi tapauksessa.

KIITOS OSALLISTUMISESTA!

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Nina Sassi