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A Contrastive Pragmatics Study of Invitations in British English and Japanese

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Abstract

This study offers a cross-cultural pragmatics perspective on invitations. It explores invitation sequences in a symmetrical invitation-refusal situation, performed by 20 female native speakers of British English and 20 female native speakers of Japanese, from a discursive approach using role plays. The qualitative analysis of the data obtained from the adapted version of conversation analysis revealed some similarities and differences in turn designs of the English and the Japanese invitations. Although pre-sequences were highly frequent in the English data, they were more so in the Japanese data. The analysis of the linguistic formats of the invitations in the two sets of data revealed that an approach to handle uncertainty seen in the cases where the invitation was initiated with a preface differed – the English speakers used a *syntactic* solution whereas the Japanese speakers used a *sequential* solution. These findings highlight the importance of analysing speech acts in *situated* interactions.

Keywords

Invitation sequences – conversation analysis – British English – Japanese – intercultural communication

1 Introduction

The importance of studying the linguistic realisations of speech behaviours from a cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) perspective has been documented in the literature (e.g. Kwon, 2004; Suszczyńska, 1999). The assumptions embedded in the field of CCP are based on the idea that realisation patterns can vary from culture to culture, and that these differences can lead to communication breakdowns when individuals from different speech communities interact according to their own pragmatic norms (Boxer, 2002). In relation to British English and Japanese, Fukushima (1996, 2000) explored the realisation patterns of requests, and the findings revealed some similarities and differences. One of the differences is that the Japanese subjects chose the strategy that pre-empted the speaker's request as a demonstration of solicitousness (e.g. "Shall I give you a lift home?" from Fukushima, 2000: 309) when responding to an utterance such as "I didn't bring my umbrella" (Fukushima, 2000), more than the British participants did. This suggests that misunderstanding can occur in cross-cultural communication between British and Japanese people when they follow their own pragmatic norms. This has motivated the researcher to explore invitations in British English and Japanese.

Although invitations are important social actions (Margutti et al., 2018; Wolfson et al., 1989), studies on invitations from a cross-linguistic comparative perspective are scarce compared to other social actions such as requests (e.g. Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch, 2013; Márquez Reiter et al., 2005).¹ To the researcher's best knowledge, only two studies have investigated invitations in CCP to date and they were contrastive socio-pragmatic studies of "ostensible invitations" (Isaacs and Clark, 1990) in English and Persian (Eslami, 2005) and in English and Farsi (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006). "Ostensible invitations"² refer to the invitations that are given for form's sake, that is. They are pretend or "insincere" invitations. That is, the analytical focus of the studies was insincere invitations rather than "genuine invitations" (Isaacs and Clark, 1990). To date, studies on "genuine invitations" have not been carried out in CCP.

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- 1 Further examples: apologies (e.g. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Suszczyńska, 1999), compliments (Daikuhara, 1986; Matsuura, 2002), refusals (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Kwon, 2004) and suggestions (Ohata, 2004).
 - 2 Isaacs and Clark (1990: 493) provide the defining features of ostensible invitations from a psychological perspective as follows. They require: "a pretense of sincerity by the speaker; mutual recognition of the pretense by speaker and addressee; collusion on the pretense by the addressee; ambivalence by the speaker about its acceptance; and an off-record purpose by the speaker".

Regarding research on Japanese invitations from a cross-linguistic comparative perspective, a few studies (Szatrowski, 1993, 2004) were conducted using a discursive approach. Szatrowski (1993) compared invitation-refusal sequences identified in Japanese telephone conversation data with some fragments of invitation sequences (Drew, 1984) and invitational refusals in English (Davidson, 1984). Although Szatrowski (1993) explored invitation-refusal sequences and their functions systematically, the English data that were utilised for comparison were limited. This may be seen as a clear research gap in cross-linguistic contrastive pragmatics studies of invitations – particularly for British English and Japanese invitations.

With respect to methodology, CCP studies have traditionally examined speech act realisation with a focus on the analysis of a single speech act sequence (e.g. a request sequence), which is isolated from situated interaction (Kasper, 2006). As a response to Kasper's (2006) call for discursive pragmatics, which is informed by conversation analysis (CA), a few studies in CCP (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008, 2015) have investigated the sequential organisation of speech acts in interaction. More recently, a growing body of research in the field of contrastive pragmatics (CP) have been exploring speech behaviours from a CA or CA informed perspective (e.g. Kim, 2023; Rodriguez and Sinkeviciute, 2023; Yu and Wang, 2023). For example, Rodriguez and Sinkeviciute (2023) investigated indirect complaint sequences in Spanish and English from the interactional pragmatics perspective (Haugh, 2012), which is informed by CA, and showed how complainants reacted to the prior turns and how extended sequences were co-constructed and negotiated in interaction. Yu and Wang (2023) utilised CA as a contrastive analysis method to explore how a teacher interacted with parents of the victim and the agent in a school conflict, and the study demonstrated how CA enabled the researcher 'to discern the subtle difference in social interaction by contrasting how the same speaker conducts the same action but to different recipients' (p. 91). These studies show what CA can bring to CP research.

Taking the research gaps into account and being in line with the body of CP research from a CA perspective, the present study explores invitation sequences in a symmetrical (friend-friend) invitation-refusal situation (invitation to a birthday party) performed by 20 female native speakers of British English and 20 female native speakers of Japanese from a discursive approach by means of open role plays (Kasper, 2008).³ The aim of this study is to examine the similarities and differences in turn designs of the English and the Japanese

3 The present study is part of a larger project (Matsukawa, 2017) which explored the negotiation of invitations as manifestation of politeness (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) in British English

invitations (to a pre-planned occasion). The interactional data were analysed by using an adapted version of CA.

2 Theoretical and Methodological Background

This section aims to provide the theoretical and methodological background of the present study by focusing on invitations in CA. Firstly, the characterisation of invitations in CA will be reviewed by comparing them to characterisation from a sociolinguistic and the speech act theory perspective (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Then, some key principles of CA will be reviewed along with the review of CA studies on invitations mainly in English.

2.1 *Characterisation of Invitations*

As mentioned above, invitations are important social actions, where social commitment is made (Wolfson et al., 1983) and they have been characterised from various perspectives. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Wolfson et al. (1983) explored the defining properties of “unambiguous invitations” in American English by using a large corpus gathered ethnographically. “Unambiguous invitations” were those with the following essential components: “(1) reference to time and/or mention of place or activity and (2) a request for a response” (Wolfson et al., 1983: 117). They distinguished “unambiguous” and “ambiguous” invitations based on these essential components. An example of the “ambiguous” invitations is an utterance like “We have to get together soon, John” (Wolfson et al., 1983: 122). Here one of the essential components, time, is left indefinite by means of the use of the vague lexical choice, “soon”.

From the speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) perspective, invitations are characterised as directives (Searle, 1979; Vanderveken, 1990) like requests, where the speaker’s purpose is to get the hearer to do something. The preparatory condition (Searle, 1969) for invitations is described as “something the hearer will be happy about and that is perceived to be good for him [*sic*]” (Vanderveken, 1990: 191). Unlike Searle, Hancher (1979) saw invitations as belonging to a “hybrid class” of “commissive directives” consisting of a combination of directive and commissive illocutionary force. This observation coincides with the characterisations from a CA perspective. However, invitations are distinguished from requests and offers in that they are designed and understood as free from obligation and need (Drew and Couper-Kuhlen,

and Japanese from the pragmatic-discursive approach (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015) by means of open role plays (Kasper, 2008).

2014) unlike requests and offers (Margutti et al., 2018) in CA. In this respect, invitations are important social actions for enhancing social solidarity and maintaining or improving interpersonal relationships (Margutti et al., 2018; Wolfson et al., 1989).

2.2 *Invitations in Conversation Analysis*

In CA, an action is seen as a collaborative activity by the participants in the situated interaction (Drew and Couper-Kuhlen, 2014), in contrast with the speech acts perspective above (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). CA considers actions in turns-at-talk within an interaction, more specifically, in the context of previous and following turns. This brings an analytical framework that focuses on pairs of actions and the link between the first and second actions in an “adjacency pair” (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973), which allows for exploration into “preference organisation” (Pomerantz, 1984; Pomerantz and Heritage, 2013) and sequence organisation in interaction (Schegloff, 2007).

In interactional literature traditionally, there are two ways of explaining the construction of invitation sequences in the context of a two-part unit (“adjacency pair”): “pre-sequences” and “preference organisation” (e.g. Levinson, 1983; Schegloff, 2007). Regarding “pre-sequence”, Schegloff (2007) states that the first part of a two-part unit can be expanded before it occurs. This may bring up the question “How can we analyse something like an utterance by reference to something else which has not yet occurred?” Schegloff’s answer to the question was, “we proceed in that way because that is how the parties to conversation seem to use these exchanges in producing them and in understanding them” (p. 28). Schegloff (2007) claims that pre-invitations may be considered as one of the most readily recognisable pre-sequences with this example: when a caller provides a query such as “Are you doing anything?” after the opening of a telephone call, the recipient does not usually perceive the query as asking for a factual explanation.

With regard to preference organisation, invitations are considered as one of the clear cases where the two alternative responses are not equal, and acceptance is preferred over refusal in the case of invitations (Levinson, 1983; Schegloff, 2007). Davidson (1984) demonstrates the way in which dispreferred organisation is constructed. The inviter modifies the invitation after the invitee displays a problem about the invitation in order to make it possible or desirable for the invitee. However, Pomerantz and Heritage (2013) also show the way in which dispreferred organisation is constructed with a case where the inviter offers an invitee a reason for a possible upcoming rejection. In relation to invitation rejection, a speaker who intends to extend an invitation but has not yet extended it may use a strategy to check the recipient’s availability

and receptivity prior to issuing the invitation (i.e. pre-sequences) (Schegloff, 2007). Pre-sequences are considered to be designed to minimise the likelihood of rejection (Schegloff, 2007).

This “cautious” action of the inviter has been documented in CA studies on invitation sequences in various languages. In English, Drew (1984) explored invitation sequences by investigating the link between the two parts of the pair. It demonstrated that reporting is a cautious way of inviting to a pre-planned event. Reporting is defined as “just telling recipient about some occasion” (Drew, 1984: 143). Drew (2018) further explored the cautious nature of the English invitation. He explored invitations found in a data base of US and British English telephone calls by focusing on “variations in the *linguistic forms* through which invitations are delivered, and the sequential and interactional circumstances (environment) in which they are delivered” (Drew, 2018: 68, italics in original). In relation to the linguistic forms, it was found that the lack of assertiveness and indeterminacy were shown in the syntactical formats that inviters use, where the invitation is started but is then “left hanging, incomplete, unspoken” (Drew, 2018: 70). Drew (2018) calls this “equivocal forms” of invitations, where “equivocal” is conceptualised in the sense of “an uncertainty, a tentativeness in asking, amounting to a kind of cautiousness” (Drew, 2018: 70).

This cautious nature of the invitation is also documented in the cluster of CA studies of invitations in seven languages⁴ from a cross-linguistic comparative perspective by using naturally occurring telephone conversations, which Drew (2018) used to serve as an introduction for other studies (Margutti et al., 2018). In the studies, the cautious nature of the action was shared with other languages with variations – different linguistic or sequential solutions were used in each corpus. In French, Traverso et al. (2018) demonstrated that the action of inviting was a “delicate” activity, which was evident in the features that were displayed on the inviter’s side. Invitations were produced in a step-by-step manner, which included various pre-sequence formats where hesitations and self-repairs were often displayed. The delicateness also appeared in the turn design where the moment the pre-planned event was explicitly announced was delayed. In Italian, Margutti and Galatolo (2018) showed that the inviter often displayed caution in extending the reason-for-calling invitation. In Italian institutional invitations, De Stefani’s (2018) analysis of Italian institutional invitations (cold calls to bank clients to invite them to a meeting at a bank)

4 In American and British English (Drew, 2018), Italian (De Stefani, 2018; Margutti and Galatolo, 2018), Greek (Bella and Moser, 2018), Farsi (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2018), Mandarin (Yu and Wu, 2018), Finnish (Routarinne and Tainio, 2018) and French (Traverso et al., 2018).

revealed that the caller cautiously checked whether the recipient was available before the purpose of the meeting was reported. Routarinne and Tainio (2018) demonstrated that the use of the declarative format (reportings) was frequently identified in Finnish invitations. The analysis of the Greek invitations revealed that issuing impromptu invitations via negative-interrogatives format could be seen as “displaying a ‘preference’ for a negative answer or, at least, as creating a significant ‘opening’ for a negative answer to occur” (Bella and Moser, 2018: 98). In Mandarin, the cautiousness appeared in the turn design in which the invitation was made and where the inviter was oriented to the likelihood of the success of an invitation (Yu and Wu, 2018). In Farci, Teleghani-Nikazm (2018) showed that the speaker commonly expressed the benefit of the activity to which a recipient was invited explicitly.

In Drew (2018), the identified linguistic formats were distinguished by whether they were displayed as being independent from prior talk (reason-for-calling) or connected to prior talk (interactionally-generated type). This distinction brought a discovery of a distinction between the kinds of occasions that were presented in the invitation, namely invitations to pre-arranged occasions, which was displayed in reason-for-calling, or invitations to occasions that were arranged spontaneously and which were interactionally generated. This distinction was also seen in other languages within the cluster of the CA studies, and they showcased the relation between a specific linguistic format that was used in the invitations and the sequential environments in which they were made. For example, in French, Travarso et al.’s (2018) analytical focus was on invitations to a pre-planned event, which was commonly delivered as a reason-for-calling. In Greek, the polar negative-interrogative construction was exclusively produced in impromptu invitations and never in pre-planned invitations. In Farsi, an imperative construction was displayed when reason-for-calling invitations were delivered, whereas when interactionally-generated invitations were delivered, a construction using an auxiliary verb was used (Teleghani-Nikazm, 2018).⁵

In conclusion, the cluster of the CA studies on invitations offered empirical evidence on what the shared characteristics of invitations were regardless of context and language. There are two characteristics of invitations that these studies can put forward. Firstly, they showcased the cautious nature of the invitation across languages. Secondly, they demonstrated the sequential environment in which the invitation was delivered as a reason-for-calling or an

5 For Mandarin, Yu and Wu’s (2018) analytical focus was the relationship between a certain syntactic form and the likelihood of the success of an invitation.

interactionally-generated type, and the relationship between the kind of occasion that was presented in the invitation and the type of invitation.

As mentioned earlier, the present study aims to investigate the similarities and differences in turn designs of English and Japanese invitations (in a symmetrical situation). The analytical focuses of the present study are (1) the sequence organisation of the invitation and (2) the linguistic formats through which invitations are delivered. This was achieved by employing an adapted version of CA as a methodological tool, where some of the CA principles and aspects that were presented above were utilised. In terms of data analysis, the focus was placed on the construction of the first action of sequences with particular focus on the development of the sequence from its launching to the moment in which the recipient responded to it as an invitation (i.e. invitation sequence).

3 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

In order to investigate the invitation sequences in English and Japanese, the interactional data obtained by open role plays were utilised. Role plays are “simulations of communicative encounters” (Kasper, 2008: 288), where spoken data are elicited under predetermined experimental conditions (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010). The situation utilised in the role plays was designed to be symmetrical in terms of “power” difference and “social distance” between the participants (friend and friend). The joint activity type of inviting-declining, not inviting-accepting, was chosen for the situation. This is because declining is a type of dispreferred response and it typically yields longer stretches of talk in interaction than the response to inviting-accepting (Heritage, 1984).⁶

The Japanese data consisted of the role plays performed by 20 Japanese female university students as inviters⁷ (mean age: 21.2 years) and 4 Japanese female student assistants as invitees (mean age: 21.0 years). The English data were the role plays performed by 20 British female university students as inviters (mean age: 22.0 years) and 3 British female student assistants as invitees⁸ (mean age: 22.0 years). The participants were all native speakers of Japanese (for the Japanese data) and British English (for the English data). The role-play setup

6 The role play scenarios are originally designed for the larger project where the present study belongs as has been mentioned in Footnote 3.

7 The terms “inviter” and “invitee” are utilised here although this type of categorisation may be opposed to that of CA, where the actions need to be seen as “the product of local interpretive work” (Sidnell, 2009: 15) rather than pre-given actions.

8 For both Japanese and English, inviter invited one of the student assistants (i.e. invitee).

comprised one experimental invitational prompt (invitation to a pre-planned event⁹): a university student invites her close friend to her twenty-first birthday (for British inviter) and a university student invites her close friend to a surprise birthday party for a mutual friend (for Japanese inviter) (see Appendix A for the full description). The role play situations were carefully selected in terms of comparability and authenticity via a rigorous procedure.¹⁰ However, the situations for the British and the Japanese participants ended up slightly different. This demonstrates a challenge that a researcher in cross-cultural pragmatics may face. The descriptions of the situations included “enriched-role play scenarios” (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010) in order to enhance the content validity of the instrument. The invitees were instructed to decline the invitations based on the role-play scenario in which the accounts for the refusal were provided (see Appendix B for the full description). Both the inviter and the invitee were instructed to perform as they would do in a real-life situation and continue taking turns until the conversation was naturally completed. All the role plays were audio-recorded and fully transcribed according to the transcription conventions adapted from Jefferson (2004) (see Appendix C). The 40 role-play interactions performed by the British and the Japanese participants were qualitatively analysed by utilising an adapted version of CA as a methodological tool.

In the following sections, the detailed analyses of the English and Japanese invitation sequences will be presented in Section 4 and Section 5 respectively.

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- 9 The prompt is designed to elicit discourse where the inviter issues an invitation to a pre-planned event, which is distinguished from invitations which are generated from the situated interaction in terms of turn design (Margutti et al., 2018).
- 10 The situational assessments (Fukushima, 2000), where a five-point “Likert scale” written questionnaire (Dörnyei, 2007) was utilised, were administered to 10 female British university students in the UK and 10 female Japanese university students in Japan. In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to assess how authentic the situations were (see Appendix D). The situations utilised in the questionnaire were selected from an “item pool” (Dörnyei, 2007) created by the preliminary questionnaires (see Appendix E), where potential items for the situations in the assessments were gathered from five British and six Japanese students in a university in the UK. In order to develop the assessment questionnaire, its initial version was piloted on two female British university students in the UK and one female university student in Japan. The Japanese participant rated the situation (a female university student invites her close friend to her twenty-first birthday at her house) differently from the British participants in terms of authenticity. The British participants rated the situation as high (i.e. natural), whereas the Japanese participant rated it as low (i.e. unnatural). The Japanese participant explained the reason as that they don’t organise their birthday party by themselves. Therefore, the situation for Japanese participants was modified accordingly and the revised situation for the situational assessments was rated by the participants as high, which is utilised for the current study.

The English and Japanese invitation sequences will be compared and contrasted in Section 6.

4 **Invitations in British English**

In this section, the sequence organisation of the English invitations and the linguistic formats by which the invitations were delivered will be explored in Subsections 4.1 and 4.2, respectively.

4.1 *Sequence Organisation*

In the English data, all the sequences where the pre-planned event was reported were initiated with a preface (“preface format” henceforth) or pre-expanded by sequences (“pre-sequences”, Schegloff, 2007) (“pre-sequence format” henceforth) except for one case. In the deviant case, the invitation where the pre-planned event was reported was initiated with just a hesitation “um”. As can be seen in Table 1, preface format and pre-sequence format were found in 26% and 74 % of the English data respectively.

TABLE 1 Distribution of preface and pre-sequence formats identified in the English data

Format type	English
Preface	26% (5/19)
Pre-sequence	74% (14/19)
Total	100% (19/19)

4.1.1 **Preface Format**

As Table 1 shows, the preface format was identified in five cases. Here is an example.

- (1)
- ((01–07 greetings))

08 Chloe(I1): =yeah [ahahaha]

09 Anna(B10): [ahahaha] yeah so um- (0.5) glad I caught up with you

10 it’s my 21st birthday party um: we’re having celebrations

11 Friday my house at seven

12 (.)

13 Anna I wondered if you want to <come> people from the course are

14 gonna be there, we haven't seen them in a while=
15 Chloe: =yeah ah:
16 (0.3)
17 Chloe: that's um happy birthday for then=
18 Anna: =thank you=
19 Chloe: =that's so nice for you to ask but unfortunately- (0.4) I'm-
20 I'm actually working you know that Japanese restaurant Noa

In line 9, after the closing of the previous sequence (greetings), Anna initiates the transition to the next activity with various hesitation markers (*yeah, so* and *um*) and pause. Then, she produces the preface (*glad I caught up with you*) and provides background information about the party she is planning (lines 10–11). After a brief pause (line 12), Anna produces the “invitation proper” (Traverso et al., 2018) (*I wonder if you want to come*, line 13) and additional accounts (lines 13–14). Chloe shows her agreement (line 15) and congratulates Anna on her forthcoming birthday (line 17), but the response to the invitation is delayed. Note that the reporting which includes the core information (including the exact time of the party) of the invitation is preceded by only a preface – that is, being straight to the point.

4.1.2 Pre-sequence Format

More frequently, the inviters used elaborate forms of “pre’s”,¹¹ namely pre-sequences, which were found in 74 % (14/19 cases) of the English data (see Table 1). The analysis of the pre-sequences revealed three reoccurring format types, which are shown in Table 2. The type of format is given in the left column

TABLE 2 Pre-sequence formats of invitations in British English

Format type	Number of cases	Example
1 Pre-invitation/pre-announcement	2	(2)
2 Announcement sequence (Friday)	3	(3)
3 Announcement sequence (next week)	9	(4) (5) (6)
Total	14	

11 The term “pre-” (Schegloff, 2007: 28) is utilised here to refer to “preliminary to something else”. Although “preface” is not constructed of adjacency pairs, it is considered as “pre-” in this study. This is because the reporting is initiated with a preface as a preliminary to upcoming invitation. This interpretation echoes with Traverso et al. (2018).

and the number of identified cases is given in the middle column. All examples are numbered on the right side in parentheses.

In the first format, the inviter used a prototypical pre-invitation (Schegloff, 2007) or pre-announcement sequence (Terasaki, 2004), then she reported the core contextual information. The pre-invitation and pre-announcement sequences enabled the inviter to provide a prelude to the upcoming invitation. This format was found in two cases (one case each). Here is a case where a pre-invitation was utilised.

(2)

((01–04 greetings))

- 05 Anna (B20): =yeah good thank you (.) um what are you doing next Friday?
 06 Chloe (I2): um: I've got a shift at work? (0.5) u:m why what's up
 07 Anna: oh it's– um– (.) I'm having a birthday party at my
 08 house it's my 21st. (0.3) u:m if you are around you're
 09 more than welcome to come [a few people are]=
 10 Chloe: [4oh::]
 11 Anna: =coming?
 12 Chloe: I don't think I'm able to come <because> I've got my
 13 shift seven till ten? so it's a really annoying time
 14 I'm probably won't be able to [make it?

After the greetings (lines 1–5), Anna opens a question sequence to check Chloe's availability on the date of the occasion; this is preceded by a brief pause and a hesitation (*um*) (line 5) as an initiation of a new activity. After Chloe's response to the question and a clarification request from her (line 6), Anna states the occasion and its venue through reporting with the invitation proper (*if you are around you're more than welcome to come*, lines 8–9) and additional background information. The pre-invitation enables her to provide a prelude to the upcoming invitation.

The next example illustrates the second format where the invitation proper was initiated with the core and background information through reporting precluded by an announcement sequence (the inviter's birthday is on Friday). This format was found in three cases.

(3)

((greetings 01–02))

- 03 Anna (B2): =do you remember it's my birthday (on) Friday=
 04 Chloe (I1): =4oh4is4it happy [birthday for then
 05 Anna: [yeah it's my twenty first I can't

- 06 [believe I'm twenty-one already
 07 Chloe: [oh my gosh
 08 Anna: um- (0.7) what are you doing that evening 'cos I was gonna
 09 have a party and invite loads of friends around, just a
 10 house party, are you going to be able to make it
 11 Chloe: jah:: that would be so nice as it would be so nice to see
 12 everyone but- (.) .hhh unfortunately I'm working?

In line 3, right after the greetings, Anna announces that her birthday is on Friday, using a prototypical pre-announcement sequence (*do you remember ...*) (Terasaki, 2004). After Chloe's display of positive assessment towards the announcement, Anna shows her agreement with it and produces additional information (*it's my twenty first*, line 5) with a display of her excitement about her birthday (*I can't believe I'm twenty-one already*, lines 5–6). After Chloe's responding excitement (line 7), Anna initiates the transition to a new activity with a hesitation marker and a long pause (line 8). She then produces the preface (*what are you doing that evening*, line 8) and background information in the form of reporting (line 8–10). Finally she produces the invitation proper (*are you going to be able to make it*, line 10). This is followed by Chloe's response explaining why she would be unable to attend the party (lines 11–12). This format is labelled as “Announcement sequence (Friday)” in Table 2 because the specific date of the party (on Friday) is included in the announcement sequence.

The third format identified in nine cases of the English data was similar to the second format; the inviter announced the pre-planned event, then she reported some background information before producing a prompt for the invitee to respond to the invitation. However, unlike in the second format, the exact date (Friday) of the event was not produced in the announcement sequence in this format – a non-specific time word “next week” was utilised instead. Hence, this format was labelled as “Announcement sequence (next week)”. This format delayed the moment the exact day of the proposed event was produced. Three examples will be presented below. In the first example, the exact day of the event was produced as part of a prompt for the invitee to respond to the invitation.

(4)

- ((01–06 greetings))
 07 Anna (B5): [yeah? I'm having] um (0.3) twenty-
 08 first birthday party next week?=
 09 Chloe (I3): =oh coo:l=

- 10 Anna: =so we can catch up everyone's gonna be there so [it'll]=
 11 Chloe: [oh boy]
 12 Anna: =be nice for us to all see each other=
 13 Chloe: =yeah [I haven't seen everyone=
 14 Anna: [since last time
 15 Chloe: =in ages=
 16 Anna: =yeah it's been a long time=
 17 Chloe: =yeah=
 18 Anna: =um (0.3) so yeah my- my house 7 o'clock next Friday?
 19 Chloe: (0.6) o[h: no:=
 20 Anna: [xxx °something°
 21 Chloe: I'm a-ha-hhh I- I didn't tell you yet I've just got new
 22 job? (0.6) [<and> at a Japanese restaurant=

In line 7, after the closing of the previous activity (greetings, lines 1–6), Anna announces that she is going to have a 21st birthday party by using the non-specific time phrase “next week” (lines 7–8). Immediately after Chloe's positive assessment of the party, Anna produces an account (*we can catch up*, line 10) prefaced with *so*, the background information (*everyone's gonna be there*, line 10) and another account (*it'll be nice for us to all see each other*, lines 10–12) prefaced with *so*. This is followed by multiple turns where Anna and Chloe share the fact that they and their mutual friends have not seen each other for a long time (lines 13–17). Immediately after the sequence, Anna initiates the transition to the next activity with a hesitation marker and a pause (line 18). Then, Anna produces the invitation proper (line 18) preface with *so*. This pre-sequence format delays the moment when the proposed event is explicitly presented.

In the next example, the inviter produced a prompt to respond to the invitation without providing the exact day of the event.

(5)

- ((01–09 greetings))
 10 Anna(B17): ah nice. (0.3) u:m it's actually my birthday next week I was
 11 gonna have a party=
 12 Chloe(I2): =oh happy birthday=
 13 Anna: =oh tthank ↓you ah: yeah I was gonna have a party just
 14 people around to mine some of our friends from last year?
 15 Chloe: oh that sounds so good?
 16 Anna: do you think you'll be about?
 17 (.)

- 18 Chloe: um- when is it
 19 Anna: ah:: next <Friday> about sevenish? at my place?
 20 Chloe: oh: sorry I work I've a job? so I can't go I work seven till
 21 ten on Friday nights- at a restaurant? so I won't be able to
 22 [go ʔsorryʔ]

After the greetings (lines 1–9), Anna initiates the transition to the next activity with a pause and a hesitation marker (line 10). She then announces her birthday party “next week” (lines 10–11). After Chloe’s birthday greeting (line 12), Anna re-announces her birthday party (line 13) and produces the background information (lines 13–14), which is followed by Chloe’s enthusiastic remark about the announcement (line 15). Then, Anna produces the invitation proper (line 16). This is followed by Chloe’s clarification request about the date of the party (line 18). In the response to the question, Anna produces another invitation proper by providing the time (an emphasised *Friday*) and venue of the invitation with a rising intonation (line 19). This is followed by Chloe’s turning down of the invitation.

In this example, the date of the event was left unspecified when the prompt to respond to the invitation was delivered. This allowed the inviter to see if the invitee was interested in the occasion itself first, which may be seen as an extra step, hence being cautious when compared to the previous example.

In the third example, the inviter provided some background information of the planned event without specifying the date of the event, which was delivered via reporting. The reporting was not followed by a prompt for the invitee to respond to the invitation.

(6)

- ((greetings 01–02))
- 03 Anna(B13): so it's- um: (0.4) my 21st birthday? coming up?
 04 Chloe(I2): oh happy birthday?=
 05 Anna: =[thank you]
 06 Chloe: [that's amazing]
 07 Anna: so um: (..) actually I thought it'd be a good opportunity for
 08 us to .hhh hang out with a couple of other friends from
 09 uni?=
 10 Chloe: =oh yeah it'd be good to see everyone again? um: when are
 11 you having a party?
 12 (1.1)
 11 Anna: u:m next Friday
 12 Chloe: oh cool

- 13 (0.3)
 14 Chloe: is that- (.) eh what time is that starting?
 15 (0.9)
 16 Anna: ah:: at seven pm (.) until (.) midnight
 17 Chloe: <okay> u:m (.) well I kind of have a shift at (.) my job I
 18 work at a Japanese fuh restaurant? .hhh and I've got shift
 19 seven till ten?=

After the greetings (line 1–2), Anna initiates the transition to the next activity with *so* (line 3). Then, she announces her birthday that is *coming up* (line 3). After the sequence in which common ground is established (lines 4–6), Anna links this with the action she is going to initiate via a discourse marker *so* (line 7). Then, she reports her thoughts about her birthday with a rising intonation (lines 7–9). This is followed by Chloe's agreement with Anna's thoughts (line 10) and a clarification question on the date of the "party" (note that Anna has not used the word "party") (line 11). Here, Chloe sees the reporting as an invitation and asks for details in order to respond to the invitation. This is followed by Anna's response to the clarification request (line 11) and another clarification request from Chloe (line 14) and its response from Anna (line 16). Then, Chloe produces her response to the invitation (lines 17–19).

In this example, the invitation was delivered via reporting where the date of the event was not specified and which was not followed by a prompt for the invitee to respond to the invitation. Based on these accounts, it may be concluded that cautiousness was apparent in the turn design.

The preceding paragraphs have shown that the invitations were produced step-by-step in a sequentially progressive manner – far from being straight to the point – in the majority of the English cases. In the invitations initiated by a preface – relatively straight to the point, the use of certain linguistic formats was found. The linguistic formats of the English invitations are explored below.

4.2 *Linguistic Formats of the English Invitations*

As has been seen above, it was found that all the invitations were delivered through reporting where a pre-planned event was announced with background information followed by a clause or a sentence in a majority of the data (65% (13/20¹² cases)). As can be seen in Table 3, in 35 % of the data (7/20) the invitation was delivered via reporting only, that is reporting was not followed by a cause or a sentence, as in data sample (6). However, in three out of seven

12 A case which was not preceded by a preface or pre-sequences was included as well in order to have a complete picture of the distribution.

cases, reporting was delivered with a rising intonation and a response to the invitation from the recipient was prompted as can be seen in data sample (4). Therefore, this type of reporting has two functions: reporting the pre-planned event and prompting the recipient’s response to the invitation. This type of reporting with dual functions is not documented in Drew’s (1984, 2018) investigation of English invitations.

In the cases where the reporting was followed by a clause or a sentence, three recurring syntactic formats were identified. The identified formats were the polar interrogative (e.g. “are you going to be able to make it”), the conditional (e.g. “I wondered if you want to come”) and the indicative (“I’d love for you to come”) as shown in Table 4. In the table, “declarative” refers to the cases where the reporting was not followed by either a clause or a sentence.

TABLE 3 Distribution of the appearance of a clause or a sentence after reporting in the English data

	English
Followed by a clause or a sentence	65% (13/20)
Not followed by a clause or a sentence	35% (7/20)
Total	100% (20/20)

TABLE 4 Syntactic formats in relation to the “pre-” type in English

“Pre-” type	Polar interrogative	Conditional	Indicative	Declarative	Total
No “pre-”	1	0	0	0	1
Preface	1	2	1	1	5
Pre-invitation/ Pre-announcement	0	1	0	1	2
Announcement sequence (Friday)	1	0	0	2	3
Announcement sequence (next week)	6	0	0	3	9
Total	9 (45%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	7 (35%)	20 (100%)

Table 4 also shows the relationship between the specific syntactic formats and the sequential environment in which they were utilised, namely the “pre-” type, and a number of observations should be made. Firstly, the conditional was identified in the invitations which were preceded by preface and pre-invitation/pre-announcement. For the cases of preface, as the data sample (1) showed, the reporting was preceded by a preface only – straight to the point. This means that the speaker did not have the opportunity to check if the recipient was interested in getting together (“testing the waters”) before the invitation proper was made as where the conditional was utilised (“I wondered if you want to come”). It may be interpreted that the uncertainty reflects conditional construction. It was also found that the lexis “wonder”, used in the example was exclusively utilised in the invitations that were preceded by a preface. Another example was “I’m just wondering I’m having my birthday party”, which was utilised as preface. Based on this, the conditional construction and the lexis “wonder” may be seen as the syntactic and lexical solutions for handling uncertainty due to lack of testing the waters. The conditional construction was also found in the case where pre-invitation was produced as seen in data sample (2). In the data sample (2), the pre-invitation was provided as a prelude to the invitation, which allowed the speaker to check the recipient’s availability on the day of the event, and the outcome was not positive. It may be interpreted that this negative outcome or anticipatory difficulty reflects the conditional construction, which echoes Drew (2018).

Secondly, the indicative (“I’d love for you to come”), where the speaker’s wish was expressed, was found in only one case in the invitation which was preceded by a preface. This is more assertive than the other constructions seen in that category: the “declarative” and “conditional”. In fact, in the case where the polar interrogative was utilised, the question (“are you free at all”) was followed by a sentence where the conditional was used (“it would be really great if you could come”). Hence, this was a unique case.

Finally, it appeared that the polar interrogative had been utilised across the format types of the “pre’s”, except for “Pre-invitation/pre-announcement”. Therefore, the more detailed analysis of the “lexico-syntactic patterns” (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014) of the invitations, where the polar interrogative was utilised, was conducted. Four “semi-fixed combinations” (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014) were found as shown in Table 5.

The first combination included a catenative verb “want” as in “do you wanna come” and was found in five cases. In the second and third combinations, modal verbs “will” and “can” were utilised as in “do you think you’ll be about” and “are you going to make it” and was found in two and one case(s) respectively. The last combination “are you free” was found in one case, where the

TABLE 5 Combinations used for the polar interrogative in English

Combination	English
do you want X	5
do you think you will X	2
can you X	1
are you free	1
Total	9

recipient’s availability was oriented to. In short, modal verbs (“will” and “can”) and catenative verbs (“want”) were used in the majority of the cases, which echoes with Couper-Kuhlen (2014) that shows they are often used in directive-commissive actions in English.

5 **Invitations in Japanese**

In this section, the sequence organisation of the Japanese invitations and the linguistic formats through which the invitations were delivered will be explored in Subsections 5.1 and 5.2.

5.1 *Sequence Organisation*

As in the English data, it was found that all the Japanese sequences where the pre-planned event was reported were initiated with a preface (“preface format”) or pre-expanded by sequences (“pre-sequence format”) except for one case. As can be seen in Table 6, preface format and pre-sequence format were found in 16% and 84% of the Japanese data respectively.

TABLE 6 Distribution of preface and pre-sequence formats identified in the Japanese data

Format type	Japanese
Preface	16% (3/19)
Pre-sequence	84% (16/19)
Total	100% (19/19)

5.1.1 Preface Format

As Table 6 shows, the preface format was identified in three cases. In this format, the inviter used a preface such as “*zutto renraku dekinkattanda kedo sa*” (“(I) have not been able to contact you for a long time but”) before she reported some of the core contextual information of the invitation (a surprise party for a mutual friend Sachiko). Here is the example.

- (7)
- ((greetings 01–12))
- 13 Hanako(J16): [*etto sa:=*
um FP
‘um’
- 14 Yumi(I3): *=un*
=uh-huh
(.)
- 15
- 16 Hanako: *ano: zutto renraku dekinkattanda kedo sa:=*
um long.time contact be.able:NEG:PT-PHR CONJ:but FP
‘um: ((I)) have not been able to contact you for a long time but’
- 17 Yumi: *=u(h)n u(h)n [u(h)n]*
=u(h)n u(h)n [u(h)n]
- 18 Hanako: [*cho:do*] *raishu:*
just.in.time next.week
‘just in time next week’
- 19 Yumi: *un*
uh-huh
(.)
- 20
- 21 Hanako: *etto Satchan¹³ no:=*
um Satchan GEN
‘um Satchan’s’
- 22 Yumi: *=un=*
=uh-huh=
- 23 Hanako: *=baasudei sapuraizu paatii yaru nda kedo:=*
birthday surprise party do PHR CONJ:but
‘((we are)) having a surprise party for Satchan and’
- 24 Yumi: *=otto:*
‘oh boy’
- 25 Hanako: *uh-hu=*

13 *Satchan* is a typical nickname for Sachiko.

- uh-hu=
- 26 Yumi: =*sapuraizu* [*yaru no?*=
surprise do FP
'((are you going)) to have a surprise party?'
- 27 Hanako: [*suru, un.*
do yes
'yes, ((we will)) do.'
- 28 Yumi: *sugge:=*
great:=
- 29 Hanako: =*ii kan*=
=good feeling?=-
- 30 Yumi: =*un*=
=yeah=
- 31 Hanako: =*minna yutteta.*
everyone say:TE-AUX.V:PT
'everyone was saying so.'
- 32 (0.3)
- 33 Yumi: *e- majide?*
INJ really
'oh really?'
- 34 Hanako: *un.*
yes.
- 35 Yumi: *e-(.)sore tte sa: eh- nan- mokkai itte itsutte*
INJ it NOM FP INJ what once.more say:TE when.QUOT
- 36 *ittakke?=-*
say:PT.FP
'um- (.) is it: um- what- say that again when is it ((happening))?'

Immediately after greetings (lines 1–12), Hanako reports that she is planning a surprise party for Sachiko next Friday (lines 18, 21 and 23). This is preceded by a preface “*zutto renraku dekinkattanda kedo sa*” (“(I) have not been able to contact you for a long time but”) (line 16). This is followed by Yumi’s positive assessments towards the occasion (line 24) and multiple exchanges between Yumi and Hanako where they share the idea that having a surprise party sounds good for them and their friends (lines 26–32). This is followed by a clarification question from Yumi as part of her refusal (lines 33, 35 and 36). Note that the invitation is delivered via reporting where the specific date of the event is not given (“*raishu*” (“next week”)), and it is not followed by a prompt for the invitee to respond to the invitation.

5.1.2 Pre-sequence Format

More frequently, the inviters used elaborate forms of “pre’s”, namely pre-sequences, which were found in 84% (16/19) of the Japanese data (see Table 6). The analysis of the pre-sequences revealed three reoccurring format types which can be seen in Table 7. The type of format is given in the left column and the number of identified cases is given in the middle column. All examples are numbered on the right side in parentheses.

TABLE 7 Pre-sequence formats of invitation in Japanese

Format type	Number of cases	Example
1 Ambiguous invitation/Checking willingness-to-get-together sequence	2	(8) (9)
2 Question sequence (Friday)	2	(10)
3 Question sequence (next week)	12	(11) (12) (13)
Total	16	

In the first format, an ‘ambiguous’ invitation (Wolfson et al., 1989), where the occasion and time were unspecified was issued and question sequences that checked the invitee’s willingness to get together for a near-future occasion were produced. Two cases were found (one each). The next example illustrates the pre-sequence where an ambiguous invitation was displayed.

(8)

((01–08 greetings))

09 Hanako(J18): [isshume isshume](0.4)ne: kondo
first.week first.week hey soon

10 sa: asobo: yo:
FP play:VOL FP
'((it's)) first week first week hey let's go out soon'

11 (0.3)

12 Yumi(I4): a- ii yo: (.) [itsu? [a- un]
INJ good FP (.) when uh- uh-huh
'oh- yes (.) when? uh- uh-huh'

13 Hanako: [nanka [a- un] un ah-hu aso bo aso bo nanka-
what-QP uh-un un ah-hu play:VOL play:VOL what-QP
'you know what um- uh-huh uh-huh ah-hu let's go out
let's go out you know what'

- 14 *sa: raishu no kinyobi ni sa:=*
 FP next.week GEN Friday P:on FP
 'next Friday and'
- 15 Yumi: *=u:n*
 = uh: huh
- 16 (0.4)
- 17 Hanako: *7ji kara nanka (.) Yama-chan de izakaya no=*
 7.o'clock from what-QP Yama-chan P:at pub GEN
 'from 7 o'clock um at the pub Yama-chan'
- 18 Yumi: *=un*
 = uh-huh
- 19 (0.5)
- 20 Hanako: *de: nanka (.) Sachiko no 21sai no: sa[puraizu=*
 CONJ:and what-QP Sachiko GEN 21.years.old GEN surprise
- 21 Yumi: [*ta:*
 INJ
 'ah'
- 22 Hanako: *=paatii mitaina [kanji de]*
 party AUX.adj likeness P
 'and um Sachiko's 21st something like surprise party and'
- 23 Yumi: [*moosugu*] *tanjobi da ne:=*
 soon birthday COP FP
 '((her)) birthday is coming up soon isn't it'
- 24 Hanako: *=so so so tanjobi da kara sa:=*
 yes yes yes birthday COP CONJ:because FP
 'yeah yeah yeah because ((it)) is ((her)) birthday'
- 25 Yumi: *=un*
 = uh-huh
- 26 (.)
- 27 Hanako: *so sapuraizu de paatii minna de shiyotte nattete:*
 yes surprise P party everyone P do:VOL:TE be.AUX.V:TE
 'yes ((we)) have planned to have a surprise party together and'
- 28 (0.4)
- 29 Hanako *issho ni- (.) yaro*
 together P do:VOL
 'let's do ((it)) together'
- 30 (0.4)
- 31 Yumi: *raishu?*
 next.week
 'next week?'

In line 9, after the closing of the previous sequence (about the fact that a new term has just begun, not shown), Hanako initiates the transition to the new activity with a pause and a marker that seeks attention *ne*: (“hey”). Then, Hanako produces an invitation with the invitation proper *kondo sa: asobo: yo*: (“let’s go out soon”) (lines 9–10), where a non-specific time word *kondo* (“soon”) is utilised – that is, an “ambiguous” invitation. This is followed by Yumi’s acceptance of the invitation *ii yo* (“yes”) and a clarification request *itsu?* (“when?”) (line 12). The “ambiguous” invitation enables her to check Yumi’s willingness to get together for a future unspecific occasion. This is evident in the turn design where Hanako opens an announcement sequence prefaced with a simple pre-telling *nanka* (“you know what”) and display of an agreement *aso bo aso bo* (“let’s go out let’s go out”, line 13) immediately after Yumi’s acceptance of the “ambiguous” invitation is displayed – the announcement sequence overlaps with Yumi’s clarification request (lines 12). In the announcement sequence, Hanako provides the core contextual information of the invitation (lines 13–27), then after Yumi’s response, she produces the invitation proper (line 29). This format allows the inviter to check the invitee’s willingness to get together before the planned invitation is made.

In the next example, Hanako the inviter, launched *two* question sequences to establish common ground, more specifically to check Yumi the invitee’s willingness to get together, before the planned invitation was made.

- (9)
- ((01–05 greetings))
- 06 Hanako(J8): *u-huh saikin minna de atsumattenai yo ne:=*
 u-huh recently everybody P get.together:TE-AUX.V-NEG FP FP
 ‘u-huh we haven’t got together recently have we’
- 07 Yumi(I2): *=u:n so: da [ne:]*
 yeah right COP FP
 ‘yeah that’s right’
- 08 Hanako: *[ne:] (0.3) atsumaritai yo ne:=*
 yeah get.together-AUX.adj.want.to FP FP
 ‘yeah ((we)) want to get together don’t we’
- 09 Yumi: *=u:n*
 yeah
 ‘yeah’
- 10 (0.3)
- 11 Hanako: *nanka: raishu no kinyobi ni:=*
 what-QP next.week GEN Friday P:on
 ‘you know what next Friday’

- 12 Yumi: =u:n
 yeah
 =ye:ah
- 13 (0.7)
- 14 Hanako: *Sachiko?*
 ‘Sachiko?’
- 15 Yumi: *hai hai*
 yes yes
- 16 (0.6)
- 17 Hanako: *no tanjobi- (..) [jan?*
 GEN birthday COP-FP-FP
 ‘((Sachiko’s)) birthday isn’t it’
- 18 Yumi: [*un un un un=*
 ‘yeah yeah yeah yeah’
- 19 Hanako: =*dakara*:(1.5) *pa- (1.0) baasudei paatii shi(h)yoo to*
 CONJ:so pa- birthday party do:VOL QUOT
 ‘so pa- a birthday party ((we)) are’
- 20 *omotte[runda kedo:*
 think:TE-AUX.V:TE-PHR CONJ:but
 ‘planning to have ((a birthday party)) and’
- 21 Yumi: [*ta_ ah ah un un*
 [*ta_ ah ah uh-huh uh-huh*
- 22 Hanako: *un. ikana- isshoni ikoo yo:=*
 yes go.NEG together go:VOL FP
 ‘yeah. ((why)) don’t ((we)) go- let’s go together’
- 23 Yumi: =*a- are- gomen itsu dakke*
 INJ INJ sorry when COP:PT.QP
 ‘oh- um- sorry when is ((it))’

After greetings (lines 1–5), Hanako launches a question sequence (*first*) to check if the invitee agrees with the fact that they have not seen their mutual friends for a while (line 6). After it is assured by Yumi’s display of agreement (line 7), Hanako opens another question sequence (*second*) to check Yumi’s willingness to get together (line 8). After Yumi’s display of her willingness (line 9), Hanako initiates the transition to a new activity with *nanka* (“you know what”) (line 11) then she launches a question sequence to check if Yumi knows that Sachiko’s birthday is “next Friday” (lines 11–17). After Yumi confirms that she is aware of that (line 18), Hanako reports her pre-planned event, which is prefaced with *dakara* (“so”) (lines 19–20). After the response tokens displayed by Yumi (line 21), Hanako provides an invitation proper (line 22), which

is followed by Yumi's clarification question (line 23). This format allows the inviter to check the invitee's willingness to get together before the planned invitation is made.

The example below illustrates the second format. In this format, Hanako the inviter launched a question sequence to check if the invitee Yumi knew the fact that a mutual friend's birthday was on Friday (Question sequence (Friday)). After that, she reported the core and background information of the invitation (some mutual friends were coming) before producing a prompt for the invitee to respond to the invitation. This format was found in two cases.

(10)

- ((01-05 greetings))
- 06 Hanako(J3): *ano: raishu?*
 INJ *next.week*
 'um: next week?'
- 07 Yumi(I1): *un=*
uh-huh =
- 08 Hanako: *=raishu no kinyobi ni:*
next.week GEN Friday P:on
 'next Friday'
- 09 Yumi: *un=*
uh-huh=
- 10 Hanako: *ano:*
 INJ
um:
- 11 (0.3)
- 12 *Sachiko-chan no:*
Sachiko.chan GEN
 'Sachiko's'
- 13 Yumi: *un=*
uh-huh =
- 14 Hanako: *=tanjooobi arujan?*
birthday COP-FP-FP
 'birthday isn't it?'
- 15 (0.3)
- 16 Yumi: *ta: so: da ne:=*
 INJ *right COP FP*
 'oh that's right'
- 17 Hanako: *=un un=*
=yes yes=

- 18 Yumi: =*un un un*=
 =*yes yes yes* =
- 19 Hanako: =*de son toki ni: chotto sapuraizu paatii shiyoo to*
 CONJ:and that time P just surprise party do:VOL QUOT
20 *omottete:*
 think:TE-AUX.V:TE
 ‘and ((we)) are planning to throw a surprise party on that day’
- 21 Yumi: *hum hum hum hum*
 uh-huh uh-huh uh-huh uh-huh
- 22 Hanako: *so: (.) de issho ni yarankana? to omottete:*
 CONJ:and CONJ:then together P do:NEG-FP QUOT think:TE-AUX.V:TE
 ‘and then ((I)) am wondering if you would like to do it together ((with
 us)) and’
- 23 (0.3)
- 24 Yumi: *un [un un]*
 uh-huh [uh-huh uh-huh]
 ((25-38 additional background information about the venue from Hanako))
- 39 Hanako: *[Yama-chan so so Yama-chan itsumo itteru*
 Yama.chan yes yes Yama.chan regularly go-AUX.V
40 *tokoro [hu-huhu=*
 place hu-huhu
 ‘Yama-chan yes yes Yama-chan the place ((we)) regularly go hu-huhu
- 41 Yumi *[hm un un*
 [hm um um
- 42 Hanako: =*da kedo: soko de: nanka 7ji goro ni yarurashiinda*
 COP CONJ:but there P what-PQ 7.o’clock around P do-AUX.V-PHR
 kedo
 CONJ:but
 ‘and it seems that ((we)) are having ((the party)) there um around 7
 o’clock and’
- 43 *ashi- aiteru?*
 tomo- be.free:TE-AUX.V
 ‘tomo- are ((you)) going to be free?’
- 44 (0.4)
- 45 Yumi: *7ji?*
 ‘7 o’clock?’

In line 6, after the greetings (lines 1–5), Hanako initiates the transition to another activity with a first component of the turn construction unit (TCU) (Sacks et al., 1974) *raishu?* (“next week?”) prefaced with a hesitation marker *ano*

(“um”). Then Hanako restarts the TCU, which comprises a question sequence to check if Yumi knows that Sachiko’s birthday is next Friday (lines 8–14). After establishing common ground (lines 16–18), Hanako reports that a surprise party is planned on that day, which is prefaced with *de* (“and”) and *son toki ni* (“on that day”) (lines 19–20). By establishing a shared common ground, the pre-sequence enables her to produce the invitation as consequences of what precedes (*de* (“and”) and *son toki ni* (“on that day”) line 19). After Yumi’s display of acknowledgement (line 21), Hanako continues reporting, in which she wonders if Yumi is interested in the party (line 22). After Yumi’s response tokens (line 24) preceded by a pause (line 23), Hanako continues the reporting, where some information about the venue is provided, and checks if Yumi knows the venue (line 25–41). Hanako restates the venue *soko de* (“there”) and provides the specific time of the party (line 42). Hanako then produces a prompt for the invitee to respond to the invitation *aiteru?* (“are you free?”) (line 43). This is followed by Yumi’s clarification request (line 45), which delays her subsequent refusal.

The next three examples showcase the third format that was most identified in the Japanese data – twelve cases. The turn design of this format was similar to that of the second format, where the inviter launched a question sequence to check if the invitee knew that the mutual friend’s birthday was approaching. However, unlike in the second format, the exact date (on Friday) of the event was not produced in the question sequence in this format – a non-specific time word *kondo* (“soon”) or *raishuu* (“next week”) was utilised instead. Hence, this format was labelled as “Question sequence (next week)”. In this format, the moment the exact date of the occasion was announced was delayed. In the example below, the exact date of the occasion was produced at the end of reporting.

(11)

- 01 Yumi(I1): o[hayo]
‘morning’
- 02 Hanako(J2): [ohayo] (0.3) ne- kondo no kinyobi? a- >chigau< (0.4)
morning hey next GEN Friday INJ not.right
‘morning hey next Friday? oh no’
- 03 Sachiko sa: 21sai no tanjobi jan ne [kondo:=
Sachiko FP 21.years.old GEN birthday COP FP soon
‘Sachiko ((will)) have her 21st birthday soon won’t she’
- 04 Yumi:
[un un
[yeah yeah
- 05 Hanako: =de minna de: tanjobi: (0.5) iwaotte ittete
CONJ:so everybody P birthday celebrate:VOL-QUOT say:TE-AUX.V:TE

- ‘so ((we)) are saying that ((we)) shall celebrate ((her)) birthday together and’
- 06 Yumi: *un*
uh-huh
- 07 Hanako: *raishu no kinyobi yarunda kedo*
next.week GEN Friday do-PHR CONJ:but
‘((we)) are having ((the party)) next Friday and’
- 08 Yumi: *un*
uh-huh
- 09 Hanako: *koreru?*
come:POT
‘can you come?’
- 10 (0.6)
- 11 Yumi: *nanji gurai kara*
what.o’clock about P:from
‘from about what time’

In line 2, after the greetings, Hanako initiates the transition to the next activity with a pause and *ne-* (“hey-”) (line 2). Then, Hanako produces a question sequence to check if Yumi knows that Sachiko’s birthday is “soon” (line 3), which is self-corrected (Schegloff et al., 1977) (line 2). Here, a non-specific time word *kondo* (“soon”) is utilised instead of “next Friday”. After Yumi confirms that she is aware of Sachiko’s birthday (line 4), Hanako reports that they (Hanako and her friends) are planning a celebration for Sachiko’s birthday together (line 5). Then, Hanako provides the specific date *raishu no kinyobi* (“next Friday”) (line 7) and a prompt to respond to the invitation (line 9). This is followed by Yumi’s clarification request, which delays her subsequent refusal (line 11).

In the second example below, the inviter produces a prompt to respond to the invitation without providing the exact day of the event.

(12)

- ((01–017 greetings))
- 18 Hanako(J11): *ano sa:=*
um FP
um
- 19 Yumi(I3): *=u:n*
=uh-huh
(1.2)
- 20 Hanako: *raishu?*
next week?
- 21 (.)

- 22 Yumi: *un*
uh-huh
- 23 (0.5)
- 24 Hanako: *Sachi no tanjobi ja:n?*
Sachi GEN birthday COP FP
'Sachiko ((will)) have ((her)) birthday won't she?'
- 25 (0.7)
- 26 Yumi: *°soo da yo° mo: ka: [hayya]*
so COP FP already FP quick
'That is right already time flies'
- 27 Hanako: *[so: 21sai]*
so 21st.years.old
'That is right 21st years old'
- 28 Yumi: *hayyai na: u:n*
quick FP yeah
'time flies indeed'
- 29 (.)
- 30 Hanako: *sa: paatii yaroo to=*
so party do:VOL QUO
- 31 Yumi: *=un=*
=uh-huh=
- 32 Hanako: *=omottete:=*
think:TE-AUX:TE
'so ((we)) are ((planning)) to have a party'
- 33 Yumi: *=un=*
=uh-huh=
- 34 Hanako: *=sapuraizu de:=*
surprise P
'as a surprise'
- 35 Yumi: *=sapuraizu de: [o:]*
'as a surprise oh boy'
- 36 Hanako: *[un] (0.3) hisashi[buri ni=*
yes long.time P
'yes ((it is been)) a long time'
- 37 Yumi: *[sasuga]*
'((you are)) a star'
- 38 Hanako: *=saikin minna atsumattenakatta kara=*
recently everyone gather:TE-AUX.V:TE:NEG:PT CONJ:because
'because ((we have)) not ((have a chance)) to gather recently'

- 39 Yumi: =un un [un]
 =yeah yeah [yeah]
- 40 Hanako: [*min*]na de atsumaroo yo
 everyone FP gather:VOL FP
 ‘let’s get gather’
- 41 (.)
- 42 Yumi: a- *ii* *ne:=*
 INJ good FP
 ‘ah ((sounds)) good’
- 43 Hanako: =so:=
 so
 ‘yeah’
- 44 Yumi: =sore- (.) *itsu? china- mini*
 it when by.the.way
 ‘is it- when ((is it))? by the way’

In line 18, after the greetings, Hanako initiates the transition to the next activity with “*ano sa*” (“um”). Then, Hanako produces a question sequence to check if Yumi knows that Sachiko’s birthday is “next week” (lines 20 and 24), which is followed by Yumi’s acknowledgement of the fact (line 26) and a few exchanges between Hanako and Yumi where they share the knowledge that Sachiko’s 21st birthday is next week (lines 26–28). Then, Hanako starts reporting the pre-planned event (birthday party for Sachiko) in a step-by-step manner (lines 30, 32, 34, 36 and 38), which Yumi agrees with it. Hanako then provides an invitation proper (line 40), which is followed by Yumi’s display of agreement (line 42). After Hanako’s display of confirmation (line 43), Yumi produces a clarification question (line 44). In this example, the date of the event is left unspecified when the prompt to respond to the invitation is delivered.

In the next example, the inviter provides some background information of the planned event without specifying the date of the event, which is delivered via reporting. The reporting is not followed by a prompt for the invitee to respond to the invitation.

- (13)
- ((01–10 greetings))
- 11 Hanako(J10): =sa- (0.3) Sachiko
 =sa- (0.3) Sachiko
- 12 Yumi(I3): un
 uh–huh

- 13 Hanako: *moosugu tanjobi?*
soon birthday
'((is Sachiko's)) birthday ((coming)) soon?'
- 14 (0.6)
- 15 Yumi: *u:n un un [so:yanna:]*
yes yes yes so COP-FP-FP
'yes yes yes that's right'
- 16 Hanako: *[u:n u:n] dakara: (.) sapuraizu de:*
yes yes CONJ:so surprise P
'yes yes so ((it would be)) a surprise'
- 17 Yumi: *un=*
uh-huh=
- 18 Hanako: *=tanjobi (.) paatii shiyo to o[motte] [de: so=*
birthday party do:VOL QUOT think:TE CONJ:and yes
'((we)) are planning to throw a birthday party and that's right yes'
- 19 Yumi: *[o:: [otto:*
INJ INJ
'oh wow'
- 20 Hanako: *so so so so [de: ma-rai-*
yes yes yes yes CONJ:and well-next-
yes yes yes yes and um-next-
- 21 Yumi: *[un itsu yarun?*
yes when do-PHR-QP
'yes when are ((you)) going to do?'
- 22 Hanako: *raishu no*
next.week GEN
'next week'
- 23 (0.5)
- 24 Yumi: *un=*
uh-huh=
- 25 Hanako: *=raishu no=*
next.week GEN
'next week'
- 26 Yumi: *=un=*
=uh-huh=
- 27 Hanako: *=kinyobi ga ichiban ii kana: to omotte*
Friday NOM most good FP QUOT think:TE
'((we)) wonder Friday would be the best and'
- 28 (0.4)

- 29 Yumi: ^o*raishu no kinyobi*^o
 next.week GEN Friday
 ‘next Friday’
- 30 Hanako: *hmm*
 hmm
- 31 Yumi: ^o*nanji kara?*^o *ah-hu-huhu*
 what.o’clock P:from ah-hu-huhu
 ‘from what time? ah-hu-huhu’
- 32 Hanako: *nanji mah: gakko ari da kara 7ji gurai*
 what.o’clock well school exist COP CONJ:because 7.o’clock around
- 33 *kana: tte kan[gaeterunda kedo:=*
 FP QUOT think:TE-AUX.V-PHR CONJ:but
 ‘what time? well because it’s a school day, ((we)) are wondering
 ((we do it)) around 7 o’clock and’
- 34 Yumi: [*7ji gurai no:*
 7.o’clock around GEM
 ‘around 7 o’clock’

In line 11, after the greetings (lines 1–10), Hanako initiates the transition to the new activity with a TCU by producing an emphatically pronounced *Sachiko* (line 11). The TCU is completed in line 13, where a question sequence is launched to check if Yumi knows Sachiko’s birthday is coming “soon”. Immediately after Yumi’s display of acknowledgement (line 15), she opens an announcement sequence prefaced with *dakara* (“so”), where the occasion of the planned party is reported (lines 16 and 18). This pre-sequence, where the common ground is established, enables her to present the invitation as a consequence of what has preceded. This announcement is followed by Yumi’s display of positive assessment (line 19). Hanako echoes Yumi’s assessment (line 20) then, she resumes the announcement but the beginning of the TCU is interrupted by Yumi’s clarification question *itsu yarin?* (“when is it”) (line 21). Here, Yumi sees the announcement as an invitation and asks for details in order to respond to the invitation. After Yumi’s clarification question, the TCU is resumed (line 22), where Hanako announces the specific date of the party (lines 22–27). This is followed by multiple turns where the specific time of the party is announced by Hanako as a response to Yumi’s clarification request (lines 29–33). Then, Yumi displays a hesitation to accept the invitation (line 34).

In this example, the invitation was delivered via reporting where the date of the event was not specified at the beginning of the reporting, which was provided as a response to the clarification question from the invitee. The reply to the clarification was not followed by a prompt for the invitee to respond to

the invitation. Based on these accounts, it may be stated that cautiousness was apparent in the turn design.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that pre-sequences were very frequent in the Japanese data. As with the English data, the Japanese invitations were produced step-by-step in a sequentially progressive manner. In the following paragraphs, the linguistic formats of the Japanese invitations will be explored.

5.2 *Linguistic Formats of the Japanese Invitations*

As seen above, it was found that all the invitations were delivered through reporting where a pre-planned event was announced with background information. Two types of recurring grammatical structure were identified in the reportings. The first structure was a clause that ended with *nda kedo*, for example, “*baasudei sapuraizu paatii yaru nda kedo*” (“(we) are having a surprise birthday party **and**”) (line 23, data sample (7)). A sentence ending *nda* in this case “indicates that the speaker is explaining” (Makino and Tsutsui, 1986: 325). A conjunction *kedo* “but” combined the two sentences which expressed contrastive ideas; however, this conjunction can combine two sentences even if the sentences did not deliver contrastive ideas (Makino and Tsutsui, 1986). The second type referred to the structure where “the last element of the predicate of a clause [was] the *te*-form” (Makino and Tsutsui, 1986: 466) as in “*sapuraizu de paatii minna de shiyotte nattete*” (“(we) have planned to have a surprise party together **and**”) (line 27, data sample (8)). The clause that ended with *te*-form meant that this was not “the end of the sentence and that another predicate or clause follows it” (Makino and Tsutsui, 1986: 466). In short, the two types of grammatical structure shared the structure which consisted of two clauses, and the clause that followed the first clause may be called “main clause” (Tsutsui et al., 2018) as in “*sapuraizu de paatii minna de shiyotte nattete*” (“(we) have planned to have a surprise party together **and**”) [first clause] “*issho ni yaro*” (“let’s do it together”) [main clause].

As can be seen in Table 8 below, the clause (reporting) was followed by a clause (main clause) in 85% of the data (17/20¹⁴ cases). However, the clause was not followed by a clause (main clause) in 15% of the data (3/20 cases).

The cases where reporting was not followed by a main clause could be considered as the invitation not completed or properly made because the sentence was not completed. In other words, cautiousness was apparent in the turn design as can be seen in data sample (7).

14 A case which is not preceded by a preface or pre-sequences is included as well in order to see the whole picture of the distribution.

TABLE 8 Distribution of the appearance of a clause after reporting in the Japanese data

Japanese	
Followed by a clause	85% (17/20)
Not followed by a clause	15% (3/20)
Total	100% (20/20)

TABLE 9 Syntactic formats in relation to the “pre-” type in Japanese

“Pre-” type	Polar interrogative	Question-word interrogative	Imperative	Declarative	Total
No “pre-”	1	0	0	0	1
Preface	1	1	0	1	2
Ambiguous invitation/ Checking willingness- to-get-together sequence	0	0	2	0	2
Question sequence (Friday)	2	0	0	0	2
Question sequence (next week)	5	4	1	2	13
Total	9 (45%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	20 (100%)

In data sample (7), Hanako reports the pre-planned event (lines 18, 21 and 23) with a clause that ends with *nda kedo*. This is not followed by the main clause such as *koreru?* (“can you come?”) (line 9, data sample (11)). In other words, the main clause is left unsaid, that is, left-hanging – hence, “equivocal” (Drew, 2018) or cautious.

In the cases where the clause was followed by the main clause, three recurring syntactic formats were identified. The identified patterns were the polar interrogative (“*koreru*” (“can you come?”) and “*aiteru*” (“are you free”)), Question-word interrogative (“*doo*” (“how does it sound”)) and imperative (e.g. “*ikoo yo*” (“let’s go”)) as shown in Table 9. In the table, “declarative” refers to the cases where a clause is not followed by the main clause.

Table 9 also shows the relationship between the specific syntactic formats and the sequential environment in which they were utilised and some

observations should be made. Firstly, the use of the imperative (e.g. “*ikoo yo*” (“let’s go”)) was found in three cases (Table 9). Two of the three cases were identified in the invitations where reporting was preceded by an ambiguous invitation sequence or a question sequence that checked the invitee’s willingness to get together for a near-future event. In fact, the imperative was the only syntactic format that was used for the “Ambiguous invitation/Checking willingness-to-get-together sequence” as a pre-expansion type. As seen above, this pre-sequence format allowed the inviter to check the invitee’s willingness to get together before the planned invitation was made. In both the cases, the outcome of the action was positive (see samples (8) and (9)). For example, in data sample (8), the display of the acceptance of the ambiguous invitation from the invitee encouraged the inviter to issue the invitation and no anticipatory difficulties were detected on the way. It may be interpreted that this syntactic format reflected the indication of *certainty* displayed by the invitee.

This interpretation was evident in the case where the imperative was utilised in the invitation that was preceded by a question sequence and categorised in “Question sequence (next week)” as in data sample (12). In data sample (12), a series of positive assessments from the invitee may be seen by the inviter as a go-ahead signal to issue the invitation, particularly the utterance *sasuga* (“(you are) a star”) (line 37) where the inviter’s action is praised in an expressive manner. For the inviter, this is reassuring, and no difficulties are detected on the way. Thus, despite the limited number of cases, it may be concluded that this syntactic format reflected the indication of *certainty* displayed by the invitee.

It also appeared that the polar interrogative was utilised across the format types of the “pre’s”, except for “Ambiguous invitation/Checking willingness-to-get-together sequence”. The more detailed analysis of the lexico-syntactic patterns (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014) of the identified questions was therefore used to explore this. Two semi-fixed combinations were found as follows (see Table 10).

TABLE 10 Combinations used for the polar interrogative in Japanese

Combination	Japanese
can you X	2
are you free	7
Total	9

The first combination included a modal verb, namely “can” is utilised as in “*koreru*” (“can you come”), which was found in two cases. The second combination was “are you free”, which was found in seven cases. In summary, it appears that the combination where the recipient’s availability was concerned was used by the inviter the most.

6 Comparison of English and Japanese Invitations

In this section, the sequence organisation of the invitations (Subsection 6.1) and the linguistic formats through which the invitations were delivered (Subsection 6.2) in the English data and the Japanese data will be compared and contrasted.

6.1 Sequence Organisation

The preceding paragraphs have shown that “pre’s” play an important role in the turn designs of the English and Japanese invitations. As Table 11 shows, “pre’s” were seen in all the English data except for one case (19/20 cases) and were also seen in all the cases in the Japanese data except for one case (19/20 cases). Moreover, the table shows that although pre-sequences were highly frequent in the English (74%), they were more so in the Japanese data (84%).

The detailed analyses of turn design of the “pre’s” revealed some similarities and differences between the English and Japanese invitations as summarised in Table 12.

Preface was identified in both the English and the Japanese data. However, it was found more in the English data (26% (5/19)) than the Japanese data (16% (3/19), Table 11). The English invitation found in this category was delivered via reporting where all the core contextual components that were required for the invitation (i.e. date and occasion) were clearly announced (see data sample (1)). On the other hand, the invitation identified in the two of the three Japanese cases were delivered via reporting where the date of the occasion was not specified (an unspecific word “*raishu*” (“next week”) was used as seen in data sample (7)), which was designed to delay the moment that the exact date of the invitation was produced – the invitation was delivered in a step-by-step manner.

In the invitations where pre-sequences were produced, a variety of formats was identified in both the English and the Japanese data, and some similarities and differences were found between the two data sets (see Table 12). Firstly, as a prelude to the planned invitation, “Pre-invitation/pre-announcement” and “Ambiguous invitation/Checking willingness-to-get-together sequence” were

TABLE 11 Distribution of preface and pre-sequence formats identified in the English and Japanese data

Format type	English	Japanese
Preface	26% (5/19)	16% (3/19)
Pre-sequence	74% (14/19)	84% (16/19)
Total	100% (19/19)	100% (19/19)

TABLE 12 Comparison of format types of the “pre’s” in British English and in Japanese

British English	Japanese
I. Preface	I. Preface
II. Pre-sequences	II. Pre-sequences
Pre-invitation/pre-announcement	-----
-----	Ambiguous invitation/Checking willingness-to-get-together sequence
Announcement sequence (Friday)	-----
Announcement sequence (next week)	-----
-----	Question sequence (Friday)
-----	Question sequence (next week)

found in the British and the Japanese data respectively. Thus, the approaches used were different. Secondly, formats that worked in a similar way were found: “Announcement sequence (Friday)” and “Question sequence (Friday)”, in the British and Japanese data respectively. Here, the inviter checked if the invitee knew that the inviter’s birthday was coming up on Friday (for the British data) or if the invitee knew that their mutual friend, Sachiko’s birthday was coming up on Friday (for the Japanese data).¹⁵ Finally, both the English and the Japanese data shared the formats “Announcement sequence (next week)” and “Question sequence (next week)”. In the formats, the inviter checked if the

15 It was interpreted that the difference between the two data sets in terms of the type of the sequence, namely “announcement” and “question”, comes from the different nature of the birthday parties: “inviting to the inviter’s party” and “inviting to the mutual friend’s party”. However, in the English data, a question sequence is also displayed in a form of a prototypical pre-announcement sequence (“*do you remember it’s my birthday (on) Friday*”, line 3) as seen in data sample (3).

invitee knew that the inviter's birthday was coming up “soon” (for the British data) or if the invitee knew that the mutual friend, Sachiko's birthday was coming up “soon” (for the Japanese data). Both were designed to delay the moment the exact date of the event was announced – the invitation was delivered in a step-by-step manner, that is, in a cautious manner.

6.2 *Linguistic Formats of the English and the Japanese Invitations*

As has been seen above, it was found that all the invitations were delivered through reporting where a pre-planned event was announced with background information, which was followed by a clause or a sentence in 65% of the English and 85% of the Japanese data as shown in Table 13. The table suggests that there may be some differences; however, the cases (three out of seven cases) where reporting had dual functions (reporting the pre-planned event and prompting the recipient's response to the invitation with a rising intonation (see data sample (4)) were included in the category “Not followed by a clause or a sentence” and must be considered. One of the functions, prompting the recipient's response to the invitation, can be considered as a question – that is, it can be categorised as “Followed by a sentence”. Therefore, it may be stated that there were no noticeable differences between the two data sets.

However, the comparison of syntactic format types identified in the English and the Japanese data showed some similarities and differences as shown in Table 14. The English and Japanese data shared two syntactic format types: the polar interrogative and declarative. Other syntactic format types were not shared. Conditional and indicative were unique to the English data, and Question-word interrogative and imperative were unique to the Japanese data. In the English data, the conditional was almost exclusively utilised in the invitation that was preceded by preface, where an opportunity for ‘testing the waters’ was lacking – that is, the speaker was facing uncertainty. Hence, it was interpreted that uncertainty was reflected in the conditional construction. On

TABLE 13 Distribution of the appearance of a clause or a sentence after reporting in the English and Japanese data

	English	Japanese
Followed by a clause or a sentence	65% (13/20)	85% (17/20)
Not followed by a clause or a sentence	35% (7/20)	15% (3/20)
Total	100% (20/20)	100% (20/20)

TABLE 14 Comparison of syntactic format types in British English and in Japanese

Syntactic format types in English	Syntactic format types in Japanese
Polar interrogative	Polar interrogative
Conditional	-----
Indicative	-----
-----	Question-word interrogative
-----	Imperative
Declarative	Declarative

the other hand, such a relationship between a certain syntactic format and this type of “pre’s” (i.e. preface) was not found in the Japanese data. In other words, the syntactic solution to handle uncertainty as seen in the British data where the invitation initiated with a preface was not found in the Japanese data. One may ask, “what are the solutions identified in the Japanese data, then?” This is evident in the turn design of the invitation that is initiated with prefaces (see data sample (7)). In the two of the three cases, the invitation was delivered in a step-by-step manner via reporting where the moment of the exact date of the event was announced was delayed by using an unspecific time word (e.g. *rai-shu* (“next week”)). This showed that an approach to handle uncertainty seen in the cases where the reporting was initiated with a preface was different for the two languages – a *syntactic* solution was employed for the English data and a *sequential* solution was employed for the Japanese data.

As seen in Table 14, the imperative (“*ikoo yo*” (“let’s go”)) was found only in the Japanese data. In addition, it was the only syntactic format type used for the invitation that was preceded by “Ambiguous invitation/Checking willingness-to-get-together sequence”, which was not found in the English data. This syntactic format type was uniquely found in the Japanese data. The indicative (“I’d love for you to come”) was found only in the English data, where the speaker’s wish was expressed.

As Table 14 shows, the polar interrogative was found both in the English and the Japanese data and the analysis of the combination types used for the polar interrogative revealed some similarities and differences. A number of semi-fixed combinations were found in the English and Japanese data – the comparison of the combinations is shown in Table 15.

It was found that the shared combinations were “can you X” and “are you free”. However, it appeared that “are you free” was utilised in the Japanese data more than the English data. Additional differences were found in the use

TABLE 15 Combinations used for the polar interrogative in English and Japanese

Combination	English	Japanese
do you want X	5	----
do you think you will X	2	----
can you X	1	2
are you free	1	7
Total	9	9

of the combinations “do you want X” and “do you think you will X”. A modal verb “will” and a catenative verb “want” where the recipient’s wish was considered were used in the majority of the English cases, and they were seen in the literature as commonly used verbs in English directive-commissive actions (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014). However, they were not found in the Japanese data although they could be utilised after a clause ending with *nda kedo* or *te*-form, as in “*kuru?*”¹⁶ (“will you come?”) and “*kitai?*” (“do you want to come?”).

7 Conclusion

From the observed similarities and differences in turn designs of the English and the Japanese invitations, the present study offers a number of contributions to (1) CA studies on invitations and (2) speech act research in CCP.

In CA studies on invitations, although “pre-invitation” was considered to be designed to minimise the likelihood of rejection (Schegloff, 2007), it was found in only one case in the English data. It was not found in the Japanese data at all, and an “ambiguous” invitation and a “checking willingness-to-get-together sequence” was utilised as a prelude to the planned invitation instead, which has not been documented in the previous studies. In addition, the format that delayed the moment the exact date of the event was announced, which was found both in the English and the Japanese data, were not documented in

16 “*kuru*” is chosen here for the following reason. The example can be “*koyoo to omou*” (do you think you will come) based on the literal translation. However, the source sentence (e.g. “do you think you’ll be about”) from the English data may not include a similar degree of volition as the Japanese volitional form (in this case, “*koyoo*”, which is the volitional form of *kuru* (“to come”)).

the CA studies on invitations except for the French invitations (Traverso et al., 2018). This may be seen as additional information that may advance our understanding of the social action of invitations in CA.

As a CCP study, the present study may offer some insights for intercultural communication between British and Japanese, based on the observed differences. The first is related to the differences identified in the invitation that is initiated with a preface. If a British student delivers all the core contextual components of the invitation in one go, which is preceded by a preface, when she issues an invitation to a Japanese student in Japanese, the Japanese student may find the manner used by the British student a little too straight to the point. Conversely, if a Japanese student delivers the core contextual components of the invitation in a step-by-step manner, which is preceded by a preface, when she issues an invitation to a British student in English, the British student may find the manner of the delivery used by the Japanese student a little not straight to the point.

The second is related to the differences for the combinations used for the polar interrogative. A Japanese student might find an invitation from a British student delivered in Japanese uncomfortable when it is delivered via reporting, followed by “*kuru*” (“will you come?”) or “*kitai*” (“do you want to come?”). In contrast, a British student might find an invitation from a Japanese student delivered in English unusual when it is delivered via reporting, followed by “are you free”. These misunderstandings may be interpreted as a result of which individuals from different speech communities interact according to their own pragmatic norms (Boxer, 2002).

As has been explained in Section 3, despite the efforts, the invitation situations were slightly different from one another – inviting a friend to your own birthday party and to a mutual friend’s birthday party. This highlights the challenge of matching up situations across cultures, which is one of the core elements of speech act studies from a cross-cultural perspective. Despite of the limitations, the observed similarities and differences in this study highlight the importance of analysing speech acts in *situated* interaction, rather than analysing speech acts in isolation from situated interaction.

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Supplementary Material

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